

sins?” Yes! Being made in the image of God means that we all possess a spirit *and* a soul – (1 Thess. 5:23). The spirit is dead to (separated from) God because of sin, but the soul still functions.

It is the soul that contains the *mind, will, heart and conscience.* Every day we witness unbelievers exercising these organs of the soul. They receive new information, make decisions, display affections, and feel emotions – including guilt and regret. As long as a person is alive, their *soul* is operating with the God-given capabilities of choice – and opportunities to change their minds (repent).

God called a wayward Israel to “*Come, let us reason (use the mind) together, says the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow*” – (Isaiah 1:18). After preaching the Gospel on Mars Hill, Paul proclaimed: “*God commands all men everywhere to repent (change the mind).*” – Acts 17:30

Jesus commanded His disciples to take the Gospel (new information) to “*every creature.*” To help them, Jesus sent His Holy Spirit who would be the *sincere Carrier* of these truths to the *souls* of all people: “*When He is come, He will convict the world of sin (their condition), and of righteousness (Christ’s provision), and of judgment (penalty of sin).*” – John 16:8

It is to this work of conviction that Paul referred: “*But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, beloved of*

the Lord, because God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” - 2 Thess. 2:13

“The Spirit of God sets the sinner apart (sanctifies him) in a *sincere* work of conviction, to show him his desperate need for the Savior. The response to God’s offer of grace (*belief or rejection of the truth*) is up to him. Thus the Bible warns: “*Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, shall he be thought worthy, who has trampled underfoot the Son of God (the will), and considered (the mind) the blood of the covenant, with which he was set apart, a common thing (heart), and has insulted the Spirit who offers grace?*” – Hebrews 10:29

The law of faith removes boasting. To exercise our God-given capacity to choose, is not a work (Romans 3:27; 4:5). It is merely agreeing with God that we are sinners indeed, who need His Son, lest we perish. The saving work is God’s alone: “*He that has received Christ’s testimony has set to his seal that God is true.*” – John 3:33

If being the Bride of Christ means anything, it means we must say “I do.” Love must be by choice, or it is not love at all.

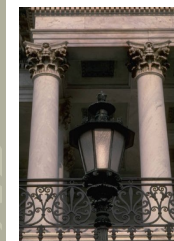
Our choices decide our eternal future. Jesus warned, “*Behold! I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work (choice) shall be.*” – Revelation 22:12

Until then, we can honestly and joyfully sing to our children and proclaim to the world: “*Jesus loves you this I know, for the Bible tells me so ...*” Amen. ©

THE IRREDUCIBLE



GOSPEL



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THE IRREDUCIBLE GOSPEL

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

Since the best offense is a good defense, the first thing we need to identify in the “Election vs. Free-will” debate is which Gospel God has asked us to defend. Since the word gospel means “Good News!” what is the Father’s version of “Good News?”

Thankfully, He sent an angelic delegation to announce it. *“Fear not! For, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people! For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ, the LORD!”* – Luke 2:10

The integrity of the Father’s testimony contains four irreducible elements:

- His genuine love for all people
- His genuine desire to save all people
- His provision of a Savior who cannot fail because He is Jehovah, the Son
- His provision of a Savior whose grand redemptive scope includes all mankind

This one and only Gospel is the foundation of the Evangelical Church, cemented in place by the Apostles and Prophets. Paul wrote: *“According to the grace of God which is given to me, as a skillful architect, I have laid the foundation, and another builds upon it. But let everyone take heed how he builds upon it. For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ”* – 1 Corinthians 3:10, 11.

The Apostles proclaimed this Gospel:

- *“And [Christ] is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, **but also** for the sins of the whole world.”* – 1 John 2:2
- *“We trust in the living God, who is the **Savior of all men**, especially of those who believe.”* – 1 Tim. 4:10
- *“As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so **death passed upon all men**, because all have sinned ... even so, by the righteousness of the One **the free gift came upon all men** unto justification of life.”* – Romans 5:12-18
- *“To [Christ] give all the prophets witness, that through His name **whosoever will believe** in Him shall receive remission of sins.”* – Acts 10:43

Like the Apostles, we must preach this same Gospel if we would be “laborers together” with God. We must be sure we are building with Him, not in opposition to Him. Consequently, any doctrine that alters the Gospel – *by minimizing, negating, or adding to* - is in contradiction to the testimony of the Father.

The Church must identify as false, any teaching that strikes at the heart of the Gospel. The Father’s *integrity* concerning His proclamation of love, and *desire* to save the world, must be defended. Jesus Christ must not be reduced or robbed of His *supreme incarnate purpose* as the Savior for all men. Anything less accuses the Godhead of misrepresentation.

God’s indictment towards a false gospel is not to be taken lightly: *“But though we or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you*

than that which we (apostles) have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If anyone preach any other Gospel unto you than that which ye have received, let him be accursed!” – Galatians 1:8, 9

All Scripture must build upon the foundation of the Gospel. No Scripture is of any private interpretation. Difficult verses cannot elbow out, alter, or do violence to, any of the foundational elements of the Gospel.

For example, the term “elect” is first introduced in Isaiah 42 as referring to the Messiah: *“Behold Mine Elect, in whom My soul delights ... I give Thee for a covenant of the people; for a Light of the Gentiles.”* Isaiah goes on to refer to those who trust in the Messiah and take hold of His covenant as *“the elect.”* Simply put, God elects those who trust the “Elect One” for salvation. When doctrines are built upon the *absolutes* of the Gospel, difficult verses fall into place.

A LIVING SOUL: So what does God require as a response to the Gospel? Jesus taught, *“He that believes on the Son has everlasting life: but he that believes not (rejects) the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him.”* – John 3:36

Since faith is what God requires, can I “believe” if I am “dead in trespasses and