

THE GOSPEL — THE THINGS OF FIRST IMPORTANCE

Objective: *To be able to clearly state and present the Good News of Jesus Christ. To comprehend the richness and grace of God in saving lost sinners. To be able to summarize the Gospel in your own words in 3–5 sentences. And finally, through the Spirit of God preach truth into the hearts of many that they might come to saving faith.*

There is no greater news to be delivered and heard than that which we call the Gospel. The great theologian Charles Hodge said, “The Gospel is so simple that small children can understand it, and it is so profound that studies by the wisest theologians will never exhaust its richest.” The Gospel is fundamental to everything we believe. It is at the very heart of who we are Christians. However, as foundational as that truth is, it has been distorted and oversimplified to a degree that it too has become just another piece of “fake news.” Additionally, many Christians struggle and waiver to answer the question: **What is the gospel?** Perhaps, worse yet, is the inability of many professing pastors to provide a biblical explanation of what the Gospel is, and what’s more what the Gospel is not. If we, as leaders of men in the church do not know what the Gospel is we above all people are to be pitied — for we cannot proclaim the Gospel in our preaching so that sinners might be saved, and thus reveal that perhaps we in fact might not be saved.

Pastor beware of preaching a counterfeit Gospel. In our day there are numerous counterfeit Gospels both inside and outside the church. It is vital that we preach the one true Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Just because a preacher talks about Jesus, the cross, and heaven does not mean he is preaching the Gospel. And just because there is a church it does not mean that the Gospel is preached from its pulpit. The Gospel is Good News not good advice or counsel or good instruction. Preaching the Gospel is not telling a group of assembled people that they can have a life of purpose, or that they can have a meaningful life, or even that they can have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. All of these things are good and true, but they do not get to the core or to the heart of the Gospel.

The Gospel is called news. The ‘good news’ about what our Triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) has accomplished for His people. It is ‘good news’ because it addresses the most serious problem that you and I have as human beings and that problem is: God is holy and righteous and just, and we are not. And at the end of our lives, each one of us is going to stand before a just and holy God and be judged. We will either be judged on the basis of our own righteousness (holiness, goodness) or lack of it, or we will be judged on the basis of the righteousness of another. The Good News of the Gospel is that God the Father sent His only begotten Son — the incarnate Jesus Christ, to live a life of perfect obedience, fulfill the law, and die on the cross, satisfying God’s wrath against us, atoning for our sins, that we might not face hell but have eternal life. Not only that, but He also rose from the dead and ascended into heaven by the power of the Holy Spirit and sat down at the right hand of the Father promising to come again as the King of kings and Lord of lords to gather all of those who are His. The Gospel is the

victorious announcement that **God saves sinners**. Jesus Christ has done for us what we could never do for ourselves. And even though He commands to “take up your cross and follow me,” “repent and believe,” “deny yourself,” and “keep my commandments,” which are necessary they are not in themselves the good news of what Jesus has accomplished. The Gospel is not a summons to do better, work harder to reach God, it is the Good News of how God Himself work all things together for good to reach us!

The Gospel is not only objective (the message of who Jesus is and what God has done through Him) it is subjective. How are the benefits of the work Jesus (His life of perfect obedience and His sacrificial death on the cross) granted to us? **How are we saved by this marvelous work of God’s goodness?** The Bible makes it clear that we are not justified (made righteous) by our works or efforts and not by our deeds. The Bible clearly teaches that **we are justified by FAITH — and by FAITH ALONE** (Ephesians 2:8-10). The only way, the benefits accomplished by the life and death of Jesus Christ can be received, is by putting your trust in Him (Jesus) and in Him alone. When an individual does that, he/she is declared just by God and adopted into His family — pardoned, forgiven of all sin, and blessed in the heavenly places with every spiritual blessing.

So, the Gospel, the Good News, is the good news of salvation that God has provided in the person and work of His Son, Jesus Christ. The Gospel, in a sense, is Jesus Christ (Romans 1,3,4,5). It concerns itself with the coming of Jesus into this fallen and sinful world on a mission of saving that which is lost “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45)

Thing of First Importance:

Therefore, in order to understand the Gospel, know and understand and believe and preach that:

- God saves sinners.
- Jesus (God incarnate) was born of a virgin.
- Jesus was born under the law.
- Jesus lived a life of perfect obedience meeting the demands of the law for us.
- Jesus went to the cross and suffered the curse of the law because of our sinfulness.
- Jesus satisfied the righteous anger of God reconciling sinful man to Holy God.
- Jesus paid in full our debt to sin.
- Jesus, on the third day rose from the dead revealing that His death payment for our sins was accepted by the Father.
- Jesus ascended into heaven.
- The Bible says: “Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”
- The Bible says: this free gift of salvation, free in the sense that you and I do not deserve it, nor could we ever earn it and yet costly in the humility of Christ as He took on flesh and bore our penalty on the cross is received (given) through Faith Alone.

The Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:

“Now I would remind you, brothers,¹ of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ²and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. ⁹For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.”

These are the things of first importance. The Gospel is the free offer of salvation through the person and work of Christ to those who have nothing to offer on their own merit and is received by faith alone.

Important note - The Gospel is offered by the grace of God alone and received by faith alone in the person and work of Christ alone.

BIBLE VERSES THAT GET AT THE HEART OF THE GOOD NEWS:

ISAIAH 53:4-6

4. Surely he has borne our griefs

and carried our sorrows;

yet we esteemed him stricken,

smitten by God, and afflicted.

⁵But he was pierced for our transgressions;

he was crushed for our iniquities;

upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,

and with his wounds we are healed.

⁶All we like sheep have gone astray;

we have turned—every one—to his own way;

and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

JOHN 3:16-17

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world,^[a] that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

ROMANS 3:23-24

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

ROMANS 4:4-5

⁴ Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. ⁵ And to the one who does not work but believes in^[a] him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,

ROMANS 10:9

⁹ because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-4

³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,

2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

²¹For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

GALATIANS 3:13-14

¹³Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—¹⁴so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit^[a] through faith.

EPHESIANS 2:4-5

⁴But^[a] God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—

PHILIPPIANS 2:6-8

⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,^[a] ⁷but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant,^[b] being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

COLOSSIANS 2:13–14

¹³And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

TITUS 3:4–7

⁴ But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

HEBREWS 2:14–17

¹⁴ Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. ¹⁶ For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. ¹⁷ Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

1 PETER 2:22–25

²² He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. ²³ When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵ For you were straying like sheep but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

These are the things of first importance. Brothers let us make sure that we are preaching the “Good News.” May we proclaim boldly with the Apostle Paul:

“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” (Romans 1:16-17).

Summary of the Gospel:

God saves sinners and sends His only begotten Son Jesus Christ, born of a virgin, to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. Born under the law, Jesus, met the demands of the Law living a life of perfect obedience on our behalf. He went to the cross satisfying the justice of God by paying in full the debt of our sin. The third day He rose again and ascended into heaven. Salvation is a gift of this work of God and received by faith.

SALVATION IS OF GRACE ALONE THROUGH FAITH ALONE IN CHRIST ALONE!!!!

Assignment: take the material presented here and seek to develop a clear and accurate “working” * summary statement of the Good News!!!

* “working” in the sense that you can quickly present the truth anytime anywhere. Working — in the sense that from it you could defend and teach the truth of God’s Word.