

THE GOSPEL: BUILDING A FIRM FOUNDATION IN THE FAITH

INTRODUCTION:

“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.” (Galatians 1:6–10 NKJV)

“Calvary Chapel Crossroads calls itself an evangelical church. What do we mean by that term?” The word evangelical comes from the “evangel,” which means “gospel” or “good news.” An evangelical Christian or Church is wholeheartedly committed to the gospel of Jesus Christ. We believe it and we attempt to share it with others.

Why does it matter what we believe about the gospel? Paul gives us four answers in Galatians 1:6-10.

1. There is only one gospel and only that gospel can save us.
2. There are many spiritual counterfeits in the world.
3. Those who preach a false gospel will be eternally condemned.
4. There will always be a temptation to please men rather than to please God and to water down our message for the approval of others.

When God commands us to believe the gospel, he does not intend that we should comparison shop the available options for salvation. It’s not as if God says, “You can take my offer or you can see if you find a better deal.” In truth, there is nothing with which to compare the biblical gospel. It stands absolutely alone and is the only way to eternal life.

If an evangelical is a person who believes the gospel, then it is all-important that we properly define the gospel. T often today we have become confused about the process of salvation through the presentation of the Gospel. There is too much emphasis on what we must do, rather than what God has already done. Let me explain in more detail! One reason why some people in evangelical churches remain unsaved is the way in which the Gospel is presented.

Many dedicated Christians present the Gospel in such a way that unsaved, unprepared people do not understand that they deserve only God's judgment, that salvation is completely God's work, and that sinners are unable to contribute anything towards their own salvation.

Romans 1:3 tells us that the Gospel is God's good news concerning His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. It is God's assurance **"...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" (I Corinthians 15:3,4).**

The Gospel is first and foremost about Christ. It is the message of the finished historical work of God in Christ. The Gospel is a work of the Godhead alone. Christ was **"...smitten of God..." "...it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief ..." The Lord made "...his soul an offering for sin..." (Isaiah 53:4,10).**

Several hundred years ago the Puritans talked about the "glories of the gospel." By that they meant the wonder of God's plan for saving sinners. He saves sinners by declaring them righteous in his sight on the basis of the blood of Jesus, and he does it through faith alone. And most amazingly, he justifies sinners while they are still sinners **(Romans 4:5 "But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,")**. He doesn't say, "Clean yourself up and I will accept you." Or "Let me infuse righteousness in you and if you cooperate with me, you will eventually be justified in my sight." No! He says to sinners, "Come just as you are and I will declare you righteous right now."

The Apostle Paul had more to say about the gospel than anyone else. Let's look at three ways he described it.

I. IT IS GOD'S GOSPEL — ROMANS 1:1

"Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God" (Romans 1:1 NKJV)

Paul called himself an apostle of "the gospel of God." The gospel begins with God! He made the first move and if he didn't make the first move, we would make no move at all.

The gospel is not about us. It's about what God has done for us through Jesus Christ. God is the author of the gospel. When confronted with human rebellion, he chose to become our Redeemer and our Deliverer. That is why the Bible tells us that the Father sent the Son to the earth (**John 17:3** *“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”*). It's not as if a committee of humans petitioned God to send Jesus to the earth. That was entirely God's doing.

Furthermore, what we know about the gospel comes from God himself. We know what we know because he has told us in his Word. The truth of the gospel does not depend on the church, or human tradition, or any particular denomination. Therefore, we base what we say on the authority of God's Word. And we deny there is any gospel other than the one revealed in the New Testament.

II. IT IS THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST — I CORINTHIANS 1:17

“For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.”
(1 Corinthians 1:17 NKJV)

Not only does the gospel begin with God, it centers upon the Lord Jesus Christ—who he is and what he accomplished in his life, death, and resurrection. In these days of political correctness and mushy theology, we need to reassert the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the power that is represented through the work upon the Cross.

Even though it isn't popular, we must say what the Bible says: The only way to know God, is through the reconciling death of Jesus Christ, the risen Lord. That means the eternal destiny of all people depends on whether they know Jesus as Lord and Savior. **Acts 4:12** says it explicitly: *“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”* We may not care for those words, but there it is in black and white. Jesus said the same thing in **John 14:6**, *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*

This is so important that we don't confuse the issue of salvation, by telling people or selling people on the idea that there is some other means of finding favor with God apart from the redemptive work of Christ on the cross. The Bible offers no hope to sincere worshipers of other religions.

There is no other way and no other name than Jesus Christ. Sincerity is not enough to get you to heaven. Only Jesus saves.

This is why we preach the gospel, this is why we send missionaries to the ends of the earth, this is why we urgently do the work of evangelism. We've got the Good News the world needs to hear.

“And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch,”(Acts 14:21 NKJV)

The Gospel in a Nutshell

Here in a short form is the message of the Gospel: Jesus Christ has come into the world—fully God and fully man. He perfectly obeyed God's law and perfectly fulfilled God's will. He died in our place and as our substitute, paying for our sins. He rose from the dead on the third day and ascended into heaven. He will one day return to the earth to establish his kingdom. In the meantime we are commissioned to preach the gospel to all people everywhere.

This simply means the gospel doesn't center on how we feel or our emotions. The gospel is eternally established in time and space, in the facts of history, in the Incarnation, in the truth of what God did when he sent his Son to the earth.

“Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: “So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest,’ ” although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.” (Hebrews 4:1–3 NKJV)

God did this out of love and His imparted grace to us. He knew there was no hope unless he took the initiative to save us. Salvation begins with the admission that there is nothing good in us, nothing in us that can contribute to our salvation, that we are utterly helpless and unable to save ourselves, and that salvation must come from outside of us. We confess that we need the help that only Jesus can supply.

God offers salvation on one simple and single condition—a wholehearted faith in Jesus Christ, trusting him alone as Lord and Savior, resting upon him for complete salvation, renouncing all self-trust, admitting our sinfulness, confessing our need, and crying out to Jesus to save us from our sins.

“For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.” (Romans 10:10–12 NKJV)

Those who trust in Jesus Christ and him alone are saved forever. They are forgiven of all their sins, born again, brought into God’s family, declared righteous while they were still sinners, their sins are placed on Christ and his righteousness is imputed to them.

“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,” (Ephesians 1:13 NKJV)

They receive a new nature that enables them to walk in a brand-new direction. They are given eternal life and guaranteed they will go to heaven when they die. This is what John 3:16 means when it says that ***“God so loved the world.”*** This is the Good News Jesus told us to preach “to all creation” ***(Mark 16:15 “And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”)***

Why do we need this message? Because no one can be good enough! No one can work hard enough! No one can do anything to merit a place in heaven! The great danger we humans face is that we will change the gospel message into a “Christ plus” religion. So we believe in Jesus but then we add in good works, religion, baptism, the mass, the sacraments, giving, church attendance, and being a nice person as part of what God requires for us to go to heaven. The truth is, “Christ plus” faith will send you to hell. It is “only Jesus and Jesus only.” Paul taught “all of Christ and none of me.” If we teach “some of Christ and some of me” we are not teaching a biblical gospel.

*“So, as much as is in me, **I am ready to preach the gospel** to you who are in Rome also.*

*For **I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ**, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.” (Romans 1:15–16 NKJV)*

III. IT IS “MY GOSPEL” – II TIMOTHY 2:8

“Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel,” (2 Timothy 2:8 NKJV)

In the end doctrine doesn't save, Jesus saves. We need correct doctrine to tell us who Jesus is, who we are, and how we can be saved. But it is Christ alone who saves. It is not enough to know the truth, you must believe the truth. It is not enough to possess the truth, the truth must possess you. Paul called it “my gospel.” Can you say that?

This gospel we preach is so simple that little children can believe it. It is so profound that the greatest scholars have been pondering it for 2000 years. The only thing you bring to the table is your need of a Savior. Come with empty hands and God will fill them.

*“Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having **the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—**” (Revelation 14:6 NKJV)*

Here are three concluding statements:

The gospel is the central message of the Bible. Therefore, we must know it. That means knowing enough to oppose any and every false gospel. We must get the gospel right. And we must have the courage to point out when someone else (who may be a nice person) gets it wrong. Not everyone who claims to be a Christian is truly preaching the gospel.

The gospel is God's plan of salvation. Therefore, we must believe it.

The Gospel is meant for everyone. Therefore, we must preach it!

Good News for the “Vilest Offenders”

This idea that the gospel is just as much for Christians as for non-Christians may seem like a new idea to many, but, in fact, it is really a very old idea. In his letter to the Christians of Colossae, the apostle Paul quickly portrays the gospel as the instrument of all continued growth and spiritual progress for believers after conversion:

“We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth;” (Colossians 1:3–6 NKJV)

“After meditating on Paul's words here, a friend once told me that all our problems in life stem from our failure to apply the gospel. This means we can't really move forward unless we learn more thoroughly the gospel's content and how to apply it to all of life. Real change does not and cannot come independently of the gospel, which is the good news that even though we're more defective and lost than we ever imagined, we can be more accepted and loved than we ever dared hope, because Jesus Christ lived, died, and rose again for sinners like you and me.”

“God intends this reality to mold and shape us at every point and in every way. It should define the way we think, feel, and live. Martin Luther often employed the phrase *simul justus et peccator* to describe his condition as a Christian. It means “simultaneously justified and sinful.” He understood that while he'd already been saved (through justification) from sin's penalty, he was in daily need of salvation from sin's power. And since the gospel is the “power of God for salvation” (Rom. 1:16), he knew that even for the most saintly of saints the gospel is wholly relevant and vitally necessary—day in and day out. This means that heralded preachers need the gospel just as much as hardened pagans.”

[Taken from pages 15-17 *surprised by grace*, by Tullian Tchividjian, © 2010 Crossway Books.]