



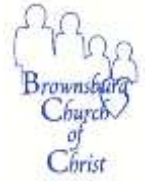
God's Amazing Plan to Redeem You

Brownsburg Church of Christ

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AM Assembly



Introduction:

If you had been training some folks for a mission for three years and you were having your final meeting with them, what kind of things would you talk about? Would it be trivial things like the weather, sports, or the stock exchange? Or would it be really, really vital stuff about the mission at hand? In **Mark 16:15**, we see Jesus' final meeting with the apostles. I think we can rest assured, Jesus was hitting on the important stuff. Notice how He began in **Mark 16:15**, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation" (ESV). In Jesus' final charge to His apostles, He commanded them to teach the Gospel. But why? **Romans 1:16-17** provides the answer. Paul said the Gospel is the power of God to save everyone who believes it. **II Thessalonians 1:7-9** says a day will come when Jesus will appear with His mighty angels in flaming fire and deal out retribution to those who do not obey His Gospel. Clearly, the Gospel instructs us to obey in some way. If we obey, we are saved from God's wrath. If we do not, we pay the penalty of eternal destruction. Does that sound important to you? On the surface, that sounds simple enough, but Satan has found a way to throw a wrench in the works. Read **Galatians 1:6-9**. Christ established His Gospel, but Satan has propagated other so-called gospels. However, they are not gospels at all. They do not provide salvation. We learn five lessons from **Galatians 1:6-9**. 1) Different gospels exist. 2) Some of seeming authority will proclaim different gospels. 3) Good, sincere people will follow different gospels. 4) Only one Gospel has the power to save. 5) It is our responsibility to learn what is the only saving Gospel and obey it. This leads to our pressing question. What is the Gospel of Christ and how do we obey it? Paul provides a guide regarding how to discover the true Gospel of Jesus in **Galatians 3:24**. The Law (the Old Testament) was established to lead us to Jesus Christ that we may be justified by faith in Him. Examining the major themes and lessons of that Old Law will lead us to the New Covenant and the saving Gospel Jesus established. Therefore, let us look back to the Law and see what we can learn of the saving Gospel.

Discussion:

I. God is holy and we are not.

- A. The Old Covenant begins with the words, "In the beginning, God..." (**Genesis 1:1**). If we are going to understand anything about the saving Gospel, we must first know the God who authored it. We could spend an entire lesson learning the characteristics of God. We could learn about His omnipotence, His omniscience and His omnipresence. However, the most important characteristic we must learn is that God is absolutely holy. **Psalms 5:4** says, "For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you." God is so holy, **Habakkuk 1:13** says, "You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong..." I am not sure we can fathom such holiness.
- B. When this holy God created man, He created us in His image (**Genesis 1:26-27**). The indication is that the holy God created a holy man with the intention of having fellowship with Him. His standard is demonstrated throughout the Old Law, especially in **Leviticus**. Repeatedly God says, "Be holy, for I am holy" (**Leviticus 11:44-45 et al**). Therefore, God made man to be in holy fellowship with Him and He established a law for mankind in **Genesis 2:16-17**.
- C. Sadly, man's fellowship with God was broken. In **Genesis 3:6**, Adam and Eve broke God's law. Their holiness was shattered and their fellowship with God was ruined. Sadder, is the fact that all men have followed in the footsteps of Adam and Eve. **Psalms 14:1-3** says all have turned aside and become corrupt. Paul quoted from this passage when he concluded in **Romans 3:23** that all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory.
- D. To us this may seem like a small thing. However, God explained the consequence of sin to Adam and Eve with that very first law. In **Genesis 2:16-17**, He proclaimed that in the day they sinned, they would die. Many have been confused because Adam and Eve continued to live physically. The death God predicted was not physical, but spiritual. Physical death is the separation of the spirit from the body, spiritual death is the separation of our spirit from God. **Isaiah 59:1-2** is abundantly clear. When we sin, a wall is erected between us and our God. The fellowship which God intended for us is destroyed. We become dead in transgression and sin (as Paul describes in **Ephesians 2:1**).
- E. However, along with God's holiness we see two more characteristics that balance out and provide us with hope. According to **Psalms 89:14**, God's holiness is demonstrated by justice and steadfast love. The balance of these characteristics provides the saving Gospel.

- II. God's justice demands death and His steadfast love provides mercy.
- A. Remember from **Genesis 2:16-17** that the consequence of sin is death. Ezekiel demonstrated the certainty of that consequence in **Ezekiel 18:4, 20**. The person who sins will die. There is nothing we can do to avoid the consequence of sin and once we have paid the penalty, we are dead. Justice means paying the price when we have committed the crime and God's justice demands our lives, that is, our deaths.
 - B. However, God's love provides mercy. In **Ezekiel 18:23; 33:11**, we learn that God actually takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. He wants them to turn away from their wickedness and live. But there is an immediate problem. God's justice demands our lives, repentance does not pay that price. In His love, God developed a plan that paid the price of death and provided the grace of life.
 - C. The plan was sacrifice. From the earliest days of man's history, God taught His followers to sacrifice in order to have fellowship with Him. At the very least, as early as **Genesis 4:3-4**, mankind learned to sacrifice. Some suggest that the animals slain to provide covering for Adam and Eve in **Genesis 3:21** indicate sacrifice there. Under the Old Covenant, sacrifice was constant and pervasive. The covenant began with a sacrifice on Mt. Sinai (**Exodus 24:4-8**). Then the tabernacle was built and sacrifice became the rule of the day. Read **Numbers 28-29** to see exactly how pervasive sacrifice was in the Old Testament. The priests were to offer two sacrifices every day, one in the morning and one in the evening (**vss. 3-4**). On every Sabbath, they offered four sacrifices (**vss. 9-10**). On the first day of every month, they offered two bulls, one ram, seven male lambs and one male goat, 11 sacrifices in addition to the 2 daily sacrifices (**vss. 11, 15**). Then there were the special feasts. **Numbers 28:16** does not describe the Passover sacrifice, but we know that all the Israelite families were to offer a Passover sacrifice. Then during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, they offered two bulls, one ram, seven male lambs, one goat and the two daily sacrifices for seven days in a row (**vss. 17, 19, 22-24**). On the Feast of Weeks (the day of Pentecost) this same set of 13 sacrifices were offered (**vss. 27, 30-31**). **Numbers 29** demonstrates the seventh month as an extremely bloody month for Israel. They offered their new moon sacrifices (**vss. 1-5**). Then on the tenth of the month, the Day of Atonement, they repeated the cycle of 13 sacrifices—plus two more we will notice in a moment—(**vss. 7-11**). Then, beginning on the fifteenth of the month, they offered the same 13 sacrifices every day for eight days during the Feast of Harvest or the Feast of Booths (**vss. 12-38**). In **Numbers 29:39** God said that was in addition to votive offerings, freewill offerings, and burnt offerings. If you want to know more about these sacrifices, study **Leviticus 1-9**. There the numerous sacrifices are described and demonstrated. I want you to picture for a moment the tabernacle and then the temple. The place was covered in blood. The stench of death, raw meat, and cooking flesh must have hung heavy in the air. Then God established the law that all the males of Israel were to come present themselves before the Lord during those three feasts filled with sacrifices. What a way to impress upon the Jews the lesson of sacrifice.
 - D. **Leviticus 17:11** explains why God set this system up. The life of the flesh is in the blood. When Israel poured the blood of these innocent and spotless animals out before the altar, they were shedding the life of the animal. The animal paid the penalty of death so those who offered the sacrifice did not have to. The Day of Atonement, the tenth day of the seventh month, was an especially significant sacrifice. In **Leviticus 16:30**, God explains through the atoning sacrifices Israel would be cleansed of their sins. But notice how the sacrifices worked on that day (**Leviticus 16:7-10, 15-22**). The priest would figuratively place the sins of the nation on the head of one goat and send it out into the wilderness, demonstrating that the sins of Israel had been taken away from them. Then he would slaughter the other goat, pouring its life out on the ground. As he wore the linen ephod with the names of the tribes of Israel inscribed on the two stone on his shoulders (**cf. Exodus 28:9-12**), he figuratively brought the entire nation with him into the Most Holy Place and sprinkled the life of the goat on the Mercy Seat before the merciful God of Israel. Thus, the sins of the people were placed on the innocent sacrifice and the death of the sacrifice was placed on the guilty sinner. Through this system, God meted out the demands of His justice and the desires of His love.
 - E. There are four things we need to recognize about this Old Covenant sacrificial system.
 1. The sacrifice was to be sinless. These animals were amoral and therefore sinless.
 2. As an illustration of their spiritual perfection, they had to be physically spotless. The sacrifice without spot could pay the price of the spotted and defiled sinner.
 3. Action had to be taken. Simply believing in the sacrificial system did not cut it. The believers actually had to offer the sacrifice. Thus, we learn what saving faith is—belief based action.
 4. Finally, the Israelites did not deserve the forgiveness that came through these sacrifices. This was a system of grace. How could killing an animal or dozens of animals or thousands of animals earn forgiveness? It could not. Despite what many teach, the Old Testament is a system of grace.
 - F. However, I am sure you have already recognized a problem with this scenario. How could the death of an animal actually pay the price for the sins of men? In the New Covenant, **Hebrews 10:1-4** explains that there was indeed a

problem. God had simply established this Old Covenant sacrificial system as an overwhelming object lesson. Because, in reality, by themselves they did not work. If nothing else ever happened, those sacrifices could not take sins away. Consider five problems.

1. The sacrifice was an animal, not a man.
2. The sacrifice, that is, the animal, was never really in fellowship with God and the penalty is actually spiritual death, the severance of fellowship with God.
3. The sacrifice was a purely physical death and did not pay the penalty of spiritual death.
4. The offerer had to atone for himself as well as the other sinners.
5. These sacrifices had to be repeated.

III. God's justice and steadfast love were brought together in the ultimate sacrifice.

- A. God, however, had developed a plan to overcome these issues. He was preparing the ultimate sacrifice. These thousands of years of animal sacrifices were simply the schoolmaster that prepared us to understand the ultimate sacrifice. In **Isaiah 53**, God prophesied the ultimate sacrifice that would take away the sins of the world once and for all. His servant would come into the world and would bare our griefs and our sins. He would be pierced through for our transgression, crushed for our iniquities. Our iniquities would fall on Him. The stroke was due us, but God's servant would take the penalty for us. He would be our guilt offering and bear our iniquities. Through this sacrifice He would intercede for the true transgressors. For hundreds of years, if people read this prophecy correctly, they realized their daily, monthly, and yearly sacrifices were only biding time. The true sacrifice was yet to come. God's justice would be meted out and His mercy would be extended.
- B. Imagine for just a moment you had been brought up under this legacy of sacrifice. For years you had traveled to Jerusalem and seen the bloody temple three times every year. You had heard the squeal of the animals as they were slaughtered. You had seen their lifeblood poured out before the altar. Then you heard of an amazing teacher named John. All Israel was turning to him and following after him. You follow him and heed his teaching. Then one day you see his cousin coming toward you and John says, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (**John 1:29, 36**, ESV). What lesson was John teaching? Jesus is the Christ, the sacrifice for our sins. Every sacrifice that had gone before was an object lesson preparing us for John's statement. Every trip made to the temple, every animal slaughtered, every sacrifice offered pointed the way to this moment. What is the very heart of the Gospel that is God's power to save? God had a plan to bring His justice and His love together into one moment. That moment was the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. He died for our sins so we wouldn't have to. Now that is good news.
- C. Just consider some of the verses that describe what Jesus did. According to **I Peter 1:18-19**, we were redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. According to **Matthew 20:28**, Jesus gave His life as a ransom for man. According to **Matthew 26:28**; Jesus poured out His blood for many for the forgiveness of sins. According to **Hebrews 9:11-14**, Jesus offered Himself without blemish to God and His blood will cleanse us from our iniquities.
- D. However, notice what happened in this sacrifice. According to **II Corinthians 5:21**, God made Jesus who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf. How? According to **I Peter 2:24**, Jesus bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin. However, I want you to notice that Jesus' death went further than the animal sacrifices. In **Matthew 27:46**, Jesus, after six hours on the cross and three hours of darkness cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (ESV). This was more than just a quote from the psalms. Jesus was demonstrating the true death He was experiencing. He whose fellowship with the Father had been deeper and more intimate than we can possibly imagine, was separated from the Father. He not only poured out His blood for us, but He paid the penalty of spiritual death as well. Further, according to **Hebrews 7:27**, He did this once for all. He doesn't have to repeat it. According to **II Corinthians 5:14-15**, Christ died for all, therefore all died. Do you see what God did? God placed our sins on Jesus on the cross. Then God attributed Christ's death to us. The demands of God's justice were met and the desires of God's mercy were given. But do you remember earlier in our lesson that we learned the Gospel was not just a message to be taught. It was something to be obeyed (**II Thessalonians 1:8**). How do we obey?

IV. To obey the Gospel, we must die with Christ.

- A. **II Timothy 2:11** says, "If we have died with him, we will also live with him..." (ESV). **Colossians 2:20** explained that we were to die with Christ. **Colossians 3:3** speaks of the saved saying they had died and their lives were hidden with Christ in God. **Galatians 2:20** says we must be crucified with Christ.
- B. Therefore, to obey this Gospel, we have to die with Christ, being crucified with Him. This leads us to one big huge question. How do we accomplish this? When do we die with Christ? When are we crucified with Christ? When do we get into Christ's death, so that His death is applied to us and our sins applied to Him? Today, many

“gospels” abound about this. Some suggest through prayer. Some suggest through a moment of faith. These might be right. But what does the Scripture say?

C. **Romans 6** stands out loud and clear. Listen to what it says beginning in verse 2:

“How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death... we too might walk in newness of life...if we have been united with him in a death like his...our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing...one who has died has been set free from sin...you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed...but now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (ESV).

Having read that, you tell me how someone dies with Christ. When do we die with Christ? When are we crucified with Him? When do we die to sin? When do we enter Christ’s death? When we are baptized into Christ.

Conclusion:

This is the Gospel, God’s amazing plan to redeem you. No wonder Jesus said in **Mark 16:15-16**, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” (ESV). Do you believe the message you have just heard? Have you obeyed it? Have you died with Christ? If not, let me assure you today is a good day to die—die with Christ in baptism that is.