

The Gospel of Paul

Part 1

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[00:00:01] The subject for today's introductory lecture is the Gospel of Paul, Paul's Gospel.

In saying this, one must be very clear, I think, that it will be impossible to give a view of the Gospel of the Apostle Paul in one introductory lecture, which is not the aim anyway.

On the other hand, it would be difficult to distinguish the Gospel of Paul from the doctrine of Paul.

Because when Paul uses the expression Gospel, he does never limit him, or rarely limit himself to what is usually, and especially nowadays, understood by Gospel, which is rather superficial, a rather superficial idea, [00:01:08] which, the contents of which nowadays are often no more than, God forgives you your sins, and then you may be happy. But if this would be the full or the entire Gospel, it would be, according to Scripture, a very poor Gospel. Paul gives us in the Gospel, even when he speaks in Ephesians 6, 19, I think it is, of the mystery of the Gospel, even the fullness of the revelation about the assembly, it is part of his Gospel. And to begin with, it is not my aim to treat Paul's Gospel in this wide view, but rather to give some characteristics of the Gospel as it is presented by the Apostle Paul in his epistles. [00:02:10] And to begin with, I would like to read two passages, two verses from the New Testament. The first one is from 1 Timothy 1, verse 11.

The first epistle of Paul to Timothy, chapter 1 and verse 11, where he speaks about the glad tidings of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

And another verse which I would like to read now is 2 Corinthians 4, verse 4.

[00:03:15] Where Paul also speaks about the Gospel and those who are the objects of this Gospel, in whom the God of this world has blinded the thoughts of the unbelieving, so that the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine forth for them. For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus Lord, and ourselves your bondmen for Jesus' sake. Because it is the God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine, who has shone in our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. [00:04:07] These two passages, these two verses, show us, as I would like to show later on, the character of this wonderful glad tidings, the Gospel as it is presented by the Apostle Paul. Now it may come as a surprise for some perhaps, but Scripture says that even in the Old Testament we have glad tidings. In Isaiah 52, I would like to just read this verse in Isaiah 52, a very well-known verse, which also contains this expression, glad tidings or Gospel.

Isaiah 52, verse 7.

[00:05:02] How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that announces glad tidings, that publishes peace, that announces glad tidings of good, that publishes salvation, that saith unto Zion, thy God reigneth.

Paul uses this verse in Romans 10, I think, but the context shows here that the glad tidings, which is here preached or announced to Jerusalem, to Judah and Zion, is nothing else than God's reign in the millennium. And it will be glad tidings for those belonging to the small believing remnant of Jews, who will in the future hear this glad tidings that God will reign in the person of Jesus Christ in the millennium. But it is clear for everyone present here that this is not the subject of the glad tidings in our time. [00:06:04] And even when the Lord Jesus was on earth, he did not preach the Gospel as we know it today. When the Lord Jesus came into this world and started his ministry, we read of him in Mark 1, another characteristic passage of a good tidings, a glad tidings, a Gospel which is not applicable to our time.

In Mark 1, verse 14, it is said, But after John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the glad tidings of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has drawn nigh. Repent and believe in the glad tidings. [00:07:03] From this context, it is also clear that this is not what we are concerned with today. This tidings, this news, this glad news, this happy news which we may announce, and which Paul, as a chosen vessel of God, had been especially entrusted with.

When we continue now the life of the Lord Jesus, it will be very interesting to see that there is practically no truth of the New Testament which the Lord Jesus did not touch upon, even if he did not enlarge upon it.

The Lord Jesus spoke of the fact that he would die, that he would be raised, and that he would go up to his Father again. [00:08:04] So, every disciple knew this in advance, and the Lord Jesus announced this, and said that he would do this for lost sinners. He said that he would die for the forgiveness of sins. This was known to all the apostles, all the twelve, all the eleven who later announced this gospel. They had heard this from the mouth of the Lord Jesus himself. He had also spoken of the fact that everybody who would become a child of God had to be born again. John 3.

And so we can go on. He had spoken about the fact that they would be children of God, that they would be members of the family of God.

[00:09:06] The Lord Jesus had spoken about it. And he had also spoken about the fact that the Holy Spirit would come and dwell in the believers. John 14 to 16.

And lastly, he had also mentioned, even if it's only once, that he would come again to take those who believed in him into his Father's house. In John 16.

It is interesting to see that everything we know as Christians was not only preached by the apostles, but in a nutshell, the Lord Jesus had touched upon everything, even the assembly. He spoke about the assembly as a building which he would erect on the foundation, the rock, which was his own person.

[00:10:04] So one could say that there is not a single truth of the New Testament which the Lord Jesus had not mentioned, although he had not gone into any width or breadth or depth as later on in the epistle.

And I think it's very interesting to see what the apostles in general, and especially Peter and John, reproduced of this glad tidings which the Lord had entrusted to them during his lifetime.

But we read several times in the gospels that when the Lord spoke about these truths which were to be revealed, or which were not to be revealed, but which were to be realized after his work on the cross of Calvary, [00:11:09] after his resurrection and his ascension to the Father, how little these disciples announced in their own writings later on. Even when the Lord gave them the call, the command to preach the gospel, he spoke about the fact that they should believe in him, which the apostles did. But one is astonished in a way at what a difference there is between the gospel as it is announced by Peter in the Acts, for example, and later on by Paul. And the question is, how is this possible? And I think the explanation for this is in a sentence which her brother long ago has coined, which says, [00:12:12] It takes a cloud to meet a cloud. It takes a cloud to meet a cloud.

And this, beloved brothers and sisters and friends, touches the glory of God. And even that the Lord Jesus had announced when he was on earth. And I would like to turn just to two passages from the gospel of John, chapter 13, which open, as I think, the way to what distinguishes the gospel of Paul.

In John 13, and the Lord Jesus was in the upper room with the disciples, [00:13:08] John 13, verse 31, it is said, When therefore he, that is Judas, was gone out, Jesus says, Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God also shall glorify in himself, and shall glorify him immediately. And then chapter 17, John 17, verse 1, These things Jesus spoke, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come. Glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee, as thou hast given him authority over all flesh, that as to all that thou hast given to him, he should give them life eternal. And this is the eternal life, that they should know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. [00:14:06] I have glorified thee on the earth. I have completed the work which thou gavest me, that I should do it. And now glorify me, thou Father, along with thyself, with the glory which I had along with thee before the world was. When I said it takes a cloud to meet a cloud, I think there could be no better passages than these passages from the Gospel of John, which show us what happened on the cross of Calvary. There, this holy God, thrice holy, Isaiah calls him, or rather the seraphim would call him, showed what he really was, holy and loved.

[00:15:07] Nowhere can we see what God is better and deeper than on the cross of Calvary. We see the holiness, but also the love, or the character of God, when he judged sin in man.

And that is the one cloud, that is the cloud which dwelled in Leviticus 16 above the tabernacle, the cloud of the presence of the holy God. And beloved friends and brothers and sisters, I think that it is a great lack in our time that we don't realize what the real character of God is.

[00:16:01] A God too pure of eyes to see, to look at sin.

A God who is so holy that even the angels are not pure in his sight. And then there is man, a sinner, in absolute contrast to this holy God.

And how can this man, this is the question of the Gospel, how can man be just in the sight of God? And that is where the second cloud comes in. That is where the cloud comes in of the cloud which was spread by the Lord Jesus. And I take this, and I think the brother who coined this sentence thought of Leviticus 16, where the high priest, a symbol, an image of our Lord Jesus had to go into the sanctuary, [00:17:05] the holy of holies, with a cloud of incense.

He could not enter otherwise. And it was only a very weak image, a very weak type of what the Lord Jesus did.

God's holiness could only be met by a holiness which was equal to his own.

That is what the sentence means, a cloud. God's holiness can only be met by a cloud. The cloud of incense which rose from the work of Calvary when the Lord Jesus died there, not only for our sins, but as John says, to glorify God.

All the holiness and the entire character of God had been trampled under the foot by man when he fell into sin.

[00:18:14] Sin is an affront against God, not only something which does harm to our neighbor. That's what sin is thought of very often in our days.

But sin is a direct affront against the holiness of God. And no man could reach this level to be able to stand up before God.

And so the Lord Jesus came on earth. And in John 13 and John 17 we see, and even John did not enlarge on this later on. [00:19:03] He writes the words of the Lord in his gospel, but he never enlarges on this in his writings. But here once it is shown to us that the Lord Jesus as man, as son of man, and now the son of man is glorified and God is glorified in him. That the Lord Jesus as man is the first place, did everything which belonged to the place of man in the eyes of God. And by this obedience as man he glorified God.

He became obedient until the death, the death of the cross of Calvary. And thereby the glory of God which by man's sin had been attacked and trampled underfoot, the Lord Jesus brought it to light again. [00:20:04] And when he died he glorified God. And this was in a way the incense which rose from his word, that he fulfilled all the just requirements of a holy God.

He did not, he died for our sins, but he did not die for them only and not in the first place. But he died to make good what man by sin had done away with. And he put in the right light the glory and honor of God by dying for him, by offering himself in obedience until death.

That was the glorification of God by the son of man. [00:21:03] And when the Lord Jesus had done this, God said, thou hast glorified me in such a way that I will not and cannot leave thee in this position, but I will glorify thee at my right hand. That is what the Lord Jesus says in John 13. And that is where this one cloud of the glorification of the Lord Jesus met the other cloud of the holiness of God. And in John 17 we have quite another picture. It is the same person speaking, but he speaks now as a son to the father. And he says, thy son has glorified thee on earth. But it was quite something else than what he had said in chapter 13. In chapter 13 it was his glorification as the son of man with a view to the father. [00:22:05] That was in the first place his obedience. But when as the son of the father he

said, I have glorified thee on the earth. That is that he had showed all the character of the holy and just God in his life and in his death on the cross. And that is why I said, if you want to see what God's holiness and what God's character, what God's love is, but also what sin is, you have to look for Calvary. There you see God's judgment of sin.

And you see one there who not only bore this judgment, but who showed all the characters of God in bearing this sin.

He showed what the justice of God was when he bore the judgment of God in his own body. [00:23:08] And he showed what the love of God was because he was the only begotten, the beloved son of the father who was offered there. And he showed his own love to those who were lost and his love to the father that he gave himself, that he did not say, no, I will not do it, an impossible thought. He said, I will come to do thy will. And so in a few words, and it will take all eternity for us to understand these things which we have seen here in these two passages in John 13 and 17. God was glorified by the Lord Jesus in the cross.

[00:24:01] The whole glory of God was shown in the Lord Jesus. And if we now come to the Lord Jesus by faith, it is that he leads us into the glory of God. The Lord Jesus had spoken of this. And still the twelve disciples, the twelve apostles, have little, if at all, announced this.

Peter speaks once of the fact that the Lord Jesus was taken up into heaven after his word and that glory was given to him. But it is Paul, and Paul actually alone, who did not see the Lord Jesus on earth, but who saw him when he was in the glory. When he first saw the Lord Jesus, he did not see a humiliated savior as the disciples saw him, [00:25:07] as a poor man who did not have a place where to put his head. But he saw him in the glory. He saw a light that was surpassing the radiance of the sun.

That was the Lord Jesus. And the Lord Jesus said, this man, this apostle, is a chosen vessel to me. And that is what makes this difference between what the other apostles preached and wrote, and what Paul preached and what he wrote. He, as it were, he came from the glory and witnessed the glory which he had seen when the Lord Jesus appeared to him at his conversion. [00:26:01] And we may add also when he had been taken up fourteen years later into paradise, into the third heavens, where he heard things which are not allowed for men to be spoken. He could not tell them, but still all his gospel, all his preaching was filled with this thought and this feeling. He was filled with the glory. And dear friends and beloved brothers and sisters, that is what I think is the subject of this conference here. It is supposed to be the subject to occupy ourselves more with that which comes from the heart of God, instead of with that which can be characterized as our need. Aren't we too much often occupied with our own needs, the things which we desire, [00:27:08] and think too little of that which is the glory of God?

God is not satisfied, he is not content with less than giving us his glory.

And Paul, in announcing the gospel, says in Acts 20, verse 24, [00:28:10] But I make no account of my life as dear to myself, so that I finish my course in the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the glad tidings of the grace of God.

That is the beginning point, the point to start with, that everything as it reaches us is characterized by the grace of God.

But as the two passages, the two verses which we have read in the beginning show, it is by no means everything God wants to show us. His grace is something which is so rich and so vast that we will probably never understand it fully, what this love means which is shown to people who have not the least reason to receive this love.

[00:29:12] Grace is love shown to those who do not deserve it.

But this is only one point. When Paul speaks in the two passages which we have read about the gospel of the glory of God, or the gospel of the glory of Christ, then he takes us up into heaven.

He wants to show us what the riches of the divine essence are for us.

That is what the gospel of the glory shows us. And it is difficult, as I said in the beginning, to make a difference or to differentiate between the gospel of the glory [00:30:03] and the doctrine of Paul because it is, in a sense, one cannot make a distinction.

And we do not want to take, naturally, the whole conference, which would be impossible anyway, to take up the subject of the conference. But the things which show us the aim of God in giving us this gospel of glory is that he can use nothing of natural man, which is something which is also very easily forgotten today.

In believing in the Lord Jesus, it is not only that we have received forgiveness of sins, but that God says, in my glory, in my presence, it is impossible for me to have creatures in which there is a single trace of sin.

[00:31:13] But we are, by nature, all sinners. And if our sins are forgiven, we have still a sinful nature. So the gospel of the glory says, this cannot be.

And that means that the old man has to be taken away, has to be done away with. That he says, you, as a natural person, can never come into my glory. You have to, this old man has to be taken away, has to be crucified with Christ. Romans 6.

He has to be judged with Christ. That is what crucified in this respect means. [00:32:02] It also speaks of the shame of the cross. But it is also the judgment. It has to die with Christ. He has to die with Christ. Our old man has died with Christ.

And we have been buried with Christ in baptism.

That is, that God says, I cannot have anything of the old man. I can only have a new man in my presence.

That is why Ephesians says that we have been raised with Christ. Ephesians 2.

That we have been quickened with Christ.

And that even in him we are seated in the heavenlies in Christ. But not any trace of our old nature or our old man will ever be there. Because it would be incompatible with the glory of God that sinners as such are in heaven. [00:33:10] And this is something which no other apostle has ever announced and

ever preached.

The same is true with the main subject of Romans justification. Which shows in Romans 3, shows us that this is directly in connection with the glory. Romans 3.

Verse 23.

Paul says, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of Christ. [00:34:05] Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Here we see that Paul, as this chosen vessel, has always in view to present the glory of God.

This radiation of all his characteristics.

Divine characteristics.

Which one can put together in two words, light and love. Which comprise everything of the character of God. And we have said already, man can never come there. We can never reach the glory of God. But this was the aim, this was the goal of God. And then the epistle to the Romans shows us how much more he did than to forgive us our sins.

[00:35:09] He did forgive us our sins. But it is by no means everything God did when he accepted us in Christ.

Here it is said that he justified us, that we were justified. And to be justified means much more than to be forgiven.

To be forgiven presupposes that there is a guilty person. And that he confesses his guilt.

And then his guilt is forgiven.

But to be justified means much more. To be justified means that there is a just reason to forgive. [00:36:03] Justification is also forgiveness. But it is forgiveness on a judicial basis.

It is forgiveness on a basis where those who are the objects of justification can leave.

Judicial expression can leave the courtroom acquitted as if they had never done any sin. That is justification.

And we see that God, as a just God, needed, in all reverence I say this, could not act otherwise than in this way. Because otherwise he would not maintain the essence of his being in only forgiving and leaving sin as it is. [00:37:07] No, he justified us. And thereby we have been enabled to enter into the glory of God to which we were hindered by our sins.

And it goes even farther because justification is an act which happens with us.

But in Romans 3 it is not only said that we are justified, but it is said in verse 21, but now without law righteousness, the righteousness of God is manifested. It is not our righteousness. If somebody is justified, only justified, one could say he leaves the courtroom as a righteous, [00:38:02] as a justified

and therefore as an approved righteous man. But this is not the only thing. It is said that God's righteousness comes into the picture.

And that is much, much more. This shows us again that it is the glory of God which is spoken of. Because if it is said that God's righteousness is revealed to us and manifested in those who believe, one can ask how is it possible that God can show his righteousness to those who are by nature and by their acts unrighteous. But God's righteousness has not only to do with our state and our acts, but it has to do and it circles in the person of the Lord Jesus, who as the only righteous man on this earth stood in our place, stood in my place. [00:39:08] And God, the righteous God, showed his righteousness in the first place in judging a man for sin. Not me, that would have been eternal condemnation. But he judged the Lord Jesus, the only righteous one, in my place. That is, in a way, the first in this process of justification, the first act of God's righteousness that he righteously judged sin in man. And the Lord Jesus was the one who bore this righteous judgment. But then the Lord Jesus glorified God by this.

He did it so perfectly that nothing, that no desire, that no... [00:40:16] that God had nothing more to lay, to put, to charge to anybody. Because the Lord Jesus in his perfectness had borne everything and had done it in a way that God was glorified by it. So, when the Lord Jesus died and took the salary of sin, which is death, he paid the full debt for sin.

And then we see that God, in his righteousness, did not leave the Lord Jesus in the grave, in the tomb. That he raised him from the dead, from death, and that he set him at his right hand.

[00:41:08] The Lord Jesus speaks of this act, the second act of righteousness. Righteousness in judging sin. Righteousness in judging sin. Secondly, righteousness in exalting him that had fully and perfectly borne this righteous judgment in his body. And that is what the Lord Jesus says in John 16, I think. In John 16.

We see...

In verse 8.

[00:42:10] And having come, he, the Spirit, will bring demonstration to the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment. And now it is explained, of sin, because they do not believe on me. The fact that the Jews, the leaders, did not believe on the Lord Jesus, who revealed the grace and glory of God, was the proof of their sin. And it was the presence of the Holy Spirit which would testify of it. Secondly, he would testify of righteousness, because I go away to the Father. This shows, this explains, that the going to the Father was the righteous answer of God to the perfect fulfillment of the work on the cross. [00:43:04] God was, in a way, righteous to put his Son at his right hand. God would have been, reverently speaking, unrighteous if he had not raised the Lord Jesus and put him at his right hand. So the second act of God's righteousness, God's righteousness, was that he placed the Lord Jesus at his right hand. And now Romans 3 gives the third step. And that is what we find in Romans 3, verse 26.

For the showing forth of his righteousness in the present time, that is the present time of Christ, so that he should be just, or righteous, and justify him that is of the faith of Jesus. [00:44:09] There we find the third step, or the third aspect of this righteousness of God. Not our, God's righteousness. After having seen that, having judged sin in the Lord Jesus, righteously, and in an answer to this bearing of

the sin, raising him and putting him at his right hand in his righteousness, he is now righteous. It is God's righteousness that he accepts everybody who puts, as it were, his hand in faith on the Lord Jesus. Again, and that shows us that God's righteousness is much more than my justification. My justification is based on the righteousness of God. [00:45:03] As it were, I again say it, God would be unrighteous, but he isn't, if he would not accept me when I put my faith in the Lord Jesus. That is the righteousness of God, and John Paul, under the guidance of the Spirit, says that the sinner, who is not in relation under the righteousness of God, who is not justified, can never reach the glory of God. Because even this righteousness of God is one aspect of the glory of God. And so we can go on.

We see that we are united to Christ, who could have thought that God, instead of only forgiving sinners their sins, [00:46:02] says, no, you will be one with my Son, one with Christ, union with Christ, in Christ. That is infinitely more than the thing I needed and I could aspire to.

It is the richness of the glory of God, which gave me this place. The fact that he has placed the Spirit as the earnest, and this is with which I would like to come to an end, because we cannot speak about the whole Gospel of Paul, [00:47:01] but my idea was just to give a few hints as to what the Gospel really is, and the Gospel as it has been announced by Paul. Which brings us into the presence of God, which shows us the glory of God. And one of these things is that we have the Holy Spirit indwelling in us. A person of the Godhead dwelling in our frail bodies. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, not only the assembly. This is what Paul calls the mystery of the Gospel. And I will not at all enter into this, because this would lead us too far, and I will just limit myself to these characteristics of his Gospel, which show us in which nearness to God, the glorious God, we have been born. [00:48:02] And the last point is the blessed hope, which is also one of the things the Lord spoke of it, but the other apostles hardly touch on it. But Paul says, this cannot but be the fulfillment of all the gifts of glory which God has bestowed on us, now by faith, but there in his presence, in the glory, we will enjoy them fully and eternally. I'm convinced and persuaded that one could say many, many more things about the Gospel of Paul. But may the Lord give us grace in the coming days that we touch upon different parts of what we have mentioned tonight, [00:49:02] because the difference between Gospel and doctrine is hardly to be made. But may the Lord impress on our hearts more and more this wonderful fact that our God and our Father, who gave us the Lord Jesus, and to purify us from our sins, was not content with that, was not satisfied. It was never his aim just to give us forgiveness of sins, but it was his aim to make us as far as it is possible for creatures, for such we will always remain. Partakers of his glory.

The Lord Jesus is already there, and we are called to wait for the moment of his coming. And then we will see how infinitely much more the Gospel, [00:50:05] the glad tidings, the good tidings which saved us from this world and brought us to the Father's heart, contains than just forgiveness of sins. And I think the brothers have had at heart to enlarge a little bit on this subject, because we live in a time where there is a flatness sometimes in the announcing of the Gospel, which can hardly be topped. But it is forgiveness, and you will be glad and happy and will be another person in this world. How poor. It is true. But it is only as if you would say, you are a rich man now, but I give you 10 pounds. [00:51:01] And everybody would say, well, where is the riches now? Therefore, it is very important, I think, that we understand more and more what this Gospel of Paul, of which he speaks, my Gospel, he says my Gospel. It was not something which he had invented or which belonged only to him in the way that he was master of it. No, it was entrusted to him and to him especially. We will see this when considering Ephesians 3 especially. But it is in a special way the Gospel of the glory of God and also of the glory of Christ, which go together. The one is the author and the other the fulfiller. The one who brought us this glory and who will bring us into this glory. [00:52:20] But if the cross of Christ be seen,

How now can sane and righteous be?

The judgment fell on Jesus' head, For sin is gone since death was made.

[00:53:01] Sturgeon was his head in the blood of Paul, And mercy paid his penitent soul.

The sinner who raised his grave, And said, The Saviour died for me, Am I to live at home in God?
And take this day my peace with God?