

#1. The Word of God (Isa 46:9-11, Heb 4:11-13)

- Let Us Labour (Heb 4:11, Rom 3:11, John 4:24)

#2. Quick and Powerful (Heb 4:12, Rev 22:18-19, John 4:10,14, 6:63, Rom 3:11-12)

- Soul and Spirit (Heb 4:12, Gen 2:7, Eph 1:4, Rev 6:9, Heb 12:22-24, Rom 11:8, Isa 29:10, John 3:8, Luke 1:17, 1Thes 5:23, 1Cor 15:44)

#3. Able to Judge the Thoughts and Intentions of the Heart (Heb 4:12, 3:11,19, 4:3,5,6,7,11, Ex 4:29-31, 14:11-12, Matt 10:34-37)

- The Law and the Gospel (Heb 4:12, 2Thes 2:3, John 8:36, Gal 3:10,21, Rom 10:4)

- Selective Hearers (Rom 8:2-3, 10:17, 1Cor 16:22, Rev 2:4)

Please open your Bibles to the Prophecy of Isaiah, [Isa 46:9](#) (2X). We are continuing in the Epistle to the Hebrews, but I first wanted to set the stage from the Prophecy of Isaiah. Here in Isa 46 we read about God's involvement in the history of our lives, and in the history of everyone's life. And look at this as a stepping stone to the description of the Bible as a record of the acts of God. Where in the Bible do we read about the acts of God? In Hebrews! In the Epistle to the Hebrews we have arrived at one of the most quoted sections of this Epistle, for it refers to the Word of God as the powerful Sword of the Spirit. Therefore the title of the sermon today is, "**The Sword of the Spirit**" (2X).

#1. The Word of God (Isa 46:9-11, Heb 4:11-13)

Last month I preached on the first part of this chapter, titled, "**The Counsel of God**". Please do not forget the counsel of God when you read the Word of God, for it is the first action of God before He created the first speck of dust. And thus we need to ask ourselves: Did God know us before He created the first speck of dust? Was He pleased to create us? Did He look upon us favorably? Did God know who of us would live unto his glory and who of us would live as rebels against God and inheriting His wrath? We know that it was determined in the counsel of God that He would create the Bible, the Word of God, the message of God to mankind in order that some of mankind might be saved from their slippery slide into eternal condemnation. But in what manner did God write about Himself in the Bible? Did God write that He created the world and all that is within it, including mankind and all the natural laws and processes that we know, and then He threw away the key to let the natural processes rule the day? In other words, did God take His hands off and allow history to unfold to whatever would come naturally? Of course not! The message from the Bible is just the opposite. God continues to be intensely involved in whatever takes place in this world, and He has let us know that we are the crown of His creation, and the apple of His eye, and He would not cast this apple of His eye to Satan and his demons. We read in [Isa 46:9-11](#),

[Isa 46:9-11](#), "9 Remember the former things of old: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else; I *am* God, and *there is* none like me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: 11 Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken *it*, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed *it*, I will also do it."

Look again at these words, "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done," and look again at these words, "Yea, I have spoken *it*, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed *it*, I will also do it." Anyone who denies God's involvement in our lives will have to answer to God for denying these words. Please turn now to the Epistle to the Hebrews, [Heb 4:11](#) (2X). And so, when we read the Epistle to the Hebrews, or any other prophecy, we must always search for what purpose God took this particular course of action. The actions of man are never independent of

the actions of God. Our acts of faithfulness to God's Word are never to our credit, for they are never independent of the grace of God. And so, we read in Heb 4:11-13

Heb 4:11-13, "11 ¶ Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. 12 For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. 13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things *are* naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

Well, this is a mouthful, and here we see the actions of God right from the start in verse 11.

- **Let Us Labour** (Heb 4:11, Rom 3:11, John 4:24)

"Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest." Is that our action, or is that God's action? It is God's action, for we could not be faithful for one second if God would withdraw His amazing grace. What a peculiar way to describe God's action as, "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest." What is this "**labour**" here in this verse? It means "to eagerly and perseveringly seek" the manner of rest that God provides in the process of salvation. It means that the manner in which the saints were "to labour to enter into that rest" was by studying and believing the truth, and by continuing "steadfast and unmovable" in the faith of the truth, and in the natural results of the faith of the truth. It is humanly impossible to do this on our own initiative and on our own strength, for the Bible declares in Rom 3:11 that "There is NONE that seeketh after God." Our real rest is yet to come, but it is "promised" in verse 1 of this chapter. In the meantime we are to press forward to it, because this world is not a fit place, nor is this life a fit time to enjoy a rest like as is reserved in heaven for us. Rest here would glue our hearts too much to this world, and make us say, "It is good to be here." It would reduce our longing desire after Christ in heaven. Death would be unwelcome, and heaven would be less welcome. And then there would be no proof or trial of our spiritual armor, and no proof or trial of the graces that God has bestowed upon us. We would have no discernment for God's providence, and God's power and mercy. **No**, you see, just the opposite is true. This rest that must still come, and is reserved for us, will be to our wisdom while we live here on earth, to prepare us for trouble, and to address ourselves "to labour," which means by the grace of God to study the Word of God and to eagerly and perseveringly seek for God as He wants us to do. In this way we increase our faith and hereby we may be the more encouraged to persevere unto the end. And then verse 11 continues with: "Lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." Hereby God refers to the danger and the damage that would follow if we neglect the pursuit of the study of the Word of God and to fail to eagerly and perseveringly seek for God and belief of the truth. The rest that we enjoy in Christ is not a rest of emptiness and laziness, but it is the joy that we have been saved, and that we no longer seek for other gods in other books that we can get our hands on, or in outward ceremonies that we think are so holy. Think about this now, the Lord Jesus said in John 4:24, "God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth." If we must

worship Him in spirit and in truth it means that in the New Testament time we must place no confidence at all in outward ceremonies. Those are all ceremonial hoopla. Even water Baptism and the Lord's Supper are just outward ceremonies which do not contribute one iota to our salvation. Our Sunday attendance in church is only an outward sign that we love the Lord Jesus, and we want to do those things that are pleasing in His sight. Our rest in Christ is 100% of a spiritual nature. Our rest in Christ means that we need not to worry about anything, for Christ will never leave us nor forsake us. He will give us everything we need in this life, and in this we rest.

#2. Quick and Powerful (Heb 4:12, Rev 22:18-19, John 4:10,14, 6:63, Rom 3:11-12)

Heb 4:12 For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

What does it mean that the Word of God is quick and powerful? The word "quick" actually has the meaning of "living." The Word of God is living and powerfully working and sharper than any two-edged sword. The Word of God is not called "living" as if it is growing and continually being changed, for this is contrary to the nature of the Bible. God says in Rev 22:18-19 that the Bible is complete and man may not add nor take away from this Word of God. But when we think of the Word of God as living, we are drawn to consider it as the living water of the Gospel which it contains. The Lord Jesus travelled through Samaria and He said to the woman of Samaria in John 4:10,

"Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."

What was that living water that the lord Jesus offered to this woman of Samaria? Read John 4:14, "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

In other words, this water is the water of the Gospel. The words of the Gospel are flowing like water out of the mouth of the evangelist. It reaches the ears of an elect of God, who after his conversion becomes another source of the water of the Gospel flowing out of his mouth. The Word of God contains this water of the Gospel. Moreover, the Lord Jesus said in John 6:63 that when we are listening to the words from the Bible we are partaking of Him: "The words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life." The words of Scripture are spirit and are life because the Holy Spirit has the power to use these words to convert our soul. It is also in this sense that God uses the metaphor of a sharp two-edged sword. What is a sword for? A sword is used for cutting. And this sword is two edged, which means that it cuts both ways. It cuts to the heart those who are the elect of God when they hear that they have sinned greatly, they have insulted God greatly, and the Lord Jesus Christ imputed the guilt of all their sins to His account and He paid for it on their behalf on the cross of Calvary. Humanly speaking, we would look at Christ on the cross and we would believe that He hung there in our place,

because the penalty for our sins must be paid. If He would not have done it for us, we would be hanging there on the Last Day when God avenges all sins committed against Him. But we would be hanging there for an eternity. But we are not drawn to believe just to buy fire insurance. We are drawn to believe because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, and we love the Lord Jesus for taking our place before the judgment throne of God. And thus, the sword cuts to the heart of those who believe. But who will believe this amazing story? No one will believe, for God says in Rom 3:11, "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God," and Rom 3:12 adds to it, "No, Not One!" And so, in order to save at least a remnant of mankind God Himself must turn the hearts of some of mankind and make them believe what He has done. It is in this way that the Sword of the Spirit is used to save a remnant chosen by the grace of God, and God promised that the payment that Christ has made will be effective on their behalf.

But God has not made this decision to save a remnant of mankind just for fun. God has a purpose for every action that He takes. And in this case the purpose was that the Father chose a Bride for His Son. All those who have been chosen by the grace of God will end up in glory as the Bride of Christ. All those who have not been chosen continue on their wicked way until God's patience with them has run out, and then God will use the other side of the two-edged Sword of the Spirit, and they will be judged for their sins. And since God has created man in His own image, God declared thereby that man shall live forever, either in the New Heaven and the New Earth with Christ, or in hell with the devil and all his demons. And be assured that God will not continue to deal with wicked man for an eternity, but God has assigned this task of the eternal penalty to the devil and his demons.

- **Soul and Spirit** (Heb 4:12, Gen 2:7, Eph 1:4, Rev 6:9, Heb 12:22-24, Rom 11:8, Isa 29:10, John 3:8, Luke 1:17, 1Thes 5:23, 1Cor 15:44)

Heb 4:12 For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Look again at these words, "Piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow." What does this mean? When we consider the soul of man we realize where that came from. God says in Gen 2:7, "And the LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." In other words, God gives the soul of man when He makes man a living being. Apply this now to today. When does God give us our soul? Each one of us is made a living person at the time that we were conceived in our mother's womb. It was at that time that God gave us a soul which He made at that time. Our souls did not exist before the foundation of the world as some might have concluded from the words of Eph 1:4. No, our souls came into existence at the time we were conceived, for this was the time when we became living persons. Before the foundation of the world only our names were in existence in the mind of God. The word

“soul” as used in the Bible indicates the non-material “**ego**”, or the non-material “**self**” of man, but it is a substantive entity, meaning that it is a spiritual object, like as the body is a physical object. Thus, the “mind” in the Bible refers to the soul in its rational functions and in meditations. The “heart” in the Bible refers to the soul as manifesting a complex of attitudes. The “will” refers to the soul as choosing and deciding. The “spirit” refers to the soul when thought apart from earthly connections. In other words, when the reference is to the body God speaks about the soul; when the reference is to spiritual matters apart from the body God speaks about the spirit; in both instances referring to the same non-material “ego” of man. In contexts where the bodily, and emotional and intellectual aspects are not prominent, but where the direct relationship of man to God is the point of emphasis, the “self” is called a “spirit”. Let us put these principles in practice: The souls of the blessed martyrs in heaven are called “**souls**” when there is a special reference to the brutal form of their bodily death, in Rev 6:9. Notice that these souls are spiritual objects! They are not abstract concepts, for John **saw** the souls that were under the altar. But in the exalted description of the heavenly goal which lies before the church, in Heb 12:22-24, the blessed dead are referred to as “the **spirits** of just men made perfect.” In addition the word “spirit” has often an impersonal meaning, such as in the expressions, “the spirit of slumber” in Rom 11:8, and “the spirit of deep sleep” in Isa 29:10. And sometimes the word “spirit” can also mean “wind” or “breath” in John 3:8. And certainly when the Angel Gabriel said in Luke 1:17 that John would come in the spirit and power of Elijah, God did not mean that Elijah would be reincarnated and the soul of Elijah would reside in a reincarnated Elijah. The context must show what the meaning of the word “spirit” is in each case, and usually there is no confusion.

These functional names of soul and spirit of the non-material ego are not used with technical discrimination, for they often overlap. The difference between man and beast is that man has a soul or spirit and man is created in the image of God, whereas the beast is not. We understand that there are only two substantive entities which make up the whole man. **#1**, the body which at death returns to dust, awaiting the resurrection and the judgment, and **#2**, the non-material self which if regenerated goes to paradise, or heaven, and if not regenerated goes to the abode of the wicked dead, Sheol. This is called “Dichotomy”, which means “two substantive entities.” There are many, however, who hold to the view that is called “Trichotomy.” They believe that the soul and the spirit are two distinct substantive entities and the body is the third one. They hang their theory on only three passages, 1Thes 5:23, 1Cor 15:44, and Heb 4:12. However the theology of Trichotomy is not coherent and leads to many confusing situations. We will stick to the view of Dichotomy.

#3. Able to Judge the Thoughts and Intentions of the Heart (Heb 4:12, 3:11,19, 4:3,5,6,7,11, Ex 4:29-31, 14:11-12, Matt 10:34-37)

Heb 4:12 For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Actually the word “discerner” should have been translated, “Able to Judge.” The Word of God is able to judge the thoughts and even the intents of our heart. God knows our heart to the extent that He even knows the intents of our heart, even before we have thought about this sin or that sin. Is it sin that is the focus of this passage? Indeed it is. Look at the context. The context rehearses the rebellion of the children of Israel in the wilderness. God says in Heb 3:11, “So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.” God says in Heb 3:19, “So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.” God says in Heb 4:3, “As I have sworn in My wrath, they shall not enter into My rest.” God says in Heb 4:5, “And in this *place* again, they shall not enter into my rest.” God says in Heb 4:6, “They to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief.” God says in Heb 4:7, “To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” God says in Heb 4:11, “Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief,” and that example of unbelief refers to the rebellion of most in the nation of Israel that came out of Egypt. And so, historically what was the situation? What does the Word of God say concerning the children of Israel? We read in Ex 4:29-31, “**29** And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel: **30** And Aaron spake all the words which the LORD had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. **31** And the people believed: and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped.” Did the people really believe God? No, they did not. For whom did they bow down their heads and worshipped? It was not for Jehovah God of the Bible, for the Bible declares that once you are saved you cannot lose your salvation. So they believed for a while, but when the going was tough they rebelled against God and against His servant Moses. At the time they walked out of Egypt in Ex 12 they believed Moses, but just a short while later in Ex 14:11-12 they were already sorry that they left Egypt. And so it went for almost 40 years. This is the context in which Heb 4:12 is set. This beautiful description of the Word of God as a sharp two-edged sword was given to remind the people of Israel, and to remind the present day Christians, that God is “Able to Judge the Thoughts and Intentions of the Heart.” God is a discerner of truth and falsehoods, and God has given us also the tools in the Bible to discern both truth and falsehoods. Are falsehoods present in the church today? Absolutely Yes! Near the end of time the church will be overrun with falsehoods. The Lord Jesus referred to this when He said in Matt 10:34-37,

Matt 10:34-37, “**34** Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. **35** For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. **36** And a man’s foes *shall be* they of his

own household. **37** He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”

Do you see that here? Christ came to bring a sword to judge the thoughts and intents of the hearts of the family members of those who became saved. The Lord knows that your family members shall declare that you are a religious fanatic, or that you have fallen away from the faith of your fathers, or that You have lost your senses and have followed a cult that will take you away in insanity. Little do they know how much we pray for them. Little do they know how they have been blinded by the god of this world who advocates that we all are children of God and that we should all live in peace with one another. Let us consider how far we and they have drifted apart based on the Word of God.

- **The Law and the Gospel** (Heb 4:12, 2Thes 2:3, John 8:36, Gal 3:10,21, Rom 10:4)

How have many missed the message of the Gospel, the Good News of Christ crucified, which is the message of the love of God? They have missed it because most people are selective hearers. What do I mean by that? I mean that most people only want to hear what they want to hear. For example, from this message of 50 minutes they will only pick up one item that is 2 minutes in length, something that is familiar to them, and they do not want to hear the whole story. Even if the full text would be available on our website they will not take the time to learn something new. So, let me bring out something new, even though it will be an offense to those who do not want to hear it. We are presently speaking about the warning from God in Heb 4:12 that His Word is able to judge falsehoods and God is especially concerned about falsehoods in the church. What are some of those false messages? Well, the false messages of the Judaizers are still going strong these days. People want to hang on to the law at all costs. It is their security blanket. People want something externally solid to hang their faith on, such as an outward sign that we are saved, such as a water baptism. Or they believe that doing good works will put them in favor with God. But all this is rubbish in the sight of God, for if they have not been Born Again then there is nothing that they can do to make them gain the favor of God. The Gospel is the Good News of the love of God through Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The Lord Jesus said in John 8:36, “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” How free is free? We would be free from the curse of the law. As you know, the law carries with it a curse, for God says in Gal 3:10, “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” And God says in Gal 3:21, “For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.” And so, obedience to the law does not buy us any credit before God. Instead we must understand that Christ will set us free from the law and He will set us free from our sins. He sets us free from the desire to sin, and He sets us free from the desire for our addictions, and He sets us free from the penalty for our sins. If you believe that homosexuality is an incurable disease, then be assured that Christ can also set you free from that addiction. If you believe that alcoholism is

an incurable disease, then you should know that Christ can also set you free from that addiction. And how does all this come to pass? We must remember that God declares in Rom 10:4, "For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Christ is the end of the law means that "what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, Christ did by being crucified on behalf of us, and this is the way He changed us from the inside. "To everyone that believeth" means that God has given us the desire to believe what we read in the Bible, and to search it out diligently, for God has also given us the desire to read and study His Word. Therefore, it means that you must be Born Again, for when this occurs the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, and we will love the Lord Jesus Christ, and we will love the brethren. If any man does not love Christ he is not saved. Our love for Christ is the overriding factor for all the changes that are brought about. The thief on the cross next to the Lord Jesus was a violator of the law, and he lived a rebellious life. But his love for Christ came in the nick of time and was a gift from God, for a couple hours earlier he reviled the Lord Jesus like the other thief on the cross did. But this love of Christ and our love for Christ are free gifts from God. Blessed are you when God has imputed these free gifts to you, for then you will know that you have been saved. Now, we can only love Christ if we firmly believe that He has indeed was wounded for our transgressions, and that He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. And indeed, the faith that God has given us is the substance of things hoped for, (we hoped for salvation), and it is the evidence of things not seen (our salvation is not seen), but now we have the evidence of it. If we believe all this and have seen how loving the Lord really is, then how can we remain ungrateful? No, we fall down at His feet in worship and adore Him forever, for no one else knows how great our sins were; but Christ has delivered us from our sins. Therefore, we are looking forward to meet Him on the last day. And what can we say about the last day?

- **Selective Hearers** (Rom 8:2-3, 10:17, 1Cor 16:22, Rev 2:4)

Please turn in your Bibles to the Epistle to the Romans, Rom 8:2 (2X). We would say it will be a beautiful day when we are going to meet our Savior. However, for the unsaved, it will be a horrifying day. Just think of it. The most terrifying horror movie would be insufficient to describe the horror of all the unsaved standing before the Judgment throne of Christ. All people wait in line, and all will have a plain view of the Lake of Fire. No one will have an excuse or a defense before Christ. Everyone who were standing at the Judgment throne before have been picked up by the angels and have been dropped into the Lake of Fire. And who is waiting there? Satan and all the demons with him are tormented in the Lake of Fire, and they are blaming the entire human race for getting them into this nasty situation. Symbolically speaking, "All the fowls of the air are ready to attack our precious body. All the beautiful faces that have been well kept for so many years shall be torn by those birds and shall be scorched by eternal flames. And there is no one to help, for the day of salvation has passed". Such

is the warning of Almighty God; listen to His words of the Bible. But what do we see as a response from mankind to this great warning from God? What do we see with our own eyes right now? We see that no threat from God, however great, will whip people into shape. For example, way back in Exodus chapter 20 God declared His law with much thunderings, and lightnings, and the noise of a trumpet, and the mountain where God appeared to Moses was smoking, so that the people removed and stood afar off. But then, what did they do? Before 40 days were over they made a golden calf and worshipped it. And what do we read in Rom 8:2-3? We read there about two laws: one that brings life and the other that brings condemnation.

Ro 8:2-3 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

We see here two laws: “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus”, and “The law of sin and death”. What is the law of sin and death? It is the law of God, like the Ten Commandments or any other law from God, and the declaration that sin is a transgression of the law, and the declaration of the penalty that the wages of sin is death, and the death that God has in view is the Second Death, which is an eternity in the lake of fire. However, no law of sin and death can whip people into shape. The desire to sin is greater than the law of sin and death. That is the total depravity of man. You cannot succeed in making people behave as saints by threatening them with the law of sin and death. To this objective the law is a failure. Rom 8:3 says, “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh”, and so on, Christ could do, “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”

In other words, the grace and power of God through the sufferings of Christ, has delivered us from the stranglehold of the desire to sin. Christ’s atonement on the cross has delivered us from the clutches of Satan. The only way to deliver us from our predicament is to be Born Again, for that is the sign that Christ has atoned for our sins. And when we are Born Again we have “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” within us. And how do we become Born Again? God says in Rom 10:17, “So then, Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” But when people hear the true Gospel preached, or they read it in the Bible, even though it is the true Gospel, they can hear or understand it in two different ways, as if there are two different messages preached simultaneously.

They have become “selective hearers.” Let us consider the two ways people hear that sermon.

#1. They can hear it like another version of the law of sin and death. They hear the promises and they hear the penalty statement, but their desire to sin is not broken, and they have not become Born Again. They continue in sin. Why is that? Even if they are under the hearing of the true Gospel, they might still only hear the portion that is speaking of the law and the penalty of sin in Hell, but the love of God does not register in their mind. For example, they hear that God loved us so much that He gave

His only begotten Son as a sacrifice for our sins, and they hear that we must love Christ in return, and that our love for Christ is manifested by obeying His commandments. And if we do not obey His commandments we are not Born Again and we are still subject to the lake of fire. Have you not heard this many times? And so, what have they heard? They heard again the law of sin and death: Obey His commandments, or else suffer in the lake of fire.

#2. They can hear and see the love of Christ shining through everything they hear, and they can see the love of Christ on the cross, and they can read about the love of Christ being shed in our hearts from Romans chapter 5, and they are overwhelmed by the love of Christ for us, and they are moved to love Christ in return. That is when they are Born Again. And the love of Christ is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, which means that they will not only love Christ but they will also love their brethren in the faith, leading to a desire to love them as their own family.

Most people hear only message **#1**. But there is a small fraction who by the grace of God also hear message **#2**, and that is the blessing of preaching the Gospel. You see, this is why God says in 1Cor 16:22, "If any man love **not** the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha, let him be accursed till the Lord comes. It is our love for Christ which is the first and foremost evidence of our salvation. Nothing else matters but our first love for Christ, and that is the reason why we read in the Greek text that the Lord Jesus said to the church at Ephesus in Rev 2:4, "But I have against you that you left your first love." All their works to keep the doctrines of the church pure were of no use if they have left their first love. If they have left their love for Christ then the remainder that they are hanging on to is "the law of sin and death", and we know that this law cannot bring salvation.

Unfortunately most people are selective hearers and they are no diligent students of the Bible. And so, they are struggling with the law and the Gospel all their lives, ever learning and never coming to the knowledge of the truth. But the Gospel of Christ crucified is so beautiful and so full of love; it is amazing that people do not want this wonderful promise of God, and instead they will trade it in for a counterfeit gospel from the Arminian persuasion, which is a gospel that is under the curse of God, and everyone who follows that gospel is also under the curse of God. But thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift of the Gospel of grace through Christ crucified.

AMEN

Let us turn to the Lord in prayer.