

Summary: *The gospel is that Christ died for our sins and He rose and through faith in Him we can be reconciled to the Father.*

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...

Romans 1:16

gos-pel:¹

1. the teachings of Jesus and the apostles; the Christian revelation.
2. the story of Christ's life and teachings, esp. as contained in the first four books of the New Testament, namely Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.
3. (usually initial capital letter) any of these four books.
4. something regarded as true and implicitly believed: to take his report for gospel
5. a doctrine regarded as of prime importance: political gospel.
6. glad tidings, esp. concerning salvation and the kingdom of God as announced to the world by Christ.
7. (often initial capital letter) Ecclesiastical. an extract from one of the four Gospels, forming part of the Eucharistic service in certain churches.

The word gospel is translated from the Greek εὐαγγέλιον which means good news. It is the message of the life, death and resurrection of Christ through which the believer is saved from sin and to life. Indeed, there are various ways of looking at the gospel, depending upon the way in which you are looking at the term. This article will be restricted to the theological implications for mankind, but we must also be cognizant of the greater story of God's creation, its corruption and His reconciliation. See the article "What is Reconciliation?" for a broader sense of God's overarching purpose in the good news.

In its most simple form, the gospel is a confession of the primary tradition of faith which is presented in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8:

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. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, 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, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain

until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

1 Corinthians 15:1-8

In this concise summary, we learn the following:

→ I. It is by the gospel that we are saved

We are not saved by any works of the flesh or attempts and efforts to reach out to God. Neither are we saved by any religious system nor any other belief. It is purely and only on the merits of and by trusting in the gospel that we are saved.²

→ II. Christ died

While we will focus on the significance of the event in the next point, it is important to point out that assertion necessarily implies incarnation. Being divine, the Son could not die. So, He emptied Himself of prestige and privilege³ and was clothed with flesh, bone and suffering, being born of the virgin and living a perfect and obedient life until He breathed His last.

→ III. He died for our sins

He bore our sins and the wrath of His Father as our perfect sacrifice. This is substitutionary atonement; that Jesus died for our sins and in our place. He took the curse which was ours and made it His own. He was our substitute. Though we deserved to die, yet He died.

→ IV. He died according to the Scriptures

He was not taken by surprise and neither was this plan some last minute insertion into God's redemptive program. From all eternity Christ was appointed and willingly chose to submit Himself to death.

¹ From Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 2006.

² See "What Must I do to be Saved?" and "Is Christ the Only Way?"

³ Philippians 2:7

→ V. He was buried

His burial represents to us His actual death to assure us that the price has adequately been paid. Done away with is the claim that perhaps He merely escaped from the cross and reappeared. He truly died and lay in a tomb for three days.

→ VI. He was raised on the third day

Being fully God, death could not hold Him. Our payment being rendered in full, He rose victorious over death and sin. We have evidence of divine satisfaction. God's wrath was fully spent.

→ VII. He appeared to a number of persons

This is not some contrived narrative to make us feel good. Rather, those who witnessed to His resurrection attested to it not only in word, but by choosing gladly to face death. Such confidence on their part inspires subsequent confidence in those of us who have not seen with our own eyes.

The above summary is a basic answer to the question, "What is the gospel?" It is the good news that though we were dead in our transgressions and sins,⁴ while we were still sinners, Christ died for us, in our place.⁵ For the means by which to enter into the benefits of the gospel see "What Must I do to be Saved?" and "Is Christ the Only Way?"

In order to believe in this gospel, it is necessary that we try to put together the requisite elements of the tradition which Paul mentions. These elements include: sin, death, substitutionary atonement, and faith.

Sin

In the beginning man and woman were created good, in the image of God, in harmony with themselves, each other, their Creator and the rest of His creation. However, such peace was not to last. Rather, taking of the fruit which they were

commanded not to eat, the man and woman succumbed to sin's enticing deceit and fell. No longer did they enjoy the accord in which they had lived. Now, cursed with pain, suffering, solitude, and ultimately death, they were alienated from a holy God.⁶

This curse was not limited only to the man and woman, but rather has been passed on to all of their progeny⁷ and therefore lies within all men according to their very nature. We are, by nature and by choice, cut off from the One Who created us.

From the entirety of Scripture, we can see that man is not born into a state of neutrality, but is rather, by nature, a hostile and willing enemy of God. Man's heart and mind are darkened and dulled such that the fleeting pleasures of sin are more alluring than the eternal joy of the Master. Man is utterly rebellious, unable and unwilling to save himself.

Death

How does the Potter deal with the rebellion of His clay? Genesis 2:17 "but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die." God's warning is not empty and His word is always accomplished⁸ so the man and his wife and all of the generations which proceed from them are subjected to the curse of death.

Not only are they given over to physical death, but also spiritual death in which they are estranged from the heavenly Father. This spiritual death points toward hell, the absence of the goodness of the Lord, an eternity of suffering for a slew of sins against an infinitely holy God. We have been separated from our greatest good and united with the one who sought to usurp the throne.

Substitutionary Atonement

The wages of sin is death, the Bible says, and someone has to pay; there is a penalty which accompanies our transgression. Man has trespassed and therefore is the only one who should pay and yet he cannot, being himself sinful. God has demanded payment and yet is the only One Who could pay. However, He certainly should not, being Himself holy. What was to be done?

God alone could pay and so pay He did, with the blood of His Son. The Son of God became sin and bore the wrath of His Father, being a curse on our behalf. He became our substitution, dying for our sins, in our place. He did not deserve to die, we did, but He willingly became obedient to the payment required that we might be reconciled to Him. We deserved to die and owed a payment, but He purchased our freedom. God has been declared both just and the justifier of the justified.⁹

⁴ Ephesians 2:1,5

⁵ Romans 5:8

⁶ See Genesis 1-3

⁷ Romans 5:12

⁸ Isaiah 55:11

⁹ Romans 3:25

Faith

How do we enter into the blessings of the divine transaction?
Given that we are blinded by sin and are natural enemies of God, can we really expect to earn such entrance? How good is good enough to be considered perfect?

In order to prevent human boasting and gain all glory in the glorious work of salvation, God established only one way to gain entry into His presence. Through faith alone may we enter into the joys of our Lord.

Conclusion

This is the gospel: Christ died for our sins and He rose and through faith in Him we can be reconciled to the Father.

Outline of Relevant Scriptures:

I. Sin

- *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..."*
Romans 3:9-11
- *For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.*
John 3:20-21
- *For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*
Romans 8:5-8
- *The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?*
Jeremiah 17:9
- *Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins.*
Ecclesiastes 7:20

- *...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...*
Romans 3:23
 - *For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; and all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls on Your name, who arouses himself to take hold of You; for You have hidden Your face from us and have delivered us into the power of our iniquities.*
Isaiah 64:6-7
 - *For my people are foolish, they know Me not; they are stupid children and have no understanding. They are shrewd to do evil, but to do good they do not know.*
Jeremiah 4:22
 - *...Behold, their ears are closed and they cannot listen. Behold, the word of the Lord has become a reproach to them; they have no delight in it.*
Jeremiah 6:10
 - *Their deeds will not allow them to return to their God. For a spirit of harlotry is within them, and they do not know the Lord.*
Hosea 5:4
 - *But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.*
Isaiah 59:2
 - *For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*
Romans 1:21
 - *So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.*
Ephesians 4:17-19
- #### II. Death
- *but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die*
Genesis 2:17

- ...till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

Genesis 3:19

- ...death spread to all men, because all sinned.

Romans 5:12

- For the wages of sin is death...

Romans 6:23

- The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law...

1 Corinthians 15:56

- And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)...

Ephesians 2:1-5

- When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh...

Colossians 2:13

- ...and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness

Hebrews 9:22

- But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

James 1:14-15

• III. Substitutionary Atonement

- For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.

Leviticus 17:11

- o Especially relevant given Hebrews 10:4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

- Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten

of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him...But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering...

Isaiah 53:4-6, 10

- For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

Mark 10:45

- And He said to them, 'This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many..'

Mark 14:24

- But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8

- For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Romans 8:3-4

- ...Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.

1 Corinthians 5:7

- He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

2 Corinthians 5:21

- Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us – for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'...

Galatians 3:13

- who gave Himself as a ransom for all...

1 Timothy 2:6

- Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

Hebrews 2:14-15

- *so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many...*
Hebrews 9:28
- *and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.*
1 Peter 2:24
- *For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit...*
1 Peter 3:18
- IV. Faith
 - *but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.*
John 20:31
 - *And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.*
Acts 15:8-9
 - *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*
Romans 1:16-17
 - **Romans 3:21-31** (28 – by faith apart from the works of the law)
 - nowhere are we said to be justified by works apart from faith
 - *Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness*
Romans 4:4-5
 - *For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith*
Romans 4:13
- *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.*
Romans 5:1-2
- *...whatever is not from faith is sin*
Romans 14:23
- *nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified*
Galatians 2:16
- *Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "The righteous man shall live by faith."*
Galatians 3:11
- *For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus*
Galatians 3:26
- *and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith*
Philippians 3:9
- *and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*
2 Timothy 3:15
- *And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.*
Hebrews 11:6
- *believing that Jesus is the Son of God*
1 John 5:4-5
- *These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.*
1 John 5:13