

What is the Gospel?

What the gospel is not:

Simply a means to achieve one's own personal desires

A means of having a better life before you die - "Your Best Life Now"

A moral standard that separates you from others

One of many ways to God

A way of living your own way without consequence

What is the Gospel?

The Gospel is what is otherwise known as the 'Good News'. In the *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, they describe the Gospel as such,

"...the joyous good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. The Greek word translated as gospel means 'a reward for bringing good news'. In Isaiah 40:9, the prophet proclaimed the 'good tidings' that God would rescue His people from captivity...The gospel is not a new plan of salvation; it is the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation that began with Israel, was completed in Jesus Christ, and is made known by the Church" (Youngblood, 1995).

As we grow in our understanding of Scripture, we come to realize that the ENTIRE BIBLE is the unfolding of the Gospel! It is like the human body. The human body is one thing, but you can go deeper by describing the limbs, then you can go deeper in describing the cardiovascular system and the immune system, then you can even go deeper in describing cell functions and DNA. The goal of Salvation is not for us just to live a better life, but to bring us back to God (1 Peter 3:18) and the result should lead to a changed life.

Where did it all go wrong?

Eden is where everything was right, but also is where everything went terribly wrong. God created Mankind (Male and Female) in his image and likeness (Genesis 1:26). God created us in his image so that we could relate to him in a way that the animals could not. God blessed them with a beautiful home called EDEN and with the job of maintaining the garden, multiplying, and ruling over His creation (Genesis 1:26-28). The man and woman would continue to live in God's blessing if they were willing to stay submitted to his rule, which was shown by their obedience in not eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:17).

What Happened?

Throughout history, from sickness, to disease, injustice, to trauma, to untold wickedness, school shootings, dictators, abuses, racism, mankind has experienced all this because of this one bad decision. Adam and Eve (The names of the male and female in the garden) disobeyed God and ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The whole story of how it happened is outlined in Genesis 3 which is commonly known as THE FALL. Adam and Eve SINNED against God and the sentence for their SIN was death (Genesis 2:17, Romans 6:23). SIN is an archery term which means missing the mark. Because Adam missed the mark, all of Mankind is plagued with this bent against God and which separates him from God and makes him worthy of God's eternal judgment (Isaiah 59:1-2; Romans 1:32; Romans 5:12-21).

How can this be fixed?

Adam and Eve's relationship with God was never the same, they were removed from the garden and had to live a life that would be a mixture of blessing and suffering, having to work harder to grow crops, experience pain in giving birth, and dealing with the death of one of their sons at the hands of one of their other sons. But God had a plan from the very beginning to restore Man's relationship back to God (Rev 13:8, 1 Peter 3:18). This plan would NOT be Adam working harder to fix the relationship, or Eve trying to be the best wife she could be. No matter how good they could be, or we can be, our effort would never be good enough to repair the relationship (Romans 3:23, Isaiah 64:6), for God's standard is PERFECTION (Galatians 5:1-3, James 2:10). Many like to have the Ten Commandments that were given (Exodus 20:1-17, 34:28) to Israel in the kitchen or some public area to show people how they should live, but what we really feel is the shame of not living up to that standard. Ultimately, the Ten Commandments are to reveal to Mankind their sinfulness and need for a SAVIOR. (Romans 3:20, Galatians 3:24-25).

Who can Save Us?

This shame is first seen after they ate the forbidden fruit. The man and the woman realize they were naked and try to cover their nakedness with fig leaves. Symbolically, men have been trying to cover their nakedness, by their own efforts. In Genesis 3:15 God makes a promise to Adam and Eve that through one of their descendants, the 'seed of the woman' (a prophecy of the Virgin Birth), would, through his own suffering and eventual death (Satan bruise his heel), deliver mankind and all creation from the penalty and curse of sin (Rev 22:3). God would clothe Adam and Eve with animal skins as a picture of how GOD HIMSELF would cover their sin through the death of an innocent substitute.

What is the Message of the Gospel?

As we covered earlier, the gospel is the good news of salvation. That men will not be doomed to suffer the wrath of God for their sins. Genesis 3:15 is known as the Protoevangelium,

'...it is the first reference in Scripture to the idea of a Messiah (Anointed One) and is seen as the first presentation of the gospel. The word is derived from the Greek prefix proto meaning first and euangelion meaning gospel or good news' (Theopedia).

In it we see the prophecy (foretelling) of a child of Adam that would be the seed of a woman (the Virgin Birth since only men carry seed), would defeat the Serpent (ref 1 John 3:8), but his defeat would come through his own suffering and death (the Serpent would strike HIS heel).

The Gospel is presented again as 'the blessing to all nations' through Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3, 22:17-18, Acts 3:25-26), which Paul says was a proclamation of the gospel (Galatians 3:8). This person who would save us from our sins is the one known as Jesus Christ, the Word of God (John 1:1), the Son of God (John 5:18), who was God Incarnate (John 1:14, Philippians 2:1-11, Colossians 1:15-19).

The Apostle Paul expresses the gospel highlighting the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus which was foretold by the prophets in the scriptures (1 Peter 1:9-12, 2 Peter 1:19-21):

“Moreover brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures...” (1 Corinthians 15:1-4 KJV)

The goal of Salvation is not for us just to live a better life, but to bring us into fellowship with God (1 Peter 3:18, John 17:3).

How can we receive this Salvation?

Man will never be good enough to repair the relationship. Salvation from the very beginning was not based on Man's effort but men by FAITH believing that GOD HIMSELF would provide a means to which would be able to get in right relationship with HIM (Genesis 3:15, 1 John 3:8, Genesis 15:6, Romans 4, Galatians 3). The Apostle Paul points out that Abraham, the Father of Faith, was declared righteous, not by works, but by believing God (Genesis 15:6, Romans 4:3, Galatians 3:6), and that the prophet Habakkuk made it clear that the just (righteous) will live by FAITH (Habakkuk 2:4). Paul in his letter to the Ephesians calls Salvation a GIFT (Ephesians 2:8). Can a true gift be earned? If I earn a gift, what I receive is not truly a gift, but is a wage (Romans 4:4-5).

Can I lose my Salvation?

No, you cannot. We receive Salvation by Grace, God's Riches and Christ's Expense!!! (That acronym is not my own ☺). Grace is God's UNMERITED FAVOR, which means we cannot merit the favor of Salvation. But we receive this gift by FAITH. The question is, how do I know I have true Faith? Even though we are not Saved by works, our works show if we truly have believed (James 2:14-26). The Scripture also teaches that the Holy Spirit is given to those who are truly saved (Romans 8:9). A person who has the Holy Spirit in them will bear the Spirit's fruit: Belief in the Divinity of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:3), the receiving of the things of the Spirit...for example, the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 2:1-16), and growth in Godly Character (Galatians 5:16-26).

What are some terms for the Gospel?

Gospel of the Kingdom - Matt 4:23

Gospel of the Grace of God - Acts 20:2

The Gospel of God - Romans 1:1, 15:16; 2 Corinthians 11:7, 1 Thessalonians 2:2

The Gospel of His Son - Romans 1:9

My Gospel - Romans 2:16, 2 Timothy 2:8

The Gospel of Christ - Romans 15:19, Galatians 1:7, Philippians 1:27

Christ's Gospel - 2 Corinthians 2:12

The Word of Truth, the Gospel of your Salvation - Ephesians 1:13, Colossians 1:5

Is the Gospel Fair?

Some would question the fairness of the gospel. Shouldn't people pay for their own sin? The question needs to be seen considering four things:

Our Duty to God to Love God with our entire being & Love our neighbor as if they were us-
(Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Lev 19:18, Exodus 20:1-17)

The Depth of Sin - our sin goes down to the very core of our being - (Genesis 6:5-6, Jeremiah 17:9, Matt 15:19-20)

Our Distance from God's Standard - absolute perfection - (Romans 3:19,23; James 2:10)

Our Debt to Him - The payment for sin is eternal death - (Psalm 49:7-8, Matt 18:21-35, Romans 6:23, James 1:15)

The very first sin, though 'just' eating a forbidden fruit, produced the world full of sin (Genesis 3, Romans 5:12-20). We usually think that what we do is not that bad...but do we also think of the impact of our actions? We are held

accountable for our actions and the repercussions of those actions. Think of a ship that is off course by just a few degrees. Initially it doesn't seem like a big deal, but the further and further the ship goes, the more the passengers realize how off course they are (Romans 3:23). Sin at its core is a rebellion against God's authority (1 Samuel 15:23).

God does not just judge our actions but judges our thoughts and motives and desires, our HEARTS (Genesis 6:1-8). The Heart is full of sin (Jeremiah 17:9, Matt 15:19) and our tongues are full of iniquity (James 3:1-12, Matt 12:36). How many of us as believers realize that there is always something to work on, that we are never over in fighting the sin within us? This is evidence that there is no bottom to the sin within us. (see also Romans 7:7-25)

The sin we commit is against the One who is most worthy of our obedience. We understand the magnitude of the crime increases with the position of the victim. Johnathan Edwards (Revivalist Preacher 1700's) in his sermon *The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners* makes this point:

Our obligation to love, honor, and obey any being, is in proportion to his loveliness (and) honorableness... To have infinite excellency and beauty, is the same thing as to have infinite loveliness. He is a being of infinite greatness, majesty, and glory; and therefore he is infinitely honorable. He is infinitely exalted above the greatest potentates of the earth, and highest angels in heaven; and therefore he is infinitely more honorable than they. His authority over us is infinite; and the ground of his right to our obedience is infinitely strong; for he is infinitely worthy to be obeyed himself, and we have an absolute, universal, and infinite dependence upon him. So that sin against God, being a violation of infinite obligations, must be a crime infinitely heinous, and so deserving of infinite punishment.- Nothing is more agreeable to the common sense of mankind, than that sins committed against any one, must be proportionally heinous to the dignity of the being offended and abused; as it is also agreeable to the word of God, I Samuel 2:25. "If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him;" (i.e. shall judge him, and inflict a finite punishment, such as finite judges can inflict;) "but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?" This was the aggravation of sin that made Joseph afraid of it. Genesis 39:9. "How shall I commit this great wickedness, and sin against God?" This was the aggravation of David's sin, in comparison of which he esteemed all others as nothing, because they were infinitely exceeded by it. Psalm 51:4. "Against thee, thee only have I sinned."-The eternity of the punishment of ungodly men renders it infinite: and it renders it no more than infinite; and therefore renders no more than proportional to the heinousness of what they are guilty of.

References

Theopedia. (n.d.). *Protoevangelium*. Retrieved from Theopedia: www.theopedia.com/protoevangelium

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