

What is the Gospel?

Pastor Matt Postiff

Fellowship
BIBLE CHURCH

A Seemingly Simple Question

- Yet it may trip you up.
- Are you able to offer anyone at any time a clear explanation of the gospel of Jesus Christ?
- Many people are not able.
- What does such an explanation include?

A Vital Question

- This is, from the human perspective, a matter of life and death...
 - For you
 - For people you contact throughout your life
- Many answer it incorrectly or incompletely.

A Central Question

- We should agree that the gospel is at the center of the message of the Bible. It is a ‘fundamental.’
 - By so saying, I do not mean to reduce other doctrines to irrelevancy.
- If you don’t grasp the gospel, there is no hope that you will truly understand the big picture of Scripture or many parts of Scripture.

A Dividing Question

- The demons believe...but don't *really* believe (James 2:19).
- Many *think* they believe, but don't *really* believe (Matt. 7:21).
- The true way of belief is narrow. The wide road leads to destruction (Matt. 7:13-14).

A Debated Question

- Is repentance part of the gospel?
 - Yes, but a significant faction says No.
- What does repentance mean?
 - Does it have to do with sin (yes), or something else?
- Is the Lordship of Christ an issue in the gospel?
 - Again, yes, but a vocal faction denies this.

Summary Statement

- The **gospel** is the good news that Jesus Christ died for sinners and rose again from the dead, so that if you believe in Him, you will be forgiven of your sin, you will be accounted righteous in Christ, you will enjoy a good relationship with God, and you will participate in the kingdom of God forever.

Conversely

- From another viewpoint, the gospel also contains bad news, in that it tells us that we all start out in a state of enmity against God under the wrath of God, so that if we do not believe that Jesus is Lord and Savior, we will die in our sins and will be judged eternally for our sins.

Jesus Died for Sinners

- 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 summarizes the Christian gospel. The central point is that Christ came to earth, lived a perfect life, and died as a substitute sacrifice for sinners.
- I can say with full assurance: Jesus died for my sins, in my place, so that I would not have to.

Jesus Rose Again

- In order to show that His work was complete, and to return to His rightful place as king, Jesus had to rise again from the dead.
- And He did. “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9).

Jesus as Lord and Savior

- As **Lord**, Jesus has the right to tell you
 - what sin is;
 - that you have sinned;
 - and that you need to repent of it sin;
- As **Savior**, Jesus took your place by dying for you and provides free salvation to all who believe.

What Does it Mean to Believe?

- The Bible speaks of the saving response to the gospel as **faith**, which can be expressed from a positive and negative direction.
- From the negative direction, **faith** includes repentance from sin. This is a recognition of sin, a desire to turn from sin, and a seeking of pardon from God. It is a true change of mind.

Repentance

- The basic word means a change of mind.
- In Christian theology, it means to change one's mind regarding sin generally, and ultimately how to properly deal with sin. It is not merely a change of mind about who Jesus is, though that can be included.

What Does it Mean to Believe?

- From the positive direction, **faith** means trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ. But it is not only mental assent to the facts that Jesus died and rose again. It is a wholehearted embrace of Jesus as Lord and Jesus as Savior.
- It is a change of loyalty and allegiance.

Faith

- Christian faith includes mental assent to facts, but so much more.
- Response of the heart and will as well.
- True faith is the response of the whole man to the whole Christ.

When You Believe...

- You are saved from the penalty of sin. You are given a new life. This is what Christians call being born again.
- You are delivered from the power of sin in your life. You can now have victory over it.
- You will be rescued from the presence of sin.

What is Forgiveness?

- The fact that we sin results in objective guilt. Guilt may or may not be felt, but it *is a thing*.
- Since we are guilty, we are liable for punishment.
- When God forgives, He ceases to hold us liable for sin. In effect, it becomes as though we are innocent. To do this, God holds Another liable.

What is Accounted Righteousness?

- In theology, “accounted” is more frequently called “imputed” but we need not use that complex term to get the idea across.
- The sin problem is wiped away in forgiveness, but now we need something positive...a pure legal standing before God.

What is Accounted Righteousness?

- God takes the righteousness of Christ and applies it to our “record.” Then He views us in that way, no longer with our own “righteousness.”
- Where does the righteousness come from? It is debated:
 - The perfect life and death of Christ (Yes).
 - The death of Christ.
 - The divine attribute of Christ’s righteousness.

What is a Personal Relationship?

- From birth to just before salvation, we were enemies of God (Romans 5:10). Sin separated us from God (Isaiah 59:2).
- At salvation, we are reconciled to God and become friends of God. Moreover, we are adopted as children of God.

What is the Kingdom of God?

- Jesus said that unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.
- This kingdom is the reign of Jesus Christ, first on this earth for the millennial age, and then in heaven for eternity.
- You will want to see this kingdom. The alternative is very unpleasant.

Framework for Memory

- You should know the things we have talked about from memory, and be able to say them in your own words.
- A framework can be helpful.
- Here is one: need, provision, response.
- Keep Bible verses in mind with each point.

Need – Sin Leads to Death

- Romans 3:10 As it is written: “There is none righteous, no, not one.”
- Romans 3:23 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
- Romans 6:23a For the wages of sin is death...
- Revelation 20:15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Need – Sin Leads to Death

- John 8:24 “If you do not believe that I [Jesus] am *He* [Messiah, Son of God], you will die in your sins.”

Provision – Christ Died for Sinners

- 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that 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.

Provision – Christ Died for Sinners

- Romans 6:23b ...but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Provision – Christ Died for Sinners

- 1 Peter 3:18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.

Response – Turn and Believe

- Acts 16:31 “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.”
- John 6:37 “The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.”
- Romans 10:13 “Whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.”

Response – Turn and Believe

- Mark 1:15 “Repent, and believe in the gospel.”
- Acts 17:30 “But now [God] commands all men everywhere to repent.”
- Acts 26:20 “They should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.”

Back to the Need—Sin: The Fact

- Romans 3:9-19 is the capstone of Paul's case against humanity.
- The evidence of sin is all around us. This is the “problem of evil” that is used by many against God, when in fact it is against themselves!
- The evidence of death is in every cemetery. Romans 5:12.

Wrong Ways to Deal with Sin

- Ignore it. Shutting your eyes doesn't make it go away!
- Keeping the Law of God (“works of the law”).
 - Romans 3:20
- Good works.
- None of these erase the sin problem.

Sin: The Conscience

- Jesus said that hating your neighbor is akin to murder and makes you guilty of such. Have you hated or been angry with another person?
- Jesus said that looking with lust makes you guilty of adultery. Are you guilty?
- Jesus said we must not swear or make oaths. Have you?

Sin: The Conscience

- Jesus said that we are to love our enemies. Have you done so?
- Jesus said that we cannot serve two masters—money and God. Has money ever been your master?
- Jesus said that we must not worry about tomorrow. Have you ever done that?

Sin: The Conscience

- God said that we must never take his name in vain. Have you?
- God said that we must not steal or covet. Have you?
- God said that we must always honor our parents. Have you?

Still About the Need - Guilt

- God is a perfect and just judge. He has to pronounce you guilty if you have sinned.
- You know you have sinned (see prior questions).
- So, are you guilty? Absolutely yes.

Still About the Need - Death

- The Bible tells us that the wages of sin is death. This death is first spiritual, then physical, then eternal.
 - **Spiritual**: separation from God
 - **Physical**: separation of spirit from body
 - **Eternal**: forever existing in spiritual death

The Provision Again

- Matthew 20:28 “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”
- John 10:10 “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.”

The Provision Again

- John 3:17 “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him.”
- 1 John 1:1-2 And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

The Provision Again

- Galatians 1:3-4 Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father...

More Than That...

- The provision is not just an act or a thing done by someone else. The provision IS the Lord Jesus Christ.
- John 14:6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

The Provision is Christ

- Matthew 16:13-16 He asked His disciples, saying, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” ... “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

The Saving Response

- To be saved, you can't say "Meh" when you hear this message.
- **Believing** what is written above, **wanting** and deciding **to turn away** from sin, and **trusting** in Christ—that is the saving response to the gospel.

By the Way

- God's provision doesn't stop at the moment one is saved. After that, we **need** to live holy lives.
- God **provides** His Holy Spirit, the Bible, the church, and trials to sanctify us.
- We need to **respond** well to those provisions.