

# What is the Gospel?

*The Gospel is a message. It is news; in fact, this is what the term gospel actually means "good news."*

*Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 tells the people in Corinth that he wants to remind them of the Gospel and declares that the contents of this Gospel is that Christ died for our sins, that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day and all according to the scriptures. Paul also tells those in Galatia that anyone who preaches a different Gospel is accursed. We learn that the Gospel is an objective message rooted in the scriptures and rooted in history, but what makes this message "good?"*



# The Good becomes Bad News

God created the heavens, the earth, creatures, and humanity and deemed them all good. Humanity was living with God in harmony until man acquired the knowledge of evil by acting evil; by disobeying God's command. While man had all he needed in the Garden of Eden, man was duped into thinking that obedience to God was causing him to lack, yet, all he gained was a corrupted nature for himself and his descendants.

This disobedience is called sin, and when man was corrupted, this disease spread throughout creation. This disease had and has only one end - death. Humanity was separated from life as it was intended; walking with God, abundant living, and in harmony with other human beings. Without God, man continued to spiral into disobedience, and sin continuously introduced grievances such as guilt, shame, theft, and murder.

The entrance of sin had corrupted the once good creation; the once good creation was abused by its creatures who had committed treason against the gracious creator. And because God is pure, good, and just he will punish man's disobedience. If God did not punish the sin of man, then God would be negligent in bringing justice to his creation. (*1 John 1:5, Rev. 4:11, Rom. 2:5-8*).

That God is just is a comfort for all who have had injustice done to them, for all who have had someone sin against them, and for all who have felt the ripples of sin in their lives. Yet, the problem becomes apparent; All people, without exception, are corrupted by sin and will have to stand before the judgment seat of God. The scriptures state that All have fallen short of God's perfect standards; all of us are naturally born alienated from God, hostile to God, and thus subject to just punishment. From birth, all of us fail – day in and day out – to love God with our entire being and love

others just the same. We lie, cheat, steal, and rage. We plunder, slander, lust, and live as renegades. We crown ourselves gods and commit treason naturally. (*Gen. 1:26-28, Ps. 51:5, Rom. 3:23; Eph. 2:1-3*).

## The Bad News is met with Good News

Because God is good and just, we are subject to eternal death. We are in a land without water – dying of thirst – with no hope. Yet, as rain is good news amid a drought, God promised that he would bring an individual who would restore the kingdom of God and who would restore humanity. The people of God waited hundreds of years for this promise to be fulfilled, and prophets foretold the day when this day would come, and when all things became quiet and bleak, a child was born in the small town of Bethlehem.

## *The Father Sends the Son and the Holy Spirit*

The promised individual had come, and more than this, this individual was God's Son Himself, the Eternal Son of God, Jesus the Christ, who added upon himself a human nature to live a sinless life that we had failed to obtain. Where the first man, Adam, failed, Jesus Christ succeeded. Not only did he live a sinless life to fulfill the requirements of God on our behalf, but he died on the cross to bear the good and righteous punishment of God on our behalf. On the cross, Jesus took our rightful place and our rightful punishment so that we may have forgiveness of sins, and live as we were intended to – in right relationship with God, with life, and in holiness. The cross was not only a demonstration of the holiness of God, as he did not spare his

when he took on our sins, but also his love in sending his Son to provide a way to salvation.

The Son took on the punishment for our sins on the cross and died. At the cross, we have the good news of forgiveness, and at the cross, we have the punishment of death covered. Yet, three days later, God raised him from the dead so that we could be raised with Jesus and have life eternal. Not only did God send his Son to restore individuals to himself, but he brings about a restored creation where all of the ripples of sins will ultimately be removed. When the proper time comes, according to God's perfect plan, all people live with and love God as they were intended in right relationship with one another. God is making all things new by the Holy Spirit, who applies the glorious work of Jesus to those who

belong to God leading them to love God and live for him. (*John 1:1, 1 Tim. 2:5, Heb. 7:26, Rom. 3:21-26, 2 Cor. 5:21, 1 Cor. 15:20-22*).

The Gospel is good news because it brings us relief from the overbearing weight of the bad news. It brings us relief from the burden of our sin, guilt, and shame. It brings us relief from a life of death and emptiness, which is meant to be lived in a relationship with God. The Gospel brings us back to our maker, back to his excellent and glorious design, and the Gospel will bring us back to creation as it was intended. All sins are dealt with in the Gospel. All of the weight of our wretched past is lifted off of us and onto the shoulders of Jesus Christ. And it is only through Jesus that such a relief can be found, and only through Jesus can we be restored to God.



# *Everyone will die - Now is the Time*

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Everyone will die. Everyone will enter the courtroom and sit before the judgment seat of God. When the charges are being read off – there is no good deed that will remove the proper execution of judgment for your crimes. Yet, Jesus has offered to step in and take that judgment, and so here we must look at ourselves and recognize every failure to live up to the perfect standard of Christ in loving God and loving others. We must recognize where we have made ourselves our own gods in our lives and have abandoned our creator. We must recognize the price paid for these sins.

Now is the time to turn from ourselves (repentance), turn from our sins, and put all of our trust (faith) in the perfect work of Jesus Christ. The Gospel doesn't promise us a more manageable life here on earth, it doesn't promise us all that we desire, self-help or self-fulfillment, but it does give us what we need. And it does help us realize that true fulfillment is found in our original designs as obedient creatures to the living and loving God. And it looks beyond this temporal dying old world to the new world.

What do we do then? Consider Romans 10:9-13. “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God

raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” Often, we think the former confession is enough, however, “believe in your heart” shows us this is much deeper than mere lip service. The Hebraic understanding of the heart was the whole man. This means this is a confession of deep conviction in the reality of Christ as Lord, his death, burial, and resurrection.

“For with the heart one believes and is justified” (v. 10), meaning they are declared righteous, their sin is dealt with, and “with the mouth one confesses and is saved” (v. 10).

Here we find ourselves recognizing our sins, our hopelessness, and the necessity of God's provision. Here we stand confessing the reality of the Gospel, the provision of a Savior. “For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Romans 10:13).

God is faithful to save, and he is faithful to account for the sufficient and perfect work of Jesus Christ on the cross on your behalf. In this we are called to turn from ourselves, our works, our self-fabricated roads to salvation, and put our trust fully and wholly in the Lord and his work. Believe (trust) in the perfect work of Christ and the promises of God.

# Therefore...

*"Therefore" (Romans 12:1-2), that is, because of these realities, because of the Gospel, which saves us from our sinfulness and self-deceptive paths of salvation (Romans 1-3), and because of the blessings it brings of justification through faith (Romans 4-5), the freedom from the bondage or slavery to sin (Romans 6), the freedom in the Spirit and freedom from condemnation (Romans 8), and freedom in assurance in God's faithfulness and power to save (Romans 8-11), we are called to respond. We are moved into faith, into life, a life devoted to God. "Therefore" because of the Gospel we present ourselves to God in gratitude. Verse 2 points out that we renew our minds with the scriptures and learn to discern the will of God. Further, we love the church (other believers) and serve our neighbors with our unique gifts and talents as we grow in the knowledge of God. We move to share the good news that frees from righteous condemnation. Therefore, because of the Gospel of God, we live unto God.*