

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

“The Gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared to believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared to hope.”

—Timothy Keller

“We have to come to grips with what the gospel is before we can apply it to every area.. “

—Timothy Keller, *Shaped By The Gospel*

(Therefore my people are gone into captivity because they have no knowledge..” —Isaiah 5:13)

GOSPEL comes from the Greek word, **EUANGELION**, which means **“GOOD NEWS”** ... It was typically used when announcing weddings, births, installments of a king, or military victories... And even more than “Good News,” it actually means “BREAKING NEWS” (news to be announced and proclaimed)

- 1).** The Gospel is not primarily a way of life. **It is something that has been done for us and something that we MUST respond to.**
- 2).** The Gospel is good news announcing that we have been rescued or saved ... saved from God’s wrath due to our sin (I Thessalonians 1:10)
- 3).** The Gospel is news about what has been done by Jesus Christ to put us in a right relationship with God. (You are either in Christ or you are not; you are either pardoned and accepted or you are not; you either have eternal life or you don’t.)
(Keller, *Shaped By The Gospel*, pgs. 27-29)

A. WHAT GOD HAS DONE: **The Gospel** (John 3:16, I John 4:10)

B. OUR RESPONSE: **REPENTANCE** and **FAITH** (Acts 20:21)

- **Repentance** - to mourn one’s sin, turn from it, and change directions, and trade one’s self-focused kingdoms agenda for the kingdom agenda of Jesus Christ. (Trevin Wax, author of *Rethink Your Self*)
- **Faith** - to believe means to assent to the truth of the gospel message, and then personally entrust oneself to the faithfulness of God as demonstrated in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus.

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Martin Luther (1483-1546):

“At its briefest, the gospel is a discourse about Christ, that he is the Son of God, and became man for us, that he died and was raised, and that he has been established as Lord over all things. The gospel is a story about Christ, God’s and David’s son, who died and was raised, and is established as Lord. This is the gospel in a nutshell.”

William Tyndale (1494-1536):

“*Euangelion* (that we call the gospel) is a Greek word and signifies good, merry, glad and joyful tidings, that makes a man’s heart glad and makes him sing, dance, and leap for joy... [This gospel is] all about Christ... how that he has fought with sin, with death, and the devil, and overcome them: whereby all men that were in bondage to sin, wounded with death, overcome of the devil are without their own merits or deservings, loosed, justified, restored to life and saved, brought to liberty and reconciled unto the favor of God and set at one with him again: which tidings as many as believe laud, praise, and thank God, are glad, sing, and dance for joy.”

Richard Sibbes (1577-1635):

“What is the gospel itself but a merciful moderation, in which Christ’s obedience is esteemed ours, and our sins laid upon him, wherein God, from being a judge, becomes our Father, pardoning our sins and accepting our obedience, though feeble and blemished? We are now brought to heaven under the covenant of grace by way of love and mercy.”

J.I. Packer (1926-2020):

I formulate the Gospel this way: It is information issuing in invitation. It is proclamation issuing in persuasion. It is an admonitory message embracing **FIVE** themes:

1. First, **GOD**: the God whom Paul proclaimed to the Athenians in Acts 17, the God of Christian theism
2. Second, **HUMANKIND**: made in God’s image but now totally unable to respond to God or do anything right by reason of sin in their moral and spiritual system.
3. Third, **THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST**: God incarnate, who by dying wrought atonement and who now lives to impart the blessing that flows from his work of atonement.

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4. Fourth, **REPENTANCE**, that is, turning from sin to God, from self-will to Jesus Christ.
5. Fifthly, **NEW COMMUNITY**: a new family, a pattern of human togetherness which results from the unity of the Lord's people in the Lord, henceforth to function under the one Father as a family and a fellowship.

Mark Dever (b.1960):

Here is what I understand the good news to be: the good news is that the one and only God, who is holy, and made us in his image to know him. But we sinned and cut ourselves off from him. In his great love, God became a man in Jesus, lived a perfect life, and died on the cross, thus fulfilling the law himself and taking on himself the punishment for the sins of all those who would ever turn and trust in him. He rose again from the dead, showing that God accepted Christ's sacrifice and that God's wrath against us had been exhausted. He now calls us to repent of our sins and to trust in Christ alone for our forgiveness. If we repent of our sins and trust in Christ, we are born again into a new life, an eternal life with God. Now that is good news.

Bible declarations of the Gospel:

- **I Corinthians 15:1-8**
- **Romans 1:1-4**
- **Acts 2; Acts 3:112-16; Acts 13:16-41; Acts 17: 22-31**

In John Stott's, *The Gospel*, he talks about 3 different types of Christians: the "already" Christians, the "not yet" Christians, and the "already-not-yet" Christians:

1). The "Already" Christian:

"First, there are the "already" Christians who emphasize what God has already given us in Christ. But they give the impression that, in consequence, there are now NO mysteries left, NO sins that cannot be overcome, NO diseases that cannot be healed, and NO evils that cannot be eradicated. In short, they seem to believe that perfection is attainable now. (I John 1:8)

Their motives are blameless. They want to glorify Christ - so they refuse to set limits to what he is able to do. BUT their optimism can easily

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degenerate into PRESUMPTION and end up in DISILLUSION. They forget the “Not Yet” of the New Testament, and that perfection awaits the second coming of Christ.

2). The “Not Yet” Christian:

“Second, there are the “Not Yet” Christians who emphasize the incompleteness for the time being of the work of Christ and look forward to the time when he will complete what he has begun. But they seem to be preoccupied with our human ignorance and failure, and the pervasive reign of disease and death, and the impossibility of securing either a pure church or a perfect society.

Their motive is excellent too. If the "Already" Christian wants to glorify Christ, the "Not Yet" Christian wants to humble sinners. They are determined to be true to the Bible in their emphasis on our human depravity. BUT their pessimism can easily degenerate into COMPLACENCY; it can also lead to acceptance of the STATUS QUO and to APATHY in the face of evil. They forget the “Already” of what Christ has done by his death, resurrection, and gift of the Spirit—and of what he can do in our lives, and in church and society, as a result.

3). The “Already-Not-Yet” Christian:

Third, there are the “Already-Not-Yet” Christians. They want to give EQUAL WEIGHT to the two comings of Jesus. On the one hand, they have a great confidence in the “already,” in what God has said and done through Christ. On the other hand, they exhibit a genuine humility before the “not yet”, humility to confess that the world will remain fallen and half-saved until Christ perfects at his second coming what he began at his first.

It is this combination of the “already” and the “not yet” which characterizes AUTHENTIC BIBLICAL EVANGELICALISM, and which exemplifies the balance that is so urgently needed today.

(John Stott, *The Gospel*, p. 85-86)

- IN WHICH OF THESE THREE CATEGORIES WOULD YOU TEND TO PLACE YOURSELF? HOW HAS SUCH AFFECTED YOU?
- WHAT ARE SOME OTHER POSSIBLE PITFALLS/NEGATIVE RESULTS OF HOLDING ONE OF THE FIRST TWO CATEGORIES?
- WHAT PRIOR EXPERIENCES/OBSERVATIONS COME TO MIND?
- HOW DOES ONE (OR A CHURCH) MAINTAIN THE CORRECT BALANCE?

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Benefits of the Gospel:

1). FORGIVENESS:

Indicates a release from guilt and an end to relational estrangement.

2). RECONCILIATION:

Marks the end of alienation and hostilities between humanity and God and restores the rupture between the God-humanity relationship.

3). ADOPTION:

Just as God's plan is to bring the nations into the Abrahamic family and to make them co-heirs with Israel, so also in the New Covenant, God brings Gentiles into the family of Abraham by making them co-heirs with the Messiah.

4). REDEMPTION:

Deliverance by purchase with a cost (the blood of Christ - I Peter 1:18-19)

5). RESCUE:

Salvation can be equated with physical healing, economic liberation, deliverance from demonic oppression, and release from shame.

6). ETERNAL LIFE:

The life that God offers is the opposite of death. It is free from the decay of evil and undoes the corruption of sin.

7). PEACE (Shalom):

In closing, here is a great quote by theologian, D. A. Carson:
“Because the gospel is good news... It is to be announced; that is what one does with news. The essential heraldic element in preaching is bound up with the fact that the core message is NOT a code of ethics to be debated ... It is news, good news, and therefore must be publicly announced.” (D. A. Carson, *What Is The Gospel?*)

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