

THE *Glory*
OF
GOD
INTO ALL THE WORLD

REDEMPTION IN CHRIST JESUS
by Frank Jones

A SERMON PREACHED ON
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*“Being Justified freely by his grace through
the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”
- Romans 3:24*

FAITH
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REDEMPTION IN JESUS CHRIST

BY PASTOR FRANK JONES

In light of the day in which we live, I tremble when I consider how many lack an understanding of the gospel, the good news of Christ Jesus. We live in a day of a “powerless gospel.” First Corinthians 1 describes the problem of mixing the wisdom of this world with the truth of Christ. “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God” (v. 18). We are living during those days.

I transcribed this sermon because I am concerned that you and I have the reality of the gospel living inside us. I don’t believe any pastor should ever lose a passion to see the members of his church represent a *saved* membership. We are mistaken if we ever assume that the members of our churches are born-again.

THE EXAMPLE OF GEORGE WHITEFIELD

I recently read a biography about George Whitefield (1714-1770), an English evangelist God used mightily during our nation’s First Great Awakening. Ministering in Georgia when it was considered a wilderness, he preached along the eastern seaboard of our nation and by God’s grace and power he lived to see a Great Awakening in our land. Thousands professed the Lord Jesus. Churches were revived and filled to capacity.

Before he came to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, however, George Whitefield experienced a period of great agony of soul. Whitefield wrote in 1769,

I began to fast twice a week for thirty-six hours together, prayed many times a day and received the sacrament every Lord’s Day. I fasted myself almost to death all the forty days of Lent, during which I made it a point of duty never to go less than three times a day to public worship, besides seven times a day to my private prayers.

What if you met someone who fasted, attended services every Lord’s Day, engaged in the common community of the church, and not only read the Bible during his private devotions but also

paused seven times a day for private prayer? Would you consider him a religious man? Yet Whitefield wrote in 1769, “I knew no more that I was to be born a new creature in Christ Jesus, than if I had never been born at all.”

It is dangerous for Bible-believing Christians to think that spirituality consists of activity and not of a change in one’s inner soul. If that inner change occurs, yes, there will be a change in activity; but we too often mistake ministry activity for spirituality. For example, a believer witnesses, faithfully reads his Bible, or prays regularly can still be lost. A man who orders his family aright or is zealous for the things of the Lord can still be lost. Indeed, he can carry around a Bible, memorize Scripture, and attend church services every service—and remain lost. A lost man can hold a church office.

People tend to base their salvation on our spiritual activities—on how much money we give, on whom we do good towards. But this is a wrong way of thinking. For example, at Oxford George Whitefield was part of a Holy Club, along with John and Charles Wesley. Everyone who participated in the club, though lost in his sin, was trying to please the Lord. They read devotional books about self-discipline, good works, and how they should conduct themselves as believers. The bottom line, however, is that those sincere men knew nothing of the grace of Jesus Christ.

In fact, dissatisfaction grew within each Holy Club member, especially in the heart of George Whitefield. When at age twenty he read *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* by Henry Scougal, he was especially disturbed. The author contradicted everything Whitefield believed about salvation. Whitefield wrote,

God showed me [through the book *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*] that I must be born again, or be damned! I learned that a man may go to church, say his prayers, receive the sacrament and yet not be a Christian. How did my heart rise and shudder, like a poor man that is afraid to look into his account-books, lest he should find himself a bankrupt? “Shall I burn this book? Shall I throw it down? Or shall I search it?” I did search it; and, holding the book in my hand, thus addressed the God of heaven and earth: “Lord, if I am not a Christian, or if I am not a real one, for Jesus Christ’s sake, show me what Christianity

is that I may not be damned at last!” . . . God soon showed me, for in reading a few lines further, that; “true religion is a union of the soul with God, and Christ formed within us,” a ray of divine light was instantaneously darted in upon my soul and from that moment, but not till then, did I know that I must become a new creature.

Though Whitefield wasn’t yet a believer, he knew that he must be born again. The term *born again* means that **our souls are in union with the risen Jesus Christ**. Whitefield knew that he couldn’t do anything to make God make him born again; in short, he needed what we call “regeneration.”

Whitefield searched for regeneration and revival as many believers do today—through activity and self-denial. He wrote, “By degrees I began to leave off eating fruits and such like and gave the money I usually spent in that way to the poor. Afterwards, I always chose the worst sort of food, . . . I wore woolen gloves, a patched gown, and dirty shoes.”

Whitefield thought that if he gave his money to the poor, did enough good deeds, or said the right things, the Lord would give him this new birth. He gave himself so heartily to this pursuit that his academic studies began to suffer. He was called to the Oxford’s physician office. “What is the problem?” the physician asked. “Why are you not able to make your studies?”

Recalling the meeting, Whitefield wrote, “I burst into tears, and assured him that it [his academic failure] was not out of contempt of authority, but that I could not act otherwise.”

When Whitefield kept searching, someone suggested that he try imitating Jesus. Of course, glorifying the Lord and seeing His life flow out of us after we are saved by His grace should be our life’s pursuit. But Whitefield wrote, “After supper I went into Christ Church walk, and continued in silent prayer under one of the trees for near two hours, sometimes lying flat on my face, sometimes kneeling upon my knees.”

What was the result of Whitefield’s efforts? He found no rest for his soul. In fact, the experience almost killed him. A few weeks before his conversion, he wrote, “I constantly walked out in the cold mornings, ‘til part of one of my hands was quite black. This,

with my continued abstinence and inward conflicts, at length so emancipated my body, that at Passion-week, finding I could scarce creep up stairs.”

Remember, two years earlier, Whitefield had joined the Oxford Holy Club with other men who were serious about finding regeneration. In fact, one club member, William Morgan, continued in these practices until he went insane and died.

Whitefield wrote, “I resolved to die or conquer.” But he was still going about his pursuit the wrong way; he was seeking activity. Though we don’t know everything that occurred, *welo* know that Whitefield was saved in a room at Oxford University. He wrote,

God was pleased to remove the heavy load, to enable me to lay hold of His dear Son by a living faith, and by giving me the Spirit of adoption, to seal me even to the day of everlasting redemption. O! With what joy—joy unspeakable—even joy that was full of, and big with glory, was my soul filled, when the weight of sin went off, and an abiding sense of the pardoning love of God, and a full assurance of faith, broke in upon my disconsolate soul! Surely it was the day of mine espousals - a day to be had in everlasting remembrances! At first my joys were like a spring tide, and overflowed the banks!

Reader, do you know anything like these joys? Later, Whitefield wrote in a sermon, “I know the place! It may be superstitious, perhaps, but whenever I go to Oxford I cannot help running to that place where Jesus Christ first revealed Himself to me and gave me the new birth.”

His words describe “the power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16), which is different from the message of modern-day evangelism. If Whitefield were alive today, some evangelists would have said to him, “Do you want to go to heaven? Pray this prayer after me.” But is it enough to promise a different future geographical location alongside the same old dying life? Reader, we don’t need to continue in a dying life. **We need new life**—a life that is only through the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE EXAMPLE OF ANN JUDSON

We find another example in Ann Judson, the wife of Adoniram

Judson, one of the first missionaries from our shores to a foreign land. Anne was a churchgoer but also a socialite who loved the gaieties and worldliness of parties. Getting together with her friends, she adored jawing, laughing, and poking fun at people. At sixteen, Anne wrote about her salvation in her journal:

I obtained a new view of the character of God. His justice, displayed in condemning the finally impenitent, which I had before viewed as cruel, now appeared to be an expression of hatred to sin, and regard to the good of beings in general. A view to His purity and holiness filled my soul with wonder and admiration. I felt a disposition to commit myself unreservedly into His hands, and leave it with Him to save me or cast me off, for I felt I could not be unhappy, while allowed the privilege of contemplating and loving so glorious a Being.

John 1:14 says, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” Church isn’t boring when we see God’s glory. Life changes. Everything is radically disturbed.

Before salvation, I didn’t care about God. As long as He took care of me and took me home to be with Him in heaven someday, that was okay with me. But in my heart, I said, “God, You can leave me alone. I want to do my own thing. You know, I don’t want to be a bad person. I just want to be moral.” A teen once told me, “You know, I don’t want to be rich, but I don’t want to be poor. I just want to have everything I want.” Those words describe covetousness.

We can hear facts like a blind man who can’t see. We can know certain facts about the Lord Jesus; but until the light of His glory shines in our souls, we are lost in our sin. Second Corinthians 4:4 and 6 say that “the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. . . . For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts.” We have a different view of the Lord. We are not using Him; we are humbling ourselves and calling out to Him, “Save me.” Cries of desperation do not come from those who do not believe they need to be saved. Ann wrote,

When I examined myself, I was constrained to own, that I had

feelings and dispositions to which I was formerly an utter stranger. I had a sweet communion with the blessed God, from day to day; my heart was drawn out in love to Christians of whatever denomination; the sacred Scriptures were sweet to my taste; and such was my thirst for religious knowledge, that I frequently spent a great part of the night in reading religious books. Oh, how different were my views of myself and of God, from what they were. [That is salvation.] My chief happiness now consisted in contemplating the moral perfections of the glorious God. I longed to have all intelligent creatures love him; and felt, that even the fallen spirits could never be released from their obligations to love a Being possessed of such glorious perfections...Sin in myself and others, appeared as that abominable thing, which a holy God hates - and I earnestly strove to avoid sinning, not merely because I was afraid of hell, but because I feared to displease God, and grieve His Holy Spirit.

One of Ann's friends wrote the following about her:

Redeeming love was now her theme. One might spend days with her, without hearing any other subject reverted to. The throne of grace, too, was her early and late resort. I have known her to spend cold winter evenings in a chamber without fire, and return to the family with a solemnity spread over her countenance, which told of Him with whom she had been communing. [Ann wasn't a socialite anymore.]

Reader, you may not have experienced a radical change to the same degree that George Whitefield and Ann Judson, but at salvation you should have experienced an inward change in your desires, your motives, and your affections towards God and His Son, Jesus the Christ. Something is inside you that wasn't there before: a new life—the life of God in the soul of man. Even a six-year-old will experience this change if that little one is born again.

WHAT PEOPLE REALLY NEED

Do we read anywhere in Scripture that people's greatest need is merely a change of location? Hell to heaven? Romans 3:9 describes the real need: "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles,

that they are all under sin." Heaven is a far inferior byproduct to the life and divine essence of God dwelling in a man or woman's soul. No location can compete with the life and presence of God.

The real need is that we are all under sin and need salvation. Paul didn't ask, "Do you want to go to heaven? Do you want peace? Do you want prosperity? Do you want your problems solved?" Paul told people the terrible news nobody wants to hear—**that everyone is evil.**

The world's textbooks tell people that they are okay. "The real problem," the books say, "is the parents. The real problem is the church. Perhaps you went to church too much." According to the world, the real problem is everything other than ourselves.

The fact is, we cannot be saved unless we know that we *need* to be saved, and we must know what we are saved *from* and what we are saved *to*. In short, we are saved from sin to a union in Christ by His power, grace, and righteousness. That salvation happens only one way—through the gospel.

Romans 3:9 says that "both Jews and Gentiles . . . are all under sin." Is anyone righteous? Verse 10 says, "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one." Don't let people tell you that they are without sin or perhaps less sinful than someone else. Our standard is not one another but Jesus Christ. Verse 11 further describes our sinfulness—"There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." No one apart from faith in Christ walks on the right path, a problem Jesus warned about in Matthew 7:13. "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat." What does Jesus say about the broad way? "Many there be which go in thereat."

Romans 3:12 says, "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable." If you told your neighbors that they were worthless to God, do you think they would get angry or put up a fight? Even if they did get angry, the church of Jesus Christ shouldn't be suppressing the truth. In fact, we should be letting loose the truth and telling everyone about it. We do not tell people the truth because we think we are more righteous than they are; we tell them so they can be saved. Verse 12 continues, "There

is none that doeth good, no, not one.”

We should tell them that men are sepulchers and that the only thing dwelling inside people is corruption. If that’s what’s on the inside, then the only kind of fruit they can produce is corruptible fruit. We should tell them what has happened and that the real cause of their problem is that they do not glorify God. Romans 1:21 says, “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful.” Instead of glorifying God, what did they do? Verse 23 says, “[They] changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.” That is what many are doing today—worshiping the works of their hands. They ask, “Do you know what is going to solve our problems?” Here is their answer: “Technology,” “Money,” “Reason.”

Though much time has passed since Paul penned the book of Romans, men and women haven’t changed. According to verse 25, they have “changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.” Let me ask you a question, reader. Do you read your Bible, or do you reject God’s truth? If you read the Bible, why do you do so? If for any reason, you should read the Bible to love and behold God’s glory in the pages of the Bible. Anything else is the wrong reason.

The Bible tells us that we are not to love the world (1 John 2:15). What does it mean to be “worldly”? It means to live for the same glories that those in the world live for. It means to reject the truth and to believe the same lies those in the world believe.

Everywhere believers are becoming more like the world. The only answer is for the church of Jesus Christ to “not [be] ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Romans 1:16). We must believe that “the exceeding greatness of [that gospel’s] power” (Ephesians 1:19) is to save people from their sins.

Salvation comes not from my activities or my duties. It does not come by my self-discipline or by my coercing God. Salvation comes when I fall on my knees and humble myself before Jesus Christ, the God of gods and King of kings, believing what the

Bible says about His life, death, and resurrection; believing that God raised Him from the dead; believing that made Him Lord of all. Salvation comes when I cry out, “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13).

Dear reader, the gospel is the *only* message that can deliver us. People ought to know that truth of the gospel, believe it, and see it living in the church of Jesus Christ.

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

The gospel is not a four-step program. The apostle Paul says, “[I am] separated unto the gospel of God” (Romans 1:1), which verse 3 says is “concerning [God’s] Son Jesus Christ.” God has called His church to confess Jesus Christ, not just a generic God.

This issue is important because Romans 3:20 says that “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified [or declared righteous] in [God’s] sight.” God gave the law to give us an experiential understanding that we are sinful people. “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets” (v. 21). Galatians 3:24 says, “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” What righteousness is God referring to in Romans 3:21? The next verse answers. “Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference” (v. 22).

This message is not universalism; not everyone is going to be saved. Though we should proclaim the gospel to everyone, it is effective only to those who believe. When I say the word *believe*, I do not refer to intellectual acknowledgment. Believing is hearing and seeing the glory of God in Jesus Christ and embracing Him. That’s what faith is, as described in the pages of our Bible.

I love this phrase in verse 22—“There is no difference.” Can a Muslim be saved? Certainly. Can a rich American? Yes. Can a Jewish person or a Baptist? Yes. There is no difference because “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (v. 23). Here is the problem. When we sinned in Adam, we lost moral ability and the glory of God in our bodies. “All of us have sinned and lack the glory of God.” We threw it away; we despised it. What we really wanted was the glories of this life, the glories of

the computer, the glories of retirement, of money, of lands, and of houses. “This is what I really want,” we said, “but not You, God, unless I get in trouble. Kind of help me out so I can continue feeding my soul on these false glories.”

Verse 24 continues, “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Faith in Jesus Christ can come upon all people whereby God the Father through His Son declares them justified. What is the key word related to justification in this verse? “Freely.” When I read that word, I want to shout, “Hallelujah!” Do you experience any joy in that word? Could we possibly be justified beyond a reason within us? If God was looking for a reason inside me, I would be going to hell. No, we’ve been saved freely by His grace—not because of anything we have done.

I fear that we have so lost our understanding of what the gospel truly is. Are we “justified freely” by our prayers? What does verse 24 say? We are “justified freely *by his grace*” (emphasis added).

Where is this redemption found? It is not found in us; it’s found in His Son. Surely for a believer here is “joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8).

Who do we turn to when we have no hope or don’t know what to do? Jesus. This new birth comes to us, not by the will of man or by the blood of human beings, but by His grace. This is surely the reason we ought to rejoice in God’s unmerited favor toward us.

You say, “Well, I don’t want to be too different from the world.”

My reply? Impossible. Is God different from the world? If you are saved, you *are* different. You don’t need to try to be different—you already *are* different. This difference comes from redemption (v. 24). What that simply means is that Jesus Christ is the payment that bought believing people out of the marketplace of sin. It wasn’t our prayers, our good works, or our worthiness that brought redemption. It was *what He* did. By the way, Jesus didn’t pay the ransom to Satan. He paid the ransom to God the Father, whom we had offended. It is His wrath that is poured out on everyone who is under sin.

Jesus Christ Himself is the ransom. He is the payment. He is that which was given, the Son of God, to purchase believing people

out of slavery. Many of us have a hard time understanding what slavery is. During a terrible time in our nation’s history, African-Americans were enslaved. What many in our society don’t understand is that African-Americans aren’t the only ones who have experienced slavery. Everyone has.

Sin is like a taskmaster that whips and drives us so we rebel against God and do what you want—which is exactly the way lost people live. They are enslaved to sin and to the feelings (desires) that come out of an unclean heart. But if, as the Bible says, we are enslaved to sin, how can we be free from this slavery?

Perhaps you say, “I don’t want to be free from it.”

That’s a problem because if you die in your sin, then you will be under God’s condemnation. If you die in your sins, you will experience the “second death,” the eternal lake of fire forever. How are you going to get out of this slavery? Who will pay the price to set you free? Thankfully, Jesus already paid the price to God the Father, and He is the one who can deliver us.

We were once slaves to sin, bound in death, but Christ became the ransom to purchase us out of death. That is why He came. Matthew 20:28 says, “Even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” When Jesus came, He didn’t come only *to announce* salvation; He came *to be* salvation—that’s the difference. He came to open the way to God as “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). Romans 3:23 says that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” But I am declared righteous, without any cause in myself, by the grace of God through the redemption that is Christ Jesus the Lord.

Salvation comes only from Jesus Christ. He is our Savior, our salvation, and our God. This salvation is by grace alone, by faith alone, and in Christ alone. The work of salvation is wholly and completely by God, not of man lest any man would boast (Ephesians 2:9).

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