

98-10-23a Colossians

Let's begin this evening with a word of prayer to prepare ourselves for the study of God's Word. Father, we thank you for your many blessings. We thank you for your provision, the expressions of grace that, because they are so constant, we sometimes take for granted.

We thank you that your mercies are renewed every morning. Your faithfulness is great toward us. We enjoy the privilege of freedom and the opportunity to assemble ourselves with believers of like mind and to be nourished up through the truth of your Word.

We pray tonight as we study that God the Holy Spirit will enlighten us, give us insight and understanding of your truth so that we will be enabled and empowered to fulfill the calling that you have set before us and that in all things in our lives and in our operation in this world that our Savior Jesus Christ will be glorified. We pray these things in his name. Amen.

We resume tonight in Colossians chapter 1 toward the end of the chapter after a little bit of a break. As you may remember, last time we finished our rather brief analysis of this most important subject that is the first of several high points in this letter. Paul built up through the introduction and through the earlier sections of chapter 1 that we have studied to talk about the great mission that God has entrusted to him as an apostle, the information that he is entrusted with to communicate to the Gentiles, which of course includes us and actually to all because Paul ministered to both Jews and Gentiles.

But in verse 27 of chapter 1 Paul says, To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. We understand from many of our previous studies the threefold system of operation that we are privileged through Christ to live within faith, hope, and love. This is a specific reference here to hope.

The hope of glory is Christ in you. We spent a little bit of time looking at what that really means. This is virtually interchangeable with being in Christ.

If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away. All things are become new.

We have seen some confusion in the world of Christians, in the understanding of believers with passages like the one I just quoted because what if someone professes to be a believer, appears to have accepted Christ as Savior, and yet it doesn't manifest itself in any change of life. It seems to have been sort of a flash in the pan and there's no fruit. I may have mentioned before that the first time I ever visited Dallas Theological Seminary back in the early 80s, it was probably 82 or 83, I visited my cousin who was at that time attending classes and they had things at lunch called brown bag discussions or a brown bag lunch where they would have a panel of speakers and they would address some subject and you could bring your bag lunch in there and eat and listen

and hopefully be edified by some area of discussion, something theological.

On the particular day that I came down and visited my cousin Scott, the subject for the brown bag luncheon was whether or not someone who has truly professed faith in Christ will have fruit in their life that is observable, that it must follow. If you see no fruit, that person is not saved. That by virtue of being saved, there must be as a concomitant, as an accompanying thing, fruit in the life, a transformation that is visible to others.

And of course you have your fringe and your exceptions, what if you're on your deathbed with your last gasp, you trust Christ and expire, obviously you didn't have the opportunity for any fruit. But in the normal course of things, you have someone who is living in the ways of the world, they express faith in Christ at some point, maybe with Billy Graham or some other special event, and then everything seems to go on as before, is that person really saved. The idea being that the scripture says, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.

Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new. So if you look at someone and all things are manifestly not new, this person must not be in Christ. To which we can agree.

The problem comes in, what do you understand the phrase in Christ to mean? There is a position in Christ, which everyone who professes faith in Christ and trusts Him as their Savior, is given by God. Position in Christ, there are certain things that happen that are irrevocable, it is like a birth, and that's why the Bible calls it a birth. A new birth is a birth, and once you're born, you can't go back and be unborn.

Whoever your parents were, they are your parents, whatever else may happen, you have two physical parents, of course in this day of technology, who knows if you can still say that in another five years. But so far in human history, everybody who is born has two parents, in some way, shape, or form. Same thing in the spiritual realm.

At the point of spiritual birth, irrevocable things are done by God. You're entered into union with Christ in this age, you're given eternal life, you are imputed with righteousness, there are by varying counts, anywhere from 36 to 45 things that take place at the point of salvation, that are irrevocable. The misunderstanding comes, and this is a part of our Reformed heritage, in the idea that there must be fruit, perseverance of the saints.

If you are truly a saint, you will persevere. Of course, it wreaks all kinds of havoc in the mind of someone who really is trained up and tries to live in the light of Reformed theology, because every time you fail, you begin to question, well, maybe I'm not really persevering, maybe I'm just a flash in the pan, maybe everything up to this point that seemed like good was really just hollow, I'm the plant that grows in the day and withers in the sun, maybe I'm not really... You have big problems with eternal security, with security in the knowledge of your salvation, because you keep checking yourself to see if you're persevering. Well, everyone fails, everyone sins, and will

continue to do so throughout life, no matter how much growth we achieve, there is always a chink in the armor somewhere that trips us up.

At the point that you fail, you think, well, now I wonder, maybe I'm a false professor. There's all kinds of terrible, unfortunate baggage that comes with a misunderstanding of what the Bible teaches. That verse that I quoted, if any man be in Christ, we've seen, and we saw last time, that there are passages that talk about Christ in you.

Paul says, I labor with birth pangs for you until Christ be formed in you. Christ in you, the hope of glory, he says in Colossians. Christ in you, and us in Christ.

You go back to John 15 through 17, where Jesus is talking about, abide in me, my words abide in you. I will be in you, you will be in me. When he's praying to his Father, all of these things seem to be virtually interchangeable.

This is not positional truth, but experience truth, the truth of daily life. What's called experiential truth versus positional truth. Position is your legal standing.

On paper, this is what you are. There are stories, some of them are children's stories, or at least read and told to children, about how someone, back in the medieval days perhaps, is born into the palace as a prince or as a princess. But because conditions are unstable, someone spirits the child away, and they're raised by some kindly old couple out in the forest, and they don't know that they're a prince or a princess, but they're of the royal blood.

You have Arthur who comes and pulls the sword out of the stone, or you have Sleeping Beauty and some of these other stories that are of this nature. And someone may not know that they're royalty, but in the stories a lot of times they have the royal characteristics. They're kind, they're noble, they're self-sacrificial.

They just operate with a lot of class. They seem to be of noble birth, even though there's no evidence to prove it. In other cases, you have the snobby prince.

You've got the prince in the potpourri, the prince that's in the palace, and he's snobby and haughty and arrogant and spoiled and vindictive and so forth, and through an accident he gets switched with a little guy who looks just like him, and he has to go out and live among the people, and he learns humility and so forth. What's the point? You can be royalty on paper. You can be royalty by right of birth and yet fail to act like it.

There are other people who there's no evidence to prove that they're of royal birth, but they function as though they were. They act as though they were. They live with integrity, with character, with those things that we probably wrongly associate with blue blood and noble birth.

We have that same duality in our identity as believers. We have a positional truth. We have been declared to be sons of God.

We have been declared to be in the royal family of God. We have that. That's our positional truth.

The question now is are we going to make that an experiential truth? Are we going to live like spiritual royalty, like the family of God, like the many brethren of whom Christ is the firstborn? God raised him up to be the firstborn among many brethren. Well, we are the many brethren. Are we going to look and act like Christ? That's the question.

That's experiential truth. Many of the passages that confuse people and they scratch their heads and say, well, if someone is not a new creature, maybe they're not saved. That's not the right conclusion to draw.

If someone is not bearing that fruit, if someone is not acting any differently after their salvation, it means they're not in Christ in the experiential sense. How do we attain that status of being in Christ? It's the very same way we attain the status of Christ in us, the hope of glory. That's what we've been studying for the last few lessons.

What does the Bible say about Christ in you? What are the characteristics? Last time we saw just two out of many. All the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form in Christ, but there are two prominent ones, and that's peace in you. Let the peace of Christ dwell in you richly.

Jesus said, peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you, not like the world gives. I give you peace in a different sense with a higher eternal quality. This is one of the ways we know that we're making progress in the experiential area of exploiting the wonderful blessings and the wonderful grace that Jesus Christ has made available to us through his work for us on the cross.

This is what Paul has led up to and has now stated in this letter to the Colossians. He said this is the mystery that was hidden in previous ages, this identity with Christ, Christ in you, abiding in Christ. Where in the Old Testament does God ever say abide in me and I in you? He doesn't, does he? There's not the personal relationship with Jesus Christ available to Old Testament saints that is available to us in this age.

It's a different kind of relationship. It doesn't mean that it isn't valuable or that it doesn't carry with it great blessing and great relationship with God, but it's a qualitatively different calling that the Old Testament saints had. We have the opportunity to exploit personal relationship with Jesus Christ, to be like him, to manifest his characteristics, to have Christ dwelling in us.

And that's the hope of glory. We're going to see that tonight in some passages as we move forward here in Colossians. But this is what Paul has led up to and that's what we've explored in some detail.

We're ready now to move forward in verse 28. I say move forward. If we get more than five or six words into this verse, we will have done a great thing because look at verse 27.

The mystery, this glorious mystery that's preached among the Gentiles. Christ in you, the hope of glory. So then Paul continues in verse 28.

What does he say? Him, Christ, we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom for a purpose. You find out these things about Christ. You see this great potential of Christ in you.

That's the glory. That's the calling. That's the goal that God has set for us specifically for you and for me in this age is to have Christ in us.

How do you achieve that? Well, Paul knows how it's achieved and this is what he's going to tell us in verse 28. How do you make this happen? It sounds great. Let's go for it.

Well, Paul says, Him, Christ, we preach, warning every man and teaching every man. Do you notice the repetition in the beginning of that verse? It's hard to miss. He says, warning every man, teaching every man.

This is an individual. You can't just join a church and say, well, my church has got glorious things going on. My church is on the road.

They had the church on the way. They had the church on the rock. They've got all these different churches.

People take pride in you because they say, well, you've got the super duper we're getting it all done church down the road here. And because of that, I should be lifted in your esteem because I'm a member of this church. Our church has got a singles minister.

We've got a young couples minister. We've got an elderly minister. We've got a singles group.

You can meet somebody. We've got activities. We've got outreach.

We've got impact. We've got crusades and conferences and ministries and books and tapes and movies and so forth. Well, Paul doesn't say, I go preach Christ in churches.

I'm planting churches. I'm establishing groups. What does he say? This is an individual message to individuals.

I warn every person, every individual. I teach every individual person because this goal is not going to be achieved by a church. God on Judgment Day is not going to say, will the First Congregational Church of Dallas please step forward and receive your crown of glory or your crown of life or your crown of righteousness or your order of the morning star or your white stone with the name of the church written on it.

And everybody in the church gets the same church name written on the white stone. All of the

rewards, all of the opportunity, all of that hope of glory is individual. And we're going to see that we're not diminishing or taking away the importance of relationship with fellow believers and of being related and united with other believers in a church form.

But the goal is individual. Paul doesn't say, I warn every church and teach every church, does he? This means that we individually and personally shoulder this responsibility. We take advantage of this opportunity individually.

There's nobody holding you back. You can't say, well, I was in kind of a slow church. We were old or we were worn out.

We were retired or we were young and inexperienced and didn't know what we were doing. You can't blame it on the church. You can't blame it on the pastor.

You can't blame it on the teacher. You can't blame it on the guy on the radio or the guy on TV or the guy on tape. Paul says, look, I'm an apostle.

The writings of Paul that we find in the Bible minister today, he being dead yet speaketh. And what does Paul do? It's the same thing the entire Bible does. It warns every man and teaches every man for a purpose.

After a certain amount of time, you start to recognize that when you see the word that in Paul, this is a purpose or result clause that lays behind it in Greek. It lies behind it there. And I could go into a lot of grammar here, but you can see that.

He says, I warn every man and teach every man so that, and you know that here's the purpose. What's the purpose of the warning and the teaching? So that we may present every man. How many times does it say every man in that verse? Three times.

Every man gets warned. Every man gets taught for the purpose of presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus. We have no excuse for not achieving this goal, for not arriving at the hope of glory, for not having Christ in us.

Every man. You say, well, but you know, I've got stuff in my past. He doesn't say, everybody except the ones with stuff in their past.

You can say, well, but you know, I don't seem to have a good discernment in spiritual things. I have a hard time learning. He doesn't say every smart man, every quick on the uptake man, every talented man, every gifted man, every selected, elected man.

It says every man. I warn every man. I teach every man so that I can present every man perfect in Christ.

Now, we can ask ourselves this question. Are we in this group? Are we included in this verse? I

think there's no way around it. Man, of course, is a generic term.

There's nothing wrong with using the masculine gender to refer to everybody. It was done all the way for thousands of years until the last couple of decades. So, the purpose is to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

So, how does this happen? This is where we're going to spend our time tonight is in verse 28. Because you wouldn't believe how hard it's going to be to cover everything that's in this verse. Paul says, Him, Christ, we preach.

Here's a little pop quiz for you. Paul says that he preaches Christ. What do you think that includes? What does it mean to preach Christ? What fact? This is a thing they do in seminary and other places perhaps.

What is the content of the gospel? What is the minimum information that someone must believe in order to be saved? Do they have to believe that Jesus is the Son of God? Do they have to believe that He was raised from the dead? Do they have to believe that He was virgin born? Do they have to believe that He rose again and ascended? Do they just have to believe that He died? Do they just have to believe that He is their substitute? Do they have to believe that He's coming again? What does it mean when Acts 16.31, it sounds so simple on the surface, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. Believe what about Jesus Christ? Do they have to believe in the hypostatic union that He's the God-Man? What exactly is that? Well, you have a similar question here. Of course, I'm not going to launch off in answering that question.

Hopefully you have that somewhere in your notes. But Paul here is preaching Christ. What does it mean to preach Christ? Because who's he talking to here? Is he trying to evangelize the Colossians? I think probably not.

What does it say in verse 2 of this first chapter? This letter is to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ. So if he's warning and teaching, he's not warning and teaching unbelievers. This is another fairly common mistake that is made.

I have seen this many times. You may have run across it where someone very well-meaning says, well, I know this group of unbelievers and I really want them to come to faith in Christ, so I'm going to start a Bible study and we'll study the Bible with these unbelievers. And hopefully in the course of learning the Bible, they'll come to faith in Christ.

You can't teach spiritual truth to the carnal man. The Bible comes right out and says the carnal mind cannot understand the things of the Spirit because they are spiritually discerned. If you're an unbeliever, you don't have any spiritual discernment except in one area.

And it is discernment provided by God the Holy Spirit. Jesus said when the Holy Spirit comes, He will convince the world of three things. Everybody who comes to some sort of conscious thought

in the human race will understand three things under the ministry of God the Holy Spirit.

Everybody. Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Bill Gates, whoever you think are the worst people that have ever lived in the world. Everybody.

Genghis Khan. Anybody you can think of understands three things because God the Holy Spirit convinces them of it in this age. Sin, righteousness, and judgment.

This is what Jesus told the disciples over there back in John. But outside of that, you're wasting your time trying to teach spiritual truth to an unbeliever. To try to have a Bible study with an unbeliever is a waste of time.

God the Holy Spirit, normally in the learning and application of the Word of God, you have two parts. You have the Word of God and you have the Spirit of God. You learn the Word of God and the Spirit of God acts with it in our souls to transform us by the renewing of our minds.

To mold us closer and closer to the image of Christ. It doesn't work that way with an unbeliever. And believe it or not, God the Holy Spirit brings both pieces to the unbeliever.

He not only brings them His presence and His enabling power to discern, but He brings them the information. A person, and you may find this shocking, a person does not have to hear John 3.16 to be saved. A person doesn't have to have a believer come to them and share the Gospel with them to be saved.

They don't have to hear a single verse of Scripture. They don't have to have a single witness. They don't have to have a single testimony.

God the Holy Spirit is the great evangelist and He brings the information to them. What did Jesus say? When the Holy Spirit comes, He will convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Of course the real famous example of that I'm sure I've mentioned before is when they finally figured out how to communicate with Helen Keller.

Do you remember the, what was the name of that movie or book with Patty Duke and Anne Bancroft? Miracle Worker. They pictured that story of Helen Keller. When the teacher, and I'm sad to say I can't remember her name, but she was played by Anne Bancroft in the movie.

When she finally taught Helen how to communicate and began to, she was a Christian lady. Among other things, once they could communicate and had a sophisticated enough language to be able to talk about more than concrete things, one of the first things this wonderful lady did was start talking to Helen Keller about God. Once she finally made her understand that she was talking about a supreme being and that there was a need for salvation and so forth, Helen said, oh yes, I know who you're talking about.

Helen Keller already knew who God was before the first person to communicate with her ever

had a chance to tell her. Because God, the Holy Spirit, convinces the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. And implied in that, if there's righteousness and judgment, that's God.

God is the one who holds and maintains the righteous standard. He is the judge who does the judging. Sin is a violation of his righteousness, his justice, his divine character.

Implicit in sin, righteousness, and judgment is the existence of God himself. And of course, Romans chapter 1, Paul talks about what may be known of God as manifest in creation. And even someone who's blind, deaf, and dumb knows that there's a God.

And that's all it takes, to know that God is there and to be convinced by the Holy Spirit of sin, righteousness, and judgment. However, and this is an important concept as well, there is more than one component to faith. It has been assumed, and a lot of us probably grew up believing, that if you could just understand those things, if you could get a vision, if you could be impressed with the reality of God, with the reality of the lake of fire, with the reality of sin and the need for salvation, nobody in their right mind would refuse that.

That it's primarily a matter of revelation. That if you can see it, everyone would basically respond the same way. Who in their right mind would refuse if they could accurately understand the precipice upon which they stand at the point of possibly rejecting God.

And so, when we see someone or a group or whatever, we see people who are not interested in God or the things of God, we think we've got to make them understand. We need to give them more information because if they could just see it clearly, they would never be so indifferent. They would never be so apathetic.

How could they possibly be indifferent to God if they knew the truth? And so we assume, unconsciously or consciously, that it's a matter of they need more revelation, they need more information. And a lot of people wear themselves out trying to convince someone, don't you see there's a God, there's a lake of fire, there's sin, righteousness, and judgment. And we waste our time because God the Holy Spirit either has already done that or will do it at the most propitious moment for that person.

The problem is, and this is something that even, there's a lot of things I disagree with B.B. Warfield on. He's one of the great, perhaps the greatest theologian in the Reformed tradition. And he got a lot of things right.

We tend to emphasize our differences with Reformed theology. But B.B. Warfield and others, Hodge and Calvin and Luther and a lot of the others in the Reformed tradition, were great students of the Word of God and got a lot of things right. And one of the things I was just reading earlier this week, B.B. Warfield was talking about faith.

In fact, he wrote a whole paper on the psychological aspects of faith, I think it was published in a

theological journal some years back. He was back in the tail end of the last century. He lived in the 1800s.

Tremendous scholar of the Word of God. Unfortunately, he convinced himself of the Reformed view. But he was right on faith.

He said there are two components of faith. First of all, you have to have the evidence of something. If you're going to believe something, you have to have the evidence, the knowledge of the facts.

These facts alone need to be sufficient to be compelling. The evidence has to be convincing evidence. It has to be in the nature of proof.

It's pretty much undeniable. Nobody in their right mind would not be convinced by this set of facts. That's the evidence, and that's the first thing that's required in faith.

The second thing is, you have to have a mind that is susceptible to that evidence, that is able to be convinced by that evidence. The example he gives is, suppose that you want to prove a mathematical theorem, and if you go back to algebra, you may remember if you had any math in college, or in geometry, they had proofs, and you had to prove the associative property of addition, or the commutative property, or you had to use math. If somebody says, well, A equals B, well, how do you know? And so you have some other things, you've worked through these equations, and you say, see, according to the laws of mathematics, A has to equal B. Well, that's a convincing proof, that's evidence, and that's one of the things that's necessary for faith.

But, if you're like most of us, I was an English major, not a math guy, if I don't understand math, if I can't follow the logic of the proof, I'm not susceptible. This is absolutely convincing proof, but I don't have the ability to understand it and be convinced by it. I'm not susceptible to that.

You could have music, and you could say, this is one of the most beautiful pieces of music ever composed. Here's Swan Lake, here's Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, or whatever. But, if you're tone deaf, and you don't have the ability to distinguish one note from another, it just sounds like a lot of noise.

So, Warfield said, there are two things that are necessary for faith. You have to have the evidence or the proof out there that's discernible, and you have to be someone who is susceptible, able to comprehend and draw the appropriate conclusion from that evidence. Where we part ways is, he says, as does the entire Reformed tradition, that God sovereignly grants the ability to be convinced by the evidence only to the elect.

God decides who is and isn't going to be susceptible to that proof. And that's an entirely other discussion. What we understand from the Word of God is, it's our choice whether or not we are going to be convinced by that evidence.

There are many examples in common life. The one that always leaps to my mind is the Surgeon General's warning on a carton of cigarettes. The Surgeon General has determined that smoking is hazardous to your health.

People believe that, but they're not convinced to act any differently because of it. They say, oh yeah, the coffin nails, I know these will kill me, etc., etc. The evidence is there.

They don't deny it. They don't dispute it. They will assent.

They will agree intellectually. But intellectual agreement, intellectual assent to something is not faith. And this is how you answer the question, and Scripture points this out, you say that you believe, well great, even the demons believe and tremble.

Does Satan believe that Jesus is the Son of God? Does Satan believe that he died and rose again on the third day and is seated at the right hand of the Father and is coming again in glory? Satan believes all that stuff. It's intellectual assent. But he's not in a position, first of all, and secondly, even if he were in a position he wouldn't take advantage of it as he has already demonstrated, he's not in a position to place his trust and confidence in that information, to rely on it and say, I am claiming that as my deliverance.

This is the rock upon which I stand when I reach the judgment seat of God. We are in a position to do that and we have done that in the area of salvation. The next step now is to do that same thing in daily life.

We understand, and we have just reviewed, the mechanics of saving faith. There is evidence out there of Jesus Christ. He is the atoning sacrifice.

He is our peace. He is our righteousness. He is our sanctification.

He is our deliverance and our deliverer. All we have to understand, and to answer the earlier question, what do you have to understand of the Gospel? Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. Nobody comes to the Father except through Christ.

You don't have to understand deity and hypostatic union. You don't have to understand substitutionary atonement, redemption, reconciliation, propitiation. You don't have to understand eternal life.

You don't have to have a degree in theology to understand God and so forth. God the Holy Spirit convinces us that we are in a hopeless situation apart from Jesus Christ. He is the deliverance.

And when someone, however they understand it, says, you know, God has made a way and Jesus Christ is that way. He is the deliverance. I'm going to claim Him.

I'm going to put my reliance, my trust in Him. If anybody asks me, what is your fate when you die?

I will say, I'm clinging to Jesus. He's my Savior.

If God comes and asks me, why do you think I should give you eternal life and not go to the lake of fire? Because I've claimed Jesus as my Savior. That's all you have to know. Jesus Christ.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Trust Him. Place your reliance on Him.

Cling to Him as your deliverer, your Savior, and you'll be saved. It is that simple. People hair-split, agonize, how much should we communicate in the Gospel? You don't have to worry about what you say.

God the Holy Spirit has said it all. There's sin, righteousness, and judgment. Jesus Christ is the only way.

And people in the privacy of their own soul are confronted by God the Holy Spirit, and they can make the decision. We are sometimes privileged to be there to explain or to encourage or to pray with or for, to be a walking example of what someone is getting into when they claim Christ as their Savior. But we grossly, and the church at large, grossly overestimate our role in evangelism and in the salvation process.

Salvation is a work of God. How many times have you met someone or heard a testimony or been in a church meeting and someone says, well, here's the person that led me to Christ. If it wasn't for this church, I don't know where I would be.

And a lot of the glory starts getting dispersed out to people and their ministry. I heard somebody on the radio at noon today while I was eating my lunch who was a singer. He said, oh, you know, we get letters all the time about people who have come to Jesus through our ministry and this, that, and the other.

And I know they're well-meaning and so forth, but we overestimate whether or not we were instrumental or even necessary. We are not instrumental and we're not necessary in salvation. We may have the privilege of being there when God does that great thing, but salvation is a work of God.

We don't participate in it when it happens to us. We don't participate in it. And we don't make it happen to someone else.

But the church at large has seized this as its ministry and its reason for being and doesn't see itself as justified and individuals within it don't see themselves as justified or spiritually growing or anything else unless they're somehow integrally involved in the process of someone coming to faith in Christ. We need to go back and read our Bibles. God, the Holy Spirit, is the evangelist.

We have evangelists who can preach the Word and God, the Holy Spirit, can use that to make Him more understandable. But it is a work of God, not of man. So, we come back to this issue of

faith.

We see at salvation what happens in faith. There's evidence and there's our responsibility to decide that that evidence is convincing and not only convincing in the sense of intellectual assent. There are many unbelievers who don't dispute that Jesus was someone special.

Perhaps He was the Son of God. I wouldn't argue with you that He is virgin-born, that He did die. I have no disagreement with you.

There probably is a God. I just don't care. I wish He would leave me alone.

I've got a life to live here. I'm having a good time. I'm not miserable.

I'm not bent with sorrow under a load of care. I'm having a very good time in life. I enjoy my vices.

I don't want to give up my nasty habits. I don't want to have to sit in church and be sanctimonious and bored and listen to someone drone on and on. I like life just the way it is.

I don't feel a need for God. If He's got a plan and righteousness and salvation and all this other stuff, great. Just let Him go do that somewhere else and leave me alone.

And what people miss is that this is commonly the attitude among unbelievers deep in their heart of hearts. All of them have or will be convinced, either have been or they will be convinced that there is a God, there is sin, righteousness, and judgment. You just don't want to have anything to do with it.

It's tiresome. It's an irritation. It is the same attitude that Satan has.

He's aware of all these things as well and he dislikes the whole scenario. If it was up to him, he'd just get his own corner of the universe and do his own thing. He wishes God would leave him alone.

So looking at the idea that faith is not only knowing the information and having an intellectual assent, and this is my point, many unbelievers and all of the fallen angels have intellectual assent. There's no doubt in their mind of what the situation is. Remember what the demons said when Jesus started walking around casting them out? Have you come to torment us before the time? They know what's coming up in the future.

But it goes beyond intellectual assent. And this is our problem. When we look at this Christ in you, the hope of glory, and we look at being warned and being taught, this is our danger that we stop at the point of intellectual assent and we think we've hit the mark.

Here we are as believers. We go to Bible class. We find someone who teaches.

Maybe they know some of the original languages. They teach point by point or verse by verse or

they give lots of things you can take notes on and so forth and it makes sense and it sounds good and you say, yes, that's true. That rings true.

I think that's just what the Bible teaches. Intellectual assent. Intellectual assent is not faith.

Any more than the demon's intellectual assent of who and what Jesus is and what God's plan is is not faith. Satan knows more than we will ever know about the realities in the universe and his intellectual knowledge is not faith. Our knowledge of the word of God is not faith.

It is not a substitute for faith. It will not accomplish what faith is designed to accomplish in the faith, hope, love mechanism in our souls. So we have to go beyond knowledge to faith.

Faith is, and if you need an analogy, just go back to salvation. What's the difference in affirming or agreeing or being willing to admit that Jesus is the Son of God, that he died for sin, that God has a plan, that God has a standard and in placing your faith. There have been lots of examples.

You've got the 500 pound test rope dangling over the cliff. Someone says, do you believe this rope is 500 pound test and that it will hold 500 pounds? You say, of course, I have no doubt. It looks like a brand spanking new nylon rope.

It looks like it could probably hold a lot more than 500 pounds, so sure, I believe that. And someone says, okay, well, put your foot in this loop in the end of it and let us lower you down over this thousand foot cliff. That's the difference between intellectual ascent and placing your confidence in trusting yourself to something because you believe it to be so.

I heard, what was that we heard? Was it the radio or we were reading maybe where they were talking about the tightrope across Niagara Falls and the guy takes a wheelbarrow across, takes his little assistant across, the crowd is watching and they say, do you believe that this man can make another successful trip across Niagara Falls with this wheelbarrow? You say, well, I've seen him do it every day for a week here with his assistant in the wheelbarrow. It looks like he's got really good balance. Sure.

You say, okay, get in the wheelbarrow. Let him wheel you across. There's a difference in affirming and believing that something is so or probably so and saying, I am going to entrust myself to this truth.

Well, now think about that in day-to-day life. We've talked about positional truth. We've talked about salvation which all of us have experienced.

Now let's talk about daily life. Do we entrust ourselves to the knowledge that we get in Bible class? Do we entrust ourselves to the Word of God? That's when we move down the road toward Christ in you, the hope of glory. Jesus Christ entrusted himself completely to the will of the Father to the point of death and beyond.

He did not think equality with God a thing to be grasped, but he emptied himself and took on the form of a servant. He came down and took tremendous abuse, tremendous temptation, a grueling ministry a grueling life and even more grueling death for the joy that was set before him because it was real to him. And Jesus Christ lived in his humanity by faith.

And it wasn't just his knowledge, oh, let me tell you all the things I know about the Father. He entrusted himself to it and that's our calling. And we often give ourselves a bye.

We give ourselves an alibi or an excuse or we fool ourselves into thinking that we have done this because we assent. We hear the teaching of the Word of God. We may even seek it out and we say, you know, I believe that's so and that's all great.

But we have failed to distinguish in our minds between knowledge and between our agreement with that and faith. I'm going to pause here and take a break. When we come back, we're going to examine what Paul means when he says him we preach because he's preaching Christ to believers.

What is he doing and what is the response that the believers should be having because that's what our response should be. So that's what we'll look at when we come back.