



## THE SOUND GOSPEL: OUR FIRM FOUNDATION

***“The Sound Gospel is the good news of Abundant Life in Jesus Christ if we submit to Him as Lord Before Savior in the relationship of covenant through His Church.”***

### **1. The Sound Gospel...**

1.1. Stands opposed to the many false gospels that exist. There can only be one saving gospel, all the rest are false and damning – Gal 1:8-9). This is the way it has always been, the truth surrounded by a plethora of false teachers, heresy and apostasy (Act 20:28-29 w/1Ti 1:20; 2Ti 2:17; 2Pe 2:1; 1Jo 2:18-19; 2Ti 4:3; Rev 2-3; Luk 16:16; 2Ti 3:1, 12-13)

“The truth is so obscure in these times and falsehood so established, that unless we love the truth we cannot know it” – Blaise Pascal, 17<sup>th</sup> century Christian philosopher (2Th 2:11-12)

1.2. The change in our own day (from “The Gospel According to Jesus” to “Jesus Plus Nothing Equals Everything”).

1.3. Our ability to stand firm in the future depends on GTGR – possessing a sound gospel (Eph 6:10-11, 15)

1.4. How we know we possess the sound gospel? Canon consistency! (Noah = 1Pe 3:19-21, 4:6 w/2Pe 2:5; Abe= Gal 3:8; OC = Rom 10:16-21, Heb 4:2, 6)

1.5. (1Co 15:1-4) is therefore NOT the whole gospel and a sign of dangerous ignorance among those who believe/teach that (2Pe 3:15-16) (e.g. Tim Keller, Gospel Coalition, New Calvinism).

### **2. ...is the good news of Abundant Life in Jesus Christ**

2.1. This is what makes the gospel good news, it is about abundant life. This has always been its message and the motivation to seek after God (Abe = Gen 15:1, 17:1-7; OC = Deu 5:32-6:3, 18, 10:12-13, 22-23, 28:1-6, 29:9, 30:19; Psa 16:11, 34:8-15; Isa 48:17-19; NC = Joh 10:10; 2Co 1:20; 1Pe 2:2-3, 3:10-12; Rom 8:28)

2.2. This is why those in a saving relationship w/God are taught pray a certain way to the Father (Mat 6:9-15: purpose, provision, pardon, protection, paradise later).

2.3. Jesus has always been the source of abundant life (Joh 14:6; 1Co 10:4 w/Eph 2:11-12; Heb 7:1; Joh 8:56; Col 1:16-17 w/Psa 104; Col 1:19-22).

### **3. ...If we submit to Him as Lord before Savior**

3.1. There has always been a condition to God’s blessings (as Savior): we must first be willing to submit to Him (as Lord/Boss) (Gen 17:1-2 w/Neh 9:8; Exo 23:22 w/24:7-8; Amo 5:21-25; Psa 50:7-23; Luk 6:46-49; Joh 15:5; Rom 10:9; Col 1:21-23; Heb 5:9; Jam 4:6-7; 1Pe 1:1-2; 1Jo 1:7, 2:24-25, 3:22; Rev 2:5-7, 16-17, 3:5, 21).

3.2. A denial of LBS is what defines the false gospel teachers we are to contend against (2Pe 2:1; Jud 4)

3.3. Submission to Christ as LBS is what it means to repent – the prerequisite to saving belief (Luk 3:1-9, 18; Mar 1:14-15; Act 20:21).

3.4. Submission to Christ as LBS looks like faithful obedience (Deu 28:1-2, 32:20 – notice what causes God to spurn them is not lack of perfection, but faithfulness<sup>1</sup>; Mat 24:44-51, 25:1-30).

3.5. Our faithful obedience to God is our demonstration of love for God and others (Joh 14:15; 1Jo 2:5, 5:2-3).

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<sup>1</sup> Never has God required more than faithfulness – hence why he has always provided a means of atonement. However, the only way to accomplish such faithfulness, is by accepting perfection as our standard (Mat 5:48). In other words, God expects perfection as our standard, but accepts faithfulness as our practice (Phi 3:12-15a).

3.6. Our faithful obedience is the obligation we possess as the means to maintaining what we gained by faith (i.e. our justification and other Abundant Life blessings) - something always true of the gospel (1Pe 1:1-2 w/Exo 24:7-8 // Rev 19:6-8 w/Mat 22:1-14 w/Zec 3:1-7; consider also: Mat 5:17-20, 19:16-21, 24:42-51, 25:1-13, 14-30, Luk 9:23-26, 13:22-30, Rom 2:12-29, 8:1-14; Col 1:21-23; Heb 3:12-14, 5:9, 10:36-39; Jam 2:12-26; 2Pe 1:5-11, 3:14-18; 1Jo 2:26-3:7; 2Jo 1:8 Jud 21; Rev 2:26; Deu 5:32-6:6, 7:9-13, 11:8-9, 22-23, 12:28, 13:17-18, 15:4-5, 19:8-9, 26:16-19, 28:1-2; Psa 18:16-24, 25:10-14).

Nowhere does the Bible ever teach:

3.6.1. Christians are to “rest in Christ’s sacrifice”<sup>2</sup> as the only thing that will commend them before God (i.e. obedience is nice but not necessary) (contra: Mat 10:37-38; Luk 13:23-24; 20:35; Eph 4:1; Phi 1:27; Col 1:21-23; 1Th 2:12; 2Th 1:5; Rev 3:4-5)

3.6.2. Our obedience is simply the product of our faith – i.e. “good works are the guaranteed consequence/result of saving faith”(contra: Eph 2:10; Jam 2:26)

3.6.3. Sanctification is monergistic (contra: Phi 1:6-7 w/also 1:25; Phi 1:27 w/2:12-16, 3:16).

3.6.4. Election as the guarantee of our future salvation (contra: Eph 1:1-14 w/5:5-6; 1Th 1:4 w/3:5)

3.6.5. The doctrine known as the Active Obedience of Christ (contra: Heb 10:10, 14, 13:12)

3.6.6. Grace as a “hall-pass” for sin (and excuse for faithful obedience; contra: Rom 6:1-2 w/22-23)

This demonstrates that God has always required more than just being righteous (positionally). He has also required that we practice righteousness as a means to remaining in that state.

3.7. We will be judged according to our deeds (Rev 20:11-15; 2Co 5:10; Rom 2:6-8; 1Pe 1:17) since faithful obedience:

3.7.1. Is within our ability (Deu 30:11-14 w/Rom 10:6-8; also consider Luk 1:6; Phi 3:4-6 w/Rom 7:18)<sup>3</sup>

3.7.2. Is our responsibility - not the responsibility of the Holy Spirit. Though He is Helper to the Christian, He does not take the lead in producing the good works and faithfulness required by God. That role is given exclusively to us. This is why we discipline people not the Spirit when there is unrepentant sin! This is why also all the commands in Scripture are directed at us – not the Spirit (Rom 8:12-14).<sup>4</sup>

3.8. We must continue faithfulness to all of God’s commands if we hope to maintain (rather than forfeit/lose) the righteous standing (i.e. justification) we have gained through faith in Christ (Mat 6:12-15, 8:11-12, 18:17-20, 35; 22:1-14 = three groups: those who never come, those who do come yet become disqualified, those who come and maintain their right to stay; Mat 25:26-30; Luk 14:34-35; Joh 15:6; Rom 2:25, 11:19-22; 1Co 10:1-12; Gal 5:4; Col 1:22-23; Heb 3:12, 14-19, 6:4-5, 10:18 w/26-30, 39, 12:14-17; Jam 5:19-20; 2Pe 1:9, 2:1, 20-22, 3:14-17; 2Jo 1:8; Jud 1:5; Rev 2:10, 3:3-6; Deu 29:18-20, 24-25, 32:5; Eze 18:24).

3.9. The idea that the OT teaches or Jesus encounters a works-based salvation (i.e. that 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple Judaism was meritorious) is another of the heretical assumptions of Martin Luther foisted upon the text as a result of his issues with the Roman Catholicism.<sup>5</sup> The Jews condemned such thinking (Luk 5:21). The problem w/the Jews throughout the Bible – much like the kind we see today, was a refusal of LBS believing instead “because I have the sacrifice, have already been justified, am “in the club” - I don’t need to obey” (i.e. obedience is nice but not necessary – Psa 50; Pro 7:6-20; Amo 5:21-25; Joh 5:45, 8:39; Luk 3:8; the true character of the Pharisees = Mat 15:8, 23:3, 13, 28, 32). This is why Jesus will say to many “Depart from Me you workers of lawlessness” (Mat 7:21-23).

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<sup>2</sup> “At the end of the day, what finally commends you to God is not how hard you tried. What commends you to God is the utterly sufficient sacrifice of Christ. That’s resting in Christ.” – D.A. Carson

<sup>3</sup> The doctrine of spiritual inability is not about what we can’t do - but won’t do (Mat 16:1-4).

<sup>4</sup> The view that the Holy Spirit is the One producing our obedience has historically also been associated with the heresy of antinomianism. “The distinction between antinomian and other Christian views on moral law is that antinomians believe that obedience to the law is motivated by an internal principle flowing from belief rather than from any external compulsion.” (Como, David R. (2004). *Blown by the Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Pre-Civil-War England*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. p. 36.)

<sup>5</sup> More than one historical scholar has pointed out Luther’s eisegetic approach to the NT: the Jews became the works-based Roman Catholics and the followers of Jesus, the antinomian Lutherans.

3.10. Our faithful obedience is to be in relation to the all that Christ commanded (Mat 28:20) which includes the OT Law (Mat 5:17-20<sup>6</sup>; Luk 16:16-17):

3.10.1. Observance of the OT Law is reinforced by the NT writers (Paul = Rom 13:8-10; Eph 6:1-3; 2Ti 3:15-16; Peter = 1Pe 1:14-2:8; James = Jam 1:22-25, 2:8-13; John = 1Jo 2:3-7)

3.10.2. It is important to recognize the holiness, wisdom, blessedness, righteousness and equity communicated through all of God's law (Rom 7:12, Deu 4:6-8; Psa 119:75; Num 15:15-16). They are an expression of His love (Psa 119:41, 159, 138:2, 143:8; it is hard to make a distinction between God's love and law in the OT since they are almost always communicated as part of the same context. It is part of how He reveals Himself to individuals for the purpose of relationship and blessing. In other words, you cannot have God's love without His law!).

3.10.3. It is important to also make those distinctions within the law expected by its communication through the biblical text:

3.10.3.1. A distinction must be made between the clean laws (i.e. the laws by which a person is made clean or justified – 1Co 6:11) and the moral commands (1Co 7:19; Lev 10:10-11; Eze 44:23-24)<sup>7</sup>

3.10.3.2. A distinction must be made when applying the OT Laws today since under the NC it may look different than under the OC (e.g. 1Co 5:2-5, 12-13 w/Lev 18:8, 29 w/Deu 17:6-7). This is especially true in relation to the clean laws (Col 2:11-17; Eph 2:11-15; Rom 3:21-31; 1Jo 1:9; Joh 13:8-10)

3.10.4. "Works of the law" and Paul's other opposing references to the Law refer only to either the Old Covenant clean laws, the application of the OC clean laws or the administration/authority of OC itself (e.g. Rom 3:20-31, 7:1-12, 10:4; Gal 2:11-16, 5:1-4). The idea that Paul was actually speaking about the abolishment of the Law itself makes Paul not only in contradiction to Jesus, but a schizophrenic! (consider Rom 10:4w/13:8-10)

3.10.5. Lawlessness as the definition of sin also makes it clear that it is the entire OT Law which must be observed since this is the scope of its usage in the NT (1Jo 3:4; Tit 2:14 w/Mat 24:12 w/Rom 6:19 = "lawlessness" is not comprehensive, but rather refers to any deficiency or refusal in relation to the entire law – Mat 7:23). Historically, this has been recognized as the heresy of antinomianism<sup>8</sup> (the Law is no more) and the result of

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<sup>6</sup> Martin Luther is the reason so many view Christ's words in Matthew 5:17 as referring to His fulfillment of the Law on our behalf. "Everything is from God...both commandment and fulfillment. He alone commands; he alone fulfills." Given the context of His words, this is not at all what Jesus had in mind. As the new Moses (Deu 18:18), Jesus came to see that it was fulfilled (rather than abolished) in the lives of His covenant people. In this respect, Luther may also be credited with planting the initial seeds of what later became the errant doctrine of the Active Obedience of Christ (contra: Heb 10:10,14, 13:12). For further study see "The Law: The Authority of the Old Testament Scriptures in the Church Today", R. Scott Jarrett (2013).

<sup>7</sup> The belief that divisions/distinctions do exist in the OT laws between those laws that make the worshipper spiritually clean versus those which maintain his morally righteous status in the covenant community can be found going back to the early centuries of Christianity in the writings of such men as Barnabas, Tertullian and Augustine (Cf. Barnabas, *The Epistle of Barnabas*; Tertullian, *An Answer To The Jews*, ch. 2,5; *Against Marcian*, 2.17; Augustine, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum*, 6.2). However, it was Thomas Aquinas - and later the Reformers and their confessions, who did the most in establishing it as important Christian doctrine (Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa* 2.6.99.3 -2.6.99.4.; John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. 2, Bk 4, Ch. 20, Sec 14; Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Election Theology*, 11.24.1; Westminster Confession; London Baptist of 1689; Heidelberg Catechism). Such division/distinctions however are not only a Christian construct. Judaism also recognizes that they exist and are key to understanding the Scriptures (Cf. Boaz Cohen, *Law and Tradition in Judaism*, 1959, 188-189; T.R. Rich, *Judaism 101*, 2005; R. Bisschops, "Case Study on Samuel Holdheim", *Metaphor, Canon and Community: Jewish, Christian and Islamic Approaches*, 1999, p.291). It must also be mentioned that though many have made a tri-partite distinction, the bible communicates only two (i.e. a bi-partite distinction) (Lev 10:10; 1Sa 15:22; Pro 21:3; Hos 6:6; Isa 1:11-17, 43:22-24; Rom 2:25; 1Co 7:19).

<sup>8</sup> The key error of antinomianism in all its forms has been to treat our union with Christ as involving in effect some degree of personal absorption into Christ, such that the Law as a voice from God no longer speaks to us or of us directly. The Mosaic Law, under which Jesus lived and which was basic to His own moral teaching, (has) no direct relevance to us once we have closed with Christ." – J.I. Packer (Foreword to *Antinomianism* by Mark Jones, 2013). In his book, *Paths to Power* (1911), AW Tozer defined antinomianism this way. "The creed of the Antinomian is easily stated: We are saved by faith alone; works have no place in salvation; conduct is works, and is therefore of no importance. What we do cannot matter, as long as we believe rightly. The divorce between creed and conduct is absolute and final. The question of sin is settled by the Cross; conduct is outside the circle of faith and cannot come between the believer and God. Such in brief, is the teaching of the Antinomian... It takes the teaching of justification by faith and twists it into deformity." In contrast, the Reformed faith teaches that the moral law of God has three uses. The first is to convict of sin and drive the repentant sinner to the Lord Jesus Christ. The second use of the law is to restrain lawlessness in society. The third use is to function as the rule of life for the believer. One of the most famous statements of this truth comes from the Puritan Samuel Bolton in *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom*: "The law sends us to the gospel for our justification; the gospel sends us to the law to frame our way of life." The Reformed way of thinking and conduct is diametrically opposed to the ways of antinomianism (and New Calvinism). Ironically, Martin Luther who coined the term antinomianism and also a Reformer, was himself more antinomian than reformed-rejecting the third use of the Law. "Even if he would, he could not lose his salvation, however much he sinned unless he refused to believe. For no sin can condemn him save unbelief alone." As such, the imperative distinction that must be made in relation to Luther is as Reformer v. reformed. Historically, the former is true, the latter however is very untrue/inaccurate theologically. - hence the designation Lutheran and why those who were a part of the Swiss Reformation (those who took the moniker "reformed") separated themselves from those in the German Reformation (those who took the moniker "Lutheran" or "evangelical"). The theologies of both were very different –especially as it related to the Law. Much of what fancies itself to day as reformed (i.e. New Calvinism) is instead Lutheran.

Dispensational theology (the dispensation of Law/works, the dispensation of Grace/faith) as well as New Calvinism (Gospel Coalition, Tim Keller, D.A. Carson, John Piper, Mark Driscoll).

3.10.6. As such, this reveals Luther's Law-Gospel Dichotomy to be heretical and damning (Mat 5:19).

3.11. Those therefore preaching against any portion of the Law; or using such blasphemous terms as "legalistic" or "moralistic" to describe those attempting to be faithful to the Law under the New Covenant; or not requiring faithful obedience to all of God's Law as the necessary and personal responsibility of all Christians are embracing a false/damning gospel.

#### 4. *...in the relationship of covenant through His Church.*

4.1. The only way God has a saving relationship with human beings is through covenant. There are five salvific covenants in the bible:

4.1.1. Adamic (Hos 6:7)<sup>9</sup>

4.1.2. Noahic (Gen 6:18)

4.1.3. Abrahamic (Gen 17:2)

4.1.4. Mosaic (Old) (Exo 6:1-7, 19:5)

4.1.5. Christian (New) (Luk 22:20)<sup>10</sup>

4.2. All five covenants found in the bible are marriage covenants:

4.2.1. The Old and New covenants are spoken of using marriage titles and terminology (Jer 31:31-32; Isa 2:2, 54:5; Jer 3:20; Eze 16:8, 32; Eph 5:22-32).

4.2.2. The conditions and consequences of marriage are applied to the Old and New Covenants including full submission (in the role of wife), divorce and the "rule of no re-marriage" (i.e. apostasy) (Eph 5:22-24; Exo 24:7; Isa 50:1; Deu 24:1-4 w/Jer 3:1-9)

4.2.3. The Adamic covenant is revealed to be the same kind of covenant as the Old (Hos 6:7 – consider it is "the covenant" v. "their covenant" indicating that the Mosaic covenant is not to be seen as different or distinct from the Adamic. Both were marriage covenants).

4.2.4. The remaining covenants which follow after the Adamic (now established as also a marriage covenant) are referenced in the possessive (i.e. Gen 6:18, 17:2 - "My covenant") demonstrating this to be their antecedent in kind (i.e. they are marriage covenants as well!).

4.3. Jesus Christ is the Husband in all such covenants. He is covenant- making Member of the Godhead (Joh 8:56-58; Eph 2:12; 1Co 10:1-12; Heb 7:1-3; 1Pe 3:18-21; Jud 1:5; Rev 19:6-13; Rev 2:7<sup>11</sup>).

4.4. The marriage covenant entered into by those being saved is inchoate (unconsummated). We are betrothed to Christ (2Co 11:2)<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Though one may initially question calling the Adamic Covenant a "saving relationship" since there was no sin at the time it was inaugurated, what must be considered is the fact that this is where it ended up: in God providing an addendum and means of atonement thus taking the role of Savior in that covenant as well (Gen 3:21).

<sup>10</sup> Covenant theology which also recognizes that God's saving relationships are only through covenant, would acknowledge a sixth covenant – the Davidic covenant, in between the Old and New. Though an important covenant within God's redemptive plan, it was established in relation to kingship not salvation (see 2Sa 7 and 23). In relation to salvation, David operated under the Mosaic (or Old) covenant.

<sup>11</sup> It is only logical to assume that if Jesus is the One determining who may eat of the "tree of life" in Paradise future, then He was also the One determining such things in Paradise past. He was, in other words, the divine party of the Adamic covenant!

4.5. As such, choate (or consummated) marriage and the blessings of true intimacy with Christ are not yet ours:

4.5.1. This is realized only after we depart from this life (Rev 19:6-7)

4.5.2. This is realized only by those who demonstrated faithfulness during their betrothal –and by such faithfulness are counted “worthy” (Rev 19:8; Rev 3:4; Phi 1:19-27; 2Th 1:5, 11; Mat 25:1-13 w/24:45).

4.6. Christ’s departure to heaven to “prepare a place” for us is consistent with the historical picture of betrothal (Joh 14:1-2).

4.7. The promised “care” blessings associated with this life are also consistent with the historical picture of betrothal (e.g. Eze 16:8-13; Mat 6:9-13 w/Joh 16:15, 26-27 – the Father is the custodian/manager of Jesus’ estate/inheritance).

4.8. However, the wife of Jesus is the entire covenant community of the church and not the individual Christian (Eph 5:22-25, 28-32). For this reason:

4.8.1. The church is called the “Body of Christ” (1Co 12:27). The wife is an extension of her husband – a part of his body (Consider again Eph 5:28: “their own bodies”; also Gen 2:22-23).

4.8.2. We are told Jesus died for the church (not again, the individual) (Act 20:28).

4.8.3. The guarantee of preservation (unto a future salvation) is given only to the church (Mat 16:18).

4.9. Therefore to be in covenant (saving) relationship with Jesus, we must become members of, and remain faithful to the church:

4.9.1. She is place where we our identity as Christians reside (1Pe 3:21; Mat 18:17)

4.9.2. She is the place where the atoning work of Christ resides (Joh 13:1-30 w/Mat 26:20-29; Heb 10:24-26)

4.9.3. She is Christ’s authority on earth and holds the keys of binding and loosing (Mat 16:19, 18:18; Joh 20:22-23 w/Mat 12:31-32 w/Act 15:28)

4.9.4. She is the primary place to be assessed on Judgment Day regarding our deeds unto Christ (Mat 25:40; Heb 13:17)

4.9.5. She is the New Israel and Kingdom of God, household of God, the gateway to heaven and earthly owner of God’s truth (Jer 31:31-37 w/Gal 4:21-31, 6:16; Mat 21:43; Heb 12:22-24; Rev 19:7, 21:2, 9-10; Gen 28:17 w/1Tim 3:15...Mat 16:19; Eph 3:10).

“It is the duty of all believers, according to the Word of God, to join themselves to the Church, wheresoever God has established it. Therefore all those who do not join themselves to it act contrary to the ordinance of God...Hereby the true Church may certainly be known, from which no man has a right to separate himself.” (Belgic Confession, art. 28).

“Outside of the church there is no possible means of salvation.” (Westminster Confession)

“He who does not have the Church as his Mother, cannot have God as His Father.” - Cyprian

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<sup>12</sup> In biblical betrothal all the titles, conditions and consequences associated with consummated (or choate) marriage still apply (e.g. Mat 1:18-19). Hence, the reason such things were mentioned (4.2.1.- 4.2.2.) as support for the salvific covenants of the bible being marriage covenants. In this respect, it is my belief that all former marriage covenants were also betrothal in form.