The Gospel, Repentance and Perseverance

Many people do not really know who Jesus is, or understand that He was sent to earth by God the Father in mutual agreement with Jesus, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, all three commonly referred to as the Trinity. For many it is not clear, exactly what all He came to do included, and why it was so important that He accomplish His objective. However it is important to know and understand.

The **gospel** message begins with Jesus and the purpose of why He came to this earth. **He came***:*
1) To reveal God the Father to man and to give us a spiritual, conscious awareness of God (*Matt. 11:27; Titus 1:3)* God revealed Himself through Jesus as a good, loving, gracious, merciful and compassionate God, yet a God of justice, and wants us to know Him as He is. In the Bible, in the Psalms, in Proverbs and through the prophets God shows us who He is. Through the prophet Jeremiah in (*Jeremiah 9:23,24)* It states, "*This is what the Lord says: 'Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,' declares the Lord."*

2) **He came** to destroy the works of the devil. The work of the devil seeks to distort *both man's concept of God and man's perception of the nature and character of God (1 John 3:8).* As with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, the serpent distorted what God had told them and he also incorrectly quoted Scripture to Jesus when He was tempted in the wilderness. In (*John 8:43,44)* Jesus spoke of the nature of Satan when speaking to the Pharisees He said *"Why can't you understand what I am saying? It's because you can't even hear Me! For you are the children of your father, the devil, and you love to do the evil things he does. He was a murderer from the beginning. He has always hated the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies.*

In (*John 10:10)* Jesus speaking of Himself as the Good Shepherd, and explaining that "*…the thief* (speaking of our adversary the devil, Satan), *does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy*. He says but *"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."*

(*2 Corinthians 4:4****)*** states **"***Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God*." That's why we try in these messages to tell you what God has said in the Bible. To give you truth, "food for thought," so you realize if you haven't accepted Jesus as your Savior, time is of the essence. Satan's main objective is to keep you from knowing God, thus sealing your fate of doom.

For those of us who have accepted Christ as our Savior, God's word puts forth a warning to us. In (*1 Peter 5:8)*, He states *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."* In the life of a believer, he tries to keep us from knowing and understanding God's love for us and keeping us from bringing that good news of salvation to others.

In (*Matthew 16: 14-2)* Just after Peter confesses Jesus as the Christ, saying *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," "…Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."*

Repentance

Definition**:** ***Repent*** *- to feel regret or contrition – to turn from sin and dedicate oneself to the amendment or change of one's life.* It's not easy to change our lives when most of our lives are behind us, but we can, with God's help, ask Him to change our attitudes, to give us understanding of what is important for us with whatever remaining time He allows us on this earth, and that is strengthening our faith, trust and dependence in Him.

(Matthew 3:1,2) says "Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" And *(Matthew 4:17)* states *"Jesus began His ministry from that time Jesus began to preach and to say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"*

(2 Peter 3:9) shows us God's view. *"The Lord is longsuffering and patient, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." And (Isaiah 59:1,2)* states, "*Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor His ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear."* God also says in *(Ezekiel 18:32) "For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live!"*

Repentance was so important that Jesus, Matthew, Mark Luke, Paul, Timothy and many Old Testament authors and prophets spoke of its importance. The basic bottom line is stated in ***(****2 Corinthians 7:10****).*** *"Godly sorrow brings* ***repentance*** *that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.* Being sorry enough for some of you actions that you ask God to forgive you and to help you change your ways, that leads to salvation. If your sorry merely because you now feel bad because you know what you did is wrong (as Judas did) or just sorry that you may have gotten caught, but there is no desire to repent and change, then that is worldly sorrow which does not bring salvation.

In (Acts 3:19), (Romans 2:5) and (Acts 17:30-31) it states, *"Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord…" "But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when His righteous judgment will be revealed." In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent. For He has set a day when He will judge the world with justice by the man He has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising Him from the dead.* Jesus came to earth because God wanted to reconcile man to Himself.

3) He was manifested (that is He became a man) to take away our sins *(1 John 3:5*). To be made sin for us *(2 Cor.5:21). Jesus Christ was born to die.* Born for the express purpose of dying, shedding His blood on the cross, *sacrificing* Himself to die in our place…and to be resurrected to show that God accepted His sacrifice…

When any sinner repents, convinced he has no power to save himself from the judgment he deserves, and pleads for mercy, acknowledging the Gospel message that Jesus died for his sins and was resurrected back to life, God grants him forgiveness. God then declares him righteous because Christ's sacrifice covers him.

(The apostle Paul writing to Timothy) states *" Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief."* (*1 Timothy 1:13*)

Jesus Christ, the righteous and sinless Son of God, having taken upon Himself man's every sin past, present and future, and paying the penalty of death (once and for all) in turn gave us His righteousness (by forgiving our sins). However as *(Romans 3:22-25)* states;

"This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. But now God has shown us a different way to heaven - not by 'being good enough' and trying to keep His laws, but by a new way (though not new, really, for the Scriptures told about it long ago). Now God says He will accept and acquit us - declare us 'not guilty' - if we trust Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we all can be saved in this same way, by coming to Christ, no matter who we are or what we have been like. Yes, all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious ideal; yet now God declares us 'not guilty' of offending Him, if we trust in Jesus Christ, who in His kindness freely takes away our sins. For God sent Christ Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to end all God's anger against us. He used Christ's blood and our faith as the means of saving us from His wrath." (John 3:16-18) states *"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."* Jesus came to be the sacrifice in which would allow reconciliation with God to take place.

4) So we may have life and that more abundantly *(John 10:10).* (A God controlled spiritual life/quality of life) ***(****Jeremiah 29:11)* states *"For I know the plans I have for you." declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."* **(***Proverbs 3:5,6)* says *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." (Romans 8:28) "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."* That means that when we belong to God even our worst decisions and their consequences will be used to work to our advantage. God loves us and wants the best for us just as a good parent wants the best for their child. Isn't that what we should want?

The will of God is that all men would know Him and all men would be saved. But we know not all men will be saved. For Jesus stated *in (Matt. 7:13,14): "Heaven can be entered only through the narrow gate! The highway to Hell is broad, and its gate is wide enough for all the multitudes who choose its easy way. But the Gateway to Life is small, and the road is narrow, and only a few ever find it."*
And*: (Luke 13:23-25)* adds *"Someone asked Him, 'Will only a few be saved?' And He replied, 'Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I will say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside knocking, and pleading, 'Lord, open the door for us,' He will reply, 'I do not know you.'"* (Speaking of those who felt they deserved entrance into heaven, because of the "good," "moral" or "religious" lives they had led, *but in reality, had never accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, and never developed a personal relationship with Him)*

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." (Romans 8:1)
To be "in Christ" means being reconciled to God. *God desires reconciliation with man. Reconciliation is done by the act of forgiveness.* Because of God's perfect justice, forgiveness can only come when sin is removed.
Reconciliation by the Work of Substitution – The work of substitution (placing all our sins on Jesus, as if He personally committed every sin, having Him pay the wages of those sins – death – in our place - and by imputing (crediting) Christ's righteousness to our account) allows God, in His justice, to be just and the justifier of the ungodly sinner. The sacrifice of the Lord Savior for sin is the heart of both the Old Testament and the New Testament**.** When *(Romans 6:23)* states: "*For the wages of sin is death…"* That means we all deserve death for we all sin. Without a spiritual rebirth, that means we are spiritually dead, sentenced to an eternity separated from God because sin cannot dwell with God's holiness. And because God is just, in His holy justice *in order for us to dwell with Him* the penalty for our sin must be paid and *that requires a substitute—one to die in the sinner's place. God's chosen substitute—the only one who qualified—is Jesus.*

Jesus being sinless was crucial. In the Old Testament when they sacrificed animals to atone for their sins the animals had to be in perfect health, that is without spot, blemish or defect. For Jesus to qualify as our acceptable sacrifice He had to be perfect. That is the reason for the virgin birth.
(Gen. 3:21) Has the first blood sacrifice for sin**.** Blood of animals was shed for their skins to clothe Adam and Eve in the garden after "The Fall." *(Heb. 9:22*) says *"In fact the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood. And without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness."* The sacrifices made for sins in the Old Testament had to be made annually because they merely "covered" the sins of the people. However, Jesus Christ, the righteous and sinless Son of God, having taken upon Himself man's every sin, <u>*past, present and future*</u>, qualified us for forgiveness by shedding His blood for us on the cross and paying the penalty of death, (<u>*once and for all*</u>).

Sins are forgiven by the means of faith. But only after repentance and true faith and belief in the gospel message. If you have accepted that responsibility and accepted Jesus Christ as your savior, the words of Jesus to the thief on the cross will also pertain to you when you are ready to take your last breath; "*Assuredly, I say to you, today you shall be with Me in paradise"(Luke 23:43).* But that decision to accept Christ as your Savior must be done with a *sincere heart* and *true motive* before you take your last breath here on earth! Again, <u>it is repenting and turning from our sins, believing *God sent Jesus to this earth for the purpose of dying, in our place, for our sins*</u>. God does not want you to perish. He is rich in mercy and compassion, and has provided a way for you to be forgiven. He has invited you to come to Him for a full pardon and receive the free gift of eternal Life. You cannot earn it, and you do not deserve it, but God is offering it to you as proof of His love for you. *(Isaiah 55:6)* says, *"Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near." (2 Corinthians 6:2)* states, *For God says, "At just the right time, I heard you. <u>On the day of salvation, I helped you." Indeed, the "right time" is now. Today is the day of salvation.</u>*

I started this message saying many might not know why Jesus came to this earth. I think we covered that. 1) to make God known to man. 2) Destroy the work of the devil. 3) Born for the express purpose of dying, shedding His blood on the cross, *sacrificing* Himself to die in our place…and to be resurrected to show that God accepted His sacrifice…4) So we may have life and that more abundantly. Why it was so important that He accomplish His objective is summed up in *(Hebrews 12:2*) *"…looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who <u>for the joy that was set before Him</u> endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.* That is, making a way that satisfied God's justice, for us to have the opportunity to live with Him eternally in heaven.

<u>Accepting Jesus as our Savior means understanding and accepting, by faith, the Christian's statement of faith which contains the heart of the Gospel message.</u>

**Scripture:* We believe the Bible is the inerrant (free from error) and infallible (incapable of error) Word of God.

**The Trinity:* We believe in one God who has revealed Himself in three distinct persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

**The Deity of Christ:* We Believe God, the Son, came to this earth incarnate (in the bodily form of man) as Jesus Christ.

**The Virgin Birth:* Jesus was *not* born through the natural inherited sinful seed of the natural man but was born through God's Holy Spirit as announced to Mary by Gabriel, an angel of the Lord.

***Jesus' Sinless Life:* We believe that Jesus led a perfect sinless life in order to qualify as the perfect sacrifice, in our place, for our sins.

**Miracles of Jesus:* We believe the miracles Jesus performed as stated in the Bible. A definition for a miracle: A miracle is the introduction of God's supernatural power by altering the laws of physics to endorse God's messenger and advance His purposes bringing wonder to those who see it.

**The Vicarious and Atoning Death of Christ:* We believe Jesus died in our place to pay our sin debt. *"For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And the ransom He paid was not mere gold or silver. It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. (1 Peter 1: 18,19)* When there is reference made to the blood of Christ in the New Testament it is more than the fluid that it speaks of, it is the whole atoning work.

**The Resurrection*: We believe Jesus was crucified, died on the cross, was buried in a tomb and raised back to life on the third day.

* *For Salvation each man must personally "by faith, believe" the Gospel Message.* That is; Jesus, God the Son, died on the cross, in our place for our sins, and was buried in a tomb and resurrected from the dead three days later. Jesus Christ died *"for all"* so that "*whosoever*" would "*by faith, believe*" in Him would obtain salvation. All are given the opportunity, but just as a gift that is held out to you, it does not become yours *until you receive it!*

* *Salvation* – We believe all men are sinners by nature and by choice and are, therefore, deserving of eternal condemnation. *"Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man (Adam) and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all have sinned." (Romans 5:12)*

**Salvation – Regeneration by the Holy Spirit: "But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Titus 3:4-7)*

**The Resurrection of the Saved; they that are saved* unto the resurrection of eternal life in heaven.

**The Resurrection of the Lost; they that are not* saved; unto the resurrection of damnation.

**Christ's Ascension:* He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.

* *The Church:* We believe the church is the body of Christ, of which Christ is the Head.

* *The Second Coming of Jesus Christ. (John 14:1-3) "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*

True salvation is done by God and it is a work that is not manifest (noticeably apparent). It is a spiritual work of justification, regeneration and transformation that is not immediately apparent but through time shows its faith true by one's *endurance and perseverance*. As *(Hebrews 12:2)* states *"...looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.*

Perseverance and Endurance

(Matthew 10:22) "And everyone will hate you because of your allegiance to Me. But those who endure to the end will be saved."

(Colossians 2:6,7) "*And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to live in obedience to Him. Let your roots grow down into Him and draw up nourishment from Him, so you will grow in faith, strong and vigorous in the truth you were taught. Let your lives overflow with thanksgiving for all He has done."*

(Colossians 1:3-6,11,12,23) "We always pray for you, and we give thanks to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we have heard that you trust in Christ Jesus and that you love all of God's people. You do this because you are looking forward to the joys of heaven - as you have been ever since you first heard the truth of the Good News. This same Good News that came to you is going out all over the world. It is changing lives everywhere, just as it changed yours that very first day you heard and understood the truth about God's great kindness to sinners. We also pray that you will be strengthened with His glorious power so that you will have all the patience and endurance you need. May you be filled with joy, always thanking the Father, who has enabled you to share the inheritance that belongs to God's holy people, who live in the light. But you must continue to believe this truth and stand in it firmly. Don't drift away from the assurance you received when you heard the Good News…"

(2 Timothy 2:12) "If we endure hardship, we will reign with Him. If we deny Him, He will deny us."

(Hebrews 10: 34-39) states *"You suffered along with those who were thrown into jail. When all you owned was taken from you, you accepted it with joy. You knew you had better things waiting for you in eternity. Do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord, no matter what happens. Remember the great reward it brings you! Patient endurance is what you need now, so you will continue to do God's will. Then you will receive all that He has promised. "For in just a little while, the Coming One will come and not delay. And a righteous person will live by faith. But I will have no pleasure in anyone who turns away." But we are not like those who turn their backs on God and seal their fate. We have faith that assures our salvation."*

(James 1:12) "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him."

(James 5:11) "Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful."

(John 15:4-7) "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you."

Although throughout our lives we are seemingly tossed around like a ship in a storm, and stray to the outer boundaries of where we know we ought to be, *our faith in God should work as does a ship's anchor. Always keeping us secured, trusting in the knowledge of His truth and faithfulness.*

Turning to God in repentance, and ***by faith***, believing in the Gospel message – in Who and what you have not seen, God wants you to trust in the fact that He has empowered you with what you need to *endure* and *persevere* through trying times. *Only what He allows* in our lives befall us. We are told He will not give us more than we can handle because He will make a way of escape.