

(1) This gospel is normally spread by proclamation. This gospel, Paul says, “I preached to you” (1 Cor 15:1), and then adds that it is “the word I preached to you” (15:2). This way of describing the spreading of the gospel is typical of the New Testament. The gospel that was preached was what the Corinthians believed (15:11). Look up every instance of the word “gospel” and discover how often, how overwhelmingly often, this news of Jesus Christ is made known through proclamation, through preaching.

Earlier in this same letter Paul insists that in God’s unfathomable wisdom “God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe” (1:21). The content was “what was preached”; the mode of delivery was “what was preached.” There are plenty of texts that talk about the importance of being salt and light, of course, or of doing good to all people, especially those of the household of God, or of seeking the good of the city. Yet when dissemination of the gospel is in view, overwhelmingly the Bible specifies proclamation. The good news must be announced, heralded, explained; God himself visits and revisits human beings through his word. This gospel is normally spread by proclamation.

(2) This gospel is fruitfully received in authentic, persevering faith. “This is what we preach,” Paul writes, “and this is what you believed” (1 Cor 15:11). Toward the beginning of the chapter, Paul tells the Corinthians, “By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain” (15:2). In other words, their faith in the word Paul preached, in the gospel, must be of the persevering type. Many other passages carry the same emphasis. For instance, Paul tells the Colossians, “[God] has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel” (Col 1:22-23). This gospel is fruitfully received in authentic, persevering faith.

(3) A result is personal self-humiliation. When the gospel is properly understood and

received in persevering faith, people properly respond the way the apostle does. Yes, the risen Christ appeared last of all to him (15:8). Yet far from becoming a source of pride, this final resurrection appearance evokes in Paul a sense of his own unworthiness: “For I am the least of the apostles,” he

writes, “and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am” (15:9-10). How could it be otherwise? Jesus had purchased Paul’s redemption at the cost of his own blood, he had graciously forgiven him of his sins, including the sin of persecuting the church of God, he had confronted the apostle on the Damascus Road and revealed himself to him at the very moment Paul was expanding his efforts to damage Christ’s people! Even if in the wake of his conversion, Paul confesses he has worked harder than the other apostles, he insists that this can only be true because of the grace of God that was with him (15:10). Humility, gratitude, dependence on Christ, confession of sin—these are the characteristic attitudes of the truly converted, the atmosphere out of which Christians experience joy and love. When the gospel truly does its work, “proud Christian” is a contradiction of terms. This gospel is properly disclosed in personal self-humiliation.

(4) This gospel is rightly asserted to be the central confession of the whole church. At numerous points in 1 Corinthians Paul reminds his readers that the Corinthian church is not the only church—or, better put, that there are many other churches with common beliefs and practices, such that at some point the independence of the Corinthians, far from being a virtue, is merely evidence that they are out of step. In 4:17, Paul tells them that Timothy will remind the Corinthians of Paul’s way of life, “which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church

Of course, what “the whole church” or “all the churches” are doing is not necessarily right: One must test everything by Scripture. Moreover, one must grimly admit that there is a kind of traditionalism that loses its way that preserves form while sacrificing authenticity and power. In Corinth, however, that does not seem to have been the

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problem. Paul insists that the gospel is rightly asserted to be the central confession of the whole church. Always be suspicious of churches that proudly flaunt how different they are from what has gone before.

(5) The gospel is boldly advancing under the contested reign and inevitable victory of Jesus the king. This side of Jesus' death and resurrection, all of God's sovereignty is mediated exclusively through King Jesus. That is amply taught elsewhere in the New Testament, of course. Matthew concludes with Jesus' claim, "All authority is given to me in heaven and on earth" (Matt 28:20). Philippians rejoices that "the name that is above every name" has been given to him (Phil 2:9-11). So also—and dramatically—here: Christ "must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet" (15:25). That presupposes the reign is still contested, and still advances. This is of a piece with Jesus' claim, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt 16:18). But one day, the final enemy, death itself, will die, and Jesus' mediatorial kingship will end. God will be all in all (15:28).

It is in the light of this gospel—all that the death and resurrection of Jesus have achieved, all that the advancing kingdom of King Jesus is accomplishing, all that we will inherit in resurrection existence on the last day—that Paul writes to these Corinthian believers, and to us, and says, "Therefore my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain" (15:58). The gospel is boldly advancing under the contested reign and inevitable victory of Jesus the king.

Here is what is to be understood, believed, obeyed; here is what is promised, taught, explained.

Then in the great commission, we are told to baptize and continue to teach.

Baptism is not necessary for salvation, it does not occur before one's conversion to

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place in infant in covenant relationship as some of our Reformed brethren teach or to make them a Christian as Catholics practice. It is an external act that pledges allegiance to Christ and pictures our death, burial and resurrection in Christ. We should be suspicious of any who say they have been changed by Christ and are hesitant to be baptized and find out why they would do so.

Continuing to teach new disciples is the final part of this teaching.

It is here that I want to make some very specific points.

Too often, new disciples are placed in a position where their new life is reduced to being taught nothing but a series of legalistic rituals to ensure that they are expressing devotion and love for Christ their Savior and demonstrating they are believers.

The irony of this is they are not meant to be rituals but genuine expressions of our love for Christ. They are means of grace, means by which grace is manifested and manifesting itself more abundantly in our lives.

We want to teach the disciplines of the Christian life - not as legalistic impositions of performance to be better but: My definition :

Disciplines are the natural outflow of who you are because you love Christ

These things are taught in the Scripture and are there to inform us of what the external looks like because we are changed internally. This is a sample not a 10 Steps list.

1. Study and read the Word of God

God's Word is the truth you need for living in Christ (righteousness.) Discovered truth can fix your car or make surgery successful. All "truth" is not God's truth for growing in grace and knowledge of Christ.

2. Meditate on the Word of God- Ps. 1:2

3. Memorize the Word of God-Ps. 119:11

4. Pray without ceasing (be always ready)-I Thess. 5:17

5. Be a witness - share the gospel-Mt. 28:18-20.

6. Be salt and light-be “missional “in your walk

6. Serve God through a local assembly as a member Rom.12:4 - 8

7. Be a cheerful giver when able-Mt. 6:1-4; 2 Cor. 9:7

8. Let all be done as worship: study, prayer, fasting, witnessing, serving, giving. Include singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs as part of your daily worship Col. 3:16-17.

9. Confess sin as soon as you are aware of it. Daily, ask God to search your heart and reveal any hidden sin - Ps. 139:23-24.

Find joy in repentance. It is a gift from God-Rom. 2:4~

10. Take whatever measures are necessary to keep you from habitual sin. Flee it
God will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able to endure-1 Cor.
10:13.

C. Learn to esteem others more highly than yourself-Phil. 2:3. Jesus did. Invest your life in others and be a servant to all. God’s love is another serving, and recognizing the real, yet not excluding the felt needs of others and offering the solution needed even if it is not recognized by the one you are helping. Self love is not taught in God’s Word except as sinful: men are and will become, increasingly, lovers of themselves-2 Tim. 3:2. **(emphasize the one another and the let us passages of Scripture.**

D. We have the ability to do all God requires of us because His grace (Christ) is sufficient for us-Phil. 4:13

Often, the first emphasis that new believers are taught is to focus on themselves.

“You need to do this” to become a mature believer.” And the interpretation of that becomes “I must do these things” which is leading to a performance based Christianity.

Jesus did His part, now I do mine.

This takes the form of practicing disciplines of grace (Bible reading, prayer, meditation, etc...) for the purpose of repaying Jesus.

Instead we need to realize that it is grace that saves sinners, it is grace that sanctifies

sinner, it is grace that keeps sinners, and it is grace that will ultimately present sinners as blameless before the throne of God. Our constant dependence upon the grace that is ours in Jesus reminds us of his richness and our neediness; this reality brings joy and intensifies our appreciation of the cross of Jesus.

Are you trying to repay Jesus for Calvary? If so you are no doubt living a miserable Christian life. Preach the gospel to yourself afresh that you might agree with God about the eternal value of Jesus and then join him in delighting in Jesus (Matt. 3.17; 12.18)

The Bible is a means of grace by which God communicates himself to his children, even shaping our minds into conformity to him (Rom. 12.1-2; Eph. 4.20-23; Ps. 119.28, 58, 65, 116). This is accompanied by the work of the Holy Spirit who is continually transforming us to be more like Christ. It is a life long enterprise.

So, if the Christian neglects the Bible they neglect the heart of God and rely upon themselves to decide who God is. Note historical context. Before Bible.

If we understand that Jesus is the Living Word and that means that He is the Word incarnate, then we can understand that the first way to understand Scripture is to understand Christ because that is the priority of Scripture from Genesis to The Revelation. If we do this we can say that the text we read was lived by Him. So, what we read about Him all through Scripture as God, as Jesus, and as The Holy Spirit, reveals to us His completeness as a person with all of His attributes and as we understand that and how He has acted before He was incarnate and how He lived as the God/man then we can more easily understand the things He says with His words because His life and His words are indicative of who He is and the imperatives- the commands He gives us - once we are in Him, are rooted or established first in Him and who He is then in us and who He has made us to be. We have the Living Torah, The Living Word, the Inscription of God. When we read Romans 12:1,2 this should give us a better understanding of why and how we understand the Word of God.

**“1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.
2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your**

Paul speaks of the literal human body as a sacrifice unto God. Instead of taking a lamb to slaughter as a sacrifice for God, as Israel did before Jesus died on the Cross, Paul offers up visual imagery to allow the reader to better understand that Christians should offer their bodies unto Christ. This use of sacrificial language by Paul is important to mention. Literal sacrificial worship at this time was very vivid in the minds of most ancient religions, including Judaism. Using metaphors to describe this sacrificial act of worship were vastly understood by the Roman culture that he originally wrote the book of Romans to (Moo 73). Therefore, this usage of language was not foreign to the people that he wrote this specific letter to. This mention of a so-called spiritual sacrifice is considered an act of worship. Paul displays this sacrificial speech in symbolic and cultic terms in these verses (Moo 750). Instead of a literal slaughter of the human body, Christians should offer the body to be used by God for his discernment and will. The word “urge” or beseech in this verse is a translation of the Greek word *parakaleo*. This word is designed to deliver the correct meaning and usage of the word, which has moral undertones within it. The word *parakaleo* was often used when signaling a shift in conversation in the Greek language (Moo 73). Therefore, when a slight subject change was to be noted in text, this is a common word to include in usage to signal this change in conversation. This verse is designed to ask for dedication from Christians unto God, without demanding this act. Because the act of giving the body to Christ is an act of worship, this act cannot be forced but one who is truly regenerated does not need to be forced because we possess the desire to do so, albeit the conflict of the remnant of the old man may at times cause a struggle within us. . This worship is, however, a worship that not only involves the mind, the heart - meaning the total being of who we are in Christ.

The second verse of this passage speaks of God’s ability to transform an individual. The transformation is a life long enterprise as we are seeking the prize and the goal of

Christ our Lord. Paul here is not referring, although some tend to believe so, to the church to stop conforming to the world, but is saying be continually being transformed into the likeness of Christ ie., into who you are. This is a direct reference to the theology of Romans chapter 5-8. Not being conformed to the world, the age that produces what we were. Here in Romans 12, because of the work that has been accomplished for us by Christ from justification to sanctification to the indwelling of the Spirit we are now to be who we are according to the renewing process that keeps transforming us into the likeness of Christ.

To be transformed is having the mind of Christ in a growing way, in a maturing way, in knowing the Living Word and His words and walking in the Spirit. Knowing the will of God does not first come from obeying some external standards of law like the Decalogue. We are bound to the Law of Christ which includes all that Jesus has taught us and that which has been taught us by His apostles, all that is Jesus' teaching preserved in the teaching of the NT writers (This was Jesus' own plan: John 16:12; John 14:25, 26; John 15:26, 27; 16:12-15). And what does this teaching look like. Very little of it is law or rules or commands as we would normally understand those words and as compared to the Old Covenant Law. There are few commands. Jesus, primarily only gave His people two. Most of the teaching is showing us who we are and what we are to be in light of the knowledge of Christ.

What was taught also includes how they interpreted the Old Testament Scriptures in light of Christ, which then gives us the proper understanding of how to understand the Old Testament Scriptures as they are fulfilled in Christ. In this way we know that all Scripture is given to us by Christ and therefore is inspired and we learn what is for teaching by way of illustration from the Old Testament and what can be applied in light of Christ in the New Covenant. For example, we do not follow the dietary laws of the Old Covenant but they teach us about the holiness of God's people and how they were meant to be set apart as different. We see in all the sacrifices, which we do not make, that they pointed to Christ and are all fulfilled in Him. This informs and instructs us but

We must see that The Law of Christ is not a series of written laws or codes or statutes or precepts that were used to describe what God gave to Israel under the Old Covenant. The Law of Christ is Christ Himself and His law is written on our hearts. That Law is there because by His Spirit, His Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ we are internally driven to outwardly show who we are and a means of that is the desire to obey the imperatives-the commands - the things we read in the Scripture that reveal the standard of Christ for His New Covenant people. We are not shaped by the imperatives but by what Christ has made us to be and is causing/making us to be. I am not who I am in Christ because of what I do. I do what I do because of who I am, even though in this life it will be imperfect.

We should not be saying, as Steve Fuchs has written : “ that Jesus is the guy we need to obey and imitate.”

“We should be saying that ‘Jesus is causing us to act RIGHTLY’. It’s no longer about obedience to codes, but anticipation for being fully ruled. It’s about taking our eyes off of what we need to do in sanctification, fixing them instead on what we are/are becoming by his sanctifying work and fixing them on the glory of what is in store for us and longing for Him to speed up the procession being excited to be ruled (driven) entirely by Him in every act and thought.

We are still under a Law, but it’s a law of a different nature. His nature is Spirit, not code. Codes tell, but Spirit causes. This Spirit who causes us to think and act righteously is not conforming us to the list of imperatives in the NT anymore than to the Decalogue alone or the whole of Law and Prophets This Law of Christ is everlasting in the forward AND backward sense.

He existed from the beginning even while He was only revealed in the shadows of Law and Prophets. He was always the true substance of Righteousness.

The True Covenant didn't change so much as His substance became fully visible and exposed the shadows to be mere shadows (Col 2 uses the word ‘mere’). None-the-

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less, among the shadows the faith of OC believers trusted that He would perfect them by ruling their very thoughts and desires with His own Spirit.

Our hope should not long for how much we'll obey codes.

Our hope should be fixed on the Righteousness He is fulfilling in us...ruling our thoughts and desires to be perfect as the Father is perfect.”

As the living Word is eternal and as His people we are eternal then His words and the result of them will never pass away.

So also we have the written Word. We have the text that informs us, reveals to us, illustrates for us, instructs us, rebukes us by the objective truth we see written there as the Holy Spirit convinces us of all these things.

The written Word is another means of God's grace for us to participate in growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus.

We do not disregard the Word in any way. We may be able to live according to the work of promise fulfillment that has occurred because of the real time event of Christ's cross work and the giving of the Holy Spirit to indwell His people to be continually transforming them, but the bible shows us the development and the reality, objectively and tangibly, of these great truths for our enlightenment, our encouragement and to give us tangible objective truth to see these things with new eyes because of a new heart. The Scripture helps to bring us to understand “the radical understanding of the law and the radical obedience to the law that is not based on law but on Christ, and therefore reflects the fullness of what God wills for us—and especially reflects the gospel, the covenant-keeping work of Christ at Calvary for his church.” John Piper

The bible, in and of itself is paper and ink. It cannot change me, however, it is used by God as a tool in the process of His changing me.

So, once we have continued to teach new believers about Christ and who we are in Him, in the most personal sense, then we need to teach them who we are as participants in His kingdom and what is the place of the church, His bride and body in

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the kingdom.

First Christ, then His kingdom. Why.

Kingdom is the most explicit theme that is given all through Scripture.

Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand!