



WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

INTRODUCTION

The Greek word for "Gospel" simply means "Good News". Our English word "evangelism" comes from the Greek word *euangelion*, which means "to proclaim the good news". Our world is full of bad news today but Christians proclaim something better. We proclaim good news that could be summarized in five key points.



1. GOD IS HOLY

God's holiness refers to His absolute moral perfection. God always does what is morally right and He never does what is wrong. His morality is impeccable. In fact, He is so holy that James 2:10-11 says, *"For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. For He who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said, 'Do not commit murder.' Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law."*

In other words, if you score 99.99999999% on your moral purity, you get a 0 in God's eyes. If you keep every commandment but one, you cannot get into Heaven. Why? Because God is holy. He is morally perfect and you cannot be with Him unless you are morally perfect too, which leads to the next point.

2. WE ARE NOT HOLY

In Romans 3, the Apostle Paul gives a summary of the spiritual condition of mankind. He adds to our desperate situation when he says in verses 9-18 and verse 23.

What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; as it is written, 'There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one. their throat is an open grave, with their tongues they keep deceiving, the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood, destruction and misery are in their paths, and the path of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.'...For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

That is a sad outlook on mankind. It does not sound like good news. (Just wait, because the good news is coming.) No one is righteous. No one seeks God.

"Our throats are open graves and our feet are swift to shed blood..." - if the Apostle Paul was trying to boost our self-esteem, he failed miserably in this passage. However, our self-esteem notwithstanding, Romans 3 is the spiritual biography of every person who has ever lived. None of us is holy. We have fallen way short of God's standard, which leads to the following inevitable result.

3. GOD IS ANGRY

It has been said that you cannot understand the cure if you do not understand the disease. You cannot understand the solution unless you first understand the problem: and the problem we have is that God is angry with us. It may surprise some to hear this.

But in the Old Testament alone, God's wrath is referred to more than 580 times and there are more than 20 different words used to describe it. The Bible is very clear about the fact that God is mad at what we have done. He does not take our unholiness lightly. He does not ignore our sin. Psalm 5:4-5 says, *"For you are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; no evil dwells with You. The boastful shall not stand before Your eyes."* Psalm 90:11 says, *"Who understands the power of Your anger and Your fury, according to the fear that is due You?"*

While God is patient with sinners now, withholding His judgment and giving them time to repent, a day will come when His patience will run out: and nothing will stand between the sinner and a perfectly righteous Judge. We will face the consequences of His wrath for all eternity, which finally brings us to the good news. Here is the Gospel.

4. GOD IS LOVE

So far, we have looked at the bad news. God is holy, we not, and God is angry with us. That is some pretty grave news. It certainly does not sound very encouraging, but let us change the tone of this discussion. First John 4:16 says that *"God is love."* Next to John 3:16, there is probably no more powerful verse in the Bible than this: *"God is love."* God is agape in Greek. He is unconditional, unmerited, unearned, unrelenting love. As First John 4:7 says, *"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God."*



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The Greek language had four words for "love": *Eros* from which we get our English word "erotic", *philia* from which we get our word "Philadelphia", the city of "brotherly love", *storge*, which referred to natural affection and served as a synonym to *philia*. But, the Greeks had a fourth word for love which appears here in First John 4:16: *agape*.

Agape was love for love's sake. It was love that was given even though there was no love expected in return. First John 4 says that God is just that. He is love for love's sake. He is unconditional love, and the Bible says that God sent Jesus into the world to show it. Jesus came to us because God is love.

Here is what this has to do with the Gospel: Jesus Christ was God, living as a man. He was born of a virgin and, as such, He was born sinless. All throughout His life, He remained sinless. He never sinned, so whereas we broke God's law, Jesus did not. Whereas we coveted our neighbor's possessions, Jesus did not. Where we gossiped and lied and lusted and stole, Jesus did none of that. He was holy as God is holy. In regards to personal holiness, Jesus scored a perfect 100% every day of His life.

Despite that perfect holiness, He allowed God the Father to punish Him on the cross. At the cross, God took all His anger and fury and hatred towards our sins and He killed Jesus Christ with it. Isaiah 53:10 says that He crushed Him with it: the Hebrew word indicates He broke Him with it.

This means that God's holiness was satisfied on the cross because Jesus was perfectly holy. He made a sacrifice to God that was morally perfect. There was nothing lacking in His character because He never sinned. On the cross, God's anger was satisfied on Jesus because it was poured out on Him in full. There was no anger left over to pay. In regards to wrath and judgment, the cross paid it all.

God's love was shown because, while we cannot get into Heaven on our own, God provided a way for us. While we missed the mark of God's holiness completely, Jesus met it completely. After meeting it, He rose from the grave to live again. His resurrection proved that He had defeated sin, that God approved of His sacrifice, and that His followers would one day rise with Him in new resurrected bodies. Which leads us to a final point to the Christian Gospel.

5. WE ARE RESPONSIBLE

Romans 14:12 says, *"So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God."* Hebrews 9:27 says, *"It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment."* In light of man's sinfulness and God's holiness, anger and love, we all have a great responsibility. One day each of us will stand before Him and answer for our lives. Every one of us will be judged by the Lord for what we did with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

What are we asked to do? Romans 10:9 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."*

We are asked, or commanded, to believe that Jesus Christ was crucified for our sins and that He was raised from the dead to give us eternal life. You must believe that you are sinful and that God is holy, angry, and loving if you would have your sins forgiven: and you must confess "Jesus as Lord."

"Lord" is another word for "ruler." To confess Jesus as your "Lord" is to confess Him as your ruler. It is to give your life in submission to Him. It is to bow to Him and give Him complete control over everything.

You must do that if you would be saved. You must respond to this Gospel if you would enter Heaven. The Gospel is not a suggestion. The Bible warns us of our sin and appeals to us to believe and respond in repentance. It is an appeal that will save your life. Believe this and you will have eternal life. Reject it and you will not as John 3:36 says, *"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."*

That is the good news. That is the Gospel.