

## What is the Gospel? - Part 5

**Psa. 2:12** Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish *from* the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed *are* all they that put their trust in him.

**Jn. 14:6** Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

I chose this wonderful verse from Psalm 2, because it illustrates the great fact that the gospel was present and operating in the Old Testament, the same as in the New Testament. The “everlasting gospel“, has not changed one iota, throughout all the millennia of human history, and this beautiful verse illustrates that perfectly. Christ is the sum and substance of the gospel, because He is the sum and substance of “the truth” and “the life” of God. There is no saving “truth” outside of Him, and all who come to Him, find and receive the very “life” of God Himself. No wonder the gospel, has always been an eternal blessing to all who come under it’s power, and to all who are transformed by it’s grace. To the unbelievers it is foolishness, but to us which are saved it is the power of God. To us which are saved it is life itself. To us which are saved, it is that which satisfies all the longings of our soul, and that which brings us peace with God. All these blessings, and more, are included in the gospel, and that’s why I want to point out some things from these verses, which have monumental importance to all of us who live today, in a world which seems very far from God and His “truth” and “life”. The gospel is the answer for men, no matter what age they live in. I’d like to derive a few key concept from these verses, which will enrich us with further gospel knowledge about Jesus Christ the Only Savior.

### **1. God’s Anger is the Reason Men Perish.**

I am starting this lesson, with a statement that ravel the sensibilities, and ruffles the feathers of many people who cling to false views of God. Even the majority of so called Bible believing preachers shudder at the two ideas that are included in this statement. It upsets their comfort zone. It makes them wince. They want to be “positive”, and this sounds too “negative”. And that’s why they should not presume to call themselves Bible-believing, and reject these two ideas. The first idea is that God is an angry God, and the second idea is that this anger of God is the reason why men perish. People are quick to rebel against both notions, primarily because they want a God who fits their preconceived notions, and these ideas, which I have expressed, don’t fit their false concepts that a Loving God is never angry, and that a person perishes by his failure to believe, and for no reasons in God. God is not the cause of mans damnation, they say. Man is. So in this non-Biblical attitude, we have at once the destruction of the Sovereignty of God, and the elevation of man to the office of creator. Man creates His own destiny.

If however, we read the Bible, we will learn that this godless and unchristian bias against God, and warped prejudice toward the divinity of man, is nothing more than the same sin which Adam and Eve committed. They did not want God's commands and decrees to rule over them, so they rebelled. They were the original advocates of the doctrine of human independence and the power of human self-determination. So this attitude which perpetually recoils from the truth that God is a God of anger, and that His anger is the cause of man's damnation, is clear evidence of both the extremely low view of God that men have, and the extremely high view of man which they cherish in their bosoms like some sort of holy grail. These are both serious signs of depravity and alienation from the truth and life of God. Man is thoroughly sinful in all his thoughts, and rebellion against these revealed doctrines proves it.

Clinging to false views of God, and elevating man into the cause of his own effect, are nothing more than blasphemous idolatry. God is the "I Am", and man shall have no other God but Him. To turn man into His own god, and to remove God's power to damn, is to worship idols. Yet these doctrines are sanctioned in churches, and preached from pulpits, as though they were truth. They are simply lies, and they need to be excised from the body of Christ. To say that a loving God cannot be angry and send people to hell, is simply to contradict some of the most basic principles of the Bible. False views of God always constitute idolatry.

Many people will say, Oh, but that verse is from the Old Testament, so somehow God is not a God of wrath any more. But I will remind you that it is the New Testament which tells us: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God" (Heb. 10:31). That is the whole point of the Psalmist's plea for men to "Kiss the Son!...LEST HE BE ANGRY AND YE PERISH WHEN HIS WRATH IS KINDLED". I'd say that anyone with even a basic level of cognition, can see that the Psalmist is trying to invoke fear in the hearts of the people who read his words. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the holy is understanding" (Prov. 9:10). "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Isa. 33:14). Fearing God is a good thing. Not fearing Him is idolatry.

I think that it is quite clear that the Psalmist was not only accurately stating plain and solid Biblical doctrine, but he was deliberately trying to create and promote a healthy fear, and a correct perception of the True God. God is not a sissified and emasculated puppet in heaven, who is powerless to do whatever He wants. On the contrary, He is the Absolute and Unlimited Sovereign, who always does exactly what He wants, and who causes all things by Sovereign Decree, which cannot be altered, hindered, modified or questioned. God is God! He is not a wimp. And when that is established, and understood, then we can realize that "man is man", and we will take our place of total dependence on our knees before God. There is no other place for us. Man was created to either worship

God, as God, or burn in hell. There is no other purpose for us. God makes either vessels of honor, or vessels which are prepared for destruction (Rom. 9:21-23). Vessels of honor, always come to believe, fear God and worship Him. The elect were created for that purpose. Everybody else will be cast into hell!

The Universalists have been rebelling against this doctrine for years. They have turned their puny man made straws toward hell, and tried to quench her flames in an attempt to eradicate her, because their warped views of God won't allow them to acknowledge the fact that He sends men to the everlasting burnings in absolute, and irresistible Sovereign wrath. All they are doing thereby is stoking the fire even hotter to receive their rebellious, wicked and godless souls. Christianity doesn't act like that at all. Christianity, clearly teaches that God is God, and man is man. Christianity acknowledges that man's place is at the throne of worship, and those who do not find themselves there, are cast alive into the blackness of darkness, into the fire that is not quenched, where the worm dieth not, where they will be tortured endlessly, and without mercy throughout eternity. Men hate these truths, and the ranks of the Universalists and fire-extinguisher cults swell exponentially, but guess what? Their rebellion changes nothing, and they are simply proving to the entire world that they were in fact "made to be taken and destroyed" (2Pet. 2:12).

I do not intend to devote any time here to disproving the false notions that man, or Satan created sin; or that man's sin is the cause of His damnation, and not God. I have refuted these fallacies elsewhere. What I simply want you to see here is that God is not just the God of Love, and Peace, Mercy and Grace; He is also the God of Absolute Sovereignty, Holiness, Justice, Wrath, and Vengeance. Man wants only a positive-centric God, which makes him feel comfortable, joyful, peaceful and contented. But the actual God of all Christians, the real God of the Bible, burns people in a Christless eternal hell. He is a God to be feared just as much as He is a God to be loved! That's what the Psalmist was teaching, and that's what we must embrace in implicit faith.

God did not lie about Himself in the Bible. He knows quite well what His nature is, and He has told us exactly what He is like. This is a vital part of God's self-disclosure, and Bible-believers are required to preach it and teach it, even though men hate it. Guess what? Men are wrong. Men love darkness rather than light. Men have been rebelling against Gods words since Eden. That should not surprise us or dissuade us from preaching all the truth about our God. So, what they think or like, simply does not factor into the equation which requires all preachers to preach the entire counsel of God. If they don't like it Tuff! If they don't like it, let them stone us. That's what they love to do to Bible believing preachers. They have always stoned the prophets, and stoning for us would be the blessing that would release us from dwelling in the midst of a den of vipers. Once they stone us, we would not have to preach to them any more! and we would no longer have to weep for their souls, and be burdened by their false accusations. Let them stone us. Bring it on. It will simply bring us to heaven sooner. So let them have at it. Their anger against God changes

nothing, because if they are destined for hell, hell is exactly where they will end up, no matter what they do, and no matter what we say.

## 2. Christ is the Only Reason Some Men are Saved.

Notice that The Psalmist directs us to “Kiss The Son”. “The Son” is an Old Testament reference Jesus Christ who told us “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (Jn. 16:6). No man comes to the Father but through the Son. That’s the only way that any humans at all are saved.

Now strange as it may seem, people get just as much upset and disturbed by this thought, as the thoughts expressed in Point 1 above. Rather than rejoicing in the true facts of salvation, men choose to criticize and complain about God’s wonderful works of Grace. Instead of being glad that God saves some, that is not good enough for them. They require Him to save all. They thus totally forget, that it is God who saves, and not them. Christ is the one who shed His precious blood for sinners, and it is He who applies the work of redemption together with the Holy Spirit and the Father. So why would anybody criticize Him for what He does? Does He do things that are less than perfect? Does He make mistakes? Is His thinking clouded because it does not agree with ours? Is His arm shortened that it cannot save? What possible reason could someone have for questioning the Love, motives or heart of Jesus? Such criticisms of God are never acceptable. They show the deviousness and sinfulness of the man or woman who asks them.

“Blessed *are* all they that put their trust in him” indicates that salvation is a great blessing to the people who receive it. So why on earth would someone decry it as some sort of injustice with God? Now it is indeed true that all men are not saved, and that Christ died to secure the salvation of the elect only, but how does this make God to be an unjust tyrant? Yet many people voice these exact feelings and hatred for what God in Grace has done. This shows that they are motivated by impure thoughts and an evil overestimation of their own self worth. Men may be supremely important in their own eyes, but they are as insignificant as grasshoppers and as the dust on a scale in God’s eyes.

**Isa 40:12-18** Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? **13** Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or *being* his counsellor hath taught him? **14** With whom took he counsel, and *who* instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding? **15** Behold, the nations *are* as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. **16** And Lebanon *is* not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. **17** All nations before him *are* as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. **18** To

whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?

The concept of God's over-arching and supreme transcendence, must always be kept in mind when we are talking about any of God's works, and this especially includes the work of redemption. God does not consult man, nor does He require any of man's knowledge or wisdom. We require His. There is a simple, permanent and impenetrable wall of distinction between God and man...the wall of Divine Transcendence. Man will never be able to breach this wall, modify it, or understand it. So questioning and doubting the veracity of the Almighty needs to cease. It is evidence of a reprobate mind, and is not something any Christian should ever be involved in. Christians should not question God's greatest blessings toward men, and the fact that He saves any at all, is a stupendous miracle. The fact that He would even invite sinners to Kiss Him, is an utterly astounding and humbling concept. Who among men deserves to Kiss the Son? Have we done something that would make God willing to receive our kisses? I tell you it is the sheer Mercy and Grace of God which allows any sinner to approach Him, and we must never imagine that it is something which is within us.

Salvation, like everything else, is a caused thing. God is the only cause of it, and at no point, or in no way, has man ever contributed anything toward it. "Salvation is of the Lord" (Psalm 37:39-40; Jonah 2:9). Instead of this being some sort of a bad thing, this is a very good and wonderful thing. Because God is the cause of it, it shall never fail in any point. The elect shall be called, delivered, and brought effectually and infallibly to heaven at last. Not one sheep will ever slip through the hands of God, and be devoured by the enemy. This makes our salvation absolutely certain and secure, because we cannot screw it up.

### **3. The Gospel is Both an Invitation and a Command.**

"Kiss the Son" can be understood as both a command and an invitation. And there are plenty of other verses which show both of these aspects of the good news. A good example is the oft quoted Matt. 11:28-29.

**Mat 11:28-29** Come unto me, all *ye* that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

First we hear the words of invitation "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden". And then we hear the words of command: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me". Over and over again both aspects of the gospel are interwoven, and are seen in clear words of invitation and words of command. To deny either of these things is to make the gospel unrecognizable. Sinners need to hear the invitations of grace, and inviting men to meet Christ and know Him is a definite and important aspect of the gospel. Silence saves no one. Men must be invited. It is doubtful that the gospel is preached at all if it never invites a

sinner to drink from the living waters. At least I would not consider that gospel preaching. Would you? By the same token, sinners need to hear the stern commands in the gospel as well. They are commanded to repent (Acts 3:19; Acts 17:30). They are commanded to believe (Acts 16:31; Rom. 10:9-10). They are commanded to forsake all and follow Christ (Lk. 14:33), They are commanded to flee from the wrath to come (Matt. 3:7). So if people say that the gospel contains no commands, they are simply lying. If there are no clear commands requiring sinners to change and believe on Christ, then the gospel is not being preached. The technicalities of whether or not a sinner is capable of obeying these commands, does not enter into this at all, because when the commands are preached it is the Holy Spirit who applies them as He sees fit. But they must be preached. Sinners need to be told to obey God in clear gospel terms. It does not matter whether they can or cannot do it. These are commands, not options.

It is these parts of the gospel that the hyper-Calvinist denies. Listen carefully. If a man tells you the gospel contains no commands to sinners, he is probably a hyper-Calvinist. To him, if we command a sinner to do something, that implies that he indeed has the ability to do it, and in their way of thinking, this makes salvation contingent upon something in man. If man can repent, then salvation is not of Grace. If sinners can believe, then they obviously are contributing something to their own salvation. The same things are asserted with reference to inviting men to Christ. If we invite all men, without discrimination, to come to Christ, then we are in fact implying that all men can indeed come, and save themselves by a simple choice of their own free will. These hyper-Calvinist follies can easily be refuted by the simple fact that we are commanded to preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). When we preach the gospel, the gospel itself makes the necessary discriminations required to call the elect, unite them to Christ, create in them a clean and repentant heart, and apply whatever aspects of the atonement God wants to apply. We do not determine these things. That's God's work. Our work is simply to extend the invitations, and utter the commands. God does what he wants with them. And when the gospel seed is sown, which includes invitations to Christ and commands to repent, believe and flee to Christ, the Holy Spirit applies it as He sees fit according to God's predestinating purposes. There is absolutely no danger of misleading a sinner when the invitations and commands about salvation are presented from Scripture, because the Holy Spirit is the one who either uses those invitations and commands according to God's perfect will to gather in whoever among the hearers is elect, or he uses them to harden the non elect. How can this be dangerous? Sinners cannot be misled by preaching the gospel. How can our extending the invitations and calls, commands and promises of the gospel, mislead anyone? If God predestines whom He will to be saved, then how does presenting invitations and commands to everyone interfere with that in any way? The real danger is to not issue the invitations and commands as we are told to preach to all men. The hyper-Calvinist is so concerned about technicalities concerning the limited atonement, that he never invites anyone, and he never

commands anyone to believe in Christ. This is the really dangerous position, because absolutely nobody can hear the voice of Christ in the gospel, if nobody preaches the gospel invitations and commands to them (Rom. 10:14). Hyper-Calvinists talk about the gospel, with great authority and theological adeptness, and never preach it! What's up with that? Talking about the gospel, must never be confused with actually preaching it. The hyper-Calvinist can go on and on, and preach 36 or even 80 sermons about the gospel, and not utter the gospel even once in the course of his preaching. Beware of this ungodly and dangerous heresy. I'd rather see a rank Arminian preacher inviting people to Christ, and commanding men to repent, than a sovereign-gracer who never utters a direct word of admonition to sinners. Woe unto them. A Calvinist with the whole truth and a closed mouth, is far worse than an Arminian with a partial truth and an opened one. Nobody gets saved from hearing nothing. But some people do get saved when they hear invitations and commands from God's word, even though those commands and calls are uttered by imperfect men with imperfect doctrine. It is the word which God uses to save men, not theologians busy with their theological juggling, unscriptural silence, or endless babble about a gospel that is never actually preached by them. Shame on preachers who don't invite all men everywhere to come to Christ. They are a disgrace to the Christian faith.

#### 4. The Gospel Contains Promises

Notice the words: "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him". These words promise a blessing for all people who put their trust in the Son of God. Trust is synonymous with faith, and by making this promise, God is saying that faith in Christ is never misplaced faith, instead it is always faith that is rewarded with all the blessings of salvation. Salvation is clearly a promise from God to save all those who trust in Christ. I want to emphasize that the promises in the gospel, specifically relate to salvation, as the gift of God. We are saved because He promises to save all His sheep, and lose none. But simply talking about God's promises, is not the gospel. I hear it presented like this, and it disturbs me.

It is true that the promises of salvation are many, are wonderful, and are part of the gospel, but it is not true that the promises apply to everyone. It is not true that all the promises are unconditional. It is not true that every believer receives every promise. It is not true that every believer understands every promise. It is not true that Bible promises are supposed to be objects of worship. And it is not true that men somehow hold God accountable to keep His every promise. So when we talk about the promises of God special discernment and wisdom is required. Let me give you some examples.

**Deu 26:16-19** This day the LORD thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments: thou shalt therefore keep and do them with all thine heart, and with all thy soul. **17** Thou hast avouched the LORD this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice: **18** And the LORD hath avouched thee this day to be his

peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that *thou* shouldest keep all his commandments; 19 And to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour; and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the LORD thy God, as he hath spoken.

This I think is a good example of a clear promise made to Israel. But did God fulfill His promise that these people would “keep all His commandments, and do them with all their hearts”? No He did not. These people showed over and over again that God did not in fact turn them into people who kept all His commands. They were among the most disobedient law breakers who ever lived. And that is simply because the promise was conditional. While the word “if” is not used, it is certainly indicated. They made a covenant with God which included obedience: “Thou hast avouched the LORD this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice”; and God made a covenant with them which in turn promised their obedience: “And the LORD hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that *thou* shouldest keep all his commandments”. But when they broke their promise to God, God’s covenant and promise to them, was automatically nullified. The promise was not unconditional. Very few of God’s promises are unconditional, and very few are blank checks on which you just fill in your name as the payee. Great care must be taken when discussing the wondrous promises of God. Here’s another example.

**Mat 7:7-8** Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: 8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

**Mat 21:21-22** Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this *which is done* to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. 22 And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

**Mar 11:24** Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive *them*, and ye shall have *them*.

**Joh 14:12-14** Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater *works* than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. 13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do *it*.

What do these verses have to do with the promises of God? Everything. Let me show you. Anybody can read and comprehend these simple promises. “Ask and ye shall receive”. “All things whatsoever ye shall ask, believing, ye shall receive”. “Whatever things you desire, when you pray...you shall have them”. “Whatsoever ye ask in my name, that will I do”. “If you ask anything in my name, I will do it”. These are certainly promises, are they not? People will tell you all day long, stories of how God heard and answered their prayers. And God does

hear and answer prayer, but not always. The simple question which must be asked in the light of these verses is are these absolute and irrevocable promises from God? Does God always keep his promises? I think this is a very valid question. When was the last time you saw somebody tossing around mountains, through prayer? Did Jesus ever move one? Has God ever answered the prayer to restore an amputated limb? There is no medical record of such a thing. Why not? Has nobody ever prayed for God to heal and amputee? If God answers prayers to heal people from cancer, why does He not answer the prayers of Christians who pray about a soldiers legs who were blown off in Iraq? If God always keeps His promises, then why doesn't he do what we ask when we ask Him to heal amputees? He promised to do "all things", "anything", "whatsoever we ask", but He obviously does not do that, so why not? Somebody will pipe up and say, well God only answers prayers when we are praying in God's will. These verses do not say, "ask anything you want, as long as its My will"? They say..."ask anything and I will do it". What's wrong here? Somebody else will say, well, there are certain things we should not ask because they are foolish. So is asking God to heal an amputee, or a downs syndrome baby, or a person who severed his spinal cord, or a baby with a cleft palate, or any other difficult case foolish? Why then do all babies born with a cleft palates require surgery? Why then do people with severed spinal cords remain paralyzed for life? Why doesn't God cure downs syndrome when Christians ask him to? Why don't amputees grow new legs? These are not unreasonable or foolish questions. If God always keeps His promises, as most people teach, then why does He not keep these? In fact these are necessary questions, which must be asked in the light of

- If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer. [Matthew 21:21]
- If you ask anything in my name, I will do it. [John 14:14]
- Ask, and it will be given you. [Matthew 7:7]
- Nothing will be impossible to you. [Matthew 17:20]
- Believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. [Mark 11:24]

So what's the deal here? Are these in fact promises, or are they not? Does God in fact always keep His promises? or does He not? How can we say He keeps His promises, when we look at the difficult cases which he never seems to heal? Are we supposed to read these verses as: "if you ask anything in my name EXCEPT HEALING AMPUTEES, I will do it"? or ""You will receive whatsoever ye ask in prayer EXCEPT HEALING AMPUTEES"? Is that how these promises are to be understood? Or is there a greater and more important factor that enters into this?

Personally I think that Christians present the promises of God far too simplistically. I think that God is in charge of the promises and not man. I think that teaching that God always keeps His promises, even though it is based upon a few verses of scripture, is far too simplistic and answer. Actually to say that God always keeps His promises, is an outright lie. He doesn't keep the

promises for answered prayer very well does He? Millions of Christians have been asking God to stop wars for thousands of years, but he doesn't keep His promises about "asking and receiving" and answer those prayers does He? How about the aborted babies? Christians have been praying for God to stop abortions for generations? But abortions continue don't they? "Ask and it shall be given" is either a case of God breaking His promises, or the promises not being a promises at all. My answer to this, is that the promises of God are up to God to keep, or not to keep, as He sees fit. They are not up to man to throw in Gods face and say "Do it, you promised!"

The Bible says that God is not a man that He should lie (Numb. 23:19), that God cannot lie (Tit. 1:2), and that it is impossible for God to lie (Heb. 6:18). So with this in mind, we must say that when God does not keep a promise, whatever it is, it is not a case of God lying, for He does not do that. I am pointing these things out, not to cause you doubt the promises of God, His veracity, or His honesty. Nor am I trying to confuse you. I simply pointing them out to show you not to be overly simplistic here, and to think realistically about what happens when we read the promises strictly from human viewpoint. God determines how he uses and grants the promises, not us. There is a seriously flawed teaching that tells men to "claim the promises" of God, or to "name the promises", or to "speak the promises", or "cling to the promises", or to "treasure the promises", or to "cherish the promises", and the fact is, that none of these phrases or teachings can be found anywhere in the Bible. Why Not? In fact, the Bible never even tells us to "believe the promises" or "believe in the promises". Why not? Because promises are not objects of worship. Name it and claim it is simply a modern form of idolatry. We worship God not words or phrases that he wrote.

Oftentimes we just accept things because they sound harmless, or logical, or even Biblical, when in actuality they are none of these things. The reason why people want to name and speak the promises, is because they want to use them to try to control God. "Look Here God, We're gonna hold you to your word!" The truth is that God does not lie, even when certain promise appear to be broken. He is not a man, and lying is not in His sphere of being, but it is in ours. So when we insinuate, or think, or imply that we are going to force God to honor His words, we are simply bringing Him down to our level, and creating a God that we can control. We do not hold God to His word, He holds us to it. But God never tells us to claim the promises or name them. He does not even tell us to believe them, or put our faith in them at all. Why? Because they are His and not ours. He will do what He wants with them, and we are not in control of it. If he refuses to answer our prayers for new legs for an amputee, it is clear that he is doing something other than we think that He should do with His promises, but He is still not lying. Guess what? He is not a man. God teaches us something very important here about the Divine Sovereignty. God alone defines what lying is, and whom lying applies to. God defines what promises He keeps and what ones He breaks, and for Him to break any or all of them, does not change His perfect character at all. Get that through your head, God does not

change, and He does not lie, so if you don't approve of the way he uses or ignores his promises, then don't accuse Him of imperfection. And don't try to hold Him to your mythological notion that He has to keep His promises the way that you think He has to. He is not a man. You are! So quit trying to put God into a corner that you have made for him. He does not fit.

Now I'm pretty sure you haven't heard much teaching like this before, because people want to think that they are in charge of God's promises. What I have just showed you is that they are not. When the Bible says that the promises of God are "Yea and Amen" in Christ (2Cor. 1:20), that does not change when God does not keep them the way we imagine that He should. He is not a man. That's why He does not lie, and that's why He does not act like a man with respect to His promises. When we do not keep our promises it shows that we are liars, because we are men. But when God does not keep His promises, it shows that He is not a man, and that He cannot lie. So Guess what? Get over it. He does what He wants. He's God!

What does this have to do with the gospel, you ask? It has everything to do with it, because I said that the gospel contains promises, and this is not only one of the gospels blessings, but it is also a source for some of the greatest divisions among Christians in church History. But if everyone would get rid of their false notions about the promises being always and invariably kept by God, then things would be quite different. Let me explain. The Arminians and Calvinists represent the two most prevalent extremes of handling the promises relating to salvation and the gospel.

The Arminian finds promises about Christ being "the Savior of the World" (1Jn. 4:14), and God loving the world (Jn. 3:16), and He thinks that because God always keeps His promises, this must mean that Jesus in some sense is the Savior of all men on the planet. Without discussing the validity of his reasoning, we can say without a doubt, that he sees this as a matter of divine promise, which people should believe and cling to.

The Calvinist likewise finds promises about the exclusiveness of salvation, and the efficacious nature of the atonement, such as the "My sheep" promises (Jn. 10:14-27), and He thinks that since God always keeps His promises, this must mean in some sense that Christ actually secured salvation only for the sheep. Without discussing the validity of his reasoning, we can say without a doubt, that he sees this as a matter of divine promise, which people should believe and cling to.

Now the actuality of the matter, is that both of these groups, base their belief upon promises of the scripture. But both share the same false view that God is obligated to keep whatever promises which they happen to find in the Bible. So the Arminian spends all His time trying to explain why the Calvinist promises are not the real promises which people should believe in and cling to. And the

Calvinist spends all His time trying to explain why the Arminian promises are not the real promises which we should believe and cling to. But the point of all this, and it has been going on for centuries, is that the promises belong to neither group, and neither group should be clinging to them as objects of belief. Both groups are expected to preach the gospel, and to include promises relative to the saving message. Neither group is exempt from the requirement to preach the gospel to the lost.

I have no problem at all thinking that John 3:16 is relative to the saving message, in fact I think it is vital, that it must have an important place in our speech about the gospel, and not just as we try to explain it away or interpret it from some theological slant. Sinners need to hear that God so loved the world that He sent His Son to die. This is correct use of a promise, regardless of the interpretation one attaches to it. We should not worship the verse, but we should proclaim it. By the same token, I think that promises showing the vicarious and substitutionary nature of the atonement, and that show that Christ actually secured salvation, such as: "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities", "The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep" etc, these promises are also relative to the gospel message. Sinners need to know that Christ really atoned on the cross, and did not just make a way possible for people to save themselves. Christ is the Savior, and that's what He did. He actually saved sinners on the cross, who could not save themselves. But we don't worship these promises. But the promises might indeed cause us to worship God. That's why they must be preached.

So both these groups are wrong in trying to be selective and possessive about God's promises relative to salvation. The promises are God's, and He will do with them what He wants to do, and He will use them as He wants to use them. The promise that might be used to save one sinner, might actually drive a different person away from Christ. So what I think needs to happen, is that we need to quite selectively believing in only certain promises. In fact, we need to quit believing in promises at all. We are never told to put our trust in promises or mere words, we are told to put our trust in God and in Christ. The gospel, creates belief, but it is always a belief in God, and a belief in Christ. It is never a mere belief in words...even words that came out of the pages of the Bible. We believe when we hear the gospel...the good news is announced, and men become believers, not in what was said, but in the person to whom the words and promises point, the person who actually saves them. Promises are not worshipped, but promises point to the one who is worshipped!

This is why I always emphasize that mere doctrinally correct propositions do not equal the gospel. The gospel is a message which directs people beyond the promises which it contains, to the person who governs and applies those promises. I rejoice if someone meets the living and true Savior because an Arminian quoted John 3:16, and the Holy Spirit applied it to his heart. Don't you rejoice in that? I rejoice if a poor lost soul hears a Calvinist preach about Christ

dying for the sheep, and he comes to realize that He is one of them, and the good news drives him from mere promises, invitations and commands, to a living and true Savior. Don't you rejoice in that? When the Holy Spirit is free to take the promises of God, any or all of them that are spoken, and use them however He wants to draw the sinner to the Savior with them, then mere words become vehicles for bringing life. Instead of dried husks of mere doctrine, the Holy Spirit uses God's promises to bring the very life of God to the souls of the elect. It has always been this way. God works no other way. So why are we so busy trying to cling to, and own, and cherish certain promises as our personal possessions, when we need to be simply broadcasting those promises, as seed just like the Lord tells us, and letting Him take care of the rest? A Calvinist does not have to agree with an Arminian, or visa versa, in order for sinners to be saved when the gospel is preached. The problem is that we are simply not preaching it. We are bickering about it. We are debating. We are arguing. We are analyzing and comparing promises, which don't concern us. Who cares if Christ saves somebody in an Arminian Church? Who cares if He uses a person whom we disagree with to save somebody? Paul rejoiced even when Christ was preached out of completely wrong motives, and for completely wrong reasons, and even when "truth" was notably lacking (Phil. 1:15-18). When Christ is preached, the gospel is preached; and when the gospel is preached, sinners are saved. Guess what? It's a good thing. It's a wonderful thing. It's God's thing! So rejoice and deal with it. Preach the gospel, and the Holy Spirit will do the rest. Preach Christ. Lift Him up. And God will draw all men unto Himself.