

What is the Gospel

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What is the gospel? Knowing the answer to this question is vital if one is to receive salvation and have a life-transforming relationship with Jesus Christ, for belief in the wrong gospel will not save, but condemn (Galatians 1:6-9). 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 provides a good summary of what the gospel is: "Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."

The gospel is the good news of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ that provides full and free deliverance from the power and penalty of sin according to the grace of God alone through faith in Jesus Christ alone. Why is this such wonderful news?

You and everyone else have been born with a fatal condition. This condition is called sin. Why is this condition so serious? Because God is sinless and hates sin, for sin is rebellion against His perfect and righteous standard. And your sinful actions makes you an enemy of God (Romans 3:23; James 4:4). God made man imperishable, in His own image (Genesis 1:27). He made man so that he may have continual fellowship with Him. But when sin came, the intimate fellowship between man and God changed.

According to Genesis 3, humanity became separated from God when Adam and Eve disobeyed Him and ate the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the tree from which God had forbidden them to eat. Humanity became separated from God because all people are descended from Adam. As a result, the sinful nature Adam acquired through his disobedience was passed down to all people, including you. Because of this inherited sin nature everyone sins. It comes naturally. It is part of the fabric of being human. Adam's sin placed you apart from God and under His condemnation (Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:22). The effect of sin on you is that it extends to every part of your personality -- your thinking, your emotions, and your will. This does not mean that you are as evil as you can be, but it does mean that sin has extended to your entire being. The lost person is dead in his sins. All are sinners and cannot do anything to save themselves. Without the sovereign, regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, such a person is blind and deaf to the message of the gospel (Romans 8:7-8; 1 Corinthians 2:14), and is totally unable and unwilling to accept salvation through Jesus Christ alone.

Many continually try to end the separation between themselves and God by their own efforts. They live "a good life", or are religious, or adhere to a particular ethical philosophy. But these attempts at reaching God are futile, and fall infinitely short. They are all tainted with sin. Sin is a cancer that infects all. And you either get the cancer, or the cancer will get you!

But there is hope! There is an antidote to sin and its deadly effects. As John 3:16 states, God loved fallen humanity so much that He sent His only Son to redeem sinners like you. Also, God demonstrated His own love toward sinners in that while they were yet in the depths of sin and rebellion against Him, Christ died for them (Romans 5:8). Jesus bridged the gap by His atoning death on the cross and ended the separation. Jesus was special because He was born of a virgin by the Holy Spirit. He was not born of Adam's seed as all other human beings are, and so therefore did not inherit a sinful nature. He did not have the tendency to sin as we all do. The Bible teaches that the payment for sin is death (Romans 6:23). It also teaches that without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness of sin (Hebrews 9:22).

In the Old Testament, God forbade sacrifice of spotted, deformed, and sickly animals (Deuteronomy 15:21; Malachi 1:7-14). He did this because a spotted, sickly, or deformed animal could not be a perfect sacrifice to pay for sin. Only a clean, healthy lamb without spot or blemish could be sacrificed. The lambs offered as the payment for sin in the Old Testament pointed forward to the time when Jesus Christ, the perfect, unblemished Lamb of God, would take the place of sinners and take upon Himself the just punishment for all their sins. As in New Testament times, people living in the Old Testament period were saved by faith (Habakkuk 2:4). They looked forward to a perfect Savior who would cleanse from sin and establish righteousness. Not merely outwardly, but most importantly, inwardly. God is more interested in what is inside us rather than in externals. He is more concerned with our motives than outward appearances (1 Samuel 16:7). God is more interested in a humble and repentant heart than in sacrifices or offerings (Psalms 51:16-17).

The good news that Jesus Christ commissioned His apostles to preach was His death on the cross for sinners and His resurrection from the dead (an historical event that provided immutable proof of His deity and the truth of His teachings, especially those regarding Himself being the only way to salvation). This *good news*, or *gospel*, is called "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16). The apostles taught that salvation is by the grace of God alone through faith in Jesus Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 3:4-7; Romans 4:3-5, 10:5-13). They were uncompromising in this message, and condemned all attempts by others to add anything to it. The Apostle Paul taught that belief in any other gospel that was a "different gospel" brought the condemnation of God rather than salvation (Galatians 1:6-9).

A "different gospel" is a gospel that on the surface may appear to be genuine and lead to salvation, but in the end it leads to eternal condemnation. This "different gospel" is a counterfeit gospel. It is a perversion of the gospel of the

grace of God. It denies the complete ability of God's grace alone to save, to preserve, and to perfect the believer, and adds human works or merit. It is a "gospel" that seems right, feels right, and appears to offer the way to eternal life, but in the end it leads to death (Proverbs 14:12, 16:25).

There are some religious groups that teach that Jesus' death on the cross was not enough to pay for all of our sins. They say that one has to perform certain good works, certain rituals like water baptism, belong to a particular church, observe certain religious days, or make other human additions in order to be saved. Or they teach that Jesus' sacrifice covers only previous sins, but good works must be performed to cover present and future sins so that salvation may be received. This, however, is contrary to what the Bible teaches. Jesus, before He died said, "It is finished" (John 19:30). The Greek text uses the word *tetelestai*, which means *paid in full*. This means that our sins were paid for completely, rather than just a down payment being made, making it necessary for us to make regular payments to prevent the gift of salvation from being "repossessed" by God.

Jesus did all the works necessary to secure salvation for sinners without their help. He didn't pay for some sins and then require sinners to pay the remaining balance with certain rituals or with good works. He paid for all sins -- past, present, and future.

Atonement for sin was done once and for all on the cross. It was not a down payment. The full price was paid at that time. God is not a loan company and His grace is not a loan. His grace is a gift. Jesus did not do an incomplete work that requires sinners to finish it. He is a perfect Savior who actually saved sinners, not a potential Savior who actually saved no one (Hebrews 9:12), but needed human help for His grace to perhaps become effective.

Ephesians 2:8-10 says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."

Romans 4:25 says that Jesus "was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification." And Hebrews 9:26 says that "now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

Jesus Christ died an excruciatingly terrible death on the cross. He was the perfect, unblemished Lamb of God, who paid the price sin in order to end the separation between humanity and God. He suffered the punishment and separation from God that was the due reward for your sins. He did this because of His unfathomable love for sinners.

When you understand that you are a sinner worthy of death (Romans 3:23, 6:23) and that you cannot earn God's love in any way, you are beginning to see your need for a Savior. When you confess your sins to God and accept Jesus as your Savior and Lord, He forgives you eagerly, instantly, and completely. God does not keep a record of your sins; He removes them far from you; God remembers your sins no more; your sins are blotted out like a thick cloud; and your sins are thrown down into the depths of the sea, never to be remembered against you anymore (Psalms 103:12, 130:3-4; Ezekiel 33:16; Isaiah 44:22; Micah 7:19). Scripture teaches that the blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin (1 John 1:7). Not just some sin or most sin, but all sin. He was buried and He rose from the grave three days later (1 Corinthians 15:1-11). When you truly believe this in your heart and place full trust in Him your entire life becomes transformed (2 Corinthians 5:17). You will begin to bear good fruit, and you will have the promise of God that He who began this good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6). He will never abandon or cast you away from Him (John 6:37; Hebrews 13:5). According to His sovereign grace He will see to it that you make it home to heaven (1 Corinthians 1:8; Jude 24).

The entire Trinity is involved in the safekeeping of Christians. The Father has given believers to the Son (John 6:37-44, 17:9), the Son has asked that they be kept (John 17:11, 20), and the Holy Spirit dwells within every believer forever (John 14:16; 1 Corinthians 6:19).

Romans 10:9-10 says: "That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."

Ephesians 1:13-14 says: "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation -- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory."

Galatians 5:22-25 says: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit."

When you believe the gospel you will become a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). Christ will live in you (2 Corinthians 13:5) and you will have a totally new outlook on life. Before, with your sinful nature, you sinned without much concern. But with Jesus in your life, you will now desire to love and serve Him, and others (Galatians 5:13). The Holy Spirit transforms sinners like yourself into the kind of people God wants you to be, and fulfills the very purpose for which Jesus died: to redeem sinners and change them so that they will truly love God and serve others as He commanded in John 13:34-35.

When you as a believer in Christ Jesus live your life focusing on the goodness and glory of God, you will become changed into His likeness (2 Corinthians 3:18) and naturally seek to do what is pleasing to Him.

When you trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, He becomes your peace (Ephesians 2:14) and you have true fellowship with God. There are times when you will sin after being saved. You will struggle with sin till your dying day or until Jesus comes again. What gives you hope is that salvation is assured to those who trust completely in Jesus' finished work of redemption (His life, death, and resurrection). So you should never feel that salvation is lost due to sins committed out of weakness. You should repent, confess your sin, accept the Lord's promise of forgiveness, and let Him help you back to your feet. But you should never allow the devil to trick you into thinking that salvation is lost. You can rest in the promises of God's word that salvation is assured to those who believe in Christ Jesus (1 John 5:11-13), and that God who begins this good work in the believer will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6). However, sin does break your fellowship with God, though not your union with Him. Sin also brings down God's chastisement on you to discipline you and turn you around, as a loving parent would do for his own child (Hebrews 12:6-7). 1 John 1:9 grants the assurance that in confessing your sin to God fellowship is restored. God's grace is powerful and sufficient to save. It is not an ineffective grace that necessitates human additions (i.e. works, performance, etc.) to perhaps make it effective.

To summarize, the gospel of Christ reveals that:

All are sinners and cannot do anything to save themselves. (Romans 3:23)

□ Jesus Christ, God's Son, is a perfect Savior for sinners, even the worst. (John 6:37-44; Hebrews 7:25)

□ Jesus Christ died for sinners, was buried, and rose again on the third day. (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)

□ It is the power of God for salvation to all who believe. (Romans 1:16)

□ Salvation comes only through Jesus. (Acts 4:12)

□ Salvation is the gift of God by His grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ alone, and not by any works you do. (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:4-7)

□ Salvation comes through the blood of Christ, which makes the sinner righteous before God and brings reconciliation with Him. (Romans 3:25, 5:9)

□ Salvation comes at the moment the sinner believes the gospel. (Romans 10:9-13; Ephesians 1:13-14)

□ Salvation is granted by God and secured by God. (John 10:27-30)

□ Jesus perfectly accomplished and completed all the works necessary to save sinners just like you. (John 19:30)

□ Salvation is completely of God and not of man in any way, and it is to the glory of God alone. (Romans 8:28-30; Romans 9; Ephesians 1)

The Bible says, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31). But what does it mean to "believe on the Lord Jesus"? It means knowing yourself to be a sinner, and that Christ died for sinners. It means abandoning all self-righteousness and self-confidence in your own works, supposed merits, faith, repentance, and personal obedience, casting yourself completely upon Him for mercy and peace. It means exchanging your natural hatred and rebellion against God for a spirit of grateful submission to the will of Christ through the renewing of your heart by the Holy Spirit.

You may wonder how you, a person lost and dead in sin, can repent of your sins and place your trust in Christ if I have no natural ability to do these things. Look to Jesus, speak to Jesus, cry out to Jesus, just as you are. Confess your sin, your impenitence, your unbelief, and cast yourself on His mercy. Ask Him to give you a new heart, working in you true repentance and saving faith. Ask Him to take away your evil heart of unbelief and to write His law within you, that you may never stray from Him. Turn to Jesus and trust Him as best you can, and pray for grace to turn and trust more thoroughly. Look to Christ to draw near to you as you seek to draw near to Him. Watch, pray, and read and hear God's Word (the Bible); worship and commune with God's people in a local church, and so continue till you know in yourself beyond doubt that you are indeed a person changed, a repentant believer, and the new heart which you desired has been placed within you by God.

Jesus holds out His hands to you in invitation. You do not need to go to eternal punishment in hell for your sins. No matter where you have been or what you have done, come to Him and He will welcome you with open arms. Please do not harden your heart in refusal; do not say tomorrow you will come to Him. Tomorrow may never come (Proverbs 27:1; 2 Corinthians 6:2; Hebrews 3:15-19).

Sinner, there is grace from the throne of God through the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for sinners like you so that you may not be condemned for the wicked things you have done. No matter what they are or how terrible or numerous they have been, His grace is greater than your sin and is able to save you. The Bible declares that anyone who trusts in Jesus will never be put to shame (Romans 10:11). It also says that there is now no condemnation for those who place their faith in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1).

Isaiah 55:6-7 says, "Seek the LORD while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the LORD, and He will have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

If you have not accepted Jesus as your personal Savior and Lord, please accept His free gift of salvation right [now](#). Do not postpone acceptance for what you think is a more convenient time, but honestly confess your sin and give yourself up here and now to Christ, who alone can save you.

"As I live!' declares the Lord GOD, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die?'" (Ezekiel 33:11)

The choice is yours today, right here, right now. Please choose [life](#).