

# Recovery of the Gospel

by Rolfe Barnard

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*The sermon emphasizes the need to recover the true gospel of God's grace, which is being lost in modern gospel preaching.*

**Duration:** 46:51

**Scripture:** John 3:16, Romans 5:8, Ephesians 2:8

**Topics:** "Gods Grace", "The Gospel"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the need to recover the true gospel of God's grace as preached by the Apostle Paul. He criticizes the popular preaching of the day, which he believes limits the work and love of Christ. The preacher argues that instead of exalting the grace of God and magnifying the cross of Christ, this kind of preaching cheapens them. He believes that the most urgent task facing believers today is to recover the gospel of God's grace and calls for a return to preaching the truth of the Bible.

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## Transcript

This conviction that sin being what it is and Satan being whom and who he is, and this world lying in the wicked one as it does, and hell popping on every direction, and the spirit of the world being prepared to bow down and accept the devil's Christ, Antichrist, and when the blow winds are blowing from every direction, the I say character of them upon the hotness of the gospel of Christ, I say to you that it's my conviction. Now, this doesn't make it so, but it is my conviction, and I do not ask anybody else to share it, but it is my conviction, and I'll stand for it, and the best I know I'll bear the consequences of preaching this conviction. It is my conviction that the most urgent task facing us today is the recovery of the gospel of the grace of almighty God, and because that is my conviction, I am asking men and women to stand by each Lord's Day for several more Lord's Days, as pretty soon we're going to try to preach the gospel of God's grace.

Thus far we've been providing a setting for its preaching, for the scriptures say where sin did abound, grace did much more abound, and sin does abound now, and oh, the deepest desire of my heart is that once again in America, as of days of yore, that men in the predicament of sin and bound by the cords of Satan himself, shall once more hear, not in isolated places but everywhere, the glorious gospel of the abounding grace of a holy God in Jesus Christ our Lord. I'm saying to you that man needs a great salvation if Satan is half as powerful as the Bible says he is, if sin is as deadly as the Bible says it is, if sin taking occasion in the flesh and being spurred on by the law and influenced by Satan has caused the

situation that we're in today, then I say to you that people in that shape cannot, cannot, and they must not be allowed to live this life out without ever hearing the true gospel of the grace of God, and the grace of God is simply the grace, the God of all grace, providing in Christ Jesus a great salvation to meet the need of great sinners who are guilty of great sin. This is the theme of the gospel of God Almighty as it is in Christ Jesus.

Now my friends, that gospel, that good news, that proclamation that does not result in men and women being saved in the Bible sense of that term, cannot be God's gospel. That gospel that turns out men and women short of being saved in the Bible sense cannot be the gospel of God. It is not the gospel of salvation as preached by the apostle Paul and as is so sorely needed to be preached today.

To be saved from sin, to be brought into right relation to God calls for a great salvation, and it will need to be a great gospel which proclaims such a great salvation for such great sinners. Now my conviction is, and you ought to hear me now, don't go away now, my conviction is that the gospel needs to be recovered. And when I say that the gospel needs to be recovered, I naturally am also saying that the gospel in its fullness, that the gospel in its purity, that the gospel in its power has been to a greater or a lesser extent in your day and mine, been well nigh lost.

In the word of God we are told that the Lord Jesus Christ came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent ye and believe the gospel. The Lord said in his first proclamation that the gospel needs to be believed, the gospel needs to be believed, that the entrance into the kingdom of God is by way of repentance toward God and by way of believing the gospel. Now the Lord Jesus Christ believed that it was important that the gospel be believed.

Great sinners standing in the need of great salvation need not only that the gospel shall be preached, but they need to hear it, and upon hearing they need to believe it. Salvation, according to the word of God, is the blessed heaven-given boon for men and women who believe the gospel. Therefore nothing is so important as that the gospel be preached and that the gospel be believed.

Now I have said that for a hundred years we have well nigh lost this wonderful gospel, and I want this morning, having made such a statement and having declared that my conviction is that our most urgent task is to recover this gospel, I want you to hear me as I buttress or recommend my conviction to you, to recommend that you need to hear what I have to say as I make the statement that the real gospel is well nigh be lost, and that men in the terrible condition they're in now are not hearing the gospel that saves men if it's believed. To recommend that conviction I offer several suggestions, and the first one is this, the great perplexity and the awful unrest which is growing every single day among those who earnestly seek to teach and to preach the gospel of Christ. My friends, we are blind as bats if we do not stop and take notice of the fact that there is today growing everywhere a tremendous dissatisfaction with things as they are within our churches.

The matter of real evangelism, the matter of Bible holiness, the matter of real New Testament discipline, the matter of gospel fruit, the matter of Christ-like character, the matter of Holy Spirit power, the matter of formal or historical faith in the stead of a living, regnant, believing, obedient faith. My friends, these things are occupying the attention of men today, and great is the disturbance and the dissatisfaction and the unrest everywhere. Now, brother, if you are not concerned about the absence of real, sure enough evangelism, and real, sure enough holiness, and real, sure enough discipline, and real, sure enough

gospel fruit, and real, sure enough growth of Christ-like character, and real absence of Holy Ghost power, and the fact that our creeds are believed and that Christ is missed, if you are not concerned about those things, then, of course, I am not talking in a way that you will be sympathetic with.

But I will say this, that whether you believe it or not, there is great dissatisfaction now, and God's Spirit is back of that dissatisfaction. Men are crying out today for something that's real, and we preachers had better face that. And with this awful perplexity and unrest, there is a great uncertainty as to the road ahead.

What shall a day bring forth? Do you mean tell me we're going to go on like we are now, playing church and making out like we believe the great, vital doctrines of Christ? And I tell you, no, something is in the wind. Nobody exactly knows what it is, but this awful unrest and this tremendous uncertainty has behind it the power of the Holy Ghost trying to flush us out of our nest of rest and unbelief into the real certainties of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I tell you, I believe that at the root of all this perplexity and unrest and uncertainty, I believe at the root of all of it is the fact that we have lost our grip on the Bible gospel.

We have lost this grip, whether we've meant to or not. For a century, we have bartered the true gospel for a substitute product, which though the substitute does look similar enough in some points of detail, it is as a whole a decidedly different gospel from the gospel written about and put down in the holy word of God. And thus our troubles for this substitute product that's called the gospel today does not answer the ends for which the authentic gospel has in past days proved itself so mighty.

This new gospel as I call it, it's everywhere and it's preached by those of us who call ourselves believers in the Bible. It's preached by men who have much zeal and much devotion and much courage, but whether that devotion is right or not, their gospel is wrong, for the gospel as it's preached today conspicuously fails to produce in its share of first, deep reverence for God. Second, this new gospel is failing to produce in its share of second, deep repentance toward God.

This new gospel is failing to produce in its share of deep humility, and this gospel is failing to produce in its share of a deep spirit of worship. In short, the gospel as it's preached today fails to produce Christians. Now that's a tremendous charge, but God ever said so.

The gospel as it's preached today produces lots of converts. It produces lots of church members, but it produces Christians. I'm not so sure.

My friends, it seems to change some of the ways of men and women, but it leaves men and women unchanged. Well, why did you tell the truth? You know I am. Preacher brother, you know I'm telling the truth.

God help us. We need to come to the mourners, preacher. No, you turn off that radio and get mad.

I'm not God, but I'm speaking now, and I'm telling you the truth. Our gospel we preach today gets men to quit some of their bad habits and keep others, but our gospel does not produce Christians. Now this isn't an idle statement.

This isn't the ranting of a fool. This needs to be faced. Why this awful failure? Why with as much preaching, and as many church members, and as much zeal, and as much courage, and as much devotion, and as much tears as we have today are we turning out by the gospel we preach? People who have miscarried.

Well, I tell you what I believe, and I'm on the mourner's bench about it, and these programs are dedicated to it. The people who give the money to pay for them are back of it, and people pray. I believe the reason for the failure to turn out Christians, men and women who are really saved, lies in the character and the content of the gospel as it's preached today.

I say you in the first place that this new gospel, this substitute gospel, this popular gospel that's everywhere today, and I say to you it fails to get men, make men God-centered in their thoughts and God-fearing in their hearts, because if we'd be honest brethren, that hadn't been the aim of our preaching. We haven't tried to make men God-centered in their thoughts where he's uppermost, and God-fearing in their hearts. We've just tried to make some more converts, and brother anything that comes along that puts a damper on our making of converts, we'll fight till we're blue in the face.

We're going to have what we call results, even if in the having of the results we're not true to Christ, and we're not true to men, and our converts do not give evidence of being saved. My friend, one way of stating the difference between this gospel they call it today and the gospel of our forefathers, one way of stating that difference is to say that the gospel preached today is too exclusively concerned to be helpful to man. It's a concern to bring peace to men, to bring comfort to men, to bring happiness to men, to bring satisfaction to men, and the so-called gospel today is utterly too little concern to bring glory to God.

Brother and sister, the old gospel your granddaddy heard and believed was helpful too. In fact it is more helpful than this new gospel, but the concern of the old gospel was first, last, and always to give glory to God. The old gospel was always and essentially a proclamation of divine sovereignty and mercy and judgment.

It was a service to men and women to bow down and worship the mighty Lord on whom man depends for all good, both in nature and in grace. In the old gospel, its center of reference was almighty God, but in the new gospel of today, the center of reference is man. The chief aim of the old gospel was to teach men and women to worship God.

The concern of the new gospel seems limited to making men feel better. The subject of the old gospel was God and his ways with men. The subject of this new gospel is man and the help God gives him.

There is a world of difference. The whole purpose and emphasis of gospel preaching has almost completely changed in your day and mine, and from this change of interest has sprung a change of content, for the new gospel has in effect reformulated the Bible message in the supposed interest of helpfulness. Therefore, the themes of man's natural inability to believe, of God's pre-erection being the ultimate cause of salvation, and of the fact that Christ is really a savior in the sense that those for whom he died are really to be saved, those great themes are not preached today.

Today I hear it on every hand that these doctrines, namely man's inability himself to believe, namely God's pre-election of grace, and namely the fact that Christ actually died to save somebody, not just to make it possible for some to be saved. I'm told on every hand today that such preaching is not helpful. I'm told that such preaching drives sinners to despair by suggesting to them that it is not in their power to be saved through Christ, and I know that the possibility that such despair might be good is not even considered, for it's taken for granted today that this despair that sinners need to be brought to cannot be good because it's so shattering to our own self-esteem, and I stand before this microphone and tell you now that unless our preaching brings sinners to the place of utter despair, of any hope within themselves or anything they can do, we're not preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

My friends, the result of leaving out these signally important themes that buttress the gospel of Christ is that part of the Bible gospel is now preached as if it were a whole of that gospel, but I warn you, my friend, that a half-truth masquerading as a whole truth becomes an uncomplete truth, and I want to ask you now if the following is not too much true, hear me now. First, isn't it true that today we appeal to men as if they all had the ability to receive Christ at any time? I put that down. That's exactly what they're preaching today.

In the second place, isn't it true that we speak of Christ redeeming work as if he had done no more of our dying than make it possible for us to save ourselves by believing? You listen, that's exactly what's being preached today. Isn't it true in the third place that we speak of God's love as if it were no more than a general willingness to receive any who will turn and trust? That's exactly what sinners are told today. Isn't it true that today we depict the Father and the Son not as sovereignly active in drawing sinners to themselves, but as waiting in quiet impotence at the door of our hearts? My friends, that's what's being preached today.

Maybe that's what people believe, but I say with all my power that this set of half-truths is something other than God's gospel, and I say that the Bible is against such preaching, and the fact that such preaching has become almost standard practice only shows how urgent it is that we shall look at it closely. I say to you that by their fruit you shall know preachers, and by the fruit of the gospel we shall know it. And so I'm going to ask you as my time has slipped upon me to be standing by next Lord's day as I take up where I've left off here and take a look at the preaching of today as against the preaching of two generations ago.

May God bless you everyone. Now my friends, what I've brought to you today over this radio station and you've just listened to is either worthy of your prayer and your attention, or it isn't. I've made a serious charge, but it comes from the very depths of my heart, and I long that I shall tell the truth.

Our Father, as we've come and our words have gone out over the ether waves and into the ears and hearts of those who've listened, my own soul reaches out and I would breathe a prayer to you for men and women in this desperate day. They hear preaching by earnest, honest men, but the preaching of the gospel despite our earnestness and honesty is not true to their souls. That gospel that transforms men as they believe it seems to be strangely absent from our land today.

And good morning my friends. We're ready now for the seventh in the series of messages on the general subject to salvation of God as preached by the greatest interpreter of Christ this world's ever known, the Apostle Paul. We're trying to lay a foundation for the recovery of the gospel of God's grace as it is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now last Lord's Day I departed from the subject somewhat and made a statement over this radio and these stations that to my mind the greatest, most urgent task facing God's people today is the recovery of the gospel which I believe has well and I have been lost for several generations. I said last Lord's Day that we have substituted a gospel that in some respects is similar to the true gospel but in its content and its character and in the fruit of the preaching of it is entirely different. And I said that the preaching of this hour we have the bible against us.

The facts of the gospel as presented in the bible are against the kind of preaching that's turning out the kind of converts that are filling our churches today. And we suggested as we kind of got lost in the time last Lord's Day and did not get to fully come to a climax in our thought because of the lack of time. We suggested that gospel preaching must be judged by its fruit, by the fruit of what we preach, the kind of converts to our preaching we may faithfully and scripturally judge the content and the character, the truth

or the falseness of the gospel as we preach it.

And I'm saying that whether I'm right in my premise or not and whether you may write me off as a crank or not, I'm saying that the character of church people today, the lack of Christ-likeness, the lack of a desire for bible holiness and the paucity of real sure enough God-inspired bible-centered evangelistic effort today and all of the efforts we have today to get results at the expense of the truth of the gospel, I'm saying those are things that we must not overlook. We need frankly to face the fact that our fruit today does not give evidence that we're preaching the gospel of the grace of God. And I come to take up at that point today and ask your indulgence.

I'm earnest about this. I'm sincere. I'm sincere as I preach to many preachers who are kind enough to listen.

I'm sincere as I preach to people who are not allowed to go into your houses of worship. And I do not doubt your sincerity or your devotion. What I'm saying is that we, whether we've meant to or not, have substituted in your day and mine a substitute gospel for the old gospel of the grace of God.

And I'm saying that we need to recover the old authentic biblical gospel and to bring our preaching and our teaching and our practice back into line with the old gospel. I say that's our most pressing need. My friends, there ain't no need for that now.

I say to you that no doctrine is worth making an issue of controversy unless that doctrine backs up and constitutes a part of the very heart of the gospel. And I am saying that by dehearting what we call the gospel today from some of the old flesh killing and yet biblically true doctrines of God's word, that we have not told sinners the truth and that we have not proclaimed the gospel of the grace of God. What's the matter with us today? Well, I'll tell you exactly what's the matter.

And everybody who supports gospel preaching needs to hear me now. And everybody who seeks to preach, I ask you to listen. I don't ask you to agree, but I ask you to listen.

I have to act, I have to be responsible to God and you have to be responsible to God. You're not responsible to me and I'm not responsible to you, but we are responsible to God Almighty and to God's revealed truth. Now that is exactly what our trouble is today.

The old gospel preach that God saves sinners. That God saves sinners. That God does the saving.

That God saves. He doesn't make possible salvation. And that God saves sinners.

People just in the shape that we've been talking about for several odd days over this broadcast. People who are in the deep mire of their own sin. People who dug a ditch and fell falling into it themselves.

People who've been greatly influenced by the satanic demonic powers of hell. People who are willful sinners. I tell you, the old gospel preach that God first, last, in between, all the time.

He takes the initiative. He is the author and the finish of our faith. The old gospel preach that God saves.

And it preach that God saves. He doesn't just make possible salvation. He saves.

He transforms. He makes new creatures. He starts with people in the pit they dug.

And he doesn't quit until he makes them like his son. The old gospel preach that God saves. And that God saves.

And that God saves sinners. But this new gospel is so popular today. Preaches that God makes salvation possible.

And there is all the difference between a true gospel and a false gospel in those statements. I say to you that whether I can preach it as it ought to be preached or not, and whether I get mired down by the fact that I am so ignorant of the great truths of God, doesn't change the fact that the gospel is the proclamation of a God who saves and saves sinners. It is not the proclamation of a God who's done this or that or the other to make salvation possible.

Now that's the heart of the difference. That's the heart of the difference. The converts of the new gospel say, I decided for Christ.

The converts of the old gospel say, please God, I can glory in nothing. See the cross of Christ. The converts of this new gospel say, if it hadn't been for Calvary, I couldn't have been saved.

The converts of the old gospel said, on Calvary's cross, the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished that which saves me. And I looked at him and on nothing else do I base my hope of salvation. Today, my friends, our minds have been conditioned to think first of the cross, the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, as a redemption which does less than redeem.

What we are preached today is not that Christ has redeemed us by his blood, but that he's made possible our redemption. Now that's what we hear and that's not so. The Bible doesn't talk about Christ having made our redemption possible.

The scripture says we have redemption through his blood. The scripture speaks of he has redeemed us. He has redeemed us.

He has made possible our redemption. There's no gospel in that. The gospel is not in a possibility.

It's in the proclamation of something that has taken place. The gospel talks about a God who's saved and saves by the cross. But today, we've heard it preached until we believe it, that on the cross, the Lord Jesus didn't actually redeem people.

He just made it possible for people to be redeemed. Today, our minds have been conditioned to think of Christ as a savior who does less than save. Did you get that? The gospel today proclaims a savior who does less than save.

All on earth we have preached today nearly years that Christ has done something that makes it possible. If you do something for God to save you. But the old gospel preached of Christ who was a savior.

Not a possible savior but an actual savior. Our minds have been conditioned by present day preaching to think of God's love, wonderful love, as a weak affection which cannot keep anybody out of hell without help from somewhere else. We preach that God loves you but if you so and so and so and if you don't do so and so and less thus and that, well you'll go to hell.

Our minds have been conditioned by present day preaching to think of saving faith as the human help which God needs to help them save sinners. My friends, these are serious charges but bless God I'm

telling you the truth and I'm lifting up my voice against it and I'm not trying to make anybody mad. I'm pleading for a recovery of preaching about a God who doesn't make possible salvation but a God who saves.

I'm not preaching a Christ who makes salvation possible but a savior who saves people. And I tell you there's good news in that if I can be a sinner to look to a real savior not somebody who made salvation possible, I'm preaching the gospel. I say to you my friends that that faith that we hear so much about now, it's an act of man and yet it's a gift of God and we tell sinners that they do it themselves and we lie to them.

It is their own act and a sinner must believe but praise God the old gospel preached that in virtue of what Christ was and did on the cross, God has secured there in the breath of the Lord Jesus Christ the gift of faith for those for whom our blessed Lord died. Now my friends here's a situation how it's come about in this way Why is it that we preach a God who doesn't save but a God who possibly might? Why is it we preach a savior who does less than redeem and a savior who does less than save? Why is it we preach of God's wonderful love as if it is just a big stream and we'll hope that we get our little dipper and and find that God's able to save? Why is it we preach faith as a human help that God needs and he can't save us unless we come to his rescue? Well I think it's come about somewhat this way we who are earnest at least want to magnify the saving grace of God. Everybody that preaches today talks about preaching that men are saved by grace and they mean it and as honest as they are I do not doubt their honesty or question their motive but I say that we who want to magnify the saving grace of God and the saving power of the Lord Jesus Christ we really want to do that.

You couldn't find the preacher anywhere in this country who doesn't want to magnify the saving grace of God and the saving power of Christ and so we we got that right motive but we declare in an effort to do what we think ought to be done we preach all over this country that God's redeeming love extends to every man and we further preach and brother you can get in a fight about this we further preach that Christ has died to save every man and we further proclaim that the glory of divine mercy is to be measured by these facts and then having preached that in order to avoid what that naturally assumes that is that everybody will be saved we have to turn right around and deny all this said and then go on to explain now here is the damning part about this we have to go on to explain that

after all nothing that God and Christ have done can save us unless we add something to it now my friends if I'm not telling the truth about what's called the gospel today I want you to write me and straighten me out we thus preach that the decisive factor which actually saves us is our own believing what we really say is Christ saves us with our help and if you think that out what that really means is we save ourselves with Christ's help but my friends if we start as is done now by affirming that God has a saving love for everybody and that Christ died a saving death for everybody and yet we do not preach that everybody will be saved we just show how foolish we are the man who preaches that Christ died in a saving way for everybody has got to preach that everybody must be saved the man

who preached that God has a saving love for everybody has got to preach that everybody must be saved but we say brother Byron we don't believe that I know but that's what you preach you get an awful stew oh how we ran about it and so these folks running around here limiting the purpose and love of God we're just a minute we are simply saying that the old gospel limited the work and love of Christ simply this way that the love of God accomplished all it was sent to do and that the love of Christ dying for our sins means that those whom it was meant for are to be saved now we need to be clear here in this kind of preaching as it is the popular preaching of the day instead of exalting the grace of God and magnifying the cross of Christ

we cheapen them and people who preach that way limit the

atonement work of the Lord Jesus Christ people say to me brother Byron you blame the limited atonement and I say no but most all the preachers in this country do for they preach that Christ didn't actually accomplish what he set out to do he just made possible something that he hoped might accidentally take place my friends the old gospel says of Christ's death that Christ's death saves all whom it was meant to save the new gospel says that Christ's death as such actually saves nobody what's good news about that what's good news about that no wonder my friends you can go into most any church in this section today and in three or four nights hewing to the line ninety-five percent of the people in the congregations will be saying if that fellow's preaching the truth then I'm not saved no

wonder my friends at Baptist who've always said we believe in the eternal security of the believer it's hard to find a Baptist now who feels any security why well we believe the gospel about a God who's made salvation possible not a gospel about a God who actually saved dear old brother Spurgeon whom the preachers quote today but hate his gospel they accused him of preaching the limited atonement he answered and this wise I quote it brother Spurgeon said we're often told that we limit the atonement of Christ because we say that Christ has not made a satisfaction for all men or all men would be saved now our reply to this is brother Spurgeon says that on the other hand our opponents limit the work of Christ we do not our opponents say Christ died for all men ask them what they mean by him

dying for all men ask them did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of all men and they said no certainly not we ask them the next question did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of any man in particular they answer no they are obliged to admit admit this if they're consistent they say no Christ has died in order that any man may be saved if and then follow certain conditions of salvation now says Mr.

Spurgeon who is it that limits the death of Christ why it's you you say that Christ did not die so as infallibly to secure the salvation of anybody we beg your pardon when you say we limit Christ death we say no my dear sir it is you that limits it we say Christ so died that he infallibly secured the salvation of a multitude that no man can number who through Christ's death not only may be saved but are saved must be saved and cannot by any possibility run the hazard of being anything but saved you are welcome to your atonement says Mr.

Spurgeon you may keep it we will never renounce ours for the sake of it I thank God I have the privilege of pointing every sinner I can get and speak in distance of to the Lamb of God and I can say to them sinner they're on the cross salvation wasn't made possible salvation was accomplished I bid you to look at not somebody who may be conceived but look at the Savior and he died so that everyone believing in him is assured of salvation oh my sure what I'm going about is not just to be dismissed I'm comparing the old gospel we're going to start preaching pretty soon if you don't all the way I'm prepared I'm comparing the old gospel that bad men look to a real savior to the new gospel that just can't possibly point anybody with assurance to Christ the Savior oh the sinner may still have his good opinion of himself and all his supposed abilities we deheart repentance and deheart saving faith in order to make this plausible it's very simple we tell sinful men just open your heart to the Lord and in so doing we have first denied God's sovereignty and second we've undermined the very basic conviction of religion itself and that basic conviction I know this is so is that sinful man is always always in God's hand and we've lost a great deal and it's no wonder that our preaching begets so little reverence and humility that our converts are so self-confident and so deficient in the true knowledge of themselves and in the good works which scripture regards as the fruit of true repentance my dear brother the old gospel said Christ died to save a certain

company of helpless sinners upon whom God had set his free saving love the old gospel says Christ's death ensured the calling and the keeping Christ's death ensured the present and the final salvation of all whose sins he bore that's what Calvary meant in the old gospel that's what means today the old preachers said the cross saved the old preachers will preach today the cross saves they'll quote that verse of scripture dear dying lamb thy precious blood shall never lose its power till all the ransomed church of God is saved to sin no more only God knows how this glorious gospel of a real savior needs to be preached today my time's gone and I have to go away sorry my time's gone and ask you to be here next lord day as we take up where we've left off with this gospel

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