
The Gospel of God

Overview

The Apostle Paul expresses a clear distinction between the Gospel of God and the preference of men. He chooses to pursue the pleasure of God expressed in the Gospel of salvation. This is a call for every Christian to do the same.

Comparisons

- Fallen creation places itself above God. Sinful humanity loves self and chases sinful, self-gratifying pleasure. This can be seen in the practices of the hedonist, the pragmatist, the atheist, and the legalist.
- God requires perfect submission from creation. Because He is the most magnificent and most majestic being, God glorifies Himself and pursues His own good pleasures. Sinners saved by His gracious grace are grateful that God desires to display His glory in the redemption of the unrighteous, as they are beneficiaries of such a marvelous display.

Consider this...

The Gospel message is one of total triumph in the face of utter hopelessness, or it provides no victory at all. For any sinner to have hope in the Gospel he must first come to understand his absolute inability to produce any hope himself; the sinner contributes nothing. Christ alone saves, and this is offensive until or unless one concedes that he is despondent without a savior.

Passage: Galatians 1:11-12

Application

- Christians are to lovingly rebuke
- Man is not the inventor of the Gospel
- God saves by empowering His own Gospel

The Gospel's transformative work

"He [Saul/Paul] now saw Christ as Victor, full of mercy and grace, reaching out his loving arms to embrace both Jew and Gentile, yes all those who would place their (God-given) trust in Him.

The experience, therefore, on the way to Damascus shed a flood of light on all the information which had been reaching Paul.

It changed vehement denial into rapturous conviction, vague outward awareness into marvelous insight."

Galatians 1:11-12

Intro: With kindness and solemnity, the Apostle Paul was calling his Christian brothers and sisters back to the Gospel. The story of Jesus Christ is rightly called good news because it claims that God has demonstrated supreme love and grace in the person and work of Christ. This message is not the invention of man, nor is man the object of it. Rather God is the author, keeper, and focus of this exceptionally good message. The Gospel is also the plumb line for Christian fellowship, and it carries the power to save sinners as well as preserve them.

11a For I would have you know, brothers...

- **Paul is most loving as he rebukes these Christians: He provides a great example of godly discipline**
 - ἀδελφοί (*adelphoi*) – brothers, fellow Christians
 - Paul was speaking to people that he still considered part of the same faith he possessed.
 - The Apostle Paul lovingly pleads:
 - "brothers" (1:11; 3:15; 4:12; 4:28; 4:31; 5:13; 6:1; 6:18)
 - "my little children" (4:19)
 - The Apostle Paul also continually and consistently rebukes:
 - "You are deserting the only God who can save" (1:6)
 - "Anyone who deviates from the one true Gospel is under the curse of Almighty God (1:8 & 1:9)
 - "If anyone seeks the approval of men, then he is not a true servant of Christ" (1:10)
 - "Even a person of notable reputation and high standing (Peter) is condemned when he deviates from the true Gospel" (2:11)
 - "If you track your standing before God by how well you are doing, then you count Christ's sacrifice as nothing at all" (2:21)
 - "You are foolish, deceived, and dim-witted if you are following after this notion of prideful self-righteousness" (3:1-3)
 - "If you rely upon your own goodness to justify you before God, then you are cut off from Christ and cursed by God" (3:10)

11 For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel.

- **The Gospel is not down from, according to or about man** – οὐκ ἔστιν κατὰ ἄνθρωπον (*ook estin kata anthropon*)

1) The Gospel is not a human invention.

- No sinful human has ever or would ever invent a grace-based Gospel that is wholly dependent upon the righteousness of another. (Christ-centered vs. man-centered)
- The Gospel of God is the antithesis of human inclination.
 - It insults our self-righteousness
 - I am forced to admit I am actually and hopelessly sinful
 - It humiliates our pride
 - I am left with no room for measuring my own contributions towards any recovery I might enjoy
 - It frustrates our sense of deserved autonomy
 - I am not only more dependent than I would like to admit, but I am utterly dependent upon another
 - It betrays our pretentious disguise
 - If I am to receive grace at all, I must expose myself to the light and be seen as I truly am

2) The Gospel belongs to and comes from God!

- In Genesis 3, it is God who declares hope and grace in the midst of unthinkable tragedy with the promise of a child who will save (Genesis 3:15).
- In Genesis 15, it is God who reveals a unilateral covenant of promise to satisfy both sides of the agreement (Genesis 15:17).
- In Exodus 12, God preserved His people through the sacrifice of a substitute (a picture of the Christ to come) and commanded them to keep the ceremony in order to remind them of God's preservation and grace (Exodus 12:1-28).

- In the book of Joshua, God demonstrates His faithfulness and power as He begins to bring His people into the blessing He promised to them through a servant who carries the same name as the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise of blessing (Joshua 1:10-15).
- Throughout the book of Judges, God preserves His people and exacts righteous punishment upon sinful humanity, demonstrating both His justice and His grace – the same way Christ is promised to return at the end of time.
- In 1 & 2 Samuel, God chooses an unlikely king named David to be the ancestor of the ultimate King and reiterates His promise to save His people under His grace forever (2 Samuel 7:12).
- The prophets tell of God's righteousness, human sinfulness, and God's judgments along with His intent to save by grace – particularly through the person and work of the coming Messiah.
- By the time we arrive at the time of the New Testament, God has caused the anticipation to grow to unbearable measures. Then there is a voice in the wilderness calling out, "Prepare the way of the Lord!" (Luke 3:2-4).
- Then, Jesus did all things according to the former prophecies about the Messiah, and even died exactly how and why God said He would (Acts 2:22-36; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8).
- This Jesus is the promised Redeemer and the only Savior for mankind. He is the demonstration of God's faithfulness and the focal point of the entire Gospel message.
- The author of Hebrews tells us that the culmination and apex of God's Gospel is the Lord Jesus Christ, and that He is the one to be trusted and obeyed (Hebrews 1:1-4).

The Gospel is referred to as being "*the Gospel of God*" in numerous passages (Romans 1:1, 15:16; 2 Corinthians 11:7; 1 Thessalonians 2:2, 8, 9; 1 Peter 4:17; Mark 1:14).

3) The Gospel is not according to man or about man.

- As we have already seen, the Gospel is according to the promise and delivery of God, and the Gospel is about Jesus Christ.

12 For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

- **The Gospel is not merely a set of rational arguments or historical facts.**
 - Pre-Christian Paul was so violently opposed to the claims of the Gospel that he was totally unmoved by the ultimate sacrifice of Christian martyrs (Acts 7:51-8:3).
 - Saul (pre-Christian Paul) was so hostile to the Gospel of Christ that he names himself as an “insolent opponent” (1 Timothy 1:13). This carries the idea that Paul simply could not even hear the Gospel message because he *would not* hear it.
 - Though the content of the Christian Faith is most certainly vital to one’s trust in such claims, and defending that body of truth is a noble purpose indeed, only God can bring dead hearts to life and cause blind eyes to see.

- **Paul received “a revelation of Jesus Christ.”**
 - Luke only records a small portion of what was conveyed, but Paul is no doubt referring to this singularly transformative encounter on the road to Damascus.
 - Acts 9:1-5 – “1 Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.
3 Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him.
4 And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”
5 And he said, “Who are you, Lord?”
And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.
6 But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.”

- **Generally, all Christians are made thus by miraculous intervention.**
 - If the Gospel is *received*, it is because of God, and not because of human ability or desire.
 - Ephesians 2:1-10 - “1 And **you were dead** in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, **following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air**, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience –
3 among whom **we all once lived** in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and **were by nature children of wrath**, like the rest of mankind.
4 **But God**, being rich in mercy, **because of the great love with which he loved us**,
5 **even when we were dead** in our trespasses, **made us alive** together with Christ – by grace you have been saved –
6 and **raised us up with him** and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,
7 **so that** in the coming ages **he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace** in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.
8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. **And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God**,
9 not a result of works, so that **no one may boast**.
10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”
 - John 1:12-13 - “12 to all who did receive him (Jesus Christ), who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,
13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”
 - Further passages on the subject: Romans 9:16; Acts 13:48; John 3:1-7

Takeaway:

Let us hear the loving rebuke from God Himself, through the words of the Apostle Paul to the Galatians:

First, Let's not think that those who would confront us in our error are our enemy or that we should avoid such as these. No, we should welcome the loving rebuke of a friend who cares enough for our soul to expose himself/herself to our sinful retaliations. May we resolve to give a humble ear to those who would love us so committedly.

Second, Let's thank God for His grace and pray that He would dispense it all the more among us. God alone owns the message of the Gospel, and He alone brings men and women, and boys and girls, under its gracious covering. Oh, dear family, pray as though tomorrow were to be the day that our friends and neighbors will stand before a holy and wrath-filled God. May we pray unceasingly and fervently for the hearts and lives of those we see each day, so that at the end of our days we will not look with horror at the time we wasted when such high things were at stake.

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