

## GOSPEL PRESENTATION

Years ago, back in the 1970s when I was a relatively new Christian, I remember when there was a great emphasis on being able to give a gospel presentation to someone in a relatively short time: to be able to share a half-dozen or so Bible texts that show the true condition of our fallen human nature and our need of accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior, coupled perhaps with a brief personal testimony; some of you may remember that, and it's a good idea to be able to do that at a moment's notice, because you never know when the opportunity might present itself. And not only that, but you must be able to give it from the heart, and from personal experience if you would be able to win someone to Christ. In other words, you can't give someone something you don't have! The Holy Spirit, working in you, must witness to their spirit in order for your gospel presentation to be effective.

There are thousands of people that are perishing for want of the truth, and we need to be able to be God's minute men and women to help them make the transition from a life of sin, to a life of holiness; because **Revelation 14:12** makes it clear that only those *"that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus"* will trade the title of sinner for saint, and be ready to meet Jesus in peace when He comes.

And so, today I'd like to explore the elements of "The Gospel Presentation", but before we do that, let's pray and ask for the Holy Spirit to be our teacher. [PRAY]

Rather than using a half-dozen or so Bible texts from different places in the Bible, I'd like to focus on a half-dozen verses in one particular chapter in the New Testament; it's a letter the apostle Paul wrote to a young man that he presented the gospel to, and then later on began training and mentoring him for the ministry; his name was Titus.

Titus was left at Crete, the largest Grecian island in the Mediterranean sea, to help straighten out church difficulties where trouble was brewing because of Judaizing teachers that placed great emphasis on obedience to various Jewish traditions, and to the ceremonial law that was now abolished by the sacrifice of

Christ. And it's unfortunate after all these years that the same kind of things are being urged still by those that advocate certain aspects of the ceremonial law, not realizing that as they do that, they're perverting the gospel of Christ to the point that God's grace can do them no good.

We must never forget that we are not saved by grace plus what we can add to it to make it more acceptable to God. If we think that's the case, then we are preaching "another gospel", and "another gospel" will not save you, but cause you to be lost. God's kindness to man is not won by good deeds, or by observing outdated rituals and ordinances, but is the gift of His mercy.

**Galatians chapter 1**, and **chapter 3**; and **Ephesians chapter 2**; and **Romans chapter 6** make it crystal clear that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone, and the things we do simply show whether or not God's grace has done its intended work upon our hearts. The roll of faith and works in our salvation are difficult for some to understand, because even though we are not saved by good works, neither can we be saved without them, and I know that may sound a bit confusing, but it's absolutely true, and we'll see that more clearly as we read what the apostle Paul wrote to Titus.

And so, let's read **Titus 3:3-8**, and then we'll dig further into what it all means [READ].

*“For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.”*

The first point Paul makes is that we have all been evil; let's face it. That's really what he's saying in **verse 3**; that we have all lived to please the fallen flesh; that we have all lived a selfish life; that we have all broken the Ten Commandments; that we have all sinned. And here's the scary part; if we have not been born again, or if we have been born again sometime in the past but have since lost our connection with Jesus, we are thinking and doing evil still, regardless of how we're living on the outside when we're around other people!

We may have learned to be very good at hiding our inward depravity from others by being good actors, but inside there's corruption, and nothing but corruption. And some have gotten so good at making people think they're good, that they even fool themselves into thinking they're good. That's probably the most dangerous condition to be in, because if we can't see our own true condition, how will we ever have our eyes opened?

The only way to come to understand our true condition is to become informed, or conscious of the fact that Someone had to make the supreme sacrifice to save us, that Someone had to die in order for us to have eternal life; that Someone loved us enough to suffer the loss of all things so we could have what they had, and that Someone is Jesus. The fact that Jesus had to die for our sins, is proof positive that there's something wrong with us! And that something is in our very nature. And so we need a new nature if we're ever going to have a chance to escape the death sentence that's pronounced against all who have done the things Paul describes in **verse 3**, and that's all of us.

When our first parents sinned, when they ate of the forbidden fruit, we inherited their sinful nature; that's not our fault, it's just a fact, and the sooner we recognize that, the sooner we can receive what we need. And here's something else we need to recognize; the sinful nature is not capable of doing anything good. Nothing! All it can do is foolishness, and disobedience, and lie, and find pleasure in sin, and injure others, and be jealous of what others have, and hate them because they have it and not us! It's not a very pretty picture, is it? But this is our fallen nature at its core, and we can try to dress it up and make it look all clean and nice on the outside, but underneath it's like having on dirty

undergarments and 6 layers of Right Guard in an effort to cover up the stink. Sorry to be so graphic, but we must see this for what it is, or we can never come to know our real need of a Saviour.

That's point one! If a person doesn't understand and acknowledge this, then they will never realize that they need something better; they will never see that they're in need of a remedy to their sinful condition, to see that they need help outside and apart from themselves. Even if we think there is even one particle of good within us, we won't feel our need sufficiently to be willing to come to the cross and acknowledge our great poverty.

So what's the best way to help a person realize their true condition apart from Christ? Well, one way is to share a couple stories in the Bible about various characters that did terrible things, but found forgiveness.

Think of what king David did when he had a man killed so he could have his wife. Think of king Nebuchadnezzar; who knows how many people he had killed, and yet the evidence is that he will be in heaven because the Holy Spirit worked upon his heart and he accepted the forgiving grace of God. Think of Mary Magdalene who was a prostitute, but became one of the most ardent followers of Christ because Jesus continued to love her and forgive her time after time after time. Think of the apostle Peter who denied Christ, not once, but three times, and yet he was forgiven. Think of the apostle Paul, he was a terror to the Christian church and was responsible for the death and imprisonment of hundreds of innocent people, and yet, after his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus, he became one the most gentle and loving people you could ever meet.

What all these people did was simply follow the dictates of their fallen natures; and don't think that you are not capable of doing the same kind of things and even worse. The only thing that prevents many people from committing similar acts is the lack of opportunity. Either that, or they're afraid they'll get caught and have to suffer the consequences.

The reason these stories are given in the Bible is so we might see the utter depravity of the fallen human nature, but more importantly, that we might

understand that no matter what we have done, there's no one that is so vile, no one that has fallen so low that they're beyond the working of God's power. If we will submit ourselves to the Holy Spirit, a new principle of life will be implanted in the soul and the lost image of God will be restored in us, and I hope that's your goal.

Once the person you're presenting the gospel to understands this, then you might follow up with a personal testimony of your own about how God has forgiven you, and changed the course of your life when you accepted the sacrifice of Jesus in your behalf.

Even though it was 40 years ago, I still remember like it was yesterday, when I saw myself for what I really was in contrast with who Jesus really is. I had known for many years that there was something missing in my life, but I didn't know what it was, and the very first time I had the gospel presented to me, I knew immediately that this is what was missing. When I realized that God loved me, and that Jesus voluntarily gave up His life so I could have a forever one, I was absolutely overwhelmed with love and gratitude and a willingness to do whatever He wanted me to do.

I walked into a church that day a lost man, but when I left, I was a new creature in Christ Jesus, and life for me would never be the same; and it happened in an instant, and it can happen to anyone who is willing to accept their fallen condition for what it is, and allow God to give them a new nature that will give them the power to obey God and like it! That's a miracle by the way.

If you saw someone raised from the dead, that would be a miracle wouldn't it? But you need to know that it's no less of a miracle to create a new heart in someone that was dead in trespasses and sin.

I never would have believed that something like that could happen to someone, until it happened to me. To instantly have new thought patterns carved into my brain, and new desires for things I had never before given a second thought to, was something I never would have imagined was possible, and yet there I was, a totally different person than what I was just a few moments ago, and it can

happen to anyone who is willing to give God a chance.

So what's the next thing Paul mentions after he tells us how wicked we've all been? **Titus 3:4** *"But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,"*

When did this "kindness and love of God toward man appear?" Have any idea? Well, it appeared as soon as sin happened, didn't it? As soon as there was sin, there was a Saviour. As soon as there was sin, the kindness of God toward the human race appeared with a solution.

You see, even though the plan of salvation was in place as soon as Adam and Eve sinned, it was actually long before that that the plan was devised. Our redemption was not an afterthought on God's part; it wasn't a plan that was thought up sometime after sin entered this world, but an unfolding of the principles that from eternal ages have been the foundation of God's throne.

From eternity, the Godhead knew of the apostasy of Satan, and the fall of man through his deceptive power. They didn't ordain that sin should exist, but they did foresee its existence and made provision to meet it. How sin entered a perfect universe is a mystery. God wasn't responsible for it; it's not His fault Lucifer rebelled; sin is an intruder for whose presence no reason can be given. That's why the Bible calls it "the mystery of iniquity." To excuse it, is to defend it. If a reason, or an excuse could be found for it, it would cease to be sin. All we know is that it started in heaven and ended up here on earth, and it has affected all of us. But the important thing is, God has a fix for it.

As the Genesis story explains; when Adam and Eve sinned, something had to die in order for them to be covered once they became naked. This nakedness represented their sinful condition in the sight of a holy God, and their own works of sewing fig leaves together to cover themselves couldn't make it all better. They lost the righteousness they were created with, and there was nothing they could do to get it back. The sentence of death, should they disobey God's explicit instructions, was now their penalty, and they couldn't do anything to get that sentence lifted and expunged from their life's record.

Because the wages of sin is death, the only way they could get back what they had lost was for someone else to take their place, for someone else to suffer the death sentence for them. Those animal skins, and I assume there was more than one because the word "skins" is plural in Genesis 3:21; those animal skins that God used to cover them; those innocent animals that had nothing whatsoever to do with their disobedience was what gave them back what they had lost, because they represented what God had done for them. And I assume also that those animals were innocent lambs because they represented Jesus, *"the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."*

And you know what else friends, I believe it was Adam and Eve themselves that had to do the killing, they had a part to act in their own salvation. Can you imagine how painful a ceremony that must have been? Their own hands must be raised to take life, which God alone could give to make an offering for their sin. This would be the very first time they had witnessed death, and as they looked upon the innocent bleeding victim writhing in pain, they were to look forward by faith to the time when Jesus would offer Himself upon the cross of Calvary as man's sacrifice.

Don't you think this act of taking life gave Adam and Eve a deeper appreciation of their transgression? No doubt it did. As they were slaying this poor innocent animal, it was as if they were shedding the blood of the Son of God by their own hands, because they understood what this all meant. They understood too that if they would have remained obedient to God, there would never have been any death; and so they saw that they were responsible for it all. And yet, in this sacrificial offering that pointed to the sacrifice of Jesus, there was hope for their future and for those of future generations.

And you know dear friends, there is no Bible record to indicate that Adam and Eve ever repeated another sinful act. Perhaps they did, we don't know, but I know one thing, they were given the power to maintain a holy life after they were forgiven, and it's the same with us.

Transgression is our own act, because the devil cannot force us to sin. All he can do is tempt us to sin, but yielding to it is a choice. However, before we come to

Christ we really have no choice but to think and do evil as Paul wrote to Titus, but once Jesus comes to dwell within us through the power of the Holy Spirit, we don't have to ever do evil again, and that's God plan; that's what it's all about; living without giving in to the fallen nature; overcoming through the blood of the Lamb, as it says in **Revelation 12:11**.

You mean that we can actually live without sinning? You wouldn't think so by listening to 99% of the preachers out there, but yes we can, that's the testimony of Scripture, but it's only possible as we abide in Christ continually; it's only as we realize our constant need of a Saviour living out His life within us; only as we submit ourselves to God and resist the devil's temptations through divine power. And so, there is something for us to do. God's part is immeasurably large, and our part is immeasurably small by comparison, but it's just that part that's needed to make the work of salvation a success.

You see, there's just one little problem Adam and Eve had, and that we still have. Even though they were forgiven, cleansed, and empowered to victory, they still had to suffer the consequences of sin by retaining a fallen nature. They would have to continue to do battle with a nature that is inclined to sin, but they had a choice; they could willingly follow the dictates of the divine nature they received when they accepted the sacrifice of Christ in their behalf, or they could yield to the fallen nature they received when they transgressed, and that's the same choice every Christian has today.

But once we've been forgiven and given a new nature, we must always remember that there's no good or power within ourselves to keep us from falling back into sin once we've been pulled out. We were totally dependent upon God's grace to get us out of the fix we were in, and we will forever be totally dependent upon His grace to keep us from reverting back to what we were before we were promised eternal life; because notice what it says in **Titus 3:5**: "*Not by works of righteousness which we have done*", it wasn't anything we were able to do to save ourselves, "*but according to his mercy he saved us.*"

Do you know what "mercy" is? Let me read it to you out of the 1828 Noah Webster's Dictionary: "That benevolence, mildness or tenderness of heart which



disposes a person to overlook injuries, or to treat an offender better than he deserves; the disposition that tempers justice, and induces an injured person to forgive trespasses and injuries, and to forbear punishment, or inflict less than law or justice will warrant. In this sense, there is perhaps no word in our language precisely synonymous with mercy. That which comes nearest to it is grace. It implies benevolence, tenderness, mildness, pity or compassion, and clemency, but exercised only towards offenders. Mercy is a distinguishing attribute of the Supreme Being."

Mercy can only be exercised toward offenders, that's all of us! We all deserve to reap what we have sown, but God, the One who was injured, treats us better than we deserve "by inflicting less than the broken law or justice warrants." Rather than inflicting an eternal death sentence upon us, He inflicts less, much less than we deserve, by granting us eternal life instead.

But here's the thing, the punishment that should have been inflicted upon us for our sins; the full penalty that we deserve, was inflicted upon Jesus who took our place. It wasn't by any "works of righteousness which we have done, but by His mercy He saved us."

A good friend of mine who recently passed away once told me a story that happened in Germany during the reign of Hitler. There was a long line of people standing side by side on the edge of a deep ditch that had been dug out for them to fall into, because every other person was to be executed for whatever reason the Nazi's evil purpose was. There were young and old alike in this line, it didn't make any difference to the Nazi regime, and as a soldier with a gun began shooting every other person, there was an old man standing next to a young boy toward the end of the line. And as the old man began counting every other person, he realized that the young boy standing next to him was the one that would be shot. And so very carefully the old man decided to switch places with the young boy, and he was able to do it without any of the soldiers noticing what he had done, and you can guess what happened to the old man.

This story illustrates, only in a small feeble way what Jesus did for every person that has ever been born into this world. The young boy might have refused the kindness of the old man if he wanted to. He could have stiffened himself up and refused to move. He could have told him that he didn't need his help and that he

would take his chances. He might even have thought that maybe the old man miscounted or was trying to get into a position to save himself. But no, the young boy trusted the old man somehow and submitted to one that was willing to die that he might have a chance to make it through this terrible ordeal.

And friends, I know this story doesn't perfectly illustrate what Jesus did for us, but can't we understand, at least in a small way, that Jesus took the bullet for you and for me on the cross of Calvary, and he did it because He's merciful? He chose to overlook injury to Himself, because of His broken law, that we might have the opportunity to live, and I love Him for that, don't you? If we make the cross the focal point in our lives and keep fresh in our minds the great mercy that has been shown to us; that's what will help us to never want to do anything that would displease the one who made the ultimate sacrifice for us.

In **Titus 3:5** Paul tells us how God's mercy is manifested to us; he says it's *"by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."* The "washing of regeneration" signifies the spiritual new birth and the cleansing that follows by having our sins washed away in the waters of baptism. And the "renewing of the Holy Ghost" is what sustains us day by day so we can walk in newness of life and not lose our connection with Christ.

And **verse 6** says that this was *"shed upon us"*, how? ***"Abundantly through Jesus Christ our Lord."*** The word "abundantly" simply means that God is stronger than the devil, amen! The Bible tells us that *"where sin abounded, grace did (what?) much more abound."* Where there was much sin, there was much more grace; and that's good news! Because no matter how much sin we may have committed in the past, the grace of God is big enough to take care of it. Copious amounts of grace and power are available to everyone that has been forgiven to go and sin no more.

Remember when Jesus told Mary to *"go and sin no more"*? Remember when He told the impotent man that was healed by the pool of Bethesda, *"sin no more lest a worse thing come upon thee."* Was Jesus telling these two people to do something that was impossible for them to do? Of course not! The Bible says that God can't lie. What He tells us to do we can perform, because He has the ability to give us the desire and the power to accomplish it. What we need is enough faith to believe it!

And what's the end result of all of this? **Titus 3:7**: *“That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”*

Dear friend, by His mercy and by His grace, God wants you to be able to stand before Him justified, or pardoned from all the times in the past when you were foolish, disobedient, deceived, enjoying sinful pleasures, living with a disposition to injure others, being jealous of what others have, and being hateful in your heart. He wants you to recognize that He loves you and was kind enough to devise a plan whereby you could be saved in His kingdom throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity, and He's willing to wash away your sins and give you the power of His Spirit to love Him back. And one of the ways we do that is to do what He says.

I'd say that that kind of love is something pretty hard to resist, wouldn't you? But you can if you want to. God doesn't use force or coercion to get us to follow Him; He won't twist your arm until you say, "I give." He just wants you to come to him and accept what He has to offer. That kind of proposition sounds almost too good to be true, but I can assure you that it is, because I have experienced it for myself.

Notice what Paul says in **verse 8**: *“This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.”*

After God freely offers eternal life, He says, *“be careful to maintain good works.”* To "maintain good works" is only possible **after** one has experienced the things in the previous verses. Obedience from a heart that has been renewed by the Holy Ghost is the only kind of obedience God can accept. This is the kind of obedience that Jesus demonstrated while He was here; and as our example, we must pattern our lives after His. This is the kind of gospel presentation that will reach the heart of those who are searching for something better; I know, because it worked for me, and I will be forever grateful for a knowledge of the truth, for want of which, the world is perishing.

Cindy and I were reading a devotional a few days ago, and I'd like to read that particular page to you in closing. It's from a book titled, *Ye Shall Receive Power*, page, 358:

"The Christian life is a life of constant conflict. It is a battle and a march. Every act of obedience, every deed of self-denial, every trial bravely endured, every temptation resisted, every victory gained, is a step forward in the march to eternal triumph.

"There is hope for man. Christ says, 'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne' (Revelation 3:21). But let us never forget that the efforts we make in our own strength are utterly worthless. Our strength is weakness; our judgment foolishness. Only in the name and strength of our Conqueror can we conquer. When we are pressed with temptation, when un-christlike desires clamor for the mastery, let us offer fervent, importunate prayer to the heavenly Father, in the name of Christ. This will bring divine aid. In the Redeemer's name we may gain the victory.

"As, seeing the sinfulness of sin, we fall helpless before the cross, asking forgiveness and strength, our prayer is heard and answered. Those who present their petitions to God in Christ's name will never be turned away. The Lord says, 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out' (John 6:37). 'He will regard the prayer of the destitute' (Psalm 102:17). Our help comes from Him who holds all things in His hands. The peace that He sends is the assurance of His love to us.

"Nothing can be more helpless and yet more invincible than the soul that feels its nothingness, and relies wholly upon the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour. God would send every angel in heaven to the aid of the one who places his whole dependence on Christ, rather than allow him to be overcome.

"If we accept Christ as our Guide, He will lead us safely along the narrow way. The road may be rough and thorny, and the ascent steep and dangerous; there may be pitfalls on the right hand and on the left. When weary and longing for rest, we may have to toil on; when faint, we may have to fight; but with Christ as our guide, we shall not fail of reaching heaven."