

# The Gospel

by Tim Keller

---

*The gospel brings restructuring of your heart, removal of your sin, and reversal of your values, offering freedom from shame and cultural freedom through the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ.*

**Duration:** 38:01

**Scripture:** Isaiah 53:4-5, Isaiah 54:1, Isaiah 54:11-13, Jeremiah 29:7, Matthew 6:33, Acts 2:42-47, Romans 3:23-24

**Topics:** "Gospel"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the three results of the gospel that flow into our lives: restructuring of the heart, removal of sin, and reversal of values. The restructuring of the heart is explained through the image of the barren woman, while the removal of sin is understood through the suffering servant in Isaiah. This passage is controversial because it seems to contradict other teachings in the Bible, such as the prohibition of human sacrifice. However, the speaker emphasizes that understanding the cost of removing our sin leads to a reversal of values and a transformation of our identity. The sermon concludes with a challenge for the church to embody these three results in their lives.

---

## Transcript

Tonight's scripture is found in Isaiah chapter 53 and chapter 54, selected verses. Surely He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered Him stricken by God, smitten by Him, and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities.

The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way, and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth. By oppression and judgment He was taken away, and who can speak of His descendants? For He was cut off from the land of the living.

For the transgression of my people He was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked and with the rich in His death, though He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it was the Lord's will to crush Him and cause Him to suffer.

And though the Lord makes His life a guilt offering, He will see His offspring and prolong His days. And the will of the Lord will prosper in His hand. After the suffering of His soul, He will see the light of life and be satisfied.

By His knowledge, my righteous servant will justify many, and He will bear their iniquities. Sing, O barren woman, you who never bore a child. Burst into song, shout for joy, you who were never in labor, because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband, says the Lord.

Enlarge the place of your tent. Stretch your tent curtains wide. Do not hold back.

Lengthen your cords. Strengthen your stakes. For you will spread out to the right and to the left.

Your descendants will dispossess nations and settle in their desolate cities. Do not be afraid. You will not suffer shame.

Do not fear disgrace. You will not be humiliated. You will forget the shame of your youth and remember no more the reproach of your widowhood.

For your Maker is your husband. The Lord Almighty is His name. The Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer.

He is called the God of all the earth. O afflicted city, lashed by storms and not comforted, I will build you with stones of turquoise, your foundations with sapphires. I will make your battlements of rubies, your gates of sparkling jewels, and all your walls of precious stones.

All your sons will be taught by the Lord, and great will be your children's peace. In righteousness you will be established. Tyranny will be far from you.

You will have nothing to fear. Terror will be far removed. It will not come near you.

This is the word of the Lord. Every single week we're taking a look at the vision of Redeemer and we're finding a Bible text that tells us one part of it, something about one part of it. In the inside of your bulletin, on the inside cover at the top, the vision of Redeemer is to build a great city for all people through a gospel movement that brings personal conversion, community formation, social justice, and cultural renewal to New York City and through New York City to the world.

And every single week we're taking one passage of Scripture and using it to explain part of that vision. We're going to do that all the way through the fall. One more week on the gospel.

We've said the gospel is not moral conformity, religion, neither is it self-discovery, secularism. It's something else. And there are three results of the gospel that will flow into our lives.

We've been talking about the gospel for a couple weeks, but this week I'd like to look at this passage in Isaiah and recognize there are three results of the gospel that flow into our lives. The gospel brings restructuring of your heart, removal of your sin, and reversal of your values. Restructuring of your heart, removal of your sin, and reversal of your values.

Let's take a look at these three things. The first, the restructuring of your heart, actually comes from the second page, the top, under the image of the barren woman. This part of the prophecy of Isaiah is, as the Lord's speaking, starts off in a startling way.

God says, sing, O barren woman, you who never bore a child. Burst into song and shout for joy. We've got to stop right away, because if we're going to understand the message of this passage, we have to ask ourselves, what was the significance of childbearing in those ancient cultures? Now, let me put it in a nutshell.

The more children you had, the better your family did. The more children you had, the more your land produced, the more your shop produced, because you had more labor. The more income you had, and therefore, your number of children completely determined the fate of your family, its status in society, its security economically, completely.

And secondly, if when you got old, you didn't have adult children to live with, you literally starved to death. And if you wanted to have three adult children when you got to old age, you needed to have about eight to ten, because that's all the number that would live to maturity. And then thirdly, if your whole tribe, if your whole nation wasn't having lots and lots of children, the tribe next door would grow in population more, and therefore, they'd have a larger army, and they would come and conquer you.

So you can see, if a bunch of women were around a well, you know, drawing water, and one of them said, I think I only want to have two or three children, the rest of them would say, do you have a death wish or something? And not only that, they would say, this isn't just about you, it's about all of us. Unless you have as many children as you possibly can, you're dooming us economically, militarily, politically. And therefore, a woman who bore children in those ancient cultures was a national hero.

But, as we have been saying all month, the natural tendency of the human heart is to take good things and turn them into ultimate things. And in ancient cultures, and in non-Western traditional cultures today, the family is the ultimate thing. It is what we've been calling, essentially in those cultures, an idol.

And therefore, women who either don't have children because they're not married, or can't have children because of some physical impediment, felt worthless, and were regarded as worthless. And so, if you want a perfect example of that, you go into the book of Genesis, where Rachel, the wife of Jacob, is seeking to have children, and she can't have children, and she says, give me children or I die. And that about sums it up, in those cultures.

Now, some of you are saying, oh boy, that's right, I know about this. Those ancient cultures really oppressed women. And you're right.

But I'm glad you brought that up, actually. And the reason I'm glad you brought that up is it gives me the occasion to ask you a question. Why do you think, and I'm trying to, let me be as sensitive as I possibly can.

Yes, those ancient cultures oppressed women. Let me ask you one question. Why do you think that in those cultures, women were not troubled with eating disorders at all? Why do you think that in those cultures, women were not troubled with eating disorders? Why am I asking you that? I'm trying to make a point.

The Bible says that all cultures are fallen, and that all cultures oppress, because here's what they do. Every single culture puts in front of men and women certain objects, and says, if you don't have them, you're nothing. If you don't have them, you have no worth.

If you don't have them, you have no significance. If you don't have them, your existence isn't justified. You must have them.

And of course, ancient cultures and traditional cultures today make idols out of, how do I say, they have collectivist idols. They say to women, your worth depends completely on the family. You've got to have a family.

You've got to be in a family. But modern Western culture has individualistic idols. And what they say, what modern cultures say, is your worth is completely dependent on your individual assets, looks, career, money.

If you don't have, every culture is saying, if you don't have that, you're nothing. When Rachel says, give me children or I die. When she says, childlessness means psychological and social death.

It's very telling, because if you build your identity on anything more than God, and you fail to get it, it's psychological and sociological death. And every culture that ever existed and exists today is telling you to build your identity on something. And therefore, every culture is going to press you, crush you into the ground, because every culture is cooperating with the part of our heart we were talking about last couple of weeks that wants to be its own savior and Lord, wants to justify itself.

Every culture is therefore crushing us into the ground in different ways. And it's almost impossible when everybody else is going after these objects, not to go along with them and be just as enslaved and crushed as everyone else in the culture is. I said almost impossible, because God says there's a way out.

There's a way to emotional inner freedom and cultural freedom. And what is it? Well, let's go back to the text. Here's what God says.

He says, into this ancient culture, sing, O barren woman, you who never bore a child. Sing, O barren woman. Do you know what is so culturally radical? What he is calling women to do.

He's calling women to an inner emotional freedom from shame and a cultural freedom from external oppressive structures. He's saying, I can give you a freedom from men, from family, from what your culture tells you. I can get you to sing without children.

In other words, look at the paradox. He says, sing O barren woman, you who bore a child, never bore a child, because more are the children of a desolate woman than of her who has a husband. And what this is saying is now it's deliberately paradoxical.

It's saying the woman who never had any children has more children than the woman who has had a lot of children. That doesn't make sense, but it does make sense when you realize that children represent value and worth and beauty and honor. And God is saying there's a value and worth and beauty and honor available apart from children.

This was utterly radical in that culture. Well, what is the source of that? He says, here it is. Your maker is your husband.

Your maker is your husband. Your maker is your husband. Last week, Colossians 3, we looked at a very, very, kind of a long theological exposition.

But here Isaiah sums up what Paul said in this incredibly beautiful image and metaphor. What did Paul say? What is Isaiah saying? What does the Bible say? The Bible says every other religion says life is about trying, trying, trying, trying hard to live up to standards. And if you really try hard at the end of your life, you'll have a positive verdict and you'll go to heaven or you'll meet God or you'll have nirvana or something.

Every other religion says try, try, try, try hard, live up, get a good verdict, and you're in. But Christianity is absolutely different than that. Christianity is a legal standing.

It's a standing. It's coming into something now. It's being united to God through Christ.

And the perfect metaphor for it is marriage. Why? Because on the one hand, marriage is the most intense love relationship possible, and yet it's also a legal status, which the moment before you take your vows, you don't have at all. And the second you take your vows, you have completely.

It's not like you try, try, try. Your maker is your husband. And this is what Christianity offers, something that no other religion dares to offer, and says that when you join to God through Jesus Christ, the verdict is in.

Now you have the applause, the praise, the delight of God. No one else even begins to try to offer such a thing. So what is God saying in this passage? Here's what he's saying.

He says, don't look to anything else. I can be your value. And what greater value could you possibly have than to be delighted in and sacrificed for by the maker of the universe? He says, look at all these other things, good things that you're turning into ultimate things.

Don't try to get your value and your beauty and your honor and your significance from them. Don't do that. You need freedom from them so you can love them.

And you'll find that freedom only when your heart rests in me the way you rest in bed at the end of a long day. Only when your heart savors me the way you savor a glass of cold water in the middle of a desert. But if you have that, then you have a completely different sort of identity.

You have cultural freedom. You have emotional freedom. You can live in your culture and every culture says these are good things.

Every culture has its themes. Every culture has its emphases. Every culture has its strengths.

But they won't enslave you anymore. They won't crush you. You'll be restructured in your heart and your identity.

Well, now some people say that's very radical, but I think I believe in God. I think I believe in Christianity. And I don't know that I've ever undergone anything quite like that.

Okay, let's keep going. The restructuring of the heart flows from an understanding of how the gospel also tells you about the removal of your sin. And as we look to the image of the barren woman to understand the restructuring of the heart, we look to, in the first part, page one, this image of the suffering servant to understand the removal of our sin.

Now, this passage is very famous, but I also want you to know it probably is the most shocking and controversial passage in all of the Hebrew scripture, in all of the Old Testament. It has been fought about

and it has been debated for centuries. And the reason is because it seems to be so shocking because it seems to contradict all sorts of other things in the rest of the Bible.

Let's take a look at it. First of all, it's shocking because of the violence of this death, the violence of this death. All through the Old Testament, there have been prophecies about a Messiah, a messianic figure, someone who's going to come and bring God's peace back to the world, someone who's going to come and bring God's justice back to the world.

And all the way from the book of Exodus, all the way up through the early chapters of Isaiah, we see this prince, this meshiach, this anointed prince, this person, this figure, who's in prophecy going to return. Now you get, though, to the middle of Isaiah, you get into chapter 40 and afterwards, and the servant of the Lord appears. And this person again appears and he brings salvation to the nations.

And this has been spoken of in chapter 42 and 47 and 50. So there are a number of these prophecies about this servant of the Lord who's going to bring salvation to the nations. But when we get to chapter 53, suddenly the most appalling thing happens.

The Messiah, the servant of the Lord, who is supposed to bring an end to violence, is instead the victim of violence. Who's supposed to bring an end to injustice is instead the victim of injustice. Look at verse 8. By oppression and justice, he was taken away.

And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living. And that cut off from the land of the living is a Hebrew term that means a violent death. And verse 5 says he was pierced for our transgressions.

Literally, that word says pierced through. It's a verb that means to be run through. It means to have something come in the front of your body and go out the back.

It is a term that describes the most painful and excruciating possible death. Now, this seems to contradict everything else we know about the Messiah. It seems to contradict everything else that we see.

How could this be the Messiah? How could the Messiah possibly bring an end to violence and bring an end to injustice and bring an end to the brokenness of the world by being broken to bits himself? That makes no sense at all. So that's the first thing. The first thing that's shocking is the violence of this death.

The second thing that's shocking, even more shocking, is the vicariousness of this death. Look at verse 10. It was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer.

And though the Lord make his life a guilt offering, whoa, stop, wait, what? The Bible talks a lot about offerings, guilt offerings, in the tabernacle, in the temple. They were animal sacrifices. When someone was guilty, you did an animal sacrifice and an animal was slain and offered up and that took away the guilt.

And many, this is all through the Bible. But one thing is absolutely and totally clear in the Bible that never, ever, ever, ever was there to be a human sacrifice. Human sacrifice was in no uncertain terms condemned.

Everywhere else in the Bible. And yet that's what this is. He was pierced for our transgressions.

He was crushed for our iniquities. Our punishment has gone to him. His peace has come to us.

He's a guilt offering. And yet the Bible says everywhere, you must not do human sacrifice. So first, the violence of the death is shocking.

Secondly, the vicariousness of the death is shocking. And last of all, the voluntariness of the death is shocking. Look at verse four.

He took up our infirmities. He carried our sorrows. Literally, that means he picked them up and put them on himself.

He's voluntarily dying. But everywhere in the Bible, suicide's a sin. So this contradicts what the Bible says about the power of the Messiah.

This contradicts what the Bible says about the forbiddenness of human sacrifice. It contradicts what the Bible says about the sinfulness of suicide. How do we make sense of this? Now, some people have really tried very hard to make sense of it by saying it's all a symbol, it's figurative, it's poetry.

And the servant here is a poetic, symbolic personification of the sufferings of the nation, of the sufferings of the people. This is just talking about the people of God, the nation of God, and how they suffered. Okay, but there's a huge trouble with this.

Even poetry still has to have a point. And what is the point of this passage? The point of this passage is that the servant suffers instead of the nation. The servant suffers so the nation doesn't have to suffer.

And so if the servant is just a symbol for the nation, how can the nation suffer so the nation won't suffer? How can the nation suffer in place of the nation? No. This is a human being. This is an individual human being.

But who? How can we make any sense out of it? Well, it all depends on who this is. Who is it? Centuries later, after this was written, the book of Acts, chapter 8, tells us a story, an account of something that happened many years later. It tells us about an African, an Ethiopian, and we're told that he had gone all the way to Jerusalem in order to worship God, and now he was coming back reading the scroll of Isaiah.

Now, even that little introduction tells us an awful lot about what happened to this man. Because first of all, in those days, even today I'm sure, but in those days the trip from Ethiopia to Jerusalem was enormously long, incredibly dangerous, and terribly difficult. And the only possible reason an individual would go all the way from Ethiopia to Jerusalem in order to worship is if this person was deeply spiritually dissatisfied, that he was searching, he was seeking, that there was a great spiritual need, longing, emptiness, let's say.

And the first thing we know is that. The second thing we know is now that he's on his way back, he would have been turned away. Do you know why he would have been turned away? He was a eunuch.

And the Mosaic law made it very clear that nothing deformed and nothing diseased could go into the presence of God. And this man had been castrated, and anyone who had been castrated was absolutely forbidden to go into the temple. After all those miles, hundreds, thousands, I don't know how, after all that way he went and he was turned away, unfit, unclean.

The reason he was castrated was because he was an official. And in those days in almost all of the royal, in all of the kingdoms, if you were an official who was going to work in close quarters with the royal family, the requirement was castration. And of course it was a terrible price to pay in a culture in which having

descendants meant everything.

And maybe that was one of the reasons why he was spiritually searching, I don't know, but he'd been turned away. And now he's on his way back and he's reading the book of Isaiah. And Acts 8 tells us that Philip, a minister of the gospel, a minister, a missionary, finds this man, and this is what happened.

We're told, Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah. Do you understand what you're reading? Philip asked. How can I? He said, unless someone explains it to me.

So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Now, this was the passage that the eunuch was reading. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter.

And as a lamb before her shears his silence, so he did not open his mouth. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living. Imagine how electrifying this must have been for a man who'd just been turned away from the house of God because he couldn't have descendants.

And yet here's this servant of the Lord who's voluntarily taking this condition on. And so the text goes on. The eunuch asked Philip, tell me, please, who is this prophet talking about? Himself or someone else? And then Philip began with that very passage of scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

It's Jesus. And you know what? That's the answer to all the riddles. If this figure, this suffering servant, is the son of God, come down from heaven in human form, that begins to unravel the riddles.

First of all, that shows this is not the sin of suicide. You know why? You and I, we did not give ourselves life. And therefore, we can't take our own lives.

Our lives don't belong to us. They belong to God. But God's life is his own.

And he laid it down for us. And secondly, it explains the vicariousness of it. Dietrich Bonhoeffer has written, forgiveness is a form of suffering.

Do you know what that means? If someone has really, really wronged you, you've got to forgive them. You've got to forgive them. If you don't forgive them, you'll be eaten up with bitterness and you'll become part of the endless cycle of retaliation that makes the world the mess of a place that it is.

So you've got to forgive. But Bonhoeffer's right. Forgiveness is agonizing.

When you want to pay somebody back, but you don't pay them back, you'll pay. When you want to make them suffer, but you don't make them suffer because you're trying to forgive them, you suffer. Real forgiveness always entails suffering.

There's no such thing as forgiveness without suffering, not if you've really been wrong. And if that's true for us, with our minuscule sense and flawed sense of justice, how much more is we to be true of God? And the Ethiopian eunuch realized this is God suffering in order to forgive us. If God was not going to pay us back, he had to pay, just like with us.

And when the eunuch realized that God underwent a violent, voluntary, vicarious death to forgive him and receive him, it changed his life. And here's why it changed his life. I want you to think about this.

We've said the gospel is not moral conformity or self-discovery. It's not moralism or relativism. Because you see, moralistic people have a God who's sort of holy and demanding.

And the way you have a relationship with this God is you try very, very hard. But when people who have a God who's basically holy and demanding and they're pleasing through moral behavior, when they think of their relationship with God, it doesn't move them to tears. It doesn't galvanize them, electrify them.

It doesn't change them from the inside out. They just say, yeah, yeah, of course I know God. I work very hard, you know.

And then there's people, New Yorkers, basically, who think, you know, if there is a God, I believe he loves everyone. He excludes no one. He accepts everyone.

Yeah, I have a relationship with God. I'm spiritual because God loves everyone. But if that's what you believe in a God who just accepts and loves everyone, you know, no matter what, if that's what you believe, when you think of your relationship with God, it doesn't galvanize you.

It doesn't move you to tears. It doesn't electrify. It doesn't change you from the inside out.

You say, well, of course he loves everybody. But the biblical God, the God of the gospel, the God of Isaiah, the God of the African eunuch, is infinitely holy and infinitely loving. And that's the reason why God's grace is costly.

It's so costly, that's why it's so moving. In other words, God's grace is infinitely costly and melts your heart when you realize that God was so holy he couldn't shrug evil off, but he was so loving he couldn't just punish us for it. And not until you're humbled down into the dust because he's so holy he had to die for you, and not until you're affirmed and valued into the sky because he loves you so much that he was glad to die for you, will you be humbled out of the pride that makes you look down on other people, and will you be affirmed out of the self-hatred that makes you look down on yourself at the same time? In other words, only when you see what it costs God to remove your sin will you finally have the death of all inferiority and the death of all superiority, and you'll be able to have freedom, the restructured identity that no one else has.

It's impossible to have it any other way. Sure, if you're a moralist then you feel good, you know, when you're living up, but you're proud, or you feel bad when you're living up, you know, but you hate yourself. But here this is proud is gone, and self-hatred is gone, because the gospel says you're so humbled because you're a sinner, and you're so bold because you're absolutely loved at the same time.

It gives you a radically new identity. It's the removal of sin and the costliness of it. When the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ is intellectually coherent and existentially melting to your heart, that's when the changes happen.

And that comes only when you see God is not just holy and demanding, or not just loving and accepting everybody, but infinitely holy and infinitely loving at once, and therefore his grace is costly. And when that melts your heart, that changes you. You know Charles Dickens' novel *A Tale of Two Cities*.

It's about Sidney Carton and Charles Darnay, and they both love the same young woman, but she marries Charles. And then they start, you know, they get married and they start having children. But this is the French Revolution, and so Charles Darnay is arrested, and he's taken to prison, and he awaits his

execution.

And on the night before his execution, Sidney Carton, who looks quite a bit like Charles Darnay, steals into the prison and says, look Charles, you have a wife, you have a child, let's switch places. Let's change clothes. I'll die in your place.

And Charles Darnay says, no way! Are you kidding? I will never let you do such a thing. So what does Sidney Carton do? He smacks him over the head and knocks him out cold. He puts his clothes on him.

Sidney's peace passes to Charles. Charles' punishment passes to Sidney. And he has some people take Charles, who's now out cold, and take him out, and he assumes his place in the prison waiting to be executed.

And there's a little seamstress young woman who is also about to be executed, and she knew Charles Darnay previously. When she hears he's there, she seeks him out and comes up and starts talking. It's, oh, you remember this, and you remember that.

And of course, Sidney Carton is looking away, hoping that she doesn't look too closely, and suddenly she sees. And she realizes it's not Charles Darnay. And her eyes get big.

And she says, are you dying for him? And he says, yes, and for his wife and children. And she says, stranger, I don't think, I have been feeling I'm not going to be able to face my death, but could I hold your hand? Because if someone as brave and as loving as you holds my hand, I think I'll be okay. And Sidney Carton says, all right.

Now, he wasn't even dying for her, but his substitutionary sacrifice strengthened her to her roots. How much more will the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ for you absolutely change you and strengthen you if you would just let it have its way with you in your memories, in your attitude, in your personality, in the way in which you look at the world, in the way in which you look at life? To the degree you understand the holiness and the love of God that makes the grace so costly, and that you understand what it cost God to remove your sin, that will create that restructuring of heart. And one more thing it'll create, and that is a complete reversal of values.

Very briefly, I must say that we not only have out of the flowing of the removal of sin in chapter 53 comes chapter 54, and we have two images in chapter 54, a barren woman who is singing for joy, and a deserted city, an afflicted city. This is talking about a city that is poor, that is devastated, and God says, I will rebuild your walls, and I will rebuild your gates, and I will rebuild your battlements and your towers, and I'll rebuild them out of sapphire, and out of rubies, and out of diamonds. Now, imagine a city like that.

Do you realize that a city that would have been made out of diamonds, and sapphires, and rubies would have been, first of all, absolutely militarily and politically secure, because nobody could break down walls made of that. Secondly, it would have been incredibly economically prosperous, because it would be the most valuable and wealthy city in the world. And then thirdly, it would also be a place of aesthetic beauty.

Its artistic life, and its economic life, and its political life would be flourishing. And of course, this has never happened, we don't think, right? I mean, you know, Jerusalem was rebuilt after the exile, but it wasn't built like that. What is Isaiah foreseeing? You have to go to the book of Revelation, where it depicts the end of time, and we see coming out of heaven this city with sapphires, and rubies, and diamonds at its base.

And what is that vision all about? What is Isaiah talking about? What is the book of Revelation talking about? It's talking about the fact that at the end of time, this heavenly power will come down to renew the world, create the world to be the way God meant it to be. He didn't want disease. He didn't want suffering.

He didn't want death. He didn't want poverty. He didn't want racism.

He didn't want injustice. He didn't want any of those things, and in the end, he's going to make the world renewed the way it ought to be. How can we participate in that? Through the gospel.

Because why do you think God always seems to be working with eunuchs and barren women? Why Sarah over Hagar? Why stupid Jacob over Esau? Why little David over all the big strapping older brothers? Why? Why does he always do that? Here's how one writer put it, Christ wins our salvation through losing. He achieves power through weakness and service. He comes to wealth by giving everything away.

Those who receive his salvation also are not the strong and the accomplished, but those who admit they are weak and lost. Salvation, because it is achieved through weakness and it is received through weakness, pulls off a complete reversal of the values of this world with regard to power, recognition, status, and wealth. When we understand that we are saved by sheer grace through Christ, we stop seeking salvation in these things, in recognition, status, wealth, and power.

The reversal of the cross, the grace of God, therefore liberates us from the bondage to the power of material things and worldly status in our lives. The gospel therefore creates a people with an upside-down set of values, a whole alternate way of being human, racial and class superiority, accrual of money and power at the expense of others, yearning for popularity and recognition. All these things are marks of living in the world and are the opposite of the mindset of people whose lives have been changed by the gospel.

When you see what it costs to remove your sin, when you get that restructuring of your identity, it will lead to the reversal of values, or you haven't really had that restructuring of identity. You look at people of other races differently than you did before, because you've got cultural freedom. You don't make an idol out of your culture.

You look at your own money differently than you did before. You don't need to have lots of it anymore, because that's not how you get your security and your significance. You start to pour yourself out, to bring about bit by bit by bit the city that God is building, and eventually will bring to completion at the end of time.

What if we really were a church filled with people who have all three of these results in our lives? The reversal of values, the removal of sin, and the renovation of our identity? What would we look like? Some people would say, oh, that's a conservative church, because of all that talk about substitutionary atonement and all that doctrinal stuff. And other people say, no, no, no, it's a liberal church. Look at all that talk about social justice and concern for the poor.

And other people say, it must be a charismatic church, because look at all that love and all that singing, oh, barren woman stuff. You know what I really love? It doesn't say, think, oh, barren woman. Now you know the truth.

Sing, artistically drill it into your heart until it catches fire. We'd be all of those things. We'd be conservative.

We'd be charismatic. We'd be liberal. It means generous.

We'd be all of those things and more, because the gospel is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe. Let us pray. Make us, Father, the new people of God that you can make us through the power of the gospel.

After these three weeks of thinking about the nature and the power and the results and the reception of the gospel in our lives, and we ask this week as we're talking about these things in our small groups, you would help us to think out ways that we at Redeemer can appropriate and take hold of these great resources in the gospel so that we can live them out in our lives in this city and reflect you, who's done all this for us. We thank you and pray for this through Jesus. In his name we pray, amen.

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/22/SID22517.mp3>  
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/tim-keller/the-gospel/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**