

There are certain things in life that I'm drawn back all the time:

- Having a snack once the kids are in bed
- Reading –learning new things brings excitement into my life

What I'm hopeful for is that you would always be drawn back to the gospel. Paul in this letter to the Colossian church unpacks the good news of the gospel. He goes into detail talking about God, the righteous creator. Paul explains the sinfulness of mankind and he definitely emphasizes Jesus Christ the Savior. Also explains how we should respond –by faith and repentance.

We're going to spend a portion of our time talking our way through Colossians 1:21-23 as it lays out what the gospel is. But I want to tell you from that beginning that we're going to spend a large portion of our time thinking through why it's so important to rehearse the gospel and preach the gospel to ourselves consistently. If the only time that you think about the gospel is on a Sunday morning when I, or someone at church, say something about it, you're missing out on the good news for your soul. But let's go ahead by reading verses 21-23

READ COLOSSIANS 1:21-23

If you were here last week you will know that we talked a lot about Jesus. We talked about how Jesus is the image of the invisible God. Jesus is the Creator. Jesus is the one who is most significant. And Jesus is the one who Rescues. But the focus shifts here in verse 21 from the Rescuer, to the one in need of rescue. What's being described here in 21 is the state that you were in, or are in, before coming to Christ.

READ VERSE 21

This is the state that everyone is in before coming to know Christ. The gospel is called good news, but in order for good news to be good—it must invade some bad spaces.¹

When you receive a clean test result, for example, from a panel of lab work your doctor ordered, that's some good news, right? It's even better news if you were preparing yourself for the worst. Or when you receive a letter in the mail it notifies you that you've been accepted into the college of your choice. That's good news too –because the alternative answer would have made for a disheartening period of time as you attempt to figure out what to do next.

Well the bad news for all of mankind is that you enter this world ¹alienated, ²hostile in mind, and ³doing evil deeds. God created us for obedient fellowship with him, but due to the curse of sin, everything is out of order. And the apostle Paul tells us that we were:

¹ Matt Chandler

- **Alienated** – isolation, loneliness, a deep sense of not belonging.
 - Our position before God needed to change
- **Hostile in Mind** – “hostile” is not a term of endearment, we were enemies of God. No one is on neutral ground with God, you are either submitting to God or you are opposed to Him.
 - Our thinking before God needed to change
 - Because our wrong thinking leads to wrong actions, and those wrong actions lead to further wrong thinking; it’s vicious cycle.
- **Doing Evil deeds**
 - Our actions before God needed to change

We were in bad shape... without Christ’s righteousness we are bad. This is something that we need to come to grips with this.

A couple of years ago a group of us from Cornerstone went out to a park in Mentor in an attempt to share the gospel with whoever was willing to have a conversation with us. We had recently been through some training where it encouraged us to start a conversation with the question, “Do you think you’re a good person?” Well, the vast majority of people said, “Yes.” They thought they were good people; they tried to help others out, they worked hard, they didn’t do really bad things like those in terrorist organizations, or like Hitler. They believed they were good.

But according to the standards of God, all of us are bad. We all fall short of the glory of God, which is absolute perfection. We can’t measure up to God’s standard by trying harder or just doing better than other people. And that’s bad news...

But the good news is that God didn’t turn His back on us and walk away.

READ VERSE 22

This verse underlines what Christ accomplished on the cross. Through Jesus Christ we can be reconciled and reunited with the One we were made for. Can you believe that?! Do you believe that? Do you believe that that only hope you have for coming into a right relationship with God is through the work of Jesus. It’s Jesus Christ plus nothing else that equals the gospel.

This verse right here declares for those who have placed their faith in Christ, that our alienation from God has been put to an end by the redemptive work of Christ. And the bottom line is that Jesus exchanged our alienation, hostile mind, evil deeds for holiness and blamelessness. Through Jesus we have been justified and can now walk into the presence of God being above reproach. Jesus took our place, He was our substitute, and through Him we can be reconciled to God.

And as we look at verse 23, I want you to notice how the gospel changes your life.

READ VERSE 23

Genuine faith in Christ is seen in patient, steadfast, and day-to-day living. Some use the phrase *once saved always saved*, and I would agree with that. But the assurance of salvation is seen not in the fact that you can remember a time that you said a prayer one time in your life, but assurance of salvation is seen in the reality that you are still persevering in your faith. It's not that you believed Christ for a moment in time and then moved onto something else; the test of genuine faith is seen through remaining fixed on Christ as your only hope.

Here's way to think about it: you are seated right now, there was a point in time in which you transferred the weight of your body from your legs to the chair. You may not even remember making that decision, but the fact that you are seated now proves that you did. Your present posture is better proof than a past memory.

*"Persevering in the faith is proof that you have the salvation you could never lose; failing to persevere shows that you never had it to begin with."*²

That is why Paul says here "if." Genuine faith is proven through perseverance.

And this is the gospel, there's the bad news of your sin, but there's the good news that Jesus Christ has provided the way of salvation and that changes the way that we live our life. This may be something that you've heard 100 times...

Christians should become experts on their knowledge of the gospel, not simply because we want to share it with those who have never come to know Christ and place their faith in Him; but we also need to be skilled in the gospel so that we can speak it to ourselves everyday and experience the benefits of it.

I have come to discover that speaking the truth to myself everyday is an essential part of moving toward maturity. You will not mature on accident. You will not grow in wisdom; you will not grow in understanding; you will not develop a changed life without intentionally bringing your mind back to rest on the gospel. If you are not firmly rooted in the gospel and have not learned to preach it to yourself every day, you will soon become discouraged and will slack off in your pursuit of holiness. And your natural tendency is to follow the standard of the world, but we're told in Romans 12 to,

"not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind."

The world that we live in is seeking for us to comply with its rules and standards; it's urging us to behave according to what they deem sociably acceptable. And it can become difficult to oppose what the vast majority of people deem acceptable, and without intentionality we will give in and follow along with what we find around us. If we're going to be transformed and have our lives literally reconstructed to be

² JD Greear

centered on the good news of Jesus Christ, we must renew our minds by bringing ourselves back to the gospel.

I want to give you ***four reasons to rehearse the gospel daily*** because I want you to see the benefit of it. I want the Christian to know that we have such an amazing gift that has been given to us in Jesus, and that we have everything we need for life and godliness if we remain stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that we have heard. These reasons that I'm going to give to you this morning to rehearse the gospel come from a book called "**A Gospel Primer**" which is written by **Milton Vincent**. This is a book that I discovered several years ago and I'm bringing our 7th-12th grade boys through it in Sunday School class. Vincent actually gives 31 reasons to rehearse the gospel, but we're just going to walk through six of them.

First, it is The New Testament Model

The New Testament emphasizes that the Christian is in need of hearing the gospel just as much as the non-Christian. Look at most of the writings of the Apostle Paul and you will notice a pattern of him rehearsing gospel truths. Read through Ephesians chapters 1-3 and you'll see it's all gospel. It defines sin, your place before God, it reveals who God is, what Jesus has accomplished, it talks of justification by faith, and on and on of the implications of the gospel. But that's not the only letter Paul does that in; he typically uses the first half of every letter to re-preach the gospel.

Colossians chapter 1-2 are all gospel, and it's not until chapter three where he begins explaining the implications of how the gospel truth shapes our lives. The truth of the gospel is so important, Paul was always restating the truth to the people he wrote. In fact, in Romans he spends the first eleven chapters unpacking the depths of the gospel. And he was so passionate to do it! In the opening chapter he tells the believers in the church that he was,

"eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome." Romans 1:15

Of course, he was anxious to preach the gospel to the non-Christian at Rome, yet he specifically states that he was eager to preach it to the believers as well. It is something that they've heard before but he keeps going back to the basics, and the basics is something you never really move past.

For an example of that you can look at sports; now I've have coached a couple of my kids soccer teams. Soccer is not my area of expertise. I grew up playing football and basketball. I did a little bit of swimming, wrestling, baseball, but never soccer. So when my kids got involved in the sport and the Rec Department here in Middlefield needed someone to coach, I decided to try and learn the sport. So I bought the book *Coaching Soccer for Dummies* and attempted to learn as much as I could so I could pass that along to the team I was coaching.

I started practice with the team and I was hopeful that we could learn the basics of dribbling with the ball up and down the field, making good passes, understanding how to properly space themselves out on the field. But do you know what they wanted to do? They weren't concerned about the basics, they just wanted to play the game. They wanted to run around the field and put into action the things they haven't even learned yet. Playing the game is a lot more fun than learning the basics. But in the game of soccer, and in any other sport, once you've become more skilled in the basics, the game becomes that much more exciting and fun! And you don't move on beyond the basics you go deeper into them.

That's how it is with the gospel as well. You don't ever move past it. You don't ever become bored with it. In fact, you see the gospel like a fuel in the furnace of worship. The more you understand about it, believe it, and rely on it, the more you adore God both for who He is and for what He has done for us in Christ.³ The New Testament comes back the gospel repeatedly, so should we.

Second, it Produces Rest in Christ's Righteousness

The gospel encourages us to rest in our righteous standing with God, a standing which Christ Himself has accomplished and always maintains for us. Listen to what Romans 5 says,

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

By placing our faith in Christ, God declares the sinner to be justified. We maintain a righteous standing before the holy God because of what Jesus Christ. And our justification before God is not a long drawn out process, it's also not something that waivers up and down based upon our actions. Justification is a one-time act, it's complete and definite at the moment you place your trust in Jesus as your Savior.

And in fact, once your saved we gain Jesus as our Advocate. 1 John 2 says,

"My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins."

Jesus Christ is now our defender. He stands in the presence of God saying, "That ones mine. I paid the price for their sin. I satisfied God's wrath by atoning for their sin on the cross. Their justification has been taken care of for they have found rest in Me."

³ What is the Gospel? by Greg Gilbert

And this reason right here is probably one of the greatest reasons I have to rehearse the gospel daily, because over my lifetime there's been a tendency to work for my own justification, to produce my own right standing before God. I had a misunderstanding of who God was, where I thought when I sinned I needed to work my way back into His good graces, or I needed to wait a period of time before pursuing God again so there would be a little bit of time between me and my sin. But that's not who God is and that's not what the gospel declares. The gospel proclaims in Christ, there is nothing I can do that would make God love me more; nothing that I can do that makes God love me less—that's a reminder I need everyday!

The gospel reminds me that my righteous standing with God always remains in spite of my actions, because my standing is based completely on the work of Jesus and not mine. On my worst days of sin and failure, the gospel encourages me with God's unwavering grace toward me. And then on my best days of victory and usefulness, the gospel keeps me relating to God solely on the basis of Jesus' righteousness and not my own. In coming to grips with that we are able to put our energies into actually enjoying God and pursuing holiness with the life that we have. There's such rest in the gospel.

Let's keep moving and look at a third reason.

Third, it is A Cure for Distrust

You are in a constant battle of who/what you're going to trust, this is especially true when it comes to living for the Lord. You see, every time you deliberately disobey a command of God, it is because you are in that moment doubtful as to God's true intentions in giving you that command. You're thinking to yourself, *"Does He really have my best interest at heart? Or is He withholding something from me that I would be better off having?"* Isn't that exactly what took place in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve? Genesis 3 tells us that the serpent approached Eve and said,

God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

She doubted the goodness of God. And those questions of doubting the goodness and trustworthiness of God, whether consciously asked or not, lie underneath every act of disobedience.

However, the gospel changes my view of God's commandments, in that it helps me to see the heart of the Person from whom those commandments come. When I begin my train of thought with the gospel, I realize that if God loved me enough to sacrifice His Son's life for me, then He must be guided by that same love when He speaks His commandments to me. Looking at God's commands and restrictions in this way

helps us to see what they truly are: they're indicators from a good God who is seeking to love us through each instruction, so that we might experience His fullness forever.

The gospel cures us from our suspicions of God, and allows us to walk more confidently on the path of obedience.

Fourth, it Awakens Hope for Heaven

The more we experience the riches of the Christ in the gospel, the more there develops within us a longing to be with Christ in heaven where we will experience His grace in abundance. Paul tells the Philippian church that his,

“desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. (Philippians 1:23)

It's far better to be with the One that we were created by and created for. And the Apostle Peter tells the Christian to

“set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Rehearsing the gospel awakens an eagerness for eternity within us and the reason for that is simple; no matter how great the current blessings of salvation are, as we look at eternity we come to an understanding that the current blessings are but the “first fruits of the Spirit,” the first portion of an unimaginably great blessing. We won't be able to think long about the gospel blessings without thinking also of the everlasting glories that will be ours to enjoy in heaven.

The Apostle Paul rehearsed the gospel, the Apostle Peter rehearsed the gospel, the Apostle John rehearsed the gospel, and it led each of them to delight in what awaits the believer in eternity. And having a gospel-generated heavenward focus produces enormous benefits to us while we live on this earth.

Not everyone agrees with that though. I remember as a young boy standing near a couple of adults who were having a conversation, I was probably 11 or 12 at the time. They were talking about someone in our church, and the older gentleman says, “*Well, he's so heavenly minded that he's no earthly good.*” And that struck me as a young man. I didn't quite know what that was supposed to mean. Isn't heaven what we're supposed to be looking forward to? Isn't eternity with Jesus the longing that God has placed on everyone's heart?

Yes! That's what God's Word tells us. Our thoughts on the gospel and our thoughts on eternity are not opposed to each. And in fact, a right, biblically driven view of eternity doesn't leave us with our head in the clouds, but sets us in motion as we live right now on this earth.

I probably quote C.S. Lewis way too much, but this is perhaps one of my favorite quotes of his,

If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. –C.S. Lewis

The hope of seeing Christ in glory releases the purifying influence of heaven upon our lives from day to day. The future love that God will show us in glory enables us to love others with a heaven-inspired love even now. I love others out of the fullness already given to me in Christ, and also out of the greater fullness that will be given to me in glory! Also, hope of eternity with Jesus in heaven allows our hearts to thrive during the most difficult and lengthy trials here on this earth. When looking at the glory of eternity, our troubles seem lighter by comparison; and when looking at the length of eternity, our troubles seem fleeting by comparison.

Preaching the gospel to ourselves everyday is a great way to keep ourselves established in “the hope of the gospel,” so that we might experience the practical benefits that such hope is intended to bring us here on earth. It’s not, learn the gospel, or discover the gospel, and then move on to the deeper things. Center your life on the hope of the gospel and keep rehearsing those truths to yourself everyday.

Conclusion:

And this is how I start my day. I have written within my phone certain aspects of the gospel that I declare to myself everyday because I know that I’m prone to wander. Just like the old song, “prone to wander Lord I feel, prone to leave the God I love.” So I meditate on truth, these are what I have written down to help me in rehearsing the gospel.

- In Christ, there is nothing I can do that would make God love me more; nothing that I can do that makes God love me less.
- In Christ is my everlasting joy. Jesus is the one who provides my life with purpose and satisfaction. My life exist today FOR Jesus!! Live accordingly.
- As God has been to me, so I will be to others. Walk humbly in light of that fact.
- I’ve been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, live a life today worthy of your Savior.
- You belong to Christ having crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.
- The Holy Spirit will help you endure with joy if you depend on Him.

It may help you as well to come up with a plan. It may make more sense for you to have a list of verses that you are drawn back to; and I have that as well, but whatever you do, I encourage you to do it with intention. Don’t be aimless, center your life on the gospel of Jesus Christ and be drawn back to daily. It’s so worth it!