

This Then Is the Message

Sunday, March 15th, 1992

1 John 1:1-7

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

I don't know how many of you heard the message that I brought last Sunday. I want to continue along the same line, upon which I spoke last week. The title of the message today, is: "This Then Is the Message." Last Sunday, the message was this, "Are You Willing To Be Saved?" Does a man will to know the will of God? Does he will to know the way of God? Does he will to know the Word of God? If you do, this then is the message!

I'd like for you to follow along in your Bible. I will be reading from the Book of First John. This is not the gospel of John; this is the First Epistle of John, in the last part of the New Testament. Turn to First John, Chapter One, at verse five. Here is a man who says; "*This then is the message.*" That is what he is saying. This man writing here says, "This then is the message from God to you."

When a man says that to you and he speaks with authority, it would be wise to listen to him. Who is this person who says, "*This then is the message?*" This is the gospel and this is the message of God. This is the one and only gospel. This is the message. Who is this fellow? First of all, it is the apostle John. He was one of the Lord's twelve apostles. He was the one who was called the "*beloved disciple.*" He leaned upon the Lord's breast at the last table, the last supper. This disciple is referred to in the Book of John as, "*The disciple whom Jesus loved.*" That is the one writing here.

This apostle John survived all of the apostles. They were all martyred except this man. He was exiled to the Isle of Patmos, across the sea. There, on the Isle of Patmos, the Lord God appeared to him and gave him the Revelation of Jesus Christ. The Revelation

is called in many Bibles, the Revelation of John. The Lord gave John a revelation of Jesus Christ. That is what that Book is all about.

The man who said, *“This then is the message,”* is the man who said in verses 1, 2 and 3, *“The Son of God was manifested. Eternal life was manifested and we have seen Him, heard Him and touched Him.”* He said that two or three times. He said, *“I have seen Him, I have heard Him and my hands have handled of the Word of Life.”* “I touched Him!”

Now, if any man knows the message, I believe he would know it don't you? I believe that if any man knows and can say, *“This then is the message,”* I would say it was this man. I'm going to listen to it, will you?

What does he say about this message? He says, *“This then is the message which we have heard of Him.”* In other words, this didn't originate with us. Twelve men didn't get together and draw up this theology. This is a message, which we heard of Him, which He gave us and this is the message, which we declare unto you. It includes all of you, and any of you. It is a message that we declare unto all men.

There is no difference in men. Do you think there is? There is no difference. *“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”* There is no difference. *“Christ is neither male nor female, Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, bond or free. There is no difference.”* It doesn't matter if you are young or old. There is no difference between you and the drug addict; you are both sinners. There is no difference between you, dear lady, and the harlot; we are both sinners. There is no difference between you, the prison guard and the man you are guarding; you are both sinners in God's sight.

You both are equally separated from God by your sins. You are both, equally condemned. You both need the same salvation. You both need to hear the same gospel.

I don't have one gospel for the White House and another for the jail or the prison. I don't have one message for the so-called “moral people” and another for “immoral people.” I don't have one message for the wealthy and learned or the intelligent educators and another one for the ones digging the ditches; it is the same message.

That is what John said, *“This is the message.”* It is the message, not a message. This message is not one of many, *“This is the message which we heard of Him and declare unto you,”* all of you. The reason is because there is one God and one Lord. There is one faith and one body. There is one church and one Mediator and one way of life to be preached to all. That is the whole ball of wax, right there. There is just one message!

We don't trim the message down. We don't alter it, compromise it, or adjust it to fit situations. *"We just preach Christ and Him crucified."* That's right! *"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."* All men need a Substitute and a Saviour. They will all come the same way or they won't come at all.

Then, he says this; *"This then is the message which we have heard of Him, which we declare unto you that God is light and in God dwelleth no darkness at all. This then is the message."* This is it, and we have heard this message and we declare it to you. This is the message, that God is light, holiness, truth, righteousness, and justice. In Him is no alloy. There is no compromise; there is no mixture; and there is no darkness at all. He changes not; He is God. He is truth and light. He is Holiness and justice. There is no leniency in Him. *"He will by no means, (under any circumstances, for no reason), clear the guilty."*

That is it! It doesn't matter if you are a little bit guilty or a whole lot guilty. It doesn't matter if you've been in sin for a long time or for a short time. There's no difference if you are old or young, *"He will by no means, clear the guilty. This is the message, that God is light."*

Do you understand that? He changes not. God is holiness and righteousness. God is invisible and dwells in a light to which no man can approach. That is the light. God is the light and *"He dwells in that light to which no man can approach."* That is right!

So, the gospel that we preach has to honor that holiness of God. The holiness has to come from that righteousness of God. Holiness has to honor that perfect law of God and it has to glorify the absolute justice of God. Holiness has to enable God to be light, truth, justice and holiness.

You see; our gospel, if it is God's gospel, will not attempt to bring God down. This is one of the major mistakes that men make today. They are trying to explain God. Men are trying to comprehend God. They are trying to bring God down so that a natural man with natural eyes can see. Men are trying to bring God down so that a natural heart and mind can understand God. That is impossible!

What needs to happen or to take place is for us not to compromise God's attributes, but preach a message that lifts men up. We need to restore their souls and restore them to His righteousness. We don't want to preach a message that brings God down to us. We need a gospel that cleanses, purifies, sanctifies, regenerates, makes us whole and takes us to God.

The gospel is not a message of what you can do for God. The gospel is a message of what God must do for us. I wish I could make that clear. This is the message, that God is light, holiness, justice and truth. In Him, there is no compromise; there is no leniency, alloy or mixture. *“He will be no means clear the guilty.”* He cannot move from His place of perfect holiness. So, the message is not what we are going to do for Him. The message is what will He do for us; in His holiness and justice do, that is consistent with His character? How will He help us out of the mess that we are in?

That is what we are looking for in a message. We are looking for a way out of the mess that we are in.

I know that there is a lot of preaching today. I want you to listen to me. I know that there is a lot of preaching today telling you that you must do this and that you must do that. They say that you must accept Jesus as your personal Saviour. Preachers will say that you must go out and serve the Lord and you must begin working for God. They will say that you need to start sending them your seed money so that they can multiply them. You will be asked to bring your tithing to the storehouse. Preachers also say that you need to give your money to various causes and promote all of these different things.

Of course, they say, “If you will do all of these things, then God will do something.” No, my friends, all this is not going to change the fact that God is light and I am darkness. God is Holy and I am unholy. God is truth and all men are liars. *“He is Just and will be no means clear the guilty.”* God is life and we are death. He is perfect and we are imperfect. All of this doing that you want me to do is not going to change me and it sure isn’t going to change Him.

If I am going to be light, I have to be made righteous. God is Holy and I am unholy. If I’m going to be holy, I have to be made righteous. If God is righteous and I am unrighteous, and I want to fellowship with God or walk with God, I have to be made righteous. If I am under a sentence of death for my sins, promising to do better is not going to do away with my condemnation.

Sending a nickel or a dime to a preacher is not going to change God’s judgment against me. If I am going to be accepted of God He has to do something for me. He has to make me righteous and make me stand in His Holy hill and to live in His Divine presence. He has to do something for me.

Do you understand what I am saying? What He does for me has to be consistent with who He is. He can’t change. He is light and Holiness. *“In Him there is no darkness at*

all.” He can’t change. I’ve got to be changed. My status has to be changed. I have got to be changed before the law. The law has me in bondage. I have to be changed before justice. Justice has a charge against me and demands my death because I am a sinner.

Adam’s fall has left me in a dreadful mess. I think evil and not good. I do evil and not good. I don’t love God with all my heart, mind, soul and strength. You don’t either! I don’t love my neighbor as myself; it is an impossible assignment. What in the world is going to happen?

Do you want me to walk down another isle? Do you want me to raise my hand again? How about both hands? Do you want me to send you another dollar or two so that you can buy another house or yacht or something? Do you think that will help me out? No, that is not going to help me out! Christ has to do something for me.

The God that is light, justice, holiness and truth has to do something for you and me. He has done something. If I could just see it in His Word, He has done something. *“God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, (should not continue in this perishing way), but shall have eternal life.”*

That is why Christ came into the world. He came into the world to save sinners, not good people or moral, religious people. Christ didn’t come into the world for people who tithe or serve God. He came to save the lost. He came to save sinners, helpless people. I hear people say, “Well, God will help a man if he will help himself.” That is a lie! God helps men who are unable to help themselves. That is why they need God.

What can you do? You can’t lift yourself from the dunghill. You can’t be born yourself. You can’t make yourself alive. You can’t accomplish righteousness. God sent Christ to do that. *“He died the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God.”* We must be brought to His light, and to His holiness and righteousness. He died that we might go to that Holy hill in the presence of God.

That is what Jesus Christ came to do. He became a man. *“He who thought it not robbery to be equal with God was made in the likeness of sinful flesh and took on Himself the form of a servant and was made unto likeness of men. He was tempted in all points as we are.”* He walked this earth as our Representative. He walked this earth representing us before God. God is light; God is Holy and God demands of men, perfect obedience. Christ came down here as a man in the flesh as our federal head and our representative and He met that perfect holiness. The Father looked down at Him and said, *“This is My Son in whom I am well pleased.”*

He did that for us! He came down here and honored the law that I had broken. He kept the law that I couldn't keep. He came down here, as a man, in the flesh. The God-man went to that cross and bore our sins in His body on the tree and paid that debt so that God who is light, and in whom is no darkness, can forgive me. God can't overlook sin anymore than a faithful, honest and truthful judge can overlook a criminal's crimes.

You may bring a criminal before the judge and the judge may look at him and declare him guilty. The judge looks at the book and he has to be sentenced. What is he going to do? Is he going to forgive him? That is not just! The judge has to sentence him. There has to be someone that will take his place, or someone that will bear his guilt or die for him. That somebody is Christ Jesus!

He came down here and died for me. He paid my bill; He paid my debt. Christ rose as my justifier. He fulfilled all that God required. Now, then, God sent forth His Son to be a propitiation, to be a mercy seat, to be a covering for sin, to be a substitute and to be a high priest in things pertaining to God; that He might be just and justify the ungodly. Christ came down here that He might be light and forgive the sons of darkness. He came that He might be holy and forgive the unholy. He came also, that He might be righteous and forgive the unrighteous. In Christ we have righteousness, and in Christ I have holiness. That is what led the hymn writer to write: "With His spotless garments on, I'm as holy as God's Son."

You can't meet God at an altar unless that altar is Christ. You can't meet God at the front of a building. You don't satisfy the justice and righteousness of God by accepting Jesus as your personal Saviour. He does that Himself and you believe on Him and bow to Him.

Listen to me, Christ didn't live on this earth and die only as an example; He is our example! That is not why He lived and died. Christ didn't live and die as a martyr. He didn't live and die as a Reformer. He lived and died as a Representative, as a Substitute for His people.

Will you learn two words? If you want to learn the gospel, you'll need to learn these two words. The first word is substitution and the second word is satisfaction. Christ is our Substitute. He literally and actually before God, took our place. Christ did in our place and stand what we can't do and what God says that we must do. He did it perfectly. In doing it and dying for us, He made satisfaction. The law of the God of light is satisfied. The justice of the God of Holiness is satisfied.

That seems to be the missing note into today's preaching. It is the very key to the treasures of the gospel. Christ didn't die to gain our pity. Christ didn't die to gain our sympathy; He lived and died as a Representative before God on behalf of His people.

You see; He lived before the Lord. If you will go back to the Old Testament and study the Old Testament sacrifices you will notice that they put their hands on the head of the scapegoat and the bullock that was to be sacrificed. They would confess their sins before the Lord. Then it says, "*They slew the lamb before the Lord.*" The high priest, by himself, alone, once a year went into the Holy Place. He put the blood with hyssop on the mercy seat before the Lord. God was the only eye, looking on.

When Jesus Christ came into this world, He walked this earth; He obeyed God's law and fulfilled righteousness. He did it not to get your sympathy, pity or to give you encouragement. Christ wasn't trying to get you to walk like He walks; He did it before God that the law of God might not charge you and me, any longer, with transgressions. Christ obeyed the law before the Lord.

When He went to the cross and was hanging on that cross, He prayed. What did He pray when He went to Gethsemane's Garden, before He went to the cross? He said, "*Father, glorify Me with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was. Glorify Thy Son that Thy Son may glorify Thee. I have finished the work that you gave Me to do.*" That's right! The Father gave Him a task to perform, a work to do, a life to live, a righteousness to produce and a death to die. He did all of it before the Lord.

When He was on that cross, it was the wrath of God that dealt with Him in our place and in our stead. He died before the Lord. His blood was shed unto God. The high priest went alone into the holiest with the blood of others because God is light! "*In Him there is no darkness.*" Do you see that?

He says, "*This then is the message.*" We have heard of Him, and we preach to you. You sons of Adam, you sinners by birth, nature, choice and practice; we preach to you and there is no difference.

Here is my message; God is light, truth, and holiness. "*In Him there is no darkness at all.*" There is no leniency or compromise whatsoever. There is truth and justice. You can't handle it can you? Christ can and that is why He came.

You see; His life on this earth was literally our life, if we believe on Him that it is my life and your life. That is what the scripture says, "*When Christ who is our life, shall appear then shall we appear with Him in glory.*"

I have a perfect righteousness. Do you? Yes sir, you will too, if you are a believer. I live already, perfectly on this earth. If Christ lives, I live. His life is my life. That is the way the justice of God looks on me. It has to be the righteousness of God.

His death was literally my death. He died the just for the unjust. He died in the stead of. *“He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; by His stripes we are healed.”* So, His death was my death. That is the reason the believer never dies, we have already died.

His resurrection is my resurrection. He says, *“Because you live, I live.”* His exaltation is our exaltation. We are raised with Him and seated at the right hand of God. That is substitution, that is the gospel and that is satisfaction! The Holy Spirit of God through the preaching of this gospel reveals it.

Sitting out there are people who find the gospel offensive to man. It is a blessing to a believer. There are people sitting there who say, “I don’t believe that; that is foolishness.” Well, to the natural man it is. *“The religious seek a sign and the wise men seek after wisdom, but the preaching of the cross is to those who believe and are being saved, the power of God.”*

Some are sitting there and saying, “Preacher, that is what it says and that is what I need. I know who God is. I understand that from the scripture that God is Holy, and in Him is light and no darkness. I am a sinner and there is no peace in religion.”

There is no rest in religion and there is no rest and peace in doing. We can’t produce a righteousness of our own; it is full of sin. Even our good works are full of sin and self. Even our prayers are full of self. God can’t be pleased; it is not perfect. So, what am I going to do?

I will tell you what to do. Receive Christ! The scripture says, *“To as many as received Him, to them gave He the privilege to become Sons of God.”* Receive Him and believe Him. *“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.”* Just believe Him!

“Believe the record that God hath given concerning His Son.” Believe Him, and love Him and trust Him. Our confidence is in Him. Our trust is in Him and in Him alone. That is right!

Listen to this:

Lord, I confess my many faults
How great my guilt has been,
Foolish and vain are all our thoughts
And all our lives are sin.

Tis not by works of righteousness
Which our own hands have done,
But we are saved by your grace
Abounding through your Son.

Tis from the mercy of my God
That all my hopes begin,
Tis by the shedding of His blood
That my soul is cleansed from sin.

That is what John says later in this Chapter. He says, "*If we confess our sins*, take our place as a sinner in an honest confession of repentance, *He is faithful*." He is faithful to His Word, faithful to His Covenant, faithful to His promise and faithful to us. He is faithful to forgive us of all our sins, past, present and future.

He doesn't forgive them arbitrarily; He forgives them based on a sacrifice. He forgives us based on a full payment. He pays our debt in full. That is what Christ did. He forgives on a base of a perfect life, His life. "*He's faithful and just to forgive us all our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*."

Remember this, in closing, the scripture says, "*He is faithful and just*." This is the message; "*God is light, and just*." He must forgive us in a way that He can be just!