

## **THE FORMATION AND FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH**

**Taught by Bruce Bickel**

**Session: December 9, 2011**

...Father, because you are the only one who can meet our daily needs, and we come to you as our Master and Lord because you are the only one who can ward off the fiery darts of the evil one. So Lord Jesus, we come to you this day just trusting once again that you would remove all the frustrations of this week, that our minds might be centered upon you and all those things that are lovely and pure and gracious and kind. And most of all, Father, we just pray that your Holy Spirit would fulfill his job description once again and that is to guide us into all truth, and may it be so for Jesus' sake. Amen.

You have a new handout today, Lesson 9. I want you to have that at your disposal as well as the final sheet on the contrast of neo-Finneyism and modern evangelism versus biblical evangelism. If you'd be kind enough to take that page and look to the last/second sheet beginning on number 18. We have been talking recently, the last couple of Fridays, about the ministry of the assurance of salvation.

Modern evangelism basically says that the assurance of salvation is a ministry that is given to man and that we are to pronounce that to people when they say a prayer, when they raise their hand up or whatever they do, walk an aisle, say the sinner's prayer. Our response in evangelism is now to assure them that they do have eternal life because of something they have done. Modern evangelism basically relegates the ministry of the Holy Spirit to mankind and says that the assurance of salvation ministry is something that we do.

Biblical evangelism would say that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is the only who can confirm/reaffirm a person's saving faith that is true. Modern evangelism would say that it's based upon Scriptural promises. Biblical evangelism would say that the assurance of salvation is based upon Scripture promises, the work of the Holy Spirit in your spirit and increased righteousness. There's got to be some evidence. That's why last week, we went through the seven traits of a person who's been truly born again.

We see that the seven tests and seven traits of a person born again, you saw that in the book of 1 John—there are seven tests of true saving faith, and are there seven traits of one who's been born again. You see that in the book of 1 John. If you have any question about that, you can read that book. It's a very short book, but it's very, very powerful because the whole purpose of the book, the apostle John writes in 1 John 5:13 is, "I write these things so that you may know that you have eternal life." What are the things that he writes? The things that he writes are the seven tests and the seven traits of true saving faith.

When you look at number 18 on the back sheet of your handout, you'll notice modern evangelism says there's a relationship between faith and assurance. As you have faith, there's a degree of assurance that comes with that. Biblical evangelism would say there's a relationship between assurance, faith and obedience. In other words, there's some evidence of your faith, there's some evidence of your assurance, and that evidence manifests itself in our obedience. Obedience does not achieve anything. There's no merit in our obedience. What it is, it's an expression of love response to God because of his grace to us.

Again, we need to understand this, guys, that's there's no merit in your obedience. There's no merit in my obedience. Where does the merit come for your saving faith? It comes from the person and work of Christ. You and I get credit for his sinless perfection and perfect obedience. Whenever you and I are obedient to the Law, whenever we are obedient to the Law of Christ in the New Testament, whenever you and I are obedient, it doesn't achieve anything as far as it relates to merit in God's eyes. You have been given all the merit you ever could have and need because of the person and work of Christ. That is

what we refer to as justification by faith alone. You get credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ. That would mean this—if I were to get credit for, or merit for, my obedience, it would be basically saying that the sacrifice of Christ was not sufficient because it was lacking something that I have to make up. That's why we say that obedience does not gain any merit. What it is, it's an expression of gratitude and an expression of love.

Look at John 14:15. Here's my point about this. There's some degree of obedience that goes along with our faith and our assurance. Modern evangelism basically doesn't say that. Modern evangelism says there's a relationship between faith and assurance. Biblical evangelism says there's one more. That's because the whole doctrine of assurance, you see, does not include obedience or righteousness or increased righteousness. Remember, modern evangelism says that the assurance of salvation is something that man does; you ascribe that, you tell somebody about that. When you notice this, there's a relationship between your saving faith, between the assurance that God gives you through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and the third evidence of that is there's some degree of expression of your faith and your obedience. That comes in our love response to God.

John 14:15-16, <sup>15</sup>“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. <sup>16</sup>And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever.” Now where do you see you get some help in your obedience? Where does that come from? The Holy Spirit. You see, you're not alone in this. That's very important to understand, that obedience is not something that you do; obedience is something that is generated within you because you now have a desire to do it. Prior to this, you did not have that desire. Where does the desire for obedience come? It doesn't come from a works-oriented mentality. It comes from the fact that the Holy Spirit was given to you at your conversion so that you now have the resources so that you can express your love to God through obedience. You see how that works? You're not alone. You didn't have the desire. The Holy Spirit is the means of the desire to help you want to be obedient. <sup>16</sup>and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, <sup>17</sup>even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”

It's very important that we understand, guys, as we look at the doctrine of the assurance of salvation that there's got to be some expression of increased righteousness. That's what we're saying here is obedience. It's an expression of a love response in obedience. What your obedience does is you wrestle through the difficulties of life, and there are times, I know, that if you're like me, you just don't want to be obedient because sometimes you just don't have it in you. The Christian life is not the little red choo-choo that says, “I think I can. I think I can. I think I can.” Really, the Christian life, if we understand it biblically, is this, “I know I can't, but you can. I know I can't, but you can. I know I just can't do it anymore, but I know you can.” That's the ministry of the Holy Spirit as it comes to the correlation between our faith, our assurance, and our obedience.

Sometimes the greatest evidence of your true saving faith is your struggle because in your humanity, you're saying, “I just don't have what it takes.” Then you realize this, “I know that you have the resources that I don't have. Would you do that for me? Will you become my mercy? Would you become my compassion? Would you become my forgiveness?” You see, guys, there is a correlation here where the ministry of the Holy Spirit is the means by which you and I have been given a holy desire to want to express our gratitude in the form of obedience. There's no merit in it. All it is, is an expression.

If you'll just give me a little bit of leeway here, I want to be very careful when I give certain illustrations referring to heaven. God the Father and God the Son were having a conversation, if that were going on, and he sees your obedience, basically they will view this as that, “He's just describing the fact that he loves us. He just told us, Father, that he loves us, even though that was difficult. He's just saying, he just told us he just loved us.” That's how it's viewed according to Jesus when he says, “If you really love

me, you're going but obedient."

Now the world will tell us that love is tolerance. It's tolerance. That's why the church gets in problems because we have become so politically tolerant that there's no distinction between those who are in Christ and those who are not, because there is no love expression of obedience in our faith life. We've got to be careful. Don't define love as tolerance.

Often times I hear people tell me that I'm not very tolerant. I have to honestly say, quietly, "Well thank you." They say, "You're not very open-minded," and I quietly think in my mind, "Thank you again." Now I'm open-minded, but not at both ends. You see, you can't be open-minded at both ends. You can be open-minded, but there comes a point when you realize that what true love really is, its obedience. It's not tolerance, as the world would tell us.

Next we go to the fact that the Gospel secures our justification. Justification is God making a declaration about your condition before him in your person and in your position. Justification is through faith alone, where you get credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ. That's what justification is. You're now wrapped in the robes of righteousness. God looks at you radically different than he did before you came to saving faith. He now sees you wrapped in the robes of righteousness. You now get credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ.

Do you have to be perfect to get to heaven? The answer is yes. Absolutely. Have you ever sinned? Then you're not perfect. Do you have sinless perfection and perfect obedience? No. Then you need a Savior. You see, that's what justification is. It's a declarative term. It's a term that happens in heaven where God makes a declaration. It's a forensic term that would be used in a court of law where the judge makes the statement about the convicted, and now he says they are justified. That's what happens in the court of eternal heaven, is that God now declares you justified. That means you get credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ. It's what we would call an alien righteousness. It's somebody else's righteousness you get credit for. That's why a works-oriented salvation is such a heresy because it basically says that I can achieve it. That means every breath, every second has to be sinlessly perfect and perfectly obedient, and if you can't do that, then you're lost. That's why we need a Savior.

Modern evangelism would say that the Gospel secures justification. Biblical evangelism says it would secure justification and sanctification. Sanctification, another good word for that, a good friend of mine told me another good word for that, which I agree with, is the word maturity. In other words, Paul says, "I want to present every many mature in Christ." Sanctification means to be set apart. It comes from the root word *hagios*, which means holy. It means there's something holy about you because you have received this justification. Now you're sanctification is an expression of that justification. I achieve it for you. You receive it. But you have now been set apart by a divine act of a Holy Father, in his providence, set you apart to be mature." What we do is, the expression of our justification really is, we become more mature in Christ.

How do you define maturity? Well there are many ways of doing that. One way in which I find is helpful to me is maturity is not if you fail, it's how quickly you get up when you do fail. That's maturity. You see, all of us are going to fail. I failed driving over here today, just by what I was thinking. I had to repent of those thoughts and say, "Lord, I'm going to go teach a study and you're going to let me think like this. Forgive me of that." At that moment, you see, you just have to recognize that I just failed in my mind. I'm guilty. But you see, in sanctification, you've been set apart to be holy. Even when we fail, the real issue is how quickly do you get up when you do fail. That's maturity in Christ. That's sanctification. It's not perfection, it's maturity.

Go to Colossians 1:28. Guys, you've got to realize, this is the purpose of the church, it's the purpose of

the presentation of the Gospel. Notice, the proclamation of the Gospel is not limited to conversion. Conversion is a part of the process of the proclamation of the Gospel. In a summary statement, Paul is describing his ministry to the people at Colossae and he says this, “<sup>28</sup>Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom.” Now two things that preaching is this—warning and edification. Teaching and warning. Sometimes you just got to warn the congregation, “Stop that. Don’t do that.” Sometimes that’s what preaching needs to do. Sometimes preaching needs to encourage. That’s the teaching side. There are two sides of preaching. There are two sides of sharing the person and work of Christ when you proclaim him. You are warning and you are “teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in Christ.”

Colossians 1:29, “For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.” Notice who is the source of his energy? It is Christ. It is the Holy Spirit. You see, that’s why you and I struggle, and we should be the ones who should never ever give up.

Let me show you another verse that’s very helpful. Go to 2 Corinthians 4:1. Now we just saw this—Paul says that, “I toil diligently with all the strength that he gives me because he’s working in me.” That’s the formation of our, basis of our strength and our ministry. Now the goal of ministry is not conversion. The goal of ministry is maturity. The goal of a church is not converts; the goal of the church is to bring those converts to maturity. That says something about the focus of the church. What is the church about? It is bringing people to be mature in Christ. The role of the church is really essentially the mission of every church has already be given to us.

Often times, I’m invited in to help a church come up with a mission statement. I said, “You’ve already got one—to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry. That’s your mission. Why do you need to come up with another one? Go with the one that was given to every church,” and that is this, to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry. That requires what? Maturity. That means with new converts, you’ve got to bring them to the point of maturity by warning them, by edifying them, by teaching them, so that they become more mature to fulfill the sanctification that’s been given to them when they were justified. They begin to express their maturity. That’s the role and mission of the church. It is to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry. A church that is mature is going to have many, many ministers, not just the paid ones. You’re going to have everybody.

When I was pastoring in Chicago, you know, you have your bulletin. My title, they wanted to call me Senior Pastor, whatever they wanted to do. I just said use the biblical term Pastor/Teacher. I’m just a Pastor/Teacher. Ministers were the congregation. Now we didn’t list everybody, but we basically said, “Ministers on the staff—congregation.” You see, because that’s the role of the church, and I wanted everybody to remind ourselves of this—the mission of the church has already been given to us. You don’t need to write another mission statement; it’s given to you. Equip the saints to do the work of the ministry. That requires maturity.

Notice this. This is why you and I should never, ever get discouraged in ministry. 2 Corinthians 4:1, “Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God.” Notice it doesn’t say by your skill set. It doesn’t say by your programmatic activities. It doesn’t say by your anything. “Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart.” Why is it you and I never lose heart, never give up? It’s because you realize that ministry is the function of God’s mercy, not human achievement. Ministry is not a function of your talent. It’s not a function of your anything. It’s a function of the fact that God in his sanctification and bringing you to maturity is permitting you to be involved in what he’s doing. That’s why it’s so important to understand the difference between my starting in ministry and say God blessing it, rather than saying, “What is God doing? I’m going to join that because I know it’s already blessed.” There’s a difference.

How often times people say, “I think the Lord’s leading me to start a ministry.” “Based upon what?” “Well I don’t like my job, {LAUGHTER} therefore, I’m going to go. God’s calling me into ministry.” “Really?” You see how we...then would you ask God to bless this. What we do is we’ve started a lot of things in Christ’s name and said, “Lord, now bless it,” and they never bring anybody to maturity. When the reality is this—you and I should never, ever get discouraged—long term. Yes, immediately, we do get discouraged. That’s when we have to rely upon the Holy Spirit who is bringing us to maturity, who is there to walk with us. But notice what it says, “Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart.” The words “lose heart” there means give up. You see, guys, we’ve been given all the resources in our sanctification not to give up. That’s why we hang in there and we bring people to maturity. The role of the local church is very, very simple. The mission has been given to every church that proclaims the name of Christ. It’s the same mission. That is to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry. That means we’ve got to have a focus on bringing people to maturity. That’s our sanctification.

There’s a difference between tolerance as a defining of love and an act of expression of a love response and obedience to say to the Father, “Thank you for your mercy.”

You’ve heard me say over the years we are M8’s—mission minded member of a movement (the Kingdom of God) motivated by mercy. What’s your motivation for ministry? Mercy. That’s what motivates you, because you understand this—I have this ministry; god is allowing me to participate in what he’s doing in building his kingdom. He’s allowing me to do that as a function of his mercy to me. It’s not because I’m so gifted, because of my education or my talents. Now I’m not saying those are not important. I’m not saying that. All I’m saying is the basis of your motivation for ministry is understanding that God’s been merciful to you to permit you to participate in this process of building his kingdom. So we are mission minded members of a movement (the Kingdom of God) motivated by mercy for ministry—ministry is giving away to someone else what God has given you; that’s your motivation; I just want to give it away—for ministry in the marketplace. The marketplace is wherever you are. It’s at work, it’s on the golf course, it’s shopping, it’s at home, it’s wherever it is.

***Sig:** Did you put in the word mercy there because it had to be a noun as opposed to grace [UNCLEAR]? {LAUGHTER}*

Any other questions? {LAUGHTER} Yes, I stuck the word...first of all, I stuck the word mercy in there because it’s biblical. {LAUGHTER} Now argue with that. {LAUGHTER} Secondly, I needed an “M.” {LAUGHTER} Yes.

***Audience Member:** Back to the topic at hand [UNCLEAR]...*

You’re welcome.

***Audience Member:** One way to I like to look at is the modern American church wants you to join because they’re focusing on membership. What I think the Gospel is, they’re asking you to identify with Christ which focuses on commitment, and we forget that.*

Yeah, we have. We have a rather worldly view of what membership is. We’re going to get into that as one of our key indicators of a healthy church. We’ll get into that. Let’s go to the next one. Now notice number 20. The Gospel is something that one gets. Biblically speaking, the Gospel is something God chooses to do. The Gospel is a work that God does any person; it’s not something you get from a person. God does something he chooses to do that. You see, the Gospel is an active ingredient. It’s an action. It’s something that God does inside of a person. Modern evangelism basically says, “Oh you get something from God. You get eternal life.”

Biblically speaking, the Gospel is something that God works in you. That's where you get your sanctification. That's where you get justification. That's where you become mature. It's because the Gospel is at work in you. It's what we saw in Ezekiel 36 in the announcement of the new covenant, the new arrangement that God will have with his people through the accomplishments of the person and work of Christ, "I will remove that heart of stone and I will replace it with a heart of flesh, and I will cause you to be obedient." You see, there's the whole sanctification process. There's the maturity process. He's going to cause us to do that, by doing something in us. What he does is the Gospel is at work in us. The Gospel is not something that you get; it's something that God chooses to do in a person. That's what Paul says, "I'm not ashamed of the Gospel for it is the power unto salvation to all who believe." You see, it is a powerful weapon. The most powerful weapon we have, brothers, is this—it is the proclamation of proclaiming him, the Gospel of Christ.

Modern evangelism would say the Gospel is simple. Jesus died for you. Do you trust Christ? Yes, you're a Christian. Now basically it's simple. Now biblically speaking, the Gospel is simple, but it's not shallow. It's now shallow. Do you understand the holiness of God? Do you understand that the person and work of Christ is the only means by which a person can be reconciled in a sinful condition to a holy God? That is not shallow. Yes, it's simple, but it's not shallow. We need to make understanding clear, guys, that when we have the opportunity to proclaim Christ, yes, we want to make it simple, but you don't want to make it shallow. It's really basically this. The six ingredients of the Gospel are this—the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the person of Christ, the work of Christ and repentance and faith. The holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the person of Christ, the work of Christ and repentance and faith. Now that is not shallow. Simple yes. Christ died for you. That is simple, but it's not shallow. Make sure that when we proclaim him that we don't make it shallow and make it too worldly.

The Gospel is about man, from God and for man. That's what modern evangelism says. It's about God. It's from him. But it's for me. Biblically speaking, the Gospel is about man, it's from God, and it's for God. You see, the proclamation of the Gospel is one of the primary means by which God builds his kingdom, and that glorifies him. Hallowed be his name. You see, the Gospel is a means of hallowing God's name, because it puts his mercy, his love, all of his 28 attributes on display. The Gospel is something that is really for God. Yes, it's from him. It's about him. And it's for him. It's not about us or for us.

The Gospel deals with man's legal problem—sin. Biblically speaking, the Gospel deals with another issue; not only man's legal problem, his sin, but also his moral problem—that's his heart. In other words, it deals with two things—your person and your position. You're an offense to God. You're an enemy of God in your unregenerate state. That's your position. That's your heart. The person is your heart, you're sinful. So you have two things that modern evangelism only deals with one and they deal with the legal problem—you're sinful—they don't deal with the positional problem or the condition of the heart. That's why it's so important to understand the Gospel is not shallow because it really is that means by which God removes that heart of stone, gives you a heart of flesh, and that's what gives you the desire. All of a sudden, you have a desire to pursue spiritual things. Why is that? It's because the Gospel has worked something in you. God has worked at something in you. So it deals with not only your sinful position, but it also deals with your sinful condition, which is the condition of the heart. Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks.

You've heard me say this, but the reason I'm saying this is because I've been really convicted of this myself. Your thoughts become your words, and your words become your actions, and your actions become your habits, and your habits become your character, and your character becomes your destiny. You see, character precedes conduct, because who we are determines what we do. Where does that start? How you think. Thoughts become your words.

The significance of that passage that Jesus says, “out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks,” you and I have got to take responsibility for what we talk about and the words that we use and the way we fly back at somebody when they irritate us. Why do you say the things you say? You know what that’s a reflection of? Not what that person’s done to you; it’s a reflection of your heart.

***Audience Member:** There was a neighbor that’s had a phrase that’s always stuck with me and his phrase was your response is your responsibility.*

Excellent. Your response is your responsibility.

***Audience Member:** Ninety percent of the time whenever I’m, when I find myself like that angry or if I’m acting out, it’s my lack of faith, that I don’t realize that God is in control and I’m trying to control something. I struggle with that all the time. That’s probably my biggest [UNCLEAR].*

I think we all do. If we’re all honest, we’ll agree with you. We’re all there.

Notice the next one. Christ is the Savior from what one has done. That’s modern evangelism. He will forgive you for your past sins. True. But you see, that’s what makes it so shallow is that it stops there. Biblical evangelism says Christ is the Savior from what one has done as well as what one is, who you are as a person. That’s what we’re talking about here. You see, modern evangelism just says Christ will forgive you of your sins. It’s basically dealing with the consequences. Biblical evangelism not only deals with the consequences of your past sin, but the condition of your present life. It’s why it deals with your heart.

We need to understand that the Gospel deals with not only our consequences of our sin in the past. There’s now no condemnation for those of us who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). You’re not condemned anymore. But it also deals with the condition of who you are right now, who you are as a person, and so it deals with not only what one has done, but also what one is.

Lastly, the offices and benefits of Christ are often separated in modern evangelism. You can trust Christ as your Savior and make him Lord later.

***Audience Member:** As I look over this, modern evangelism [UNCLEAR] appears to me to be like a proper military checklist. [UNCLEAR]...whereas the biblical approach is, it’s not a checklist. [UNCLEAR]...*

That’s a good point because the Scripture says “work out your salvation with fear and trembling.” Your salvation is something that’s going on. It’s not “Bingo! You got it.” It’s something that’s going on all the time and you’re struggling with that. So you’re right. This is not a checklist. It’s an ingredient that God imbued you with the Holy Spirit. He gives you the Holy Spirit and things begin to continue just to grow and move. That’s why we bring people to maturity. The Gospel is not something that is shallow. It just doesn’t deal with my past. It deals with my present condition, which is really important for us to understand.

Often times in modern evangelism, the benefits of Christ and his offices are separated. In other words, you can invite him in as your Savior now and trust him as Lord later. Biblical evangelism says the offices of Christ are always combined. He’s Prophet, Priest and King. He’s just not one. He’s all three together. He’s both Savior and Lord.

You’ve heard some people say, in modern evangelism, “Well she had trusted Christ as her Savior when she was 13. It’s just that there’s no evidence of that, so she hasn’t made Christ her Lord yet.” What you

do is your separate his salvation work, his salvific work, from his leadership work in his Lordship. You and I accept Christ on his terms, not on our terms. When you look at Acts 2, we're already told that Christ, God beat us to the punch when he made him Lord. Christ is Lord. You can't separate the two. That's what you would call easy believism. It's a good way of saying, "We had a lot of conversions. It's just that there's no maturity. There's no sanctification. There's no maturity." That's because they've separated the offices of the person and work of Christ. He is Savior and he is Lord. When you trust Christ, you're trusting his Lordship as much as you are his Saviorship. Yes, he saved you, but now he leads you. That's why we come to him as our Savior and Lord.

***Audience Member:** Bruce, anything that you have here [UNCLEAR] and I see it all in Deuteronomy because in our personal study, as I'm involved, in Deuteronomy God's changing the heart because he keeps reminding them in almost every passage that God who brought you out of Egypt and that God has taken you into the land. I saved you and now I'm giving you a new place and he's teaching them how to change their hearts in the whole thing. I told everybody that sits in that, the thing that I see in Deuteronomy [UNCLEAR]...*

Amen

***Audience Member:** ...obedience to God. What you were, and this is what you are going to be if you just trust him.*

It's a wonderful picture of the new covenant that we see in the person and work of Christ, which he accomplished at the cross. So all of that...remember this, the Old Testament is the New Testament revealed. The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed. The New Testament is the Old Testament revealed. They fit together. It's the same one message and the major theme of both of them is redemption—our being rescued through the payment of a price.

If you'd be kind enough to take out your handout number 9, I just want to touch on that because this is where we'll pick up next week. Thank you for going through this over the last month, this comparison between biblical evangelism and modern evangelism. When you look at the healthy ingredients of a church, you'll notice item B, there are some important issues and marks.

I would encourage you to read some of the confessions, to help you understand. Certainly, one of the ones that I would encourage you to read is the one by Bishop Rogers, The 39 Articles of Faith, what I call the John Rogers edition of 2011. That is really worth reading. It is a wonderful understanding of everything we've talked about so far. There are a couple of others that I would offer for your consideration. One would be the First London Confession of Faith (1646). That's a great one. Then there's the Westminster Confession of Faith (1646). Another one is the New Hampshire Confession of Faith (1863). Those are all some wonderful foundations for doctrinal belief. That's what Bishop Rogers has done so well in his book on the 39 Articles. He really gives us some basic tenants of our understanding of the Gospel of Christ and how it works in us. It's a wonderful book and I would encourage you to read that as much as you can, and there some other options for you. They're all saying the same thing, and that is the whole Christian life is about the person and work of Christ.

The next things you'll notice that Mark Dever, in his book at the evidences of a healthy church, would be a biblical understanding of conversion. We've talked about that. That's what we've done the last month. You can see that in the focus of the Gospel handout you have. Also a biblical view of conversion will manifest itself in the following, and we'll begin to pick this up next week. So many of the ingredients in his book about the outlines, we've already covered under that major theme of comparing the biblical gospel with the modern day evangelism. We'll pick this up next week, so bring lesson number 9 and we'll pick that up next week.



Let's pray. Father, we thank you that you're a forgiving Lord. We thank you that you are a merciful Lord. We thank you that you're a sovereign Lord and an omnipotent Lord. Father, once again, if we've said anything that's contrary to who you are as revealed in the sufficiency of your Scripture, would you remove those thoughts from our minds and only those thoughts that are consistent with your nature, your attributes, your character and your glory would be the things that we remember. Father, we desire to be brought to maturity in Christ, and so would you speak to us through your Word and guide us into all truth through the ministry of your Holy Spirit. Remind of this, Father, that it is through your mercy we have this ministry. We do not lose heart. And may it be so that we never get discouraged in being an M8. And all God's Brave Men said...Amen!