

# The Undecorated Gospel

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Good morning. I'm very excited to be here this morning. Last time it didn't work out, but this time, Lord willing, we were here. So I'm excited for this morning, and I've already been truly blessed. Thank you for the song leading.

Those were some of those songs I hadn't heard in a long time, and they were full of truth and very good. And so thank you for that. So yeah, I figured I'd start with just a small introduction.

I'm Chris Schmidt. My parents are Ben Tino Schmidt. My grandparents are Henry and Sarah Martins and John Anna Schmidt. And so now we've played the Mennonite game. Now we can keep going, right?

Just in case anybody's going to ask me that, now you know. I grew up in the Blue Menard area by La Crete. Actually, I lived here for a while. We moved back and forth.

So I've been in Grand Prairie. I've lived here a couple times, and so it's not an unfamiliar area to me. But then eventually I moved back, met my now wife, Michelle, and we have four kids, another one on the way.

[ 1 : 0 6 ]     Lord willing, he or she will be here in June. And so we're excited for that. A little while after we got married, I forget how it would be, about five years after we got married, then the Lord called us to a Bible school in South Carolina.

And so we spent three years out there just growing in the Lord, and it was a huge blessing to us to be there. And then when we came back, then there was a youth pastor position opening up at Countryside, which we were where we were attending before anyway.

And so we went into that role there, got accepted into that. And that's where we are now, doing youth ministry at Countryside.

And just as a little encouragement, I always like to just give an update. I don't know if you guys think about the other churches. We always think about, or I do anyways, what's going on in the other churches, right?

And so just a little update on what's happening in youth there. We've had an immense growth of youth coming, and so it's brought a lot new challenges and new things.

[ 2 : 1 3 ]     And so right now we're ministering to a group of about 50 to 55 senior youth. We do grade 9 to 12 senior youth, and then junior youth is grade 7 to 8, and we have another 25 in there, and then another about 12 or so in young adults.

And so it's been a growing ministry, and we've been very blessed by the Lord, and just seeing, not by numbers, but seeing growth in young people. That excites me, seeing growth in young people.

And so it's been a very big blessing for us there. But before we get into the message too far, I'll just open in a short word of prayer.

It helps me to set my mind, and so let's pray. Father in heaven, Lord God, we come before your throne of grace, Lord God, and we trust in you, we trust in your spirit, the work that you want to do here this morning, God, and we trust in your word as truth, as the ultimate truth, Lord God.

And so, Lord God, I do pray that by your spirit you would work within us, Lord, to give us understanding of your word. Lord, that is where the power of life lies, Lord.

[ 3 : 21 ] And so, we thank you, God, that you have promised your presence, that you have promised to give us understanding, Lord, that you're the revealer of truth. And so we just entrust this whole morning to you.

I pray that you would open up our hearts, Lord, to receive that which you have for us here this morning. So we thank you, God. We praise you in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. All right, so I titled it The Undecorated Gospel.

And I don't know, it's maybe a different kind of title, but it really is. There's so much that wants to get added to the gospel.

There's a constant battle going on about that there has to be something more than the gospel. And so this morning, I'm hoping to talk a little bit about the beauty and just the simplicity of the gospel.

And then not only that, but the power of the Spirit in comparison to the wisdom of men. And so these are two of the things that I hope that will be held before us this morning that are in our mind, the beauty and simplicity of the gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit.

[ 4 : 28 ] And so before we get too far, though, I want to ask a question. Have you ever heard someone preach a sermon and you just thought, wow, what a speaker?

Like, it was just captivating. It was powerful. It was, you know, I could listen to him for hours. I have. I've walked away from some and I'm like, man, it's done already? Like, he was a captivating speaker.

And I've often walked away from that truly blessed by someone who has expounded the Word of God. And he was just a, he was naturally gifted in speaking and yet he expounded the Word of God so well.

And I've been truly blessed by that. But then there's been other times where I walked away and I thought, wow, what a speaker. And then I thought about it more. I thought, but what was his point?

What was the main point of what he actually said? And he mentioned this passage in the beginning, but I don't really remember him speaking on that passage much after. And so, I don't know if that's happened to you guys, but I've been on both sides of that.

[ 5 : 31 ] Where I've been truly blessed by a good speaker and I've left kind of empty. Even though it was entertaining and it was a good speaker. And it's not beyond me to just forget.

So sometimes it might have just been me being forgetful. I'm a quite forgetful person, so maybe that's what it was. But often it's because their eloquent speaking is captivating enough that they're relying on that, on their ability, rather than the power of the Spirit of God.

And that's kind of where we find our passage. And just to kind of set a little bit of that context of it, knowledge and eloquence of speech were very highly valued in the Roman world, in the Greek world.

In the time that Paul was writing this, there was big value placed on people who were knowledgeable and who were eloquent speakers. They were highly esteemed. There was a time of philosophers. I don't know if you guys have heard of Greek philosophers.

There's many. And they were very prominent people in that time. And so just like in Judaism, so the Old Testament law, the Old Testament Jews, what they believed, just like in there where people would desire to be disciples of a prominent rabbi, just like that, people wanted to be disciples of a prominent philosopher.

[ 6 : 54 ] And so this is where that issue comes from, which you guys have gone through already, but where I am of Paul and I am of Apollos and I am of Cephas and where that's happening.

People wanted to attach themselves to the one who they thought was the best. And so you have this going back and forth there. And so Paul contrasts the faults of their thinking this way, by even approaching the gospel this way.

And the gospel is simple. The gospel doesn't need dressing up. It doesn't need decorations, right? The gospel is simple. The gospel is powerful. It is the most beautiful and most powerful if it's on its own.

And so the first point that I want to make is that the gospel is simple. If you're not already there, we're going to read in 1 Corinthians. So in chapter 1, verse 17, Paul writes, Or some versions say void.

Saying, I didn't use cleverness of speech. I didn't use fancy speech. Lest the cross of Christ should be made void or of no effect. And then in verse 18, he tells us why.

[ 8 : 17 ] He says, For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. This is why he preaches the gospel plainly, because it's in the gospel that is found the power of God.

It's not in speech. It's not in fancy speech. It's not in human wisdom. It's in the gospel. It's in the wisdom of God. And what we do when we try to dress up the gospel with fancy speech, with eloquent speaking, I don't know if you know what eloquent means.

It just means fancy. It's a fancy word for fancy. But what happens is we draw attention to ourselves. It becomes a self-focus. The focus is on the message giver rather than on the message itself.

And that message is that Jesus saves, and we do not. A cleverness in speech makes the gospel void in the sense that it gets people to trust in something, someone else, except for the true gospel, Jesus Christ.

And so it becomes an empty message. It doesn't hold power because it skips over the gospel. And so Paul says to us in chapter 2, we're going to go into our passage now, in chapter 2, verses 1 and 2, it says, Now as I was studying for this message, I have to admit that God used this passage as a sobering reminder to me.

[ 10 : 05 ] And as preachers, it's very often very easy to slip into that temptation, that tempting, into the mindset of you have to bring something new.

You have to do something different so that the people of God don't become bored, so the message doesn't become dull, right? There's a pressure that when you preach that comes with that, to be an eloquent speaker.

And the pressure, I think, is greater nowadays than what it ever has been because we have access to so many speakers, right? We have access to all the Charles Stanleys, the David Jeremias, the John Pipers.

We have access to all that, and we hear them, and they're gifted speakers. They're naturally gifted speakers. And very often, they expose the Word very well. But there's a pressure to try and keep up with that.

And so we try to decorate. And so, as I was studying, it was convicting to me of, hmm, I had to sit back for a while and think, do I decorate the Gospel?

[ 11 : 11 ] A self-reflecting moment, right? Because in reality, God wants to use me. He doesn't want to use David Jeremiah here right now. He wants to use me right now, and He wants to use you.

It's not just the people who are speaking up here, but God wants to use you. He wants to use your personality, who you are, your background. He wants to use how He's met you to tell others about the saving grace of God.

And so we don't have to decorate. The problem comes when we think that that's not good enough anymore. Then we start decorating.

We want to dress it up. So we as humans, and our human wisdom, think we need to add something. We need to make it new.

We need to make it flashy. To make the Gospel sound more appealing. But do we really need to decorate the Gospel? What is more appealing than the fact that God loves you enough to send His Son to take the penalty for your sin, to make you His child, and promise you eternal life with blessings unimaginable, an eternal life with not one more tear, with not one more hurt, with no fear, no temptations, perfect fellowship with Himself.

[ 12 : 44 ] What is more appealing than that message, right? We don't need to decorate it. But here's a couple things that happen when we decorate or when we dress up the Gospel.

Number one, we trust people and not God. This is where cults come from, right? The person becomes their salvation and not God.

The person becomes their God. To them, the power is in the human being, not in Christ. Because, like we said before, the attention, when we start dressing stuff up, is that the attention starts being thrown on us, not on Christ.

Number two, we trust in knowledge, man's wisdom, and not in God. This is Gnosticism, right? You have to be in the know. There has to be a special revelation.

You can't be saved before you have access to that. And with access to that, you get access to the Holy Spirit or to the power of the Spirit. And so we have people trusting people and not God, people trusting knowledge or man's wisdom and not God.

[ 13 : 53 ] And then the third one is we trust in experience rather than in God. And I think this is where we have many of the modern things that have come out. People look for an experience because they want that flashy thing.

And this is where many of the prominent false religions of today come from. The new apostolic reformation is coming from this. Faith healers, Hinduism, Buddhists, not all, but some charismatic churches.

The focus is on the experience, not the power of the gospel. And so they trust in an experience. When the experience isn't there, it's void, right?

It's empty. There's nothing there. But the gospel is so simple and it's so beautiful and it's so sufficient. And Paul tells us what the gospel is.

If you just flip ahead to chapter 15, so 1 Corinthians 15, verses 3 and 4.

[ 15 : 06 ] So 1 Corinthians 15, 3 and 4. That was his message.

I delivered to you first of all that which I received, that Jesus died according to the scriptures, paid for your sins, and he was buried and that he rose again the third day. It was a simple message.

Jesus is the Christ. He did die. He did pay for your sins. And he rose again. And in Romans 10, 9, 10, we find that...

I'll actually just turn there because I'm going to quote it wrong. And it's not far, so... It's Romans 10, 9, 10.

That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes into righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

[ 16 : 12 ] Like, Paul keeps it simple. Yeah, he goes into deep theological things. He does. But when he's talking about the heart of the gospel, he keeps it simple.

Jesus is Christ. He died. He rose again. And if you confess him with your mouth and you believe in your heart, your sins are forgiven, you're saved. At the heart of the gospel, that is the message.

And it's simple and yet so powerful. And it's for everyone. And that's the second point that I'm going to make is it's... The gospel's for everyone. Now, Paul makes it very evident in his letters that he is no less in need of the gospel than anyone that he's speaking to.

We'll read verses... So, back to 1 Corinthians 2. We'll read verses 2 and 3 again. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. You know, Paul brought one message and that was Jesus Christ and Him crucified. He brought the message of the cross.

[ 17 : 25 ] He did not place himself above anybody else. He didn't think of himself as greater than those that he was preaching to. He didn't dress it up. And that's one of the beautiful things about the gospel and the wisdom of God is that the salvation that He brings is for everyone if they accept it.

The gift is free. So, it doesn't matter what status you have. It doesn't matter how much money you have. It doesn't matter what family you're from. What church you grew up in.

How smart you are. How not smart you are. How old you are. How young you are. What you've done. What you've not done. The gospel remains the same and everyone's need of that gospel remains the same.

Now, you were born with a sin nature. I was born with a sin nature. You've willfully sinned.

I've willfully sinned. We're all in the same boat, right? Paul says that. I'm the chief of sinners, he says. I'm the leader of that.

[ 18 : 36 ] God. And you know, the most beautiful thing about the gospel is that not a single one of you is out of the reach of the power of the blood of Christ.

Not one. From the saving power of God. And so, I don't know where you're at in life right now. I don't know what you're going through.

When I look around, I don't know very many of you personally. So I can't draw an opinion. I don't know what decisions you've made.

I don't know what sin struggles you have. I don't know. Maybe you're sitting here this morning and you have not confessed Jesus as Lord. You have not confessed Him as Savior.

Maybe you're thinking, not yet. It's not time yet. I need to be so and so good first or maybe I just need to get rid of this thing first or maybe I just need to be a little bit older.

[ 19 : 42 ] The one thing I do know is that Jesus Christ is for you. He came to die for you. And you have not sinned your way out of the power of Christ. Admit that you can't be saved.

Admit that man's wisdom isn't enough. Submit to Him as Lord. Accept Him as Savior. Believe that He died for your sins. Follow Him. The gospel is for you and for me and for everyone that will believe.

And so we come back and Paul says that he determined not to know anything among them except Christ crucified. And then in verse 4 he says, or sorry, not verse 4.

In verse 3 he says, I was with you in weakness and fear and in much trembling. I'm going to flip back and forth a little bit within the Corinthians but if you flip to 2 Corinthians 12 verse 9 and Paul had asked the Lord three times that this thorn in the flesh would depart from him.

God answers him and he says, my grace is sufficient for you for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Now Paul is acutely aware of his weakness in the flesh.

[ 21 : 30 ] He knows that without Christ he's weak. But it would have been pretty fresh in his mind as well because and we won't turn there right now but in Acts 17-18 we find where Paul actually came to Corinth.

He came from Athens. He went to Corinth and so in Athens he was preaching in the synagogues and he was preaching in the streets and then he got invited to Iropagus. I'm going to mess this word up.

Iropagus. There we go. This is the place within Athens where the most prominent philosophers would gather and they would discuss the things of the days and they would give their opinions and they would discuss these new ideas that they had and they would discuss these things but these were the most prominent eloquent speakers.

They were the ones that were highest looked up to. They gathered here at this place and that's where they argued and discussed ideas and Paul gets brought there and I can just imagine how much my knees would be shaking and I'm supposed to go talk to these people right?

These really smarty pants guys because I'm not. I would not be able to do that right? but Paul will know the weakness of his flesh and he doesn't trust in his flesh and so he presents the gospel to them and many scoffed and sneered and just kind of made fun of him just kind of divides him or you don't know anything and then there's others that believed so there was both but from there after that he went to Corinth and there he preached in the synagogues and when he was harshly resisted there he told them your blood be on your own heads which pretty much he shook out his garments and said your blood is on your own heads and pretty much what he's saying okay you've actually done I'm done with you but God's answer to him in that time was do not be afraid any longer but go on speaking and do not be silent for I am with you and no man will attack you in order to harm you for I have many people in this city so why did God have to tell them that Paul was obviously afraid feeling weak anxious and yet he feared

[ 23 : 55 ] God all the more and he stayed and he stayed for another year and a half Paul's realization of his weaknesses caused him to be afraid Paul's faith in the power of the gospel caused him to obey to be strong to obey you know the power of the gospel isn't just for some it's for the salvation of the sinner the power of the gospel is also for the strength of the believer you need God's grace to preach you need God's grace to understand you need God's grace to be converted you need God's grace to be obedient we're never not in need of God's grace and so Paul tells them I came to you in weakness and fear and in trembling after that sequence of events I would imagine I would also be in weakness and in fear and trembling coming to them when I had been harshly rejected and we find this power not in man's wisdom man's ideas but we find it in the gospel we find it in Jesus Christ and that brings me to that third point the gospel is powerful

I'll read verses 4 and 5 actually I'm going to read them here soon but in verse 2 Paul says I determine not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified we don't always catch everything that's translated from the Greek to the English because any translation you lose some but that word crucified the word crucified there is written in the perfect tense and I don't know if you know much about tenses you guys know past tense present future tense right it's to do with time so what's the perfect tense so he writes that he preaches Christ crucified in the perfect tense and what he's saying is that not only am I preaching that it happened but there's lasting results that's the perfect tense when something's written in the perfect tense it's something that happened but there's continuing results from that thing that happened and

Jesus dying and raising back to life isn't just a historical fact right no it's an ongoing living power it's not just something that happened like in in 1st Corinthians 1 verse 30 so we back up a couple verses he says but of but of him you are in Christ Jesus who became who became for us wisdom from God and righteousness and sanctification and redemption these are ongoing effects from that which Christ accomplished and you stand righteous before God because Christ paid for your sins and his perfect life is now your life you have been redeemed by the blood of Christ you've been bought back you've been sanctified you've been set apart for Christ and you are still being sanctified this is an ongoing thing you're still being made holy you're still being made more like him by the work of the spirit that is continually going on in your life if you are in Christ and so Paul then reminds them in verses 4 and 5 he says my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom but in demonstration of the spirit and of power that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God now the church in Corinth didn't happen because of Paul's ability and he's reminding them of that it was the power of the spirit it was because of the spirit that he was even there and it's in the power of the spirit that that church was established it was the same

Jesus that rose from the dead and is living and active inside each one of God's children by his spirit I skipped ahead of myself there a little bit but how powerful is the gospel take a look at Jesus' life the miracles he performed that same power is living inside of you by his spirit not that we can go at our own will and do whatever we want now not like that but it's the same Jesus I think one of my favorite examples that scripture brings about the power of the gospel is in Acts 2 when Pentecost happened and Peter preaches that gospel right he preaches the message and that day 3,000 souls were counted to the kingdom of God they were added the power of the gospel saved 3,000 souls in one day one message powerful and there's many stories of missionaries that we could tell there are stories from scripture that could show the power of the gospel and they're good and we believe them but in reality we all have days right weeks maybe even months maybe sometimes even years where we don't experience the power we think we should

I don't know if you felt that way before where I read a missionary story I'm like wow like God is so good look what he did and then I look at my life and I'm like I'm just not feeling there I'm feeling deflated not feeling like that's real in my life right now so what do we do in those times because we want to bring this to reality right and in reality I think too often myself included we've placed our faith in the wisdom of man we look to a person to be what only God should be to us maybe money is my security when God should be my security maybe we find temporary joy in things like alcohol and drugs and pornography maybe that instead of letting God be our eternal joy maybe we use those things to cover hurts inside instead of letting God heal those hurts by his grace maybe we hold on to anger or bitterness instead of forgiving because if

[ 31 : 09 ] I'm angry or bitter it feels better at the moment because I'm kind of exacting my own revenge right or maybe you aren't doing those things and yet still you struggle with experiencing what you think the gospel the power of the gospel should be and if that's you just let me tell you one thing just because you don't feel it doesn't mean it's not true doesn't mean it's not true why God allows believers to go through tough times and feel that deflation that spiritual weakness he knows I don't know every story why but he does and he's not far away the power is still true and the power is still living in you as a believer in Christ further in chapter 2 verse 12

Paul says now we have received not the spirit of the world but the spirit who is from God that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God and I love that ending there that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God in you you know in Philippians Paul and we can follow this in Paul's life in Philippians Paul says I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me that's not a card saying I can do whatever I want and God you know God's my genie who I say I'm going to make a wish right now it's going to happen that's not what he's saying he's saying everything that God has called me to that but to do that and in Ephesians he says blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in

Christ and Paul so often I mean I followed it before Paul says in Christ so often he's just so acutely aware of everything everything that he can do is found in Christ whenever he says something about a believer that is a truth about a believer he so often adds in Christ because he wants us to know that outside of that that is not true outside of that that's not going to be reality but in Christ it's there and so when he says who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places it's not that we've gotten everything we want again but what he's saying is God has held nothing back to bless us he has not held back his son even his only son he has given there's been nothing held back and that brings us back to the simplicity of the gospel it's a simple message and that message is for you this morning and for me and for all of us right we are always in this living need of the grace of

God God sent his son to cross that you through him could be brought back into fellowship with himself he sent his son to a cross that you could know that he has strengthened you for whatever you are facing in life right now trust him don't fall for the decorations don't fall for the eloquent!

empty speaking don't fall for man's wisdom as they try to decorate or to add to the true gospel don't be fooled by flashy people and flashy things there's so much things especially in the quote unquote Christian world that that are there as flashy additives to the gospel to try and draw people away and the truth is that eventually those things when you trust in people when you trust in experiences and when you trust in extra knowledge eventually those things will leave you void they will leave you empty meditate on what God has done for you don't lose sight of the beauty of the salvation that God has brought live in the strength of the Holy Spirit that is inside of you because when you lose sight of the simple beauty of the gospel you fall for the wisdom of men and you won't experience the power of the

[ 36 : 02 ] Spirit of Father in heaven Lord God I thank you so much again for your goodness God in our own wisdom we try to make the gospel more complex than what it is Lord we we think we maybe need to feel certain things Lord but Lord you tell us that we need to obey you tell us we need to believe Lord God I pray that you would remove all those things that have influence on our lives that try to draw us away from the truth of the gospel Lord and I pray that for this congregation Lord I pray that for all who believe or that you desire to come to you God that you would remove those things that the truth of the gospel could be made clear and Lord so we trust in that we trust empowered your people to live rightly before you

God and so we thank you God and we just pray for a special blessing on each one that's here this morning Lord as we part from here as we go from here this morning Lord God that you would just ever more so make yourself known intimately personally Lord to your people and we thank you God we praise you in Jesus name!

Amen!