

How to develop Life Habits of Godliness

Why as a Christian should I preach the Gospel to myself?

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INTRODUCTION:

When we think of habits of godliness, perhaps the first thing to come to mind is: “I have got to pray more, memorize more of the Word, have more regular devotions.” All those spiritual disciplines are commended in God’s Word, but I want to steer our thinking toward the motivations for godly habits.

May I suggest that the number one habit of godliness is to be satisfied in God. And that satisfaction is a byproduct of meditating on the Word, particularly the “Word of Grace.” The ‘Word of His grace’ is Paul’s term for the full-orbed gospel message as applied to all of life (Acts 20:24, 32). By “full-orbed” I mean that Paul normally begins his epistles with the glorious blessings the believer has in Christ: *sonship; union with Christ; justification; throne rights; etc.*

When you feed on the gospel as a life habit, you are filled with God and as a consequence, and you begin to care for your relationship with the Lord out of delight rather than merely out of duty.

We also preach the Gospel to ourselves in order to learn to live upon Christ as our source of life—He is all we need for life and godliness (2 Pet 1:3). To preach the Gospel to yourself is to keep presenting to the eye of faith that Christ is our source of: *sonship; status; favor; acceptance; adoption; inheritance; power; truth; fellowship; love; wisdom from God; King; righteousness; and sanctification.*

Thinking this way does not come natural to me (to consent to let Another, Christ, work for me and to reckon that He has earned every blessing we enjoy). Our natural bent is to reason that we are the sum total of our achievements and that we carry our own worth by means of our performance. That is why the Gospel is radically counter-intuitive.

I must train my mind to think this way by preaching the glorious Gospel to myself. Only by feeding on the Gospel can we reckon, as a habit, that our acceptance and fellowship with God are grounded upon who Christ is and what He has done—not on our performance. Christ my ‘eligibility’ for God’s endless love and favor; not my performance. This is the central habit for godliness because everything in the Christian life comes back to your affections; what you love supremely and what you trust most.

As we feed on the Gospel, divine grace becomes part of our reasoning processes. Our affections are drawn to the precious things of God. Gospel reasoning ‘cuts new grooves’ in our thought life—it’s the grace of Christ re-educating the mind, conscience, will, and affections.

As we learn to train our thoughts to travel in these new channels, we gain the sweet optimism that God desires to meet with us for fellowship and intimacy. And we become increasingly aware that God is glorified in giving His people endless installments of mercy, grace and love (Heb 4:15-16).

‘The Word of His grace’ then becomes the subject of our meditations on Scripture—and not for our comfort alone. For the Gospel teaches me about my completeness in Christ (instead of looking for completeness in created things) thus, the Gospel has the power to slay idolatry and to lift me out of self-concern, and to enable me to be burdened on behalf of others. It gives me joy in God which overflows into love for others.

Preaching the Gospel to ourselves is a habit of godliness that is to be learned. This discipline is not simply entertaining general thoughts of Christ and grace. The discipline of preaching the Gospel

to one's self involves specific ways that Christ's redemptive work answers our need and ruin, and our yearning.

This is not my idea. When Paul prays for the Ephesians both of his prayers recorded in that epistle have the same theme: *believers are to contemplate God's saving activity toward them in Christ*. To preach the Gospel to oneself is to always be about the business of 'matching' Christ's Person, work, and resources with our spiritual poverty, ruin, and need. This is tied to my premise this evening (or preaching proposition) that the benefits of preaching the Gospel to oneself is intensely practical for growth in godliness.

Meditating upon the Gospel involves thinking through and contemplating God's saving activity toward us in Christ. I want to suggest six "access points" to show what this looks like (now there are many more than six Gospel meditations in the New Testament, I am just suggesting that these six represent a great starting point because they provide a condensed summary of the Gospel:

- 1.) *The Gospel is the VOICE of Christ's love to His sheep*
- 2.) *The Gospel is the VERDICT of God's justice at the cross*
- 3.) *The Gospel is the VALUE of justification by faith through grace*
- 4.) *The Gospel is the VIEW of God's glory in the face of Christ*
- 5.) *The Gospel is the VANTAGE point whereby we see the kingdom*
- 6.) *The Gospel is the VICTORY won by Christ at Calvary*

I. The Gospel is the VOICE of Christ's love to His sheep

"My sheep hear My voice, they follow Me." By an act of divine grace the sheep were enabled to 'hear' the voice of Christ in the Word of Grace (Jn 10:2-5, 16). The Gospel is addressed to faith alone (not to the righteous, or the worthy; but to the guilty, the weary, the defiled, the helpless, the condemned, the broken, and the foolish). To "hear" Christ's voice is to believe God's testimony that in Christ there is love, righteousness, and cleansing for the defiled. The Father sent Christ to be the slain lamb—the propitiation for our sins (1 Jn 4:9-10). Christ's love for us was there even while we were helpless enemies (Rom 5:8). By His sovereign grace, He creates faith in the elect to 'hear' His voice.

Christ's love is not a bare proposition; it is personal and transforming—Christ takes up residence in His people by His Spirit. By His sovereign grace, the Lord creates the faith to 'hear' His voice. Christ, through His Word (the Scriptures) speaks to the newly created faith that has been planted in the bosom of His child by the new birth. This love is not theoretical for the believer—it is a reality that the believer experiences (Rom 5:5). This is life-transforming love. The Gospel tells us that Christ is Lord of His people. Christ's love controls the child of God (2 Cor 5:14-15). That saved individual who is controlled by Christ's love no longer lives for himself but for "Him who died and rose again" on his behalf.

To know His love is to be controlled by His love. To be the object of this 'other worldly' exotic love (1 Jn 3:1) is to be animated by this love—it is to be driven with a holy unction to pass on that love to God and to others—to receive His love engenders the desire to reciprocate that love. "We love because He first loved us" (1 Jn 4:10, 19). Feeding on the Gospel is the means by which we perceive and deepen our understanding of God's love for us in Christ. We love God, deny ourselves, and we love the brethren as a *reflex response* to receiving God's love for us in Christ. In this way His love for us keeps us from loving the world (1 Jn 4:19; 2:15-17).

Let's take the application further—if you know Christ you have every warrant to go to God for love daily. Salvation imparts a relationship of love. We often go to God in prayer for our needs; for

strength; to fulfill our Christian duty; but do we go to God for love? We can and should (this enlivens our affection for God and it strengthens our loyalty to Him).

II. The Gospel is the VERDICT of God's justice at the cross

"It is finished" were Christ's last words from the cross. We must remember that the cross was a kind of courtroom in which the justice due the trampled law of God was addressed decisively. Absolute justice had to be accomplished in the case of the sinner's guilt before acceptance with God could take place. The sinner's transgressions had to be judged in the body and soul of Another—in Christ. The propitiation accomplished at Calvary was a 'verdict'—Christ took the wrath of God due our sins and absorbed it into His own person ("it is finished" is that divine verdict). This divine verdict has everything to do with how you speak to, and listen to, your own heart.

God cares deeply about the 'conversations' we have inside our heads. In Deuteronomy, the biblical book from which Jesus drew most of His quotations, we find the theme of *heart talk*. It is interesting. We find Moses telling his listeners, *don't say such and such in your heart; rather say this in your heart*. Never is heart talk more intense than in issues of conscience.

Your conscience is busy all day long; but nothing can bring your conscience to a place of absolute peace and rest except the justice which satisfies God Almighty. And, nothing satisfies God on the sinner's behalf except the finished work of Christ. Therefore, a person will never have a clear conscience UNTIL they hear by faith the verdict of God's justice accomplished at the cross. Believing that verdict is not a one-time event—it is to be our life direction as believers. Receiving the liberating message of the cross is a lifetime endeavor. Here is one of the reasons why that is so:

The conscience of man is 'wired' for strict justice; it is dialed in to moral cause and effect—it is suspicious of mercy and compassion. How true this is—the conscience of man is tied to law—to crime and punishment. It is like a private eye who is hired to collect dirt on you. In our fleshly reasoning it is remarkable how much emotional energy we dissipate trying to quiet our conscience with arguments: "I'm generous, considerate, a hard worker, a provider, well-liked, kind, a servant, etc." The most common way man seeks to 'bribe' and balance the conscience into silence is by comparing self to others. But if the whole human race, outside of Christ, is on an 'escalator to hell', being a couple steps above another doesn't change one's destiny—the whole thing is going downward into perdition. The point being, every carnal attempt to quiet conscience will utterly fail.

The blood of Christ alone has the power to cleanse the conscience down to its smallest crevice (Heb 9:14). We need to preach the Gospel to ourselves each day because we fall short each day. There is no effective 'book keeping' for the conscience other than the blood of Christ. The comfort we need in order to serve, love, and worship will only be there if our consciences are clear. A Scottish preacher named James Haldane noted that if even one sin is weighing upon the conscience it can kill your joy, numb your confidence before God, weaken your resolve to holiness, and shake your assurance of salvation.

No wonder Paul claimed that he always kept a clear conscience! (Acts 24:16). Without a clear conscience we won't be optimistic about usefulness; about blessing and answered prayer.

Learn to preach the Gospel to yourself so that the verdict of the cross becomes the loudest verdict in the conscience. When the verdict of conscience is brought in line with the verdict of heaven—there is overflowing joy, peace, hope, and comfort. But how many believers really enjoy this on a daily basis? How many Christians have as their goal to bring their conscience in line with the

verdict of heaven at Calvary? We rob ourselves of comfort by our apathy on this point. I am reminded of what a pastor said recently, “The church has a boundless capacity to forget the Gospel!”

As Martin Luther said, the Gospel must be enthroned in the conscience again and again. The Gospel must be allowed to make the call (that’s the ‘peace of Christ’ reigning Col 3:15). If we don’t turn again to the liberty promised in the Gospel, we sentence ourselves to be stuck in the futile activity of self-justification (defensiveness, self-protection, gossiping, comparisons with others, etc).

That habit of Gospel preaching allows us to run to the atonement for cleansing without delay. The Spirit of God is not interested in our efforts at self-atonement. He delights in restitution and repentance; but He points to Christ alone for atonement and cleansing. Needless to say, peace of conscience is also closely tied to repentance.

As long as I listen to self instead of preaching the Gospel to myself, I stay stuck in patterns of self-justification. What is the answer? Look to the cross again and embrace God’s verdict there. Educate your conscience with the Gospel—“God’s verdict brings the light and cleansing I need today” (1 Jn 1:7-9). The Holy Spirit is ‘solution oriented’. He does not wish to see the child of God wallowing in guilt for days on end. The Spirit desires to bring us back into fellowship with the Lord; thus He never tires of *showing us the blood of the Lamb*.

The Gospel preached is God’s invitation to come out of our dank hiding places (grey castle of self) and back into the sunlight of fellowship with the Lord (1 Jn 1:6-9).

III. The Gospel is the VALUE of justification by faith through grace

In His incarnation and passion, Christ identified with our dilemma and ruin. He became radically identified with us in our predicament that we might become radically identified with His righteousness. Christ entered the great cog works of God’s justice in order to be crushed for us. He lived the life of a perfect disciple—all to affect the most magnificent exchange in time or eternity. “. . . So that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor 5:21).

The wonder of justification is that Christ traded places with us so that under God’s moral government Christ might become ‘officially’ guilty of the sins of His people. My sin was imputed to Christ so that He might bear it up to the cross and judge it in His own Person. To be ‘justified in Christ’ is to have my sin removed and to have Christ’s perfect righteousness given to me in its place.

God is the ‘Architect’ of this great exchange which took place in our justification. Its purpose is to bring us to God through reconciliation, and to give God’s joy and glory to us. My sin imputed to Christ and Christ’s righteousness imputed to me means that I am fitted for communion with God and ultimately for life in His presence.

Because justification defines my relationship with God; it gives us a new identity. I therefore reject the world’s offers to establish my identity through my performance. Yes, I have an earthly place of employment, a vocation and calling, talents, friends; BUT these do not define me in an ultimate sense. My identity is carried by Christ (bound up in Him). The more in tune I am to the Gospel; the more consistently I will live out my identity in Christ. This is precisely where the Gospel is strategic in fitting us to deny ungodliness. The world appeals to the pride of life by offering us an identity from things below—justification brings us all the way to God that we might find our all and all in Him.

I want to address those young people under the age of 21 for a moment. Preaching the Gospel to oneself is not just a spiritual discipline you may decide to develop some day. It is life and victory. It is living upon Christ and His grace. If we do not live upon grace we will live upon an arm of flesh instead.

Let me list some fleshly symptoms of living by the flesh instead of upon the grace of Christ. You will recognize these: *cliques; gossip; comparing self to others; upmanship; escape into pleasure;*

and self-exaltation. All these carnal behaviors come natural to us. If we are not living upon grace, we will turn to these by default. It is how we will seek to manage the tensions in our life. The answer is to repent and to return to Christ—‘tear up’ the world’s score card that has been dominating your life. Allow Christ to rule you by His Word instead of living a self-directed life.

God’s work in justifying us is ‘preemptive’—in other words, God declares believers righteous ‘up front’ BEFORE they have a chance to try to win His favor by our works. This is so significant—it slays our pride. God knew that our ‘lust for law’ would cause us to approach the Christian life with legal motives. Thus the Gospel order—God declaring believers righteous up front (Rom 4:5-8), is designed to make the entire Christian life ‘all of grace.’

This means that the Christian can pursue sanctification from the position of full acceptance because he is already pardoned and accepted by God in Christ. This shapes all of our motives for personal holiness—it always brings us back to an attitude of gratitude, rather than working for acceptance through our performance. (It is just too easy to measure the Christian life by outward conformity to moral externals—in reality justification fits us for a love relationship with the Lord.)

IV. The Gospel is the VIEW of God’s glory in the face of Christ

To receive the good news of the Gospel is NOT merely the acceptance of the historical facts of Jesus’ life (Christmas and Easter). No, to become saved is to have ‘seen’ the glory of God in the face of Christ (2 Cor 4:4-6). It is to behold by faith the divine identity of the Good Shepherd. A saved person has Christ revealed to him as the Lord of Glory; the Jehovah of the O.T.—for no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Spirit’ (1 Cor 12:3). Even the Apostle Peter could not say “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” apart from the revelation of the Father (Matt 16:16-17). Paul’s own testimony extolled God as the One who ‘revealed Christ in me’ (Gal 1:16).

I want you to understand that salvation restores our ability to behold the glory of God and to be captivated by His majesty. We are all familiar with the verse, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). But what often goes unnoticed in this verse is the fact that by our sin we have forfeited not only our ability to reflect God’s glory; but also our capacity to behold God’s glory. The glorious Gospel restores our ability to see the glory of God—and to see it in the face of Christ.

The new birth gives God’s glory back to us—it is a miracle of revelation and restoration. By the Spirit’s regenerating work we are given a revelation of Christ—we see who Christ really is and we see the glory of God in the face of Christ (2 Cor 4:4-6). In addition we receive a new faculty known as “eyes of the heart” (Eph 1:18) which allows us to understand and perceive spiritual realities and eternal treasures (1 Cor 2:10-13, 15-16).

While we were spiritually dead we could not see the Lord’s glory and His beauty. We did not love His glory or live for His glory—we had zero passion for His glory. Therefore (and it is so important we catch this), we worshipped and served the creature and the creation (we were infatuated with the world’s promises). Our hearts were not the temple of God—they were idol factories. Our heart was a ‘zoo’ of lusts (it produced coveting of every kind as the Apostle Paul says—Rom 7:8).

Now through the miracle of the new birth; believers have become the ‘unveiled ones’ able to behold the glory of the Lord. Our new vocation is to gaze upon His glory. God’s glory of course is the outshining of His perfections made manifest in Christ, and revealed in the wonderful plan of redemption. God’s majesty and excellence is put on display in our redemption. Paul regarded himself (and all believers) to be stewards of this divine mystery that God is giving Himself to us in Christ (Eph 3:8-12). That is a huge reason we preach the Gospel to ourselves—because in it we see His glory.

Beholding the glory of the Lord is now the vocation of the church—it's our calling (2 Cor 3:18). Proclaiming His excellencies is her mission (1 Pet 2:9-10). The second activity (proclaiming His excellencies) depends upon faithfulness to the first activity (beholding His glory). The cycle is *behold, be changed, proclaim His excellencies as His witness*. We are created by God to be enthusiastic spectators of excellence—to cheer, to adore, to admire, to praise, to tell and proclaim. (What do you praise and esteem?)

V. The Gospel is the VANTAGE point whereby we see the kingdom

The Gospel brings Christ's kingdom into our hearts. Only through the Gospel can we reach a vantage point high enough to see the grandeur, wealth, and scope of the Kingdom of God. When the Lord saved you, He invited you into His story—into His 'kingdom plot' (this is the polar opposite of thinking that we can add Christ to our lives—we can't).

The glory of the Lord's kingdom will fill the universe someday. There is more here than we can imagine. The Lord is calling out a portion of the human race—forming them into the moral likeness of Christ. With Christ as their 'Head' this new humanity is being fashioned for eternal life in the Father's house and life in a restored planetary paradise (Jn 14:2-3; Rev 21:1-7). "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard all that God has planned for those who love Him" (1 Cor 2:9). Has that theme ever captivated your heart?

We saw under *view of glory* that we are transformed into Christ's likeness by beholding the glory of the Lord. In a very similar manner meditating on the Gospel of the Kingdom instills in us a 'kingdom consciousness' which deepens our hope of glory. The Gospel feeds our kingdom consciousness causing us to be controlled by an eagerness to see the Lord face to face, and to live with Him, and to finally be free of personal sin (1 Cor 13:12-13; Rom 8:23-25; Titus 2:13; 1 Jn 2:28).

Kingdom consciousness is a kind of 'lens' through which the believer sees all of life. Those who love the world are warned that they will pass away with it (1 Jn 2:15-17). Those who love the world have never seen the infinite value of the Kingdom of God. By contrast, the saints are controlled by their hope of glory (Heb 11:14-16; 12:25-29). Those who love the world will lose their treasure, their glory, and their souls (1 Cor 2:6-8). Satan is the god of this world. He offers the concept of a 'master-less freedom' (a freedom without service and without subjection to authority—which is precisely the soul-damning lie that drove his own rebellion).

The Gospel of the kingdom is vital to the 'treasure principle.' As a man thinks in his heart so is he (Prov 23:7). The mind of a man always returns to what he esteems as his treasure. No wonder Jonathan Edwards described true religion as existing primarily in the affections.

Jesus drove home the treasure principle—explaining in just a few words how life-directing and life-dominating a man's treasure really is. A man: *reviews his treasure; displays his treasure; adds to his treasure; speaks of his treasure; follows his treasure; and is ruled by his treasure* (Matt 6:19-21). No wonder we must preach the Gospel to ourselves!

A man's treasure determines his life direction, his 'happiness formula,' his 'score card' in life, his goals—all of these flow from what he perceives as true treasure. Only the Gospel gives the new 'organ' of sight—'spiritual eyes' which allow a man to see above the horizon of this world so as to gaze upon his true treasure in heaven. Only the Gospel installs a spiritual faculty of sight that gives a savor, taste, and hunger for eternal things. It is our responsibility to strengthen the powers of vision by the use of the eyes of our hearts (Eph 1:18). We are to utilize these faculties of spiritual sight through meditation on Scripture (the Gospel) so that the spiritual realities of grace in Christ become fixed in points of desire, and we are transformed in the process. This is a prerequisite to being satisfied in God.

That satisfaction only becomes consistent when we learn the habit of explain our heavenly treasure to our own hearts.

As a result of being ‘transferred’ into Christ’s kingdom (Col 1:13), the redeemed individual is able to perceive the infinite value of the kingdom (Matt 13:44). Jesus described this perception of the preciousness of the kingdom in a most unusual manner: “. . . violent men seize it by force” (Matt 11:12). In other words, once a person has seen the infinite preciousness of the kingdom—that man or woman has to have it! As Jesus said, they are forcing their way into it. They are making whatever sacrifices necessary to have it. How opposite this is from fake Christians (cultural Christians) who are lethargic and complacent about eternal issues.

The believer’s hope is set upon a lasting city, his true home (for here he has no lasting city)—therefore he is not ‘addicted’ to the world’s praise and honors. He is willing to suffer reproach for the sake of Christ (Heb 13:10-15). He is like Bunyan’s ‘Pilgrim’ who has left the City of Destruction and is pressing on to the Celestial City.

Kingdom hope is more than just comfort and eternal values. Kingdom hope sanctifies us—“Whoever has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself just as He is pure” (1 Jn 3:2). Kingdom hope is part of our spiritual armor. It lets us see the world for what it is—a mirage of stimuli that cannot offer a crumb of nutrition to our hungry souls, or a speck of hope for the future (1 Thess 5:8; Rom 13:12).

VI. The Gospel is the VICTORY won by Christ at Calvary

Christ came to destroy the works of the devil—to break sin’s dominion (1 Jn 3:8). He came to earth to be ‘Overcomer’ for the sake of His bride. He gained the victory over sin, death, and hell in order to give it to His church.

The victory Christ won is the rightful property of His church. But it is not a victory that is enjoyed passively. The saint is commanded to enter into Christ’s victory by feeding the mind upon Gospel realities. We are commanded to *reckon, to count, to consider* ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (Rom 6:11f.). All that Christ has accomplished at the cross is ours by virtue of being in union with Him. When the Spirit placed us *in Christ*, all of the benefits of Christ’s ‘cross-work’ became our possession.

Romans 6 tells us that we are to reckon ourselves *dead to sin* regardless of how we feel. This reckoning is not an attempt to make something fictional into something real. It is an appropriation of Christ’s victory by faith. The Lord accomplished a mighty conquest of our soul’s enemies. Our part is to believe it. That is how we participate in victory that Christ has purchased for us. It is an essential habit of godliness. Appropriating the victory Christ won for His people IS true Christianity.

God requires of us that we count His Gospel promises about us in Christ to be a fact (that we are dead to sin—this is essential if we are to fight sin successfully). The Gospel order is, *reckon yourselves dead to sin*; then say ‘no’ to sin’s overtures. That is the Gospel order—this is the means whereby we enter into Christ’s conquest (Col 3:5). We must be convinced that Christ died to give us real objective victory over sin.

When I disciple and counsel believers, from time to time I will hear a brother say, “Oh I am just a lousy Christian.” I want to grab them and shake them and say, “What are you refusing to believe?” “Which of the Gospel promises are you doubting?”

Everything Christ endured from His birth to His ascension was for His people. His vicarious life was for His people—to give them *life, righteousness, sonship, pardon, holiness, adoption, and victory*. He gave His life to make you an overcomer. His conquest over the enemies of our souls was not merely an example to follow—His conquest and victory belongs to us as believers. By faith and

obedience, we participate in His conquest. We enter into His conquest by faith—it is a conquering of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Victory is obtained by disciplining our thought life through Scripture truth (appropriating Gospel promises by faith).

Victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil is not an option; it is the condition necessary to finish the race. The citizens of heaven are said to be overcomers (Rev 21:7). Those who live by faith in Christ are said to be overcomers (1 Jn 5:4-5). Overcoming is set up in stark contrast to who are overcome by the world instead. Scripture refers to them as ‘cowardly and unbelieving’ and not heirs of eternal life. What a cause for sober reflection. Those who do not overcome; but instead are overcome by sin and the world, will not enter heaven (Rev 21:8; 2 Pet 2:18-22; Eph 5:6).

“Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provisions for the flesh in regard to its lusts” (Rom 13:14). Preaching the Gospel to myself is the way in which I am to live out the victory Christ won for me. Co-crucifixion with Christ is the ‘staging area’ from which the practical work of mortifying sin takes place. I reckon who I am and what I am in Christ—a child of God who is dead to sin—THEN from that perspective of co-crucifixion I make my forays against temptation and indwelling sin.

The only possible way to live for God is to ‘die with Christ’—this is exactly what happened—our sin natures were judged in the body and soul of our Savior 2000 years ago so that we would no longer live for self; but for Him who died and rose on our behalf (2 Cor 5:14-15). By reckoning these truths (or spiritual realities) by faith, they are worked into our daily walk so that they become inseparable from our progress in godliness in the Christian life.

CONCLUSION:

We have seen that feeding upon Christ as He is displayed and offered in the Gospel is the spiritual discipline of the godly. These six ‘access points’ are intended to help ‘kick start’ us in learning to preach the gospel to ourselves as the key habit of godliness. It’s vital we learn to do so, for the Gospel is the very ‘food’ of the church—in the Gospel are found all of the reasons God gave Christ. In the good news those reasons are opened up to us.

Our part in preaching the Gospel to self is to view these grace treasures by faith and then meditate on them until we are able to explain them to our own souls. Preaching the Gospel to our selves has a sanctifying effect—contemplating God’s saving activity towards us in Christ means that our identity in Him will exert a greater sway upon our choices. As we keep investigating all that God is toward us in Christ the Lord pours joy and delight into our souls (Phil 3:7-16).

Brethren, to deal with the wealth of the Gospel is to deal directly with Christ’s Person. For the benefits He has won for us are not ‘commodities’ that have an existence apart from Him. The infinite benefits of salvation cannot be separated from His Person. Our eternal wealth is *in Him*—we are sons *in Him*; overcomers *through Him*; heirs *in Him*. All of the blessings He has earned for us are given to us *in Him*. As we meditate upon on the Gospel, our union with Christ and His desireability come into sharper focus. Our hearts are drawn out in love and adoration to Him—our affection deepened, our loyalty to Him becomes more stable and firm.

I trust that you have seen that you will never outgrow your need for the Gospel. The word of grace provides the foundation, the formation, and the motivation for loving obedience to Christ—which is the reason He called us to Himself.

Preaching the Gospel to ourselves is the key to thinking spiritually, it is the chief spiritual habit which the Lord utilizes to form Christ in us. When we are Gospel-centered, it is normal for us to experience fruitfulness and as well as victory over the world and its solicitations. As Paul says in Acts 20:32, it is through the Word of His grace that God builds us up and gives us the inheritance.

Discussion: Why should I as a Christian preach the Gospel to Myself?

- 1.) What is the connection between being ‘saturated’ with the gospel and having one’s affections focused upon the Lord?
- 2.) Is it true that our flesh understands performance much better than it understands grace? If so, then why would preaching the gospel to ourselves be so vital in order for our walk to be ‘grace based’?
- 3.) What is entailed in reckoning our completeness in Christ? Does the gospel show our completeness?
- 4.) In Ephesians chapters one through three, the apostle Paul continually directs believers to contemplate their riches in Christ. How would that activity revolutionize our Christian walk? Is this activity possible without meditating on the gospel of God’s grace?
- 5.) Explain from various texts that the love of Christ has a sanctifying, purifying effect upon the believer (see especially 2 Cor 5:14-15; Jn 10: 1-10; Eph 3:14-21).
- 6.) Why was the cross of Christ like a courtroom? What was the verdict carried out there? How does the finality of this verdict to affect the believer’s daily walk of faith?
- 7.) What does it mean to “Educate our conscience by means of the gospel?” Why is that action of educating our conscience necessary? What does this have to do with our thoughts at the Lord’s Table?
- 8.) Most believers cannot give a precise definition of justification by faith. What are the two major elements in justification by faith? (See 2 Cor 5:21.) How does our justification (‘*while we were yet ungodly*’—Rom 4:5ff.) affect all of our motivations for obedience and service in the Christian life?
- 9.) What does it mean to see the glory of God in the face of Christ? Why does this require a regenerating work of the Spirit of God? How does beholding the glory of the Lord affect the believer after he is saved?
- 10.) What do we mean by the term, “Kingdom consciousness?” According to Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, to what degree is a person controlled by what they esteem to be their treasure? What is the role of ‘gospel hope’ in our sanctification?
- 11.) One of the least understood central doctrines in the gospel is ‘co-crucifixion with Christ’. Why is this doctrine so vital to our progress in sanctification? What normally happens when a believer attempts to gain victory over sin without drawing strength from the work of Christ on Calvary’s cross?
- 12.) Christ is ‘Overcomer’—the victory He gained, He accomplished in order to give it to the church; His Bride. How do we as believers appropriate the victory Christ won for us?
- 13.) We will never outgrow our need for the gospel. In the gospel Christ is displayed to us in all of His offices (Prophet; Priest; and King). In the gospel we are able to focus upon who God is toward us in Christ. How does our meditation upon the gospel cause us to ‘live upon Christ’ and deepen our devotion to Christ?

14.) Why is preaching the gospel to ourselves the key to thinking spiritually? How does the gospel form the 'mould' into which our lives are to be 'poured' to the glory of God? Grace is the remedy for sin; but grace also has the goal of conformity to Christ. Why do we err when we focus only on the former?