

2. The Gospel

Core DNA Trait: A church transformed by the gospel.

The Gospel: The Power of Complete Salvation

Romans 1:16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.'"

- Salvation is not merely rescue from hell—it is restoration back to God's original intention.
- The work of the cross (what Jesus finished for us) and the way of the cross (what the Spirit is finishing in us) is essential to bring us back to God's ultimate intention—eternal fellowship with the Triune God—and for accomplishing the five components of God's eternal purpose:
 1. Jesus at the center.
 2. A family of Christlike sons for the Father.
 3. An equally yoked bride for the Son.
 4. A temple, house, and body the Holy Spirit fills.
 5. Experiencing eternal intimacy, eternal authority, and eternal glory.
- Salvation is not one event. It is the full work of God—atonement, justification, regeneration, union with Christ, and sanctification—bringing you into living communion with Christ Himself.

The Gospel Is the Power of God

a) The Gospel is Power

- The gospel is not:
 - Religious instruction
 - Moral improvement
 - Spiritual inspiration
 - Seven steps to a better life
- The gospel is the power of God.
- The Greek word *dunamis* conveys:
 - Explosive power
 - Divine ability
 - Miracle-working power

- The English words *dynamic* and *dynamite* come from the word *dunamis*.
- God's power expressed through the gospel does three things:
 1. Delivers from sin's penalty—*justification*.
 2. Delivers from sin's power—*sanctification*.
 3. Delivers from sin's presence—*glorification*.
- This is complete salvation.
 - The gospel is not weak.
 - The gospel is not outdated.
 - The gospel is not elementary.
 - The gospel is not words only.
 - The gospel is God's power for complete deliverance from the penalty of sin, the power of sin, and ultimately the presence of sin.

b) The Cross Must Remain Central

- Paul: "I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2).
- Why? Because whenever the church moves away from Christ, the cross, and the finished work, it becomes:
 - Man-centered
 - Experience-driven
 - Performance-based
- The result? Jesus is eclipsed by:
 - Revival
 - Spiritual gifts
 - End-time prophecy
 - The restoration of Israel
 - Cultural relevance
- All of these are biblical and good. We should pursue all of these. But none are the center. None are the foundation. Jesus and His finished work are the center and foundation.
- Some are bored with the cross. View it as elementary. Applies to Charismatics especially.

- Many crave new teachings, the latest prophetic word, or the most recent apostolic revelation.
- They believe these are the keys to unlocking deeper spiritual experiences, life-changing breakthroughs, or transformation.
- Shifts the focus away from Christ and the cross.
- Key Idea
 - The cross is not the starting point you move beyond.
 - It is the foundation you build your life upon.
 - The cross remains the center and foundation of all spiritual life and power.

c) The Cross Addresses Our Deepest Needs

- Reconciliation with God
- Freedom from guilt, shame, and condemnation
- Deliverance from sin's power
- Transformation of character
- Conformity to Christ's image
- Becoming God's treasured possession
- Ultimate glorification

d) The Danger of Abandoning the Cross

- Many recent scandals stem from abandoning Christ and the cross.
- Examples: clergy abuse, prophetic manipulation, financial misconduct, sexual sin, false doctrines, and even the elevation of secondary truths above Christ.
- Church becomes carnal when the focus shifts.

God Is the Gospel

a) Key Verses

- Psalm 27:1 — "The Lord is my salvation."
- Isaiah 12:2 — "God is my salvation."

b) God Is the Ultimate Gift of the Gospel

- Jesus's name means "the Lord saves" or "the Lord is salvation."

- Salvation is not merely:
 - Forgiveness, heaven, blessing, or breakthrough
 - Intellectual knowledge or doctrinal precision
 - It is being brought to God (1 Pet. 3:18).
- The ultimate gift of the gospel is the Triune God Himself.
- If heaven had no Christ in it, it would not be heaven.
- Justification: Allows you to approach a holy God.
- Sanctification: Frees you from sin's power to live in ongoing communion with the Triune God.

The Atonement: Where Justice and Love Meet

a) Why the Cross Was Necessary

- We cannot understand the cross without understanding:
 1. God's holiness (Isa. 6).
 2. God's justice.
 3. Humanity's sin.
- Holiness is not one attribute among many. It is the blazing center of God's being.
- Sin is not a mistake, a weakness, a shortcoming, or a personality flaw.
- Sin is cosmic treason against a God of infinite holiness.
- Therefore sin must be judged.
- God takes sin seriously.
 - If God overlooks sin He ceases to be just.
 - God's holiness demands atonement for sin.
 - God's justice will not tolerate even the slightest sin.
- A God of love would not punish sinners eternally unless His holiness demanded it.

b) Total Depravity

- All humanity stands guilty before a holy God (Rom. 1:18–3:20).
- We sinned in Adam, our covenant representative (Rom. 5:12–19).

- Adam's guilt was imputed to the human race.
- We were constituted sinners by position and by nature.
- Apart from Christ, sin has corrupted every part of our being.
- Apart from Christ, humanity is:
 - Spiritually dead
 - Darkened in mind
 - Hardened in heart
 - Hostile toward God
 - Unable to please Him
- Total depravity does not mean totally evil.
- It means totally unable to attain God's standard of righteousness on our own.
- Total depravity is why God's wrath abides on unbelievers (John 3:35).

c) Propitiation Is Wrath Satisfied

- Romans 3:25: "whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. . . . so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."
- Propitiation means wrath turned away; justice satisfied.
- On the cross:
 - Sin was imputed to Christ.
 - Wrath was poured out.
 - Justice was satisfied.
 - Love was revealed.
- 2 Cor. 5:21: "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."
- Isaiah 53: "He bore our iniquities."

d) Did the Father Pour Out Wrath on His Son?

- "Smitten of God" (Isa. 53:4).
- "Why have You forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46).

- God “condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8:3).
 - Condemned means judgment and can refer to wrath.

e) At the Cross . . .

- Justice and mercy embraced.
- The judgment meant for you fell on Him.

f) Propitiation Means Satisfaction

- Jesus’s righteous life satisfied the law’s demand for absolute righteousness.
- Jesus’s sacrificial death satisfied the law’s penalty for sin.

g) It Is Finished—John 19:30

- This doesn’t mean: it has begun; it is possible; or you finish the rest.
- Finished means:
 - Debt paid.
 - Law satisfied.
 - Wrath absorbed.
 - Redemption secured.
- You are not waiting for God to calm down. His wrath toward you in Christ is gone.

Justification: Your Legal Verdict

a) Human Effort Fails

- All religions attempt to answer: How can a sinner stand before a holy God?
- Every religion says: Do.
- The gospel says: Done.

b) Imputation: The Great Exchange

- Romans 4:5: “But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness.”
- Romans 4:6: “God credits righteousness apart from works.”
- Romans 4 is the *imputation chapter*.
- *Chashab* (Hebrew) and *Logizomai* (Greek) mean: reckon, account, or credit.

- Illustration:
 - A million-dollar debt.
 - A ten-million-dollar deposit.
- The righteousness that makes you acceptable to God is not earned, achieved, or developed—it's credited.
- You are righteous only because you are in Christ by faith.

c) Justification vs Sanctification

- Justification is:
 - Legal
 - Instant
 - Complete
 - Unchanging
- Sanctification is:
 - Progressive
 - Transformational
 - Lifelong
 - The ebb and flow of being conformed to Christ's image
- Justification gives you a new righteous status; sanctification develops within you a righteous nature.
- Confuse them and:
 - You live in fear.
 - You strive to stay saved.
 - You try to maintain your justification with works.
- Your righteous standing does not fluctuate with your performance.

d) Justification Clarified

- Doesn't depend on how much you love God, how intimate you are with Him, how hard you work, or how much you overcome sin.
- Justification is by grace through faith.
- Justification is more than a pardon for past sins. It's an ongoing righteous status for those in Christ.

- Not elementary. Don't move beyond it. Live from it every day.
- Get it wrong and sanctification turns into striving.
- Not earned by performance. Received by repentance, faith, and surrender.
- Justification is the foundation for sanctification.
- Justification removes sin's guilt so that sanctification can remove sin's power.

e) The Power of No Condemnation (Rom. 8:1)

- Condemnation: fuels shame, strengthens sin, and creates hiding.
- Justification: Breaks accusation, produces peace, and creates freedom.
- Many entrapped in cycles of sin—not from temptation alone—but from internal accusations.
- You obey from acceptance. Not for acceptance.
- Condemnation is a verdict and a voice.
- While the cross destroys the verdict, the voice of condemnation can remain, entangling us in guilt, shame, and cycles of sin.

Regeneration: The Inner Miracle

a) Ezekiel's Blueprint for a New Humanity (Ezek. 36:26-27).

- "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances."
- Under the old covenant: You must.
- Under the new covenant: I will.

b) Regeneration Is Resurrection

- Titus 3:5: "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit."
- Regeneration is not behavior modification, rule following, or new religious zeal.
- It's new birth, spiritual resurrection, and a recreated spirit.
- Your spirit is alive because of righteousness (Rom. 8:10).
- Eph. 4:24: Your new spirit is created in righteousness and holiness.

- Your spirit was transformed in regeneration—not your body or soul.
- One third of you is already Christlike.

Union with Christ

a) A Revolutionary Concept

- John 14:20: “You in Me, and I in you.”
- Union with Christ is spiritual, positional, and experiential.
- Union with Christ is fully accomplished in your spirit but progressively realized in your heart and soul.
- 1 Cor. 6:17: One spirit with Him.
- Greek image: Glued together.
- Illustration: Grafting into a living tree.

b) Fruit Flows from Life

- It’s not about striving, self-effort, or self-improvement.
- It’s about the fruit of the Spirit produced in you by the indwelling Spirit.
- The clearest evidence of salvation is not a past decision—it is a present indwelling.

Sanctification: Deliverance from Sin’s Power (Rom. 6–8)

a) The Common Struggle

- Romans 7: “I do the very thing I hate.”
- Many believers:
 - Justified
 - Forgiven
 - Yet stuck
- Because they attempt sanctification by willpower.

b) Sanctification Clarified

- It’s deliverance from sin’s power.
- Illustration: Delivered from death row but living shackled in chains.

- Not achieved by doing more: praying, fasting, reading, serving.
- Old covenant Jew mindset: sheer willpower and behavior modification.
- The way we pursue sanctification can keep us from God.
- It's not about fixing the old self; but living from the new self.
- Put on the self and live from it (Eph. 4:24).

c) Sanctification Is Life-Based

- Romans 5:10: Saved by His life.
- Sanctification is not trying harder.
- It is yielding deeper.
- Old covenant: External law.
- New covenant: Internal life.

d) Five Aspects of Sanctification

1. Knowing

- Knowing what Christ accomplished.
- Knowing that you have been crucified with Him.
- Knowing that you are dead to sin and alive to God.

2. Reckoning

- Align faith with truth.
- Reckoning is not pretending.
- It is counting as true what God declares true.

3. Presenting

- Present yourself to God as a living sacrifice.
- Present yourself to God as dead to sin and alive to God.
- Yield your members: eyes, mouth, hands, mind.

4. Choosing

- We now have the power to choose to obey righteousness or lawlessness.

- Choosing divine life over self-life.
- Grace empowers obedience.

5. Walking by the Spirit

- Gal. 5:16
- Higher law: Spirit of life > law of sin.
- Illustration: Gravity vs lift.
- The Spirit is the higher law.

e) Spiritual Formation

- Michelangelo saw David in marble.
- God sees Christ in you.
- Sanctification is removing what obscures Jesus.
- This involves:
 - Chiseling
 - Sanding
 - Forming
- Though painful it's purposeful.
- Sanctification is Christ formed in you.

Salvation to the Uttermost

a) Salvation Is . . .

1. Atonement—Sin paid for.
2. Justification—Deliverance from sin's penalty.
3. Regeneration—Your spirit recreated.
4. Union—Joined to Christ.
5. Sanctification—Deliverance from sin's power.
6. Glorification—Deliverance from sin's presence.

b) Saved to the Uttermost

- Heb. 7:25: "Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (NKJV).
- Jesus doesn't just save partially but completely.

Conclusion

a) Final Thoughts

- The gospel is not a one-time altar call.
- It is the power of God from start to finish.
- Return to the cross and rest in your justification.
- Awaken to your union with Christ and yield to Him in sanctification.
- Present yourself as a living sacrifice and walk by the Spirit.
- The gospel is not elementary.
- It is inexhaustible. It is eternal. It is the power of God.
- And it brings you to God Himself.