

GOOD NEWS

THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING

STUDIES ON THE GOSPEL IN PAUL'S LETTERS



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What exactly is this thing we call "the gospel"?

As we saw in our recent Galatians series, 'gospel' is the word the New Testament (and especially Paul) uses often. And he just assumes we'll know what it means. Literally, it's easy enough to say that the phrase "the gospel" simply means "the good news." More specifically, it's the message that Paul and the other apostles were preaching that ultimately turned our world upside down.

But again, what exactly IS that message? How do we summarise it? What was it exactly that Paul and the apostles were so at pains to pass on and protect and define? More specifically, if you find yourself in one of those moments where your workmate says, "Ok, tell me exactly what you Christians are on about" ... what do you say? What are the essential truths that a person needs to hear, and believe, to call themselves "a Christian"?

In this series, we're going to race through Paul's key New Testament letters, and focus on passages where he most clearly summarises 'the gospel.' More than that - in each study we're going to think through one key life implication of the gospel, as Paul unpacks *the good news that changes everything - maybe even more than you thought.*

As Christians, one of the most useful things we can do is get a clearer understanding of the gospel. *What exactly is this good news? And what's good about it?* If we can't give a clear answer to those questions, how can we explain our faith to our friends? How else can we 'give an answer for the hope that we have?' How can we defend the gospel if we haven't first understood it? And when we've understood it, are we actually living it? It's our prayer that these short studies will help.

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WEEK 1 || ROMANS 1-5

GOSPEL ACCEPTANCE

As you've probably picked up, the old english word "gospel" means "good news". But so often people get the impression that the Christian gospel is anything but! We've somehow developed a reputation for being unloving, unaccepting and judgmental - almost as if the gospel is bad news.

Has anyone ever told you that Christianity is judgemental? Or felt that yourself? Share your experiences.



THE PROBLEM THE GOSPEL ADDRESSES

The Apostle Paul was so convinced the gospel really was good news that he devoted his entire life to sharing it with everyone he could. In fact, he wrote to the Christians in Rome to explain exactly why this gospel is such good news and why they should help him share it. As we consider Paul's argument together we'll get a sense of how his message could be misunderstood as bad news... but only if we miss the heart of the gospel itself.

Read Romans 1:16-17

1. Why is Paul not ashamed of 'the gospel'?

Apparently Paul's message is good news because it's all about a "powerful salvation". But salvation from what? That's where the *bad news* comes in...

Read Romans 1:18-32

2. According to Paul, what's the big problem facing humanity today (v18)?
3. What's the *original cause* of that problem? (v21-23, 25, 28)
4. How do we see God's wrath in the world now? (v28-32)

"Original sin is the only Christian doctrine that requires no faith, just newspapers."

G. K. Chesterton

Paul's fellow Jews would have agreed that *non-Jews* needed saving from this hideous mess. To Jews, Gentiles were foolish worshipers of statues - and their own bodies - not worshipers of the true creator. But Jews considered *themselves very different*. They knew God. They knew his law. Surely good, religious Jews don't need saving from the same things as everyone else? Well...

Read Romans 2:1-5

5. Does being religious and maintaining high moral standards provide any hope of salvation from God's wrath? Why or why not?

THE SOLUTION THE GOSPEL OFFERS

So far Paul's message has only been bad news. We've all rejected our creator and all deserve his wrath. That's his diagnosis of the problem. The good news is, there's a solution. The gospel Paul proclaims *saves us from* that bad news...

6. Read Romans 3:21-26. What has God done now? (v25-26)

Why is this good news for us?

Read Romans 5:6-11

7. What does the gospel tell us about God and his deepest feelings for us?
8. If we chose not to believe in God's wrath, what would we lose from the gospel?

THE DIFFERENCE THE GOSPEL MAKES

9. If you really believed this gospel, would it leave you in any doubt of how God feels about you? How so?
10. If you really believed this gospel, could you still see someone else as less acceptable in some way than yourself? How so?

This gospel really is good news. In fact it's the best news ever... and once we realise the bad news we see why. The Creator we've rejected, whose wrath we rightly and thoroughly deserve, is the same God who loved us enough to send his son to die in our place, reconciling us with God forever, if only we trust in Jesus! **The one who died for sin is King.** If you believe this gospel, it'll completely change how you see yourself. So bad he had to die for you. So loved he was glad to. And that will completely change how you see others. No more thinking of them as better. You're loved by God! No more thinking of them as worse. They're just as loved as you are! What if we showed people this attitude in our words and actions? Would that make them more ready to hear the gospel on which it's based? Let's pray for each other that we'll do that.

"He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all - how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things."

Romans 8:32

"Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you."

Romans 15:7