

Whatever Happened To The Gospel?

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How important is the gospel and what priority should it have in our ministries?

I. What is the gospel?

The only place in the Bible where we find the gospel set forth succinctly is in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

1 Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, 2 and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. 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, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 (ESV)

This is the most succinct explanation and summary of the gospel in the Bible, but it needs to be explained to the unbeliever in a more logical sequence. In other words, I would not simply read these two verses and let it go at that. This is the way to explain God's plan of salvation.

A. The Bad News

Paul states that Christ died for our sins which takes us to the sin and death problems. People need to know that these are the two main problems facing every person. I call this the Bad News, and refer to it as such on a consistent basis when I am preaching.

Explain the Bad News in terms that get the point across. In other words, don't minimize the sin problem.

1. The Bad News: "You are a sinner or criminal in God's sight and there is nothing you can do to make yourself acceptable to God."

a. Good works don't work.

Scriptures teaching that our good works will not make us acceptable to God.

We have all become like one who is unclean, and **all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment**. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. Isaiah 64:6 (ESV)

16 yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, **because by works of the law no one will be justified**. Galatians 2:16 ESV

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, **not a result of works**, so that no one may boast. Ephesians 2:8-9 ESV

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. Titus 3:4-7 ESV

b. We are all sinners or criminals in God's sight.

The Scriptures speak very clearly to the universality of the sin problem.

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Psalm 51:5 (ESV)

"...as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." Romans 3:10-12 (ESV)

"...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" Romans 3:23 (ESV)

2. The Bad News: "God is just and must punish every sin you have committed."

Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die. Ezekiel 18:4 (ESV)

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— Romans 5:12 (ESV)

For the wages of sin is death..." Romans 6:23a (ESV)

B. The Good News

1. The Good News is that God has provided a Substitute to take the punishment for us. God has demonstrated his love to us through Jesus.

God is also love, and in his love for us, God made the decision to provide a substitute, someone who would take the punishment for us. Because no one on earth could do the job, God the Son volunteered to leave the glory with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit so that he could become a man. Jesus is not just another human being like you and me. He is God the Son who became a man.

2. Jesus is God the Son who became a man.

There are many Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming Messiah, who he would be and what he would do. This is a list of some of these prophecies and the fulfillment passages in the New Testament.

a. The first promise of a Savior was made to Adam and Eve after their defection when God put the curse on the serpent who had been used by Satan. See Revelation 12:9.

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” Genesis 3:15 (ESV)

Jesus overcame Satan and the sin and death problems he had brought into God’s kingdom.

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. Hebrews 2:14-15 (ESV)

b. God told Abraham that one of his descendants would bring blessing to all families of the earth.

1 Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. 2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” Genesis 12:1-3 (ESV)

Paul tells us that God preached the gospel to Abraham in Genesis 12:3.

And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” Galatians 3:8 (ESV)

c. God told his people that the Messiah would be born into the tribe of Judah.

The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. Genesis 49:10 (ESV)

For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. Hebrews 7:14 (ESV)

d. God told his people that the Messiah would be born into the family of David.

And your **house** and your **kingdom** shall be made sure forever before me. Your **throne** shall be established forever.’ ” 2 Samuel 7:16 (ESV)

This promise was fulfilled when Jesus was born,

30 And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the **throne** of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the **house** of Jacob forever, and of his **kingdom** there will be no end.” Luke 1:30-33 (ESV)

e. The Messiah would be God who became a man

The doctrine of the Trinity states that God exists as a spirit being, and is one. Within the one spirit being of God there are three separate and distinct persons, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

This is taught in both the Old and New Testaments.

11 Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. 12 **Kiss the Son**, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him. Psalm 2:11-12
ESV

The Lord says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.” Psalm 110:1 ESV

Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? **What is his name, and what is his son’s name?** Surely you know! Proverbs 30:4 ESV.

We find God the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament.

Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your **Holy Spirit** from me. Psalm 51:11 ESV

Where shall I go from your **Spirit**? Or where shall I flee from your presence? Psalm 139:7 ESV.

It was God the Son who left the glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit and came to earth to become a man.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, **Mighty God**, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6

These prophecies were fulfilled when Jesus was born. The Scriptures clearly state that Jesus is God.

1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God**. 14 And **the Word became flesh and dwelt among us**, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:1, 14

“...waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of **our great God and Savior Jesus Christ**,” Titus 2:13

But **of the Son he says**, “**Your throne, O God**, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. Hebrews 1:8

Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of **our God and Savior Jesus Christ**: 2 Peter 1:1

f. The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Micah 5:2 (ESV)

It is of great interest that when King Herod asked the religious leaders of Israel where the Messiah was to be born, they replied with the following.

“ ‘And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.’ ” Matthew 2:6 (ESV)

g. The Messiah would be born of a virgin.

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and **shall call his name Immanuel**. Isaiah 7:14

h. The Messiah lived a perfect life.

Jesus lived a perfect life, and always did that which pleased his Father (John 8:29). He taught magnificent truth from God and worked many miracles. But none of those things could save us from condemnation. It was crucial that Jesus live a perfect life, but it was his death that makes it possible for God to forgive us our sins.

i. The Messiah would die.

The death of the Messiah and the reason for his death is clearly set forth in the Scriptures. His death was prophesied in the Old Testament and attested to in the New.

David spoke of the death of Christ 1,000 B.C.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? Psalm 22:1 (ESV) See Luke 23:34

6 But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people. 7 All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads; 8 “He trusts in the Lord; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!” Psalm 22:6-8 (ESV) See Matthew 27:41-44

15 my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death. 16 For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet— 17 I can count all my bones— they stare and gloat over me; 18 they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots. Psalm 22:15-18 (ESV) See John 19:28, Luke 23:34

Isaiah wrote of the death and resurrection of Christ 750 B.C.

All 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. Isaiah 53:6 (ESV)

8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? 9 And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. 10 Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. 11 Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors. Isaiah 53:8-12 (ESV)

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. 1 Peter 2:24 (ESV),

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, 1 Peter 3:18 (ESV).

“...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8 (ESV)

In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 1 John 4:10 (ESV)

j. The Messiah came back from the dead never to die again.

David had prophesied the resurrection 1,000 B.C.

8 I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. 9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. 10 For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. 11 You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. Psalm 16:8-11 (ESV) See Acts 2:22-28

1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, 2 which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, 3 concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh 4 and **was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead**, Jesus Christ our Lord, Romans 1:1- (ESV)

17 When I saw him (The risen Jesus), I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, “Fear not, I am the first and the last, 18 and the living one. **I died, and behold I am alive forevermore**, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. Revelation 1:17-18 (ESV)

That is the Bad News and the Good News. Those who believe it are forgiven their sins as far as the final judgment is concerned, and they are adopted into God’s family once and for all. They are saved from eternal condemnation and saved to a new life lived with and for Christ.

Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.” John 6:47 (ESV)

And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” Acts 16:31 (ESV)

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)