

What We Believe: Response & Eternal Destiny

Text: John 1.12–13; Ephesians 2.4–7; Acts 17.30–31

Theme: God's gospel requires a response that has eternal consequences.

Introduction — the gospel

- it's what we love to hear & proclaim
- and the EFCA Statement of Faith seeks to induce this love & enhance this proclamation too
- article #10 is no less so as it puts forth the response needed and expected
- you know that God's law is what He requires of us
- perfect, personal, perpetual obedience...which we simply will not and cannot keep
- and so, God, even as we heard so marvelously put last Lord's Day, promise to save us
- He covenanted with Himself to save us, promising Christ thru an oath that is an anchor for us
- throughout all of Scripture, from beginning to end, this is its proclamation
- God has acted graciously to save a people for Himself through His Son Jesus Christ
- this Son came, took on flesh, lived a holy life, died a perfect sacrifice, rose again
- and now, He rules & reigns, waiting to come back for all His people whom He has saved

God, perfect in nature and purpose, exists infinitely, perfectly and eternally in the Trinity

- Father, Son, and Spirit all work in an all-knowing & all-powerful manner
- out of love & grace, God purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself
- as He draws all things to a close and consummation, He will restore His fallen creation
- everything works and moves toward this end: the glory of God

Let's read Article #10 together so we can see this glorious gospel of God

EFCA Statement of Faith, Article #10:

We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that God will raise the dead bodily and judge the world, assigning the unbeliever to condemnation and eternal conscious punishment and the believer to eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord in the new heaven and the new earth, to the praise of His glorious grace. Amen.

First off, we must ask, in light of this gospel...

I. WHAT WILL BE YOUR RESPONSE?

- when the gospel, in any way, is put before you, it demands a response
- God has done all that is necessary to rescue us
- but this gospel does not just leave us with some good words; it requires a response
- yes, God's sovereign grace does all that is needed to redeem us
- but there is still personal involvement on your part
- a response of faith is needed from a heart that is made new by regeneration of Holy Spirit

1. God commands us to respond

- God has acted to save us in Christ
- but He also commands us to believe
- hear that again: He commands us

- and what do we do with commands?
- we attempt to obey them in our own strength & will
- but if this is a command, like all other commands of Scripture, what is the problem?
- we cannot obey it, so God must do something
- by His grace and love, He causes us to be born again
- given this new heart, He gives the gift of faith
- and when this gift is opened, it believes and receives Jesus Christ
- gospel is not just a recommendation nor a helpful suggestion for a better life
- no, we are called to repent
- **...but now he commands all people everywhere to repent — Acts 17.30**
- so God has to do a work so we can obey this command
- and this He does
- **But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus — Ephesians 2.4–6**
- so, obedient faith, due to the working of God's Holy Spirit, brings this response
- **But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. — John 1.12–13**

2. God's gospel addresses everyone everywhere

- everyone everywhere: all people in the world
- call of gospel is to go out to every nation, every people group, every language
- as we heard already in Acts 17.30
- **...now he commands all people everywhere to repent,**
- God's good news of salvation in Jesus is universal in its proclamation
- not just for some select group: we preach to any and every person
- this was Christ's last charge to His disciples
- **Go therefore and make disciples of all nations**
- this is what the book of Acts records for us: the gospel going out
- you may not all agree with me how Bible presents God's electing grace
- but none of us knows who will respond in manner they respond
- and so, we preach it, proclaim it, tell it, share it

3. God calls us to believe this tremendous message of hope

- **And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. — Hebrews 11.6**
- faith is required, which is the response to hearing the message of gospel
- **For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.**
- so believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved!

1) We turn to Him in repentance

- exercising the gift of faith given us by God means we must repent
- once God gives us this new heart, we can now obey His commands
- we may not know much at all in the beginning, but we know this
- we cannot stay the same person for we have become a new creation in Christ Jesus
- this repentance is also a gift from God, 2 Timothy 2.25
- it is not in addition to faith, and it does not save us
- this was the message of Jesus and His apostles
- **[I was] testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.**
- so, as God turns His grace upon, we, in turn, through faith, turn our hearts to Him

2) We are to receive the Lord Jesus Christ

- gospel not just a four-point plan of salvation
- not just biblically correct doctrinal teaching on redemption
- we must receive Jesus Christ Himself
- gospel is a Person to be trusted
- Paul helps us by speaking of “knowing Christ Jesus my Lord”
- and so, we receive Him as forgiver of our sins
- we receive His ruling lordship over our life and, indeed, over all things
- Jesus calls us: Come, follow Me...and this is what we must do if we are born again

People's response to God's gospel forces us to ask...

II. WHAT WILL BE YOUR ETERNAL DESTINY?

- I pity the preacher who puts gospel into self-help terminology
- more than that, I pity the congregation who must listen to such claptrap
- we cannot help ourselves; this is whole purpose of God's gospel in Christ
- it is not simply helping us live a better life, have a nicer marriage or such things
- gospel carries eternal significance
- our Statement of Faith reveals this in what God will do to end all things

1. God will raise the dead bodily

- my daughter and I sang at my father's funeral
- song titled: It Is Not Death To Die
- It is not death to die, to leave this weary road,
And join the saints who dwell on high,
Who've found their home with God.
It is not death to close the eyes long dimmed by tears,
And wake in joy before Your throne,
Delivered from our fears.
O Jesus, conquering the grave.
Your precious blood has power to save.
Those who trust in You will in Your mercy find
That it is not death to die
- time does not permit to cover all things about the resurrection of the dead
- but it is a surety, a exceedingly precious promise of God: we will rise from the dead
- and we will inherit a glorified resurrected body

• Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

2. God will judge the world

- we heard this proclaimed two Sundays ago when considering Christ's return
- He will return as King and as Judge
- God...commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."
- this judgment of God gives dignity to our lives for He treats us as responsible beings
- our choices & decisions will be brought into account: for His glory or for ours

1) Destiny of the unbeliever

- for those who reject Christ & God's free offer, there is condemnation
- the sentence is then: eternal conscious punishment
- they will not be simply annihilated, as some wrongfully teach
- they will not be excused at some point in the future & let into heaven
- this would render God's justice & righteousness mute
- And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. — Matthew 25.46

2) Destiny of the believer

- for those in Christ, this judgment holds no fear
- if the song, "I Can Only Imagine" is close to biblical, then this is what we face
- once alienated, condemned, unclean, now washed, clean, free from guilt & sin

i. eternal blessedness and joy

- heaven is given brief mention in Scripture
- and we will dwell there with our heavenly Father
- Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

He who has ears, let him hear.

ii. new heaven & new earth

- yes, we will depart this earth
- but God will renew it all, creation will be transformed
- all things will be made new — Revelation 21.5

All this reveals to us...

III. GOD'S FINAL PURPOSE

- all who have been rescued, redeemed, restored will live in God's transformed creation
- what a joyful celebration this will be, eternal adoration given to our great God
- we will sing the song of Revelation 7
- and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"
- no boasting except in Jesus Christ who has saved us unto God through His Spirit

A doctrinal statement is more than just information; it's demands...

IV. OUR FINAL RESPONSE

- truths such as these are meant to be doxological: producing a glorious response in us
- whatever else we do for eternity, we will worship

Conclusion – So, where do you stand with God?

- you have heard the gospel presented, at least this whole summer, in this series
- you have heard of God's loving and gracious nature, revealed in Christ Jesus
- Christ has been put forth each Sunday as God's good news—the evangel, the gospel
- laid out to you, I hope in a caring and loving manner by my preaching, is this news
- you are a sinner, condemned under God's wrath, in need of a great deliverance
- only salvation in Jesus Christ gives you a right standing before God
- only by believing upon His name and receiving the Son of God can you have eternal life
- this is God's purpose and plan
- as we began in this statement, God has done this “for His own glory”
- and now, we close with the only word that can summarize it
- the word which ends all of Scripture in it's last verse: Revelation 22.21
- **Amen! So be it!**
- the grace of the Lord Jesus be with all