



# **The Gospel of Jesus Christ**

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# The Gospel of Jesus Christ

The word "Gospel" is used 94 times in the New Testament and additionally we use the word as titles for the first four books of the New Testament. The word means "good news" or "preach or announce the good news". So, what is the "good news"? Why do we need good news? What is the "bad news", since without knowing what the bad news is, it can hardly be expected that we understand the good news?

To understand the bad news, we need to go back to the very beginning of creation to the book of Genesis. After God had created Adam from the dust of the ground and then Eve from Adam's rib, He gave them instructions and a command. Disobedience to the command would lead to death. When Adam and Eve disobeyed the command of God and ate the fruit that they had been commanded not to eat, the consequences were curses upon them and the rest of creation, as well as the separation from God. Since God is a holy and just God, he could not just pass over the trespass of Adam and Eve. Payment for sins was required. Without this payment, the punishment for all people is eternal damnation in the lake of fire. Salvation, the free gift of God through faith in Jesus Christ, is what delivers us from this eternal judgement as He paid the penalty for our sin.

As we start reading the Gospels, we see Jesus "proclaiming the gospel" (Matt 4:23, Matt 9:35, Mar 1:14, Luk 4:18, Luk 7:22). John preached the gospel (Luk 3:18). The disciples preached the good news (Luk 9:6, Act 8:25, Act 8:40, Act 14:7, Act 14:15, Act 14:21, Act 16:10, Ro 1:9 etc.). Jesus commanded his followers to proclaim the good news everywhere (Matt 24:14, Mar 13:10, Mar 16:15). It is also called the "gospel of salvation" (Eph 1:13). Paul sums up the gospel at the beginning of Romans:

- *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH." (Rom. 1:16-17)*

In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians, Paul gives a bit more of an explanation of the gospel

- *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. (1 Cor. 15:1-2)*
- *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, (1 Cor. 15:3-4)*
- *For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. (1 Cor. 15:21-22)*

In 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy, Paul gives a concise definition of the gospel

- *our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, (2 Tim. 1:10)*
- *Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel, (2 Tim. 2:8)*

Paul also warns against false gospels

- *I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed! (Gal. 1:6-9)*
- *But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage. But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you. (Gal. 2:4-5)*

Peter warns against disobeying the gospel of God

- *For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? (1 Pet. 4:17)*

In the book of Revelation, an angel has the eternal gospel.

- *And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; and he said with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters." (Rev. 14:6-7)*

As we look at the various references to the preaching of "the gospel", we can learn the content of the message from those texts. Take for example the preaching of John, the Baptist. He was preaching the gospel, so what was he preaching? In Matthew chapter 3, he calls for people to repent and to produce fruit in keeping with this repentance. In Mark chapter 1, he is preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The repentance would obviously be a reference to obey the commands that were given in the Old Testament and summed up by "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and love your neighbour as yourself". He confronted Herod regarding the marriage to his sister-in-law as well as the other wicked things that he was doing.

As Jesus was going about proclaiming the gospel, what was he preaching? About the first thing that we read in Matthew after his temptation in the desert is that *he began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."* (Matt. 4:17). Mark records "*Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."* Jesus taught and clarified how people are to live and honour God. As an example of this, He explained that the law taught that those who commit murder are liable to the court and then expanded on it saying "*But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.* (Matt. 5:22)

He thus, in this instance and others, taught that what is in the heart matters, not just the actions. For example, Jesus quotes Isaiah regarding the people honoring God with their lips, but their heart being far away (Matt 15:8). The whole issue of the heart permeates Jesus teaching. "*But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man.* (Matt. 15:18) It would be too much to

list all of the instances of Jesus' teaching on this, but just look up "heart" in the Gospels or read through the Gospels to get a fuller understanding of this subject.

Paul taught many things about the things that are included in the gospel. In 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy, he lists a number of things that are contrary to the gospel.

- *But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted. (1 Tim. 1:8-11)*

Throughout Paul's letters, we see a few things. The first is that we are all sinners and fall short of the glory of God (Ro 3:23). In 1 Cor 15:22, Paul specifically states that because of Adam's sin, all have died, therefore, there is nothing that we can do in and of ourselves to attain eternal life. Eternal life is only through the grace and mercy of God by faith in Jesus Christ who through His death on the cross paid the penalty for our sins. Paul spends considerable time emphasizing that works cannot save a person, whether that be through the law given at Mount Sinai or the knowledge of right and wrong that was universally given to all people from Adam on to us. He faithfully declares that it is only through faith in Jesus Christ that the free gift of God for salvation is available. While Paul's focus is primarily on the faith aspect, since that is what he was dealing with, he also speaks much on the actions that accompany this faith. James, as he is writing, addresses the other side of the coin where people were saying that they were saved by faith and did not need to do any good works.

To sum up, Adam's sin separated us from God and resulted in the condemnation of every person to eternal damnation since we all have a sin nature now. Jesus Christ came to redeem us from that eternal damnation through His death and resurrection by paying the penalty for our sin. This gift of God is available to every person, but it must be accepted by faith. Good works are the result of our faith and salvation, not the agent of our salvation. We are to follow the two great commandments in our daily lives as we continue to work out our salvation. The Scriptures expound on the meaning of those two great commandments.

- *work out your salvation with fear and trembling; (Phil. 2:12)*
- *Jesus said "You are My friends if you do what I command you (Jn. 15:14)*
- *By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. (1 Jn. 3:10)*
- *For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. (1 Jn. 5:3)*
- *And He said to him, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND." "This is the great and foremost commandment. "The second is like it, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." (Matt. 22:37-40)*

Since Jesus came to die for us on the cross, are we willing to sacrifice ourselves, our time and our resources for others to bring them to Jesus for salvation?