

What is the Gospel?

Life's Most Important Question

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Published by East Point Books
A ministry of East Point Church
PO Box 90818
East Point, GA 30364

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Printed in the United States of America.

The gospel cannot be preached and heard enough,
for it cannot be grasped well enough.

– Martin Luther

An Important Question

Human beings by nature are inquisitive. Some of the greatest advancements in the history of civilization have been the result of people simply asking questions. Wilbur and Orville Wright dared to ask whether or not we could fly. Alexander Graham Bell dared to ask if we could talk to each other over long distances.

Even our world today is full of seemingly important questions. “Who will be the next president of the United States?” “Who will be the next great American Idol?” “Will gas prices ever go down?” “What exactly is the price of tea in China?” “How many licks does it take to get to the center of a *Tootsie Roll Pop*?” As relevant as these questions may seem to us today, there is no more relevant and eternally significant question than the question, “What is the gospel?” In your hands is a little book that seeks to answer this question.

Honestly, this may be the most important booklet you have read in a long time. This may be true, not because I am the one writing it, but because it is the message of what God is doing in the world and among His people. The subject is literally the purpose of God from all eternity, the object of God’s desire for creation.

I want to share with you the message that is the pinnacle of human history and the center of the divine cosmic drama. It is the answer to the greatest question. It is the hope of all humanity and the joy of all creation.

It is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But what is it?

What The Gospel Is Not

Before we delve into what the gospel is, it may be helpful to understand what the gospel is not. In our world where the driving mantra is often, “live and let live,” the gospel not only gets dismissed, but it also gets confused and even watered down so as to make it more palatable and acceptable. Therefore, it is good to understand what is often associated with or even pawned off as the gospel, but what is merely confusion or distortion. Consequently, here are few misuses and distortions of the gospel. These remind us of what the gospel is not.

The Gospel is not music

To hear the word “gospel” for most people is to conjure up ideas and even memories of church music, choirs, solos, and revival meetings. Gospel immediately brings to mind organs and drums and the emotionally charged, soul-stirring voices of Mahalia Jackson or James Cleveland. Today, with the likes of Kirk Franklin, Marvin Sapp, and a host of others, so-called “gospel” music has evolved into a powerful and popular force on the international music scene. Unfortunately, the use of the word “gospel” is more often than not a misnomer. The gospel, as the Bible defines it, is rarely found in this type of music. Often “gospel” music is little more

than religiously disguised inspirational performances, with little or none of the biblical message of salvation through Jesus Christ. As we shall see, the gospel is not music. The gospel is a man – Jesus Christ. And insofar as the music is not about the man, it should not be called gospel.

The Gospel is not self-help

The popularity of self-help gurus today is nothing short of remarkable. Never before, it seems, have so many people admitted to needing help. And never have we been so inclined to find that help within ourselves. The average bookstore does not seem to have enough shelf space for the multitudes of self-help books published each year. These gurus vary – from Oprah Winfrey and the millions who attentively heed her every word to the metaphysical and new age popularity of Wayne Dyer on taxpayer-funded Public Broadcast television – yet the message is basically the same: you are the key to a better you and having more in life. Unfortunately, this message has bled into the church and now many of the self-help gurus are preachers and evangelists. So popular in Christian circles is positive-thinking and positive-confession and your-best-life-now philosophy that many Christians believe the Bible to teach, “God helps those who help themselves.” Yet, the message of the Bible is just the opposite. The gospel, as we shall see, is not a message of self-help. It is the message of God’s help. The gospel comes to those who cannot help themselves.

The Gospel is not good deeds

Because our world is perhaps more socially conscious than it has ever been, and because the desire for environmentally safe living is such a priority, the church has found itself adapting its message to fit with this latest trend. The church has become a place where the social needs of our neighbors are at the top of the agenda. Churches that are socially conscious, environmentally minded, and justice-pursuing often exchange this socially conscious message for the message of the gospel. Feeding the hungry and clothing the naked are good pursuits, even biblical commands, but they are poor substitutes for the gospel of Jesus Christ. Good deeds and conservation are important fruit and implications of the gospel, but they are not the gospel. Food does not save. Recycling will not reconcile. As we shall see, only the gospel saves; only the gospel reconciles.

If these are not the gospel, what is the gospel? I am glad you asked.

What is the Gospel?

The gospel is both simple and complex. It is both easily understood and yet never fully exhausted. It is at the same time a mystery and the greatest and most true revelation in human history. It is singularly stated and yet multifaceted. Simply put, **the gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ coming into the world to live,**

suffer, die, and be raised again for the forgiveness of sin and the glory of God. While this definition is easily stated, it is full of important meaning. To understand the meaning, we turn to the pages of the Bible and find that the Scriptures refer to it as the message of first importance.

In 1 Cor. 15:1-4 we are given one of the most succinct and fundamental explanations of the gospel found in the Bible. It reads:

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

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures (15:3-4).

In these four short verses we have the gospel encapsulated. It is not exhaustive, but it does give us the essential elements and foundational truths contained in the gospel message. In fact, we can break the four verses down into two sections. In verses 1-2 we see the four introductory elements concerning the gospel. And in verses 3-4 we see the three foundational truths of the gospel.

Four Introductory Elements

The word gospel means “good news” or “glad tidings.” It is news that is meant to bring comfort, joy, peace and even prosperity. It is information of which the hearers have longed to hear and, in hearing, they rejoice and are glad. On May 2, 2011 when it was reported that Osama Bin Laden, the mastermind and instigator behind the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001 (9/11), had been killed by the United States military, for most of the country and the world this was good news. In New York City people were dancing in the streets. This was news that was ten years in coming, and when it did arrive, there was rejoicing.

The biblical gospel is news that brings not just joy, but also peace and comfort. It is a message that often is long in coming, but when heard and believed causes the hearer to rejoice. It is a source of happiness because it is a message of salvation from sin and judgment. In fact, the Scriptures often tie the gospel to joy and happiness.

We see this alluded to Isaiah 52:7: “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.””

At the birth of Jesus, the Angel of the Lord pronounced to the shepherds keeping watch over their sheep: “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy

that will be for all the people” (Lk. 2:10).

Consider also what Jesus said of himself: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor” (Lk. 4:18).

The gospel is good news, and yet it is not just good news. It is good news of a particular stripe. The death of Osama Bin Laden was good news. The gospel, however, is the greater news of the coming of Christ. It is news of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. It is news that through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ we can have our sins forgiven and experience eternal life and fellowship with God himself. The good news is that God has brought into the world a power that can break the power of sin in our lives and bring us victory over the world, sin, and the devil. This is good, glorious news. This good news is the gospel! And according to the Apostle Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, this good news, the gospel, has four important introductory elements:

It is a message to be preached

First and foremost in Paul’s mind, the gospel must be proclaimed. It is a message that is to be spoken. It is communicated through words. We have often heard it said, “Preach the gospel at all times, and when necessary use words.” The idea is that our actions speak louder than our words. There is some truth to this. A life well lived for the glory of God speaks volumes to a doubting

and skeptical world. However, it is not our actions that save but the actions of Christ. People don't need to see our lives in order to be saved; they need to hear of the life of Christ. Nice Christians make good neighbors and pleasant co-workers, but faithful Christians also proclaim the message of salvation from sin through faith in Christ. They use language to do it. They must.

In Romans 10 we see one of the clearest calls to salvation found in the Bible. It is a universal call that God has designed and desired for every human being. In fact, verse 13 tells us that "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." This is the glorious promise of the gospel. Everyone who calls upon Jesus, repents of their sin, and places faith in the resurrected Christ, will be saved. These words are comfort to the guilty, lost, and dying. However, there is one small caveat, and we find it in verse 14. While this call is designed for everyone, there must be messengers. The message of the gospel must be proclaimed. Or as the Bible puts it: "How are they to call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" (Rom. 10:14-15). The feet that carry the message of the gospel are beautiful because the message is proclaimed. The gospel must be proclaimed with words. Whether in English, Spanish, Creole, Swahili, Arabic, Sign Language, or Ebonics, the message must be proclaimed.

When Paul declared this in Romans 10 and 1 Cor. 15, he was not inventing anything. He was only following the lead of his Lord and Master Jesus Christ. Jesus said of himself, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose” (Lk. 4:43).

It is a message to be received

Paul reminded the Corinthians that the good news that is the gospel of Christ is to be received. It comes to people who desperately desire it and find the greatest and most rewarding satisfaction in receiving it. Millions upon millions of people hear the gospel every year. For them it is a message to be dissected, analyzed, scrutinized, and often cast aside. However, the gospel that is proclaimed must not only be heard, but it must be believed and received if it is going to bring joy and happiness to its hearers.

This receiving is believing. In other words, to receive the gospel is not just to hear it with the ear or to understand it with the head; this message must be received in the heart, producing joy and happiness in the one who received it. This is a significant requirement. Consider this example. A man was freed from prison after serving over 20 years for a crime he did not commit. When the word came to him that he was going to be released, his response was a sober and thoughtful, “I’ll believe it when I see it.” When the day of his release arrived and he was outside the prison walls able to hug

his family and breathe the air of freedom, his response was a jubilant and tearful, "I believe! I believe!" The difference is obvious: while in prison the message of freedom was in his head, but when he walked outside the prison walls and saw his family, it was in his heart. He had received the freedom and it produced a joy and happiness that mere head knowledge never could. Such it is with the gospel.

The Apostle John says at the beginning of his account of the life of Jesus that Jesus, "came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (Jn. 1:11-12). Here we see that receiving is believing, and believing is becoming a child of God. We must remember and always be mindful that it is not enough to hear the Word of God, we must receive the Word of God. It is not enough to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ, but we must receive it. It must become an implanted Word that is bearing the fruit of joy and gladness in our lives.

It is a message in which we stand

The good news is not only that I am brought into Christ, but also that I now stand firm and secure in him. The idea to stand is the idea of being in right relationship to God. G.K. Chesterton said, "There are many, many angles at which one can fall, but only one angle at which he can stand straight." The gospel is the angle at which we stand straight. The gospel is not just the joy of

getting saved and having our sins removed, but it is also the joy of peace with God everyday. Being “in Christ” is an everyday reality that reminds me of the pleasure and peace I now have with God. The Bible puts it this way: “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Rom. 5:1-2).

Everyday we can go to God in prayer and know that we find a welcome and an acceptance because of the gospel in which we stand. The gospel is the grounds of my everyday acceptance into the beloved of God (Eph. 1:6). That is good news!

It is a message by which we are being saved

This idea of “being saved” is a wonderful reminder that God is not through with us yet. There is a reality yet coming where, as the Bible says later on in 1 Cor.15 concerning our current existence, “this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (15:54). Our salvation is accomplished, fully accomplished, but it is not yet complete. For there is coming a day of God’s wrath and judgment against all sin upon the earth; against wickedness and ungodliness in human hearts. And it will be then, when we are spared this judgment and instead of being condemned for our sins, we are welcomed into the presence of God, that we will find the greatest of all reasons to rejoice in

the gospel. The Bible says, “Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God” (Rom. 5:9). Again, that’s good news!

There is an important movement in these first two verses that must not be missed. There, the progression of thought reveals the all-encompassing, all-sufficient nature of the gospel. Notice what the Bible says about the gospel: “It is the message that you received” (past tense); “the message in which you stand” (present tense); and “the message by which you are being saved” (future tense). We see that the gospel is the message that spans the entire breath of the Christian life. We start in the gospel, we continue in the gospel, and we shall be brought to completion by the gospel.

Since this is the glorious case, it is critically important that we know what the gospel is. So critically important that Paul says it is of “first (chief) importance.” Jerry Bridges has rightly said, “The gospel is not only the most important message in all of history; it is the only essential message in all of history.” Paul says it is the most necessary truth. Its necessity has not waned. It is as essential today as it has ever been. It is as important for us to know as it was to Paul and the Corinthian Church. And to solidify our understanding, Paul gives us three defining truths of the gospel, namely the Gospel is a Person, the Gospel is a Plan, and the Gospel is for People. We see these three elements in verses 3-4:

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3-4).

Three Defining Truths

The gospel is such good news because the bad news is so bad. The bad news is that sin has marred all of life. Sin has brought the sentence of death upon creation and God’s faithful and righteous judgment is due us for our sins. When the Bible says, “the soul who sins shall die” (Eze. 18:20), it is not selling wolf tickets. Eternal punishment for sin is the portion of all who have sinned and refuse to repent. The bad news is that each of us comes into this world “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). We are “by nature children of wrath” (Eph. 2:3), under the judgment of God with the sentence of death hanging over us. The only option for the sinner is the person and work of Jesus Christ. The greatest problem facing us is sin. The only answer is the gospel. According to Paul, the gospel is the plan of God in the man Jesus Christ for the redemption of sinful humanity.

The Gospel is a Person

The gospel is a person. This person is Jesus Christ. The gospel begins and ends with the person and work of Jesus Christ. Paul begins his definitive description of

the gospel at the central point of the gospel, namely Jesus Christ. He says, “*Christ died.*” At the heart of who we are as Christians, what we do, and why we do it is the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is that which ultimately separates Christianity from all the other religions of the world.

The gospel is Jesus Christ. It is who Jesus is, the eternal Son of God becoming man. No wonder at the pronouncement of Christ’s birth the angels said to the shepherds, “Behold, I bring you good news of great joy” (Lk. 2:10). The birth of Christ in the world was good news because Christ himself is the gospel. There is no greater news than the news of Jesus. And this news is for the joy of all people.

But it is not just who Christ is, but equally important it is what Christ has done. Paul does not just say “Christ”, but he says, “Christ died.” For when we speak of Christ being the gospel we mean not just the person, but also the work. This is why Paul says earlier in 1 Cor. 2:2 that when he spoke among the Corinthians, he knew nothing except “Jesus Christ and him crucified.” His message was consistently the gospel message of who Christ is and what Christ has done. It is in Christ that we find the source and supply of wisdom and knowledge. The Bible clearly declares the uniqueness and necessity of Christ:

“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

I remember counseling a young man about his marriage and trying to help him through some thorny issues in his relationship with his wife. Before we began I told him that I didn't have much for him in way of my opinion or fancy words or clever speech. I only wanted to direct him toward the Scriptures in general and the gospel in particular. Unfortunately, he later expressed that my reliance on the Bible and the gospel was not enough. I will say however, that in this case and in all others, when the gospel is not enough, you have no hope.

If the gospel is not enough, the world is lost. If the gospel is not enough, we are among all the peoples of the world to be most pitied. If the gospel is not enough, Christ died in vain, our belief is futile and our living is fruitless. If the gospel is not enough, then we are liars, and God is impotent and arbitrary. If the gospel is not enough, then we need to eat, drink, and be merry because tomorrow we die. Live and let live. Eat or be eaten. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity (Eccl. 1:2).

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the only way. It is the only answer. Thus, it must be at the center of all we do. As a church, our ministry of in-reach and outreach must have as its focus the display, outworking, and proclamation of the glory of the gospel of Jesus Christ. There are many things, even good things that can occupy the center of church life. They make us feel good because we believe we are accomplishing virtuous, good, and even God-honoring things. However, they become poor substitutes for the gospel itself.

Some churches make the church itself as the center of the ministry. Others make the pastor as the center. Some make marriage as the central focus, or even the family, so that there are family-centered churches. Some make children as the focus, building a church around their children's ministry. There is much to commend in these things. The Bible reminds us that marriage is honorable; children are gifts from God; pastors and teachers are to be commended. Yet, all of these are poor and even pitiable substitutes for the glory of the gospel. Unfortunately, we see this so prevalent today.

Go into your local bookstore and see what the prominent books on the shelves are. The shelves are full of books on marriage and relationships. The best seller shelf is overpopulated with books on parenting, self-help, counseling, financial freedom, and prosperity. Yet, at the same time woefully and regretfully lacking from the shelves are books on the gospel itself - books that give us a clear and glorious view of the person and work of Christ himself.

Yet the message of the Scripture is that the gospel is not just enough; it is more than enough. It is sufficient unto all things. The Bible reminds us in 2 Peter 1 that through Christ Jesus we have all things pertaining to life and godliness. He is sufficient. The gospel is sufficient.

The Gospel is a Plan

The gospel is not accidental or incidental information. It is the determined plan and purpose of God for the redemption of the world and the manifestation of his glory in all the ages. Notice what Paul says, “Christ died, *according to the Scriptures.*” According to the Scriptures is an important description and designation to remind us that Paul himself did not think this up. The gospel of Jesus is not the machinations of a few distraught and discouraged followers of Jesus. It is not the vain attempt of Paul to make sense of some mid-life crisis. On the contrary, the gospel is the plan of God from all eternity for the salvation of the world. For Paul, it was not a novel story, but is the message that has been told from the beginning in the Scriptures. It reminds me that when I am proclaiming the gospel faithfully I am standing with the testimony of all saints who have stood on the testimony of God from His Word, from the beginning of time.

The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is the definite plan of God in the Scriptures from the beginning. In fact, we should understand the Bible itself as the revelation of God’s plan. The Bible paints a picture of a united purpose and plan, namely the revelation of the person and work of Jesus Christ for the glory of God on behalf of his people.

Paul says, “according to the Scriptures.” What Scriptures? Naturally, he is referring to the Old Testament

Scriptures. Beginning in Genesis and going through the Law and the Psalms and the Prophets, all the Scriptures point to the glory of Christ coming for the redemption of the world. In Genesis, following Adam and Eve's sinful disobedience, we hear the gospel proclaimed as God promised the Serpent that his days were numbered when God said: "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" (Gen. 3:15). Here we have the gospel in seed form. With their sin, Adam and Eve not only rebelled against God, but were subjected to the power, influence, and reign of Satan. Yet, God's promise of redemption is not just from sin and death, but also the destruction of the one who influences unto sin and death, namely Satan. Jesus would be the offspring, born of a woman (Gal. 4:4). He would be the one who, though his heel would be bruised, would ultimately crush the head of Satan.

And this he did in accordance with the Scriptures. Furthermore, in Exodus 11-12, with the Children of Israel on the eve of their deliverance, God promised to send the final plague, the Death Angel, upon Egypt to destroy all the firstborn. Yet, the people of God were spared. Why? Not because they are better than the Egyptians. God knows they were not. Rather, God spared them because he ordered them to sacrifice a lamb and take the blood of the lamb and put it upon the doorpost of their homes. And God said, "...when I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Ex. 12:13). What blood? The blood of Jesus Christ.

Here again, we see the gospel of Jesus foretold in the Scriptures. In the New Testament, when Jesus comes upon the scene, John the Baptist refers to him as “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1:29). Furthermore, the Scriptures declare Jesus to be the Lamb slain, as it were, before the foundations of the world (Rev. 13:8; 1 Pet. 1:19-20).

This truth is also seen throughout the Prophets. For example, in Isaiah 53 we read the words predicting the suffering and sin-substituting Messiah, who would die for his people: “He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief . . . But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed” (Isa. 53:3-5). He would be wounded for others. His crushing and chastisement would not be for his own transgressions and sins, but for the sins of others. Consequently, on the cross Christ would make atonement as the substitute. The gospel is Christ dying for us - for our sins.

And so we see, Christ died according to the Scriptures. So definite and unalterable was the plan in fact, the Bible says that the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ were “according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23). As long as God has existed, so too has the plan of the gospel. We can be confident in the gospel, because we can be confident in God.

The confidence Paul had in the gospel was that it was the eternal, immutable purpose and plan of God. According to the Scriptures, the plan of God from the beginning has been for the unfathomable and inexhaustible display of the riches of Christ in the gospel. The plan was so perfectly constructed and fulfilled that the world still can only marvel at the beauty, simplicity, and truth of it all. As the Apostle Paul himself would say, “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!” (Rom. 11:33)

The Gospel is for People

The gospel that is a Person, that is a Plan, comes to needy, unworthy People. Paul makes this clear, “Christ died for *our sins*.” What is sin? This is an all-important question when it comes to the gospel. Without sin, there is no need for the gospel. Without sin there is no gospel proclamation. Christ does not come into the world. Christ does not die on the cross. Therefore, to understand the nature and need for the gospel is to understand the nature and impact of sin.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism defines sin as: any lack of conformity unto or the transgression of the law of God. This is a good concise definition because it gives both the passive and active elements to our sin. Sin is basically not doing what God has commanded us to do (lack of conformity) and/or doing what God has commanded us not to do (transgression).

As parents or teachers we know this well. The teacher tells his students not to talk while taking the test. What do the students do? Talk. The father tells his son to clean up his bedroom before he goes outside to play. What does the son do? He goes outside without cleaning the bedroom. Both of these illustrate the nature of our sin against God. God has said not to do this or that and we have in disobedience done it. God has said to do this or that and we have in disobedience not done it. And wherever and whenever this has been the case, it is the manifestation of sin.

This was the case with our parents in the Garden of Eden. God strictly forbade Adam and Eve from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. To disobey this restriction would be to incur the penalty of death (Gen. 2:17). Adam and Eve disobeyed and brought the sentence of death upon them and their posterity. As the Bible says, “just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned” (Rom. 5:12). Through Adam, sin and its penalty, death, have passed to all. However, our own sins have contributed greatly to the punishment due as well. Again the Bible reminds us that no one is righteous, and that we all have sinned and come woefully short of living for God’s glory (Rom. 3:23). And what has this sin done to us? It has caused alienation and separation from God. It has caused death. God is life and the source of life and thus to be separated from life is death. Sin separated the world from the source of eternal life and thus sin needs to be removed if we were ever going to have life again.

The gospel is Christ dying for our sins. The gospel is life for dead sinners. Or as the Bible puts it: “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). Christ did this for us. The greatest need of human beings is to be reconciled to the source of life by having their sins removed. The gospel is God in Christ reconciling the world, even you and I, to himself. The gospel is Christ’s life for our life. It is Christ’s death for our death.

In other words, the gospel is God loving us and answering for us the all-important question, “How can I be saved?” The answer is found in perhaps the simplest and most profound gospel declaration in the Bible - John 3:16-17:

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 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.”

It is also proclaimed in Romans 5:8: *“But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

If asked, “Why did Jesus die?” can you answer with certainty and joy, “Christ died for me”? This is the point and purpose of the gospel. It is not only that Jesus died, but also that he died for us.

I believe songwriters Drew Jones and Bob Kauflin summed it up best when they wrote:

*Holy God, in love, became
Perfect Man to bear my blame
On the cross He took my sin
By His death I live again*

The gospel is good news for sinners! Christ died for our sins. He did not die for the sins of angels. He did not die for the sins of animals. He died for our sins. His glory and desire is that we would be saved. His purpose and plan is that we would come into glory of the knowledge of salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord. Friends, this is the gospel. This is the message of first importance. This is good news. This is the best news. This is news you can use.

Today, God desires that you not only be saved, but that you would know the hope and consequent joy of being eternally in communion with him. The gospel is not just that we get our sins forgiven; the gospel is also that we get joy and happiness. As the angels said, "I bring good news of a great joy" (Lk. 2:10). The one who proclaims the gospel must know that it is good news of happy times (Isa. 52:7). The one who receives the gospel must know that it is the message to change their lives now and for all eternity. The gospel says joy and happiness can be our portion now. But joy and happiness are also and more significantly our portion forever.

Believe ... Receive ... and Live!

So don't wait another moment! Now is the time! Today is the day! Believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. Believe that Christ was born of a virgin. Believe that he lived the perfect life. Believe that he died on the cross. Believe that he was buried and raised again on the third day.

Receive the message of good news. Confess your sins and know that God in Christ Jesus is not only able, but he is also willing to forgive you all your sins. He will graciously and lovingly remove from you all the guilt and penalty due for your sin. Receive the blessing of forgiveness. Receive the blessing of eternal life.

Live in the joy and freedom that is Christ our Lord, the one who died and yes, is raised again for us. Live in the comfort of knowing that God is working all things out for your good and his glory. Live in the confidence that in prayer you can go boldly unto the throne of grace and find help in your time of need.

Believe ... Receive ... Live the gospel of Jesus Christ today!

About the Author

Anthony J. Carter is the lead pastor of East Point Church in East Point, GA. He is the author and/or editor of several books including *On Being Black and Reformed* and *Glory Road: The Journeys of 10 African-Americans into Reformed Christianity*. Besides his duties as a pastor, he is the husband of Adriane and the father of Anthony Jr., Rachel, Sarah, Siera, and Ana. They live in the Atlanta area where he enjoys studying, golf, and chillin' with the family.

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Other East Point Books:

Wolves Among the Sheep

The Holiness of God

Fighting Sexual Temptation: An Attack of the Heart

