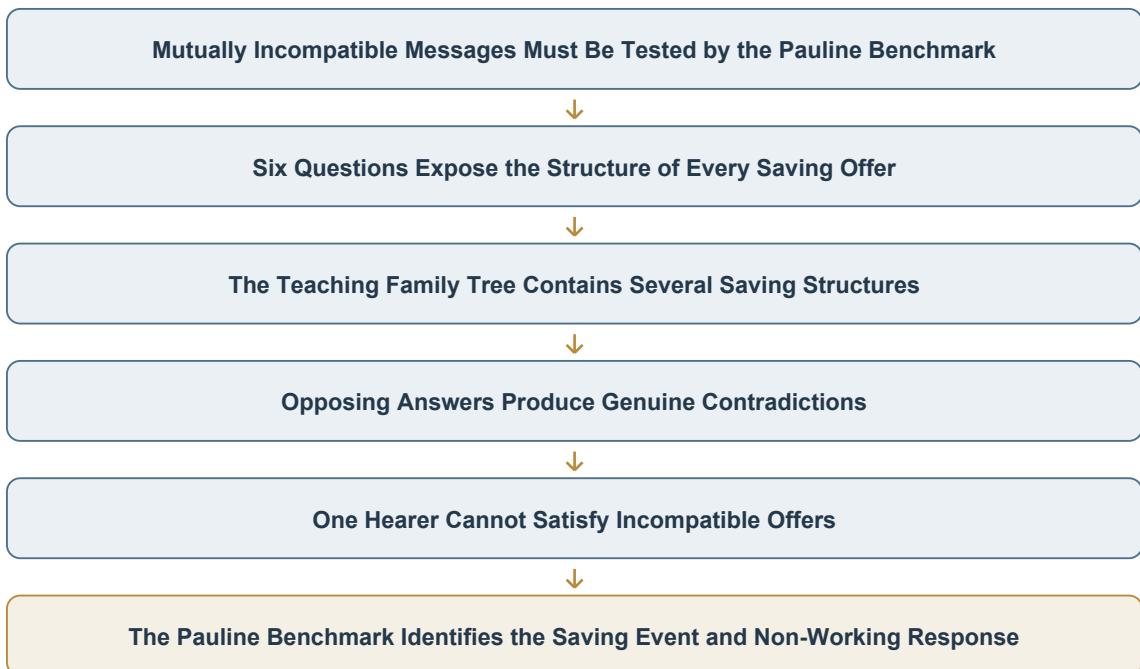


Session 3 - Not the Same Gospel: A Family Tree of Salvation Doctrine

SESSION THESIS

Mutually incompatible saving messages cannot all be the same Gospel: for the present dispensation, the Gospel is that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again, and its saving benefit is received by faith apart from works.

The Session Argument



Controlling Questions

- 1 What saving event and receiving condition form the Pauline benchmark?
- 2 Do traditions assign the same function to faith, baptism, obedience, and perseverance?
- 3 Can the same hearer satisfy one saving offer while failing another?

Mutually Incompatible Messages Must Be Tested by the Pauline Benchmark

THESIS

Mutually incompatible saving messages cannot all be the same Gospel: for the present dispensation, the Gospel is that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again, and its saving benefit is received by faith apart from works.

Shared Gospel Vocabulary Does Not Establish One Saving Message

- “We all preach the same Gospel; we just explain it differently.”
- Distinguish differences that may be compatible from differences that change the saving message.
 - Different vocabulary, length, emphasis, or illustration need not create a different Gospel.
 - Different saving content, receiving conditions, mediating means, or final outcomes may create a genuine contradiction.
- Controlling questions:
 - Do different words explain one message, or do different requirements create different messages?
 - Shared references to Jesus, grace, faith, repentance, and salvation do not answer that question by themselves.

The Pauline Benchmark Defines Content, Reception, and Exclusion

1 Corinthians 15:1-4 - King James Version

SCRIPTURE

1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

Acts 16:31 - King James Version

SCRIPTURE

31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

Romans 4:4-5 - King James Version

SCRIPTURE

4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

- Content: Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again according to the Scriptures.
 - 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 identifies the saving event Paul received and preached.
- Reception: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - Acts 16:31 answers a direct question about salvation with faith in Christ.

- Exclusion: “To him that worketh not, but believeth.”
 - Romans 4:4-5 contrasts the non-working response of faith with a wage earned by works.
- For the present dispensation, Christ's completed work is the saving basis, and faith is the non-working means of reception.

Scripture Recognizes the Category of Another Gospel

Galatians 1:6-9 - King James Version

SCRIPTURE

6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:

7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

9 As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

- Galatians 1:6-9 permits no assumption that every religious message called Gospel is an acceptable variation.
 - Adding circumcision and law obligation did not enrich the saving message; it perverted it.
- Second Corinthians 11:4 warns that familiar references to Jesus, the Spirit, and the Gospel do not guarantee equivalence.
- Doctrinal discrimination is therefore a biblical responsibility rather than an act of unnecessary hostility.

The Same-Hearer Test Reveals Incompatible Offers

- Controlling question: Could the same hearer satisfy one presentation while failing another?
- A hearer believes that Christ died for his sins and rose again.
- He has not yet been water baptized, completed an ordinance, demonstrated perseverance, or entered a particular institution.
- Would every represented tradition say that he presently possesses the promised saving benefit?
- If the same hearer passes one offer and fails another, the offers are not interchangeable in the same sense.

Notes

Six Questions Expose the Structure of Every Saving Offer

THESIS

Saving messages must be compared by the function they assign to Christ's work, faith, repentance, baptism, authority, obedience, perseverance, and final salvation—not merely by the vocabulary they share.

Six Questions Expose a Saving Message's Architecture

- Content: What must the sinner believe about Christ and his work?
- Initial response: Is the response belief alone, repentance and faith, surrender, confession, baptism, or a sequence?
- Saving means: Does the benefit reach the sinner directly through God's promise or through Word, sacrament, church, ordinance, or priesthood?
- Continuing condition: Must obedience, sacramental participation, fruit, covenant keeping, or perseverance continue?
- Present possession: Is eternal life possessed now, conditionally held, sacramentally maintained, or finally attained?
- Final goal: Does the system promise justification and eternal life, theosis, kingdom life, exaltation, or earthly paradise?
- The categories remain distinct:
 - Initial reception must not be confused with later Christian growth.

- Present possession must not be confused with a final goal still to be attained.
- A benefit's basis must not be confused with the asserted means by which it is conferred.

The Saving Sequence Makes Each Offer Explicit

- Each published teaching can be reduced to the same functional sequence:
 - Because - the saving basis or accomplishment
 - If you - the required response
 - Through - any sacrament, institution, ordinance, or appointed means
 - Continue - any ongoing condition
 - Then - the present or final promised benefit
- The elements through and continue appear only when the source itself supplies them.
- Because Christ died for our sins and rose again;
- if the sinner believes on him;
- apart from works;
- the saving benefit is received as a present possession.

Same Word, Different Function

- Shared terms can occupy materially different places in the saving sequence.
 - Grace: unconditioned gift, sacramentally conferred grace, enabling grace, or grace within a restored ordinance system
 - Faith: sole condition, repentant allegiance, obedient faith, or the beginning of a continuing process
 - Baptism: testimony after salvation, saving sacrament, condition for remission, or Jesus-name saving response
 - Perseverance: expected fruit, inevitable proof, condition for remaining saved, or covenant endurance required for the final goal
- A shared dictionary is not necessarily a shared Gospel.

Contradictions Must Be Tested in the Same Sense

- The same-sense contradiction rule distinguishes the following claims:
 - “Good works should follow salvation” does not contradict salvation received by faith apart from works.
 - “Good works must be added to receive, retain, or finally attain salvation” makes a different functional claim.
- Clarifying questions prevent premature declarations of contradiction:
 - Cause or fruit?

- Initial response or continuing condition?
- Ordinary rule or stated exception?
- Water baptism or Spirit baptism?
- Binding confession or individual opinion?
- The comparison evaluates public doctrines and official claims rather than the hidden spiritual state of individual adherents.

Notes

The Teaching Family Tree Contains Several Saving Structures

THESIS

The doctrinal family tree displays several materially different accounts of what must be believed, how salvation is conveyed, what must continue, what is possessed now, and what final outcome is promised.

The Family Tree Classifies Teachings by Functional Resemblance

- Christian-identifying salvation traditions divide broadly into historic Nicene and non-Nicene families.
- Within the historic Nicene family, the categories include:
 - Sacramental and ecclesial traditions
 - Reformation sacramental traditions
 - Conversionist Protestant traditions
 - Faith-alone and grace traditions
 - Restorationist baptismal traditions
- Within the non-Nicene Christian-identifying family, Oneness Pentecostal, Latter-day Saint, and Jehovah's Witness positions remain distinct claims.
- The branches group teachings by functional resemblance.
- They do not claim exact historical descent or uniformity within broad labels.
- Evangelical, Baptist, fundamentalist, Reformed, and dispensational each contain significant internal differences.

Four Anchor Segments

- Roman Catholic: Christ's merit within a sacramental order
 - Christ's Passion merits justification.
 - Baptism confers justification as the sacrament of faith.
 - Sacramental and moral life continues, with penance addressing grave post-baptismal sin.
 - The issue is not whether Christ or grace is affirmed, but how the merited benefit reaches and remains with the sinner.
- Confessional Lutheran: faith alone with baptism as a saving means
 - Christ's completed reconciliation is proclaimed through the Gospel Word.
 - Faith receives forgiveness.
 - Baptism is nevertheless taught as necessary to salvation and as a means through which God offers grace, including to infants.
 - This structure is neither Roman sacramentalism nor Baptist symbolism.
- Reformed and Lordship: repentance, submission, fruit, and perseverance
 - Christ's work is confessed as sufficient and human merit is denied.
 - Repentance and faith are treated as one conversion response, with yielding to Christ's authority incorporated into the Gospel call.
 - Fruit and perseverance function as necessary evidence or validation of true saving faith.
 - The decisive issue is whether these remain results of salvation or enter the definition by which saving faith is recognized.
- Free Grace and Mid-Acts Pauline: shared faith-alone segment, distinct claims
 - Free Grace makes faith alone in Christ the sole receiving condition and places surrender, baptism, obedience, fruit, and perseverance in discipleship and reward rather than reception of eternal life.
 - Mid-Acts identifies Paul's Gospel for the Body of Christ with Christ's death for sins, burial, and resurrection, received by trusting that completed work.
 - Mid-Acts additionally distinguishes the present Gospel from Israel's kingdom proclamation and excludes water baptism and covenant law as saving conditions today.
 - The two rows must speak separately even when taught within one segment.

Four Rapid Contrasts

- Eastern Orthodox
 - Baptism is essential for salvation but begins rather than completes a sacramental life of healing, participation, transformation, and theosis.
 - Falling away remains possible.
- Broad evangelical/Baptist and historic fundamentalist
 - Broad evangelical statements may join repentance, turning from sin, faith, and whole-person commitment without specifying whether each phrase explains faith or adds a condition.
 - Historic fundamentalist statements may confess justification by faith alone while also directing sinners to repent of sins and believe.
 - The two representative rows remain distinct rather than functioning as synonyms.
- Restorationist baptismal and Oneness Pentecostal
 - Restorationist teaching commonly places belief, repentance, confession, and immersion for remission before entry into the saved state.
 - Oneness teaching adds baptism specifically in Jesus' name and Spirit baptism initially evidenced by tongues.
 - The two systems agree that baptism is not merely later testimony but disagree about its required form and associated Spirit evidence.
- Latter-day Saint
 - The Gospel in its fullness includes doctrines, laws, ordinances, covenants, obedience, and endurance necessary for exaltation.
 - Christ and grace are affirmed, but the functional offer is a whole authorized saving plan rather than a benefit received through faith apart from works.

Additional Traditions Extend the Comparison

- Wesleyan, Arminian, and Holiness teaching supplies an important overview contrast.
 - Continued obedient faith and holiness are materially connected to remaining saved or finally attaining salvation, and apostasy is possible.
- Jehovah's Witness teaching supplies a sourced non-Nicene overview row.
 - Approved doctrine, repentance, changed conduct, baptism, obedience, and endurance form a cumulative path toward life in paradise.

Notes

Opposing Answers Produce Genuine Contradictions

THESIS

When traditions make opposite claims about the required response, baptism's saving function, the location of saving authority, or the possession of salvation, their messages cannot all be equivalent in the same sense.

Contradiction One: What Must the Hearer Do?

- The proposed responses differ:
 - Believe in Christ.
 - Believe, with repentance as the other side of faith.
 - Believe, repent, confess, and be baptized.
 - Repent, receive authorized ordinances, obey, and endure.
- Each response may contain the word faith, but each does not require the same act or sequence.
- The question is not whether repentance, obedience, and perseverance matter in Christian life; it is whether they are conditions for receiving or retaining the saving benefit.

Contradiction Two: What Does Baptism Do?

- Compare four incompatible functions.
 - Baptism follows salvation as testimony.
 - Baptism is a means through which God gives saving grace.
 - Baptism is required for remission of sins.
 - Valid saving baptism must use Jesus' name and be joined to the required Spirit experience.
- These cannot all define baptism's saving role, recipient, timing, and form correctly in the same sense.
- First Corinthians 1:17 requires serious attention because Paul distinguishes his commission to preach the Gospel from baptizing.

Contradiction Three: Where Is Saving Authority Located?

- Compare the asserted authorities.
 - Christ's promise to the believer
 - The Gospel Word and sacraments
 - The historic church's sacramental order
 - A restored priesthood, ordinance, formula, or unique organization
- A hearer relying immediately upon Christ's promise may still be judged deficient by a system requiring access to an authorized institution or rite.
- Institutional authority therefore changes the functional saving offer even when Christ remains central in its vocabulary.

Contradiction Four: Is Salvation Possessed, Proved, Maintained, or Attained?

- Compare the claims.
 - The believer presently possesses eternal life.
 - The true believer will inevitably persevere and thereby be shown genuine.
 - A true believer may fall away and lose the saving state.
 - Final exaltation requires covenant keeping and endurance to the end.
- These are competing accounts of assurance and final salvation rather than interchangeable emphases.

Not Every Difference Changes the Gospel

- Not every difference changes the Gospel.
 - Different descriptions of Christ's work can be complementary.
 - Different expected fruits can follow the same saving reception.
 - Different terminology can express an equivalent proposition.
- A real contradiction occurs when one source requires for salvation what another excludes from the receiving condition, or when the same hearer is declared saved by one and unsaved by another.

Notes

One Hearer Cannot Satisfy Incompatible Offers

THESIS

If one hearer can satisfy one published saving invitation while failing another, the invitations do not define the same saving terms.

One Controlled Hearer Supplies the Test Case

- The person hears that Christ died for his sins, was buried, and rose again.
- He believes on the Lord Jesus Christ and relies upon that completed work.
- He has not yet been water baptized, received a sacrament, spoken in tongues, entered an authorized priesthood system, demonstrated lifelong fruit, or endured to a final judgment.

Four Saving Offers Evaluate the Same Hearer Differently

- Faith-alone offer: the hearer has received eternal life through faith in Christ.
- Sacramental offer: the hearer has not yet received the saving benefit ordinarily conferred through the appointed sacrament and church order.
- Baptismal-restoration offer: the hearer has not yet reached remission or the saved state because immersion remains required.
- Whole-plan offer: the hearer has only begun a path requiring authorized ordinances, covenants, obedience, and endurance toward the final outcome.

The Same Response Passes One Offer and Fails Others

- The same stated response passes one offer and fails others.
- The difference cannot be removed by saying that every offer mentions Jesus, grace, and faith.
- The offers disagree about the conditions under which the hearer possesses the saving benefit.

Some Differences Can Be Harmonized and Others Cannot

- Potentially harmonizable:
 - Different levels of explanatory detail
 - Complementary descriptions of Christ's achievement
 - Expected consequences following salvation
 - Prudential practices not made saving conditions
- Not harmonizable in the same sense:
 - Baptism both follows salvation and is required to receive remission
 - Eternal life is both presently possessed and not possessed until further saving gates are completed
 - Works are both excluded from reception and required as part of that reception
 - A hearer is both accepted through Christ's promise and rejected for lacking a required institution or authority
- the opening claim fails when applied to mutually exclusive saving requirements.

Notes

The Pauline Benchmark Identifies the Saving Event and Non-Working Response

THESIS

The Gospel must be judged by the revealed saving event and receiving condition, not by the number of Christian words a message shares with rival offers.

The Saving Event Is Christ's Completed Work

- First Corinthians 15:1-4 supplies the proclaimed content.
 - Christ died for our sins.
 - He was buried.
 - He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.
- The Gospel announces Christ's completed saving accomplishment rather than a ladder of achievements the sinner promises to complete.

Faith Is the Non-Working Response

- Acts 16:31 directs the sinner to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Romans 4:4-5 contrasts believing with working for a wage.
- Obedience and good works have a necessary place in Christian life without becoming an additional price, instrument, or gate for receiving the gift.

Mutually Incompatible Saving Messages Are Not One Gospel

- Mutually incompatible saving messages cannot all be the same Gospel: for the present dispensation, the Gospel is that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again, and its saving benefit is received by faith apart from works.
- Evaluate doctrines and offers, not the hidden eternal state of individual adherents.
- How accurately must the saving message be understood?
- What evidence may properly follow salvation without becoming another receiving condition?
- Can salvation received through faith apart from works later be lost, forfeited, or invalidated by failure?

Notes

What This Session Established

- Shared Christian vocabulary can conceal incompatible saving structures.
- Saving offers must be compared by content, response, means, continuing conditions, present possession, and final goal.
- The same-hearer test exposes offers that cannot be harmonized in the same sense.
- Christ's completed work is the saving basis, and faith is the non-working means of reception.

SESSION CONCLUSION

Mutually incompatible saving messages cannot all be the same Gospel: for the present dispensation, the Gospel is that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again, and its saving benefit is received by faith apart from works.

What This Session Did Not Establish

- Every doctrinal difference constitutes another Gospel.
- Every adherent perfectly understands or consistently follows an institution's teaching.
- The hidden eternal state of individual people can be judged from a denominational label.

