

The Gospel Does Work!

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[0:00] And open your Bibles to 2 Corinthians chapter 2, the second letter of Paul to the Corinthians chapter 2, and we'll begin reading in verse 12 and read on into chapter 3 and read in verse 12.

Now, when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me, I still had no peace of mind because I did not find my brother Titus there.

So I said goodbye to them and went on to Macedonia. But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.

For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death, to the other the fragrance of life.

And who is equal to such a task? Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ, we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God.

[1:28] Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? You yourselves are our letter written on our hearts, known and read by everybody.

You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God. Not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts.

Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.

He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the spirit. For the letter kills, but the spirit gives life.

Pastor Naphtali, come and preach God's word to us. It is four years since I was last here. And it was a very gracious opportunity to be here those four years ago.

[2:44] Never knew that I would ever be back here. Yet the Lord in his goodness made it possible that I could come.

Having come so near, that is, so near. Neighborhood, as I would jokingly say. In Washington, D.C., then my dear brother and fellow pastor says, No, we must make sure you come home and preach to us.

And so that arrangement was made, and I'm very glad. Also, just having opportunity to visit a number of brethren in your homes and having meals.

Meals, my daughter told me about three days ago, Dad, make sure you come back big. Because I told her, Sorry, my dear, we can't continue talking.

I'm being taken out for lunch. And Dad, please, no, we are not going, we are not doing very well. I'm sick, and Mom has been running around for me. But it was anyway such a joy to talk with them.

- [3 : 48] And it's a joy to be among you again. Then when a friend heard that I'll be in Bremen, Indiana, and she said, I must come over and see you.
- It's a family friend, Mary. I must get on to my preaching. Otherwise, pastor will stop me. But just to let you know how it all happened, some years ago, I was in my technical work, living in a big house, two-bedroom.
- A friend of mine called Walter. I told him, Come, let's live here together. So we shared a room. We lived like that for a number of years. And then when our marriage time reached, I married Hilda, my wife.
- And a week later, Walter married Mary. And so we often jokingly say that marriage made us part ways, Walter and myself.
- But anyway, Mary is in your country doing some studies. And so when she heard I was here, she drove this morning to be here. And it's a joy to see her in the congregation together with us.
- [5 : 05] I bring God's word to you. I trust that my accent baked in the equatorial sun, you will be able to follow.
- So if I say some things that you don't understand, I'm sure later Pastor will, oh, Mary also is here, will be able to let you know later what I would have meant.
- Because after my preaching, I'll be driven away. However, I trust your Bibles are still open in 2 Corinthians 2. And I want us to be thinking of that passage.
- As we do so by way of introduction, I will say this. In the year 2012, in a small village at the border of Kenya and Tanzania, a small village, hardly, I don't know whether you can Google it, maybe now because it became famous, but a tiny village called Loliondo.
- Loliondo really became famous. And this is because some 76-year-old retired pastor turned to be a traditional medicine man.
- [6 : 32] And with his concoction, he said he could cure literally any disease, including diabetes and cancer and HIV and AIDS.
- And I tell you, people went. People made their way to that tiny, hardly anywhere to be found in the mops. They went, seeking for cure for all manner of diseases they had.
- Well, there were claims, oh, I got cured. Of course, many have died. In fact, I was challenged that I should take my father-in-law to Loliondo, or to go and take Loliondo, because now that concoction actually turned to be called Loliondo.
- And so, well, we never did. My father-in-law died. We buried him. But many, many who, of course, went there, maybe they came back claiming some healing.
- They never lived forever. And even those who are still alive will die. So, he made a claim for his medicine.
- [7 : 52] But maybe much closer home and maybe more relevant, my friends, is this weekend, and I think it will spread into tomorrow, there is this celebration, the Memorial Day, in honor, of course, of the heroes, those who fought the various wars for your country.
- And, of course, many died. I suppose there were great achievements also, but they are being remembered. What is common between the Loliondo, there between the border of Tanzania and Kenya, and your great heroes that are being remembered are the achievements.
- That old man claimed he could heal any disease. And so, he would say, now, these are my achievements, or come and get Loliondo and you will be well.
- And, of course, here, back at home, and you are also celebrating the achievements and remembering those who fought. But, of course, we are here this morning.

I'm not selling anything, some medicine from Kenya. But also, I'm sure, as you are remembering and celebrating the Memorial Day, surely there must be something more than that.

[9:29] I am here, if I may use the language, to sell the gospel. The gospel. But the question is, does it work?

Can I claim, can we claim, whenever pastors stand in this pulpit to proclaim the gospel, does the gospel work?

No, it's important to really be able to show that the gospel works. That it is real.

I want to show you that. The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is wonderful, does wonders. And it's my hope that at the end, you will not be the same.

Those who took Loliondo eventually will die. And the great celebrations in your country, remembering the heroes, really, ultimately, is not the great victory.

[10:40] There must be another. And it has to be, I say, the gospel. So what is the gospel? Let me just give you a brief definition.

I believe it's so helpful, it's precise. The gospel is that joyful message from God that leads us to salvation.

It's a joyful message from God that leads us to salvation. Now, under that gospel, it's like a capsule drug. And it's so small.

And if you just gently untie it, then you pour the contents out. But when it's all packed, it's so small. The gospel has so much in it.

It talks about God, the creator, this holy God. But this God, who of course is holy, and therefore will judge sin and sinners.

[11:49] No one will escape. The gospel also talks to us about man. That we are made in the image of God.

With great abilities and qualities. But sadly, man has chosen to go astray, to rebel against his maker. And how then he wallows in his own sinfulness.

He may not see it, but clearly that's what it is. And the gospel clearly entails that, and points out that. However, there is in the gospel, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Son of God, holy. And yet this Lord Jesus Christ, comes and dies. A death not his own. A perfect death.

Because it's a death that then brings great achievements. He died on behalf of others. And the proof that his death was effective and powerful, is that he rose again.

[13:06] The Father raised him again. Resurrection, very important in the gospel. And of course, that's not the end of the gospel, by the way. It's not God, the creator, holy.

It's not that the man is made in the image of God, but now has sinned. It's not, does not even stop with Christ, holy, Son of God, but dying, a death not his own, dying on behalf of others.

An ineffective death, because he rose again. It does not stop there. Then it goes to this other step, response.

Our response. Your response. But now, we need to believe that gospel. We believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

as we turn from our sins to God, our creator. Friends, that is the gospel. Of course, the gospel is such that, and really, this is what I want to sell this morning.

[14:17] It's this medicine that works. But it is a medicine that you cannot, as it were, take or leave. It's yes, you take it, but to leave it is to perish.

And that's why it must be taken. One of the internet providers in Kenya called Safaricom, one of their catch phrases is, Safaricom, the better option.

And of course, they do that because they have their competitors. And so, they are saying, well, you can try these other ones, but actually, we are the better option.

But with the gospel, it is the only. And I so stand here to preach it so that you will take it. Now, you may say, please, you're talking to us about the gospel.

We have heard it. It's only a few among us here who maybe benefit from that. Oh, if only you had brought some other subject for the old congregation.

[15:30] I tell you, we all need the gospel. We sure need it. Those who are not saved this morning, let me not hide it.

I target you. I would like you to see and believe the gospel. But those of us who by grace have been saved by believing this gospel, we, if we could, oh, how we should drink it again.

If it's like medicine, let's take more of it. I've got a lower back problem because of arthritis and so I'm constantly on painkillers and I need it.

But oh, we need the gospel every time. Well, let's move on. I want then to bring this morning some four points from the passage that we had read, 2 Corinthians chapter 2.

Now, this passage is important because the apostle Paul is writing to the Corinthians. He had preached to them.

[16:47] They had received the Lord, the gospel, yes, and so they were walking with the Lord. But then some false preachers came and gave them wrong medicine.

They were now beginning to turn away from the gospel even by despising the person who gave them the right gospel, Paul himself, abusing him, discrediting him.

And these false teachers had so now murdered, smeared the name of Paul and the message of Paul that suddenly the Corinthians were beginning to take that and it was beginning to influence their life and Paul then writes to them and says, listen, I've not come back to you not because I fear anything and I know the false prophets or teachers are saying bad things about me.

That's not the case. I love you. Things have not worked out for me to come among you. And so he then talks about the gospel. The passage had been read.

I want then to draw these four things. One, within the time we have, it's not much but please let's look at it. First I want to show from this passage the source or the origin of the gospel.

[18:12] There in verse 12 and then briefly in verse 17 furthermore when I came to try to preach Christ's gospel and the door was opened to me by the Lord then down in verse 17 by the way I'm using new King James version I've used it for many years I would love to move to another one but quite not yet and so the variations would be that I'm using New King James version and then verse 17 for we are not us so many peddling the word of God but us of sincerity but us from God we speak in the sight of God in Christ and in these two verses our aim is to just restrain ourselves within these two verses so we will go back and forth in a few other passages but then first of all I want to show that the gospel is from God of course you picked it from our definition but how is it from

God it is from God because God is the creator when God created the world when God made our first parents Adam and Eve and then if you read the scriptures Genesis you come to Genesis chapter 17 God then tells Abraham in chapter 12 he says Abraham I will bless you Abraham I will so bless you that the whole world will know you are blessed and any who will curse you I will deal with them and then I am paraphrasing then in chapter 17 Abraham of course lives in wonder how will this happen when will this happen then in chapter 17 of Genesis verse 7 and then the Lord tells Abraham I will establish my covenant with you and you and your descendants after you in their generation for an everlasting covenant to be God to you and your descendants afterward or after you you see friends

God is entering into and giving Abraham promise a binding promise that he will be a God to him he will bless him and of course he expected and he demanded obedience from Abraham did Abraham obey did the children of Israel obey no they did not so that later on in the book of Jeremiah because the children of Israel had so disobeyed the you know the promise that God had made with Abraham the commandment that God had made with Abraham then now God tells the children of Israel what he's going to do in chapter 31 verse 31 of Jeremiah God comes back with that promise he had given but now it is given in a way that is really catching he talks about it this way behold the days are coming says the

Lord when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the days that I took them by hand to bring them out the land of Egypt my covenant which they broke though I was a husband to them says the Lord but this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel and then he goes on and he says what things he will do and I will put my law in their minds and I will write it in their hearts and I will be their God and they shall be my people and so God is really saying okay I met with Abraham but it was broken and now I'm going to make a new covenant and I will make sure it is kept now back to our passage and the last verse that we read in 2nd

Corinthians chapter 3 verse 6 I took you back to the old testament because in verse 6 Paul equates the gospel with the new covenant and there he says in verse 6 who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant Paul had been talking about the gospel preaching the gospel in trust and now he is talking of a new covenant friends that's why I'm saying God is the source or the origin of this covenant but it's not only that Christ also in other words this gospel originates also in Christ or with Christ it is of Christ and I'll just take you to one verse the book of Luke Luke chapter 22 and then verse 20 and what

[23 : 48] I'll do is we will hit the bull's eye and I just want to show you the heart of the gospel and there in Luke chapter 22 verse 20 we read this likewise he also took the cup after supper saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood which is shed for you and Matthew would add shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins and so here then we find the source of the gospel is yes indeed it is from God and it is of Christ in other words this new binding arrangement is sealed is ratified in Christ's blood that's why the gospel is effective as in a moment we will see but right now we have just seen the source of it quickly let's move to the second point and I want to show something about the declared success of the gospel if you like the designated success of the gospel in other words what I want us to see is that the gospel is declared successful the

Leondo can be broadcast you know and say take it and all your diseases will be gone but of course those who took it die anyway the gospel has also this declared success about it you know with all that is happening around us it is very easy to say will the church of Christ really survive one verse in the new testament which really gives me hope is Matthew 16 verse 18 on this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it that to me is a great encouragement but today we are in our passage 2nd corinthians there in verse 14 2nd corinthians 2 14 we see something which to me I believe gives declares the success of the gospel way of verse 14 it says now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ and through us diffuses the fragrance of his knowledge in every place and so there we see

Paul is really telling the corinthians that he Paul and other preachers when they handle the gospel it is always successful regardless of in spite of despite of all the challenges that preachers go through sufferings preachers go through disappointments of what form one form or another the gospel that preachers handle around is always victorious in other words God uses it unto success God uses it to bring it to that which he had intended you see gospel preaching simply put is spreading out proclaiming the fragrance the knowledge of

Christ Christ is being declared everywhere now why is this declaration where is Paul getting this idea from let's get to the background of Paul using the words he's using as he writes to the Romans to the Corinthians the Romans were in power the Roman army occasionally would go to fight against other nations and extend their territory and so when they would go and fight and conquer a king then all his soldiers will be captured and they will be tied and they would be walking all the way back to the Roman empire and so they would come back there would be a celebration and of course a part of the celebration of this conquering army coming back is that the pagan priests would light incense and the whole parade will be having that fragrance that smell all around and everyone will be rejoicing my friends the gospel preachers are expected to do the same the Lord

Jesus Christ has won he died and rose again so victorious is his and now his preachers what do they do we come and declare everywhere that Christ has won he is victorious he saves sinners he has defeated the devil and we do that all over the place and therefore we are like we are spreading his knowledge we are letting everyone know about him but now we are more than conquerors in him because he himself has conquered you see the gospel now can be declared to be successful and that's what we go around telling everyone around the world of course and this leads us to the third point does it really work we may be making a lot of noise but does it does the gospel really work and therefore in the third place I want to show the powerful effect of the gospel we have seen the origin of the gospel we have seen the fact that it is declared successful but now in a more practical way let's see does it work well what does our passage tell us so we see in this third place the powerful effect of the gospel verses 15 and 16 this is what we read for we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing to the one we are the aroma of death to death and to the other aroma of life to life and who is sufficient for these things gospel preaching my friends is powerful beyond measure this passage gives us two double effects of the gospel it we have just read it gives the smell of death but also it gives the aroma the fragrance of life to those who are perishing it's smell of death to those who are being saved it is the aroma of life the gospel never returns without achieving that for which God had sent it out to do

[32:16] Isaiah 55 verse 11 you can read that let's go back to this illustration of the Roman army coming back having captured another territory the poor king and all his fighters are all tied in chains and they are coming back they are being brought back and of course the captain of the army maybe on his horse or his donkey is ahead there and his own other soldiers are also in their donkeys or horses the others are walking tied but then the pagan priests they have lit the candles and everywhere there is this beautiful smell that is associated with the celebrations of victory the smell itself tells everyone victory is ours but you know something just as they are celebrating and the smell sends out victory victory victory that very same smell if you like it's a stench it's a smell of death for the king who is tied and his enemies his soldiers also behind him this picture

Paul has otherwise it would not make sense the same celebration with all this going up but these other people know actually ultimately the best that could be done to those people is they will be tied to be slaves forever the worst is that they are going to be thrown into the arena and all the lions are set to tear them to pieces if it was in the days of Edia men of Uganda then they would be tied like that and they hooded over them and then they would be sprayed with bullets my friends the gospel is powerful in fact when Paul writes about this stew that it's this gospel that on the one hand every preacher celebrates because it's a victory call of

Christ and it is really a smell of death to those who reject it Paul thinks as he writes and just look at what he says at the end of verse 16 and who is sufficient for these things it is a truth that gripped Paul you mean what we preach is a declaration for life to those who are in Christ those who receive it but those who reject it you mean it's death to them and it's not just dying no it is to die without hope to die without the gospel and that just makes Paul say no who is sufficient these things anyway and so friends in the third place in the fourth place I must end these points and just gives you a few points to take home with you in the fourth place is this if this is the gospel we have seen the origin of it we have also seen my friends the declared effects of it and those who may despise it then we are told the powerful effect of it the fourth point

I want to bring out is the demand of the gospel I thought of some brilliant way to give that fourth point I didn't have but the demand of the gospel what does this lay upon us as preachers and every true believer let me give it in an illustration form I've given you a picture of what the gospel is and surely so far we've seen the gospel is powerful and especially the effect that it can bring and it does bring life salvation but it also leads people to perish it basically declares them to perish you know it's like a grenade now how should we handle a grenade carelessly just put it in the pocket what if especially I've never handled one what about if the trigger and so it's ready to be used anytime you use it carefully surely you carry it about carefully now that is the point

I want us to see in verse 14 verse 17 where we are told for we are not as so many pegling the word of God but as of sincerity but as from God we speak in the sight of God in Christ you know my friends the gospel surely from what we are seeing there in Corinth there were false prophets and there in Kenya there are those also who we can also you know false teachers who were using the gospel for their own end for what they can get from it manipulating their hearers so that they get rich not so Paul because of what the gospel is Paul tells us that a preacher of the gospel anyone who handles the gospel must do so with sincerity in other words we handle the gospel with an eye to

[38:37] God as the one we are seeking approval from not men especially you see friends especially as we've got to point out the seriousness of sin and the fact that God's judgment is coming upon the stubborn in their sin that's not easy but God says and Paul teaches us here we need to be sincere and the other thing this calls us out to do is that we need to be faithful we need to be faithful friends we are under the authority of God God has sent us we must go in his name and not then do anything that will bring dishonor what will you take home from this passage let me say this by way of application regardless of any and all frustrations we face in gospel preaching it is and it will remain successful and so my fellow preachers here my fellow pastors and other teachers of

God's word here please let us remember this let us remember we are on the winning team we have been called to broadcast everywhere that Christ has won and we are under the authority of God we must not lose heart we must not be cowed we must!

be encouraged in the midst of all our challenges in the second place and I wish I would avoid this application but no I have just said we have to be faithful and so I must be faithful before God you see friends this gospel while some hear it believe it believe it and they are saved and their lives are changed and the hymn we sung here of peace is true of those of us it's also true that there are some who hear the same gospel but they reject it what happens when they reject that gospel it is hopelessness so let me just ask this where are you in this matter this morning

I think one of the blessing of being here among you four years in a row is that I really don't know who is who so no one can say ah he's talking about me but really I'm bringing this out so that you may sincerely have dealings with the Lord in this matter to the end that you may be able then to take this gospel medicine and indeed it will it must change you I ask why haven't you taken the gospel so far why it's been declared here I'm sure it has been declared here week after week after week and this morning in a very brief way we have seen what it is gospel my friends as we have seen is that joyful message from

God that leads to salvation where are you why haven't you taken this gospel when will you take it when well so let's seriously think about this especially those who are not saved you know you are not saved you know you are not a believer dear children you are not too young you are not too young this is what you need let me say in the third and final place please church do pray do pray you know who is sufficient for these things especially when we see the gospel for what it is this morning who is sufficient but God has called us

[43 : 46] God has called your pastors here to be preachers and teachers and others who teach here Pastor John and Pastor Jessen and Aaron laboring there in that church plant and again the rest who teach please pray that while it is called today before that last day comes that we will continue to deliver this message that it is only Christ who saves and he welcomes sinners come to him oh that they will do this faithfully but also do pray for us there in Eldorate and I thank Pastor for praying for us and so I do ask that you pray for us there that the same gospel will go forth pray for us August the 8th is our general election and oh there are so many in Kenya who are banking their hope in either the same government to go back and there are also others saying we've had enough they have just ruined the country and so the opposition wants to come in and there are those who are thinking we are going to have a savior this time they deceived the hope they have is the gospel and therefore ours is to preach and teach and so you pray for us that we will do that my friends the

Leondo concoction came and went those who drank it died and those who even are still alive will die but the gospel tells us that by the death of one man the Lord Jesus Christ all who take this gospel by faith will live and never die now that makes the gospel worth taking for all times who will believe will you still ignore this gospel believe it and you will live but if you ignore it there is no hope thank you so much for listening let's join in prayer oh Lord our God thank you for your word thank you for the gospel gospel it's new it is fresh it's powerful it's powerful to save any and all who will believe it's powerful to damn those who reject it also so Lord we pray that we will not play around with it we'll be sincere we'll be faithful both in preaching it and then in living it out in our lives bless this congregation bless the members in this place bless the labors that go on here and there in Walsh oh Lord may your name be glorified this we pray in Jesus name amen amen