

What Is the Gospel?

Andy Naselli | April 8, 2011

Introduction

1. What does the word “gospel” mean?

2. News can be good to various degrees.

3. The bad news is very bad.

3.1. God is the holy creator.

- Because God created us, he owns us, and we are accountable to him.
- Because God is holy, he cannot simply overlook sin.

3.2. We are sinners.

4. The good news is very good.

4.1. Jesus lived, died, and rose again for sinners.

Jesus died *instead* of sinners, *in the place* of sinners, *as a substitute* for sinners.

4.2. God saves sinners who turn and trust Jesus.

The response God requires from you is repentance and faith.

5. We can summarize the bad news and good news with four words: God, man, Christ, response.

5.1. 1 Corinthians 15:1–5

5.2. Romans 1–4

5.3. Acts 3:18–19 (cf. 2:38; 10:39–43; 13:38–39)

6. So what exactly is the gospel?

6.1. Definition of the Gospel

- Jesus lived, died, and rose again for sinners.
- God will save you if you turn and trust Jesus.

6.2. Presuppositions, Responses, and Results of the Gospel (Not the Gospel Itself)

- Some presuppositions of the gospel: the bad news; the deity of Jesus; the Bible’s storyline
- Responses to the gospel: repentance and faith
- Some results of the gospel: forgiveness; reconciliation; adoption; progressive sanctification; loving our neighbors

7. The gospel should transform your life.

Many Christians *assume* the gospel and focus on relatively peripheral issues. But the gospel isn't just "step one."

7.1. The gospel should transform your view on why the gospel is good news.

John Piper, *God Is the Gospel: Meditations on God's Love as the Gift of Himself*:

When I say that *God Is the Gospel*, I mean that the highest, best, final, decisive good of the gospel, without which no other gifts would be good, is the glory of God in the face of Christ revealed for our everlasting enjoyment. (p. 13)

The critical question for our generation—and for every generation—is this: If you could have heaven, with no sickness, and with all the friends you ever had on earth, and all the food you ever liked, and all the leisure activities you ever enjoyed, and all the natural beauties you ever saw, all the physical pleasures you ever tasted, and no human conflict or any natural disasters, could you be satisfied with heaven, if Christ were not there? (p. 15)

All the saving events and all the saving blessings of the gospel are means of getting obstacles out of the way so that we might know and enjoy God most fully. Propitiation, redemption, forgiveness, imputation, sanctification, liberation, healing, heaven—none of these is good news except for one reason: they bring us to God for our everlasting enjoyment of him. (p. 47)

7.2. The gospel should transform your relationship with God.

You can't impress God. You can't earn God's favor. You should live a certain way (1 Pet 3:1–2) *because of* the gospel (1 Pet 3:3–7), not to placate God or put him in your debt. Your status with God today is not based on whether you had your quiet time and haven't committed any very bad sins. Your relationship with God is not based on whether you are living righteously.

Jerry Bridges: "Your worst days are never so bad that you are beyond the reach of God's grace. And your best days are never so good that you are beyond the need of God's grace."

7.3. The gospel should transform your church.

Jesus gave his church a mission: make disciples. If you don't understand the gospel very well, you'll not fulfill your primary mission very effectively.

7.4. The gospel should transform your relationships with other people.

The gospel should change how you relate to those around you, especially your family and friends. When you begin to view yourself as deeply sinful and see God's forgiveness in Christ as amazing, you are postured to graciously love others.

7.5. The gospel should transform your worship, especially when you sing.

Your understanding of the gospel affects the quality of your worship.

1. Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed? (1707; Isaac Watts, 1674–1748)
2. And Can It Be? (1738; Charles Wesley, 1707–88)
3. Arise, My Soul, Arise (1742; Charles Wesley, 1707–88)
4. Before the Throne of God Above (1863; Charitie Lees Smith [later Bancroft, then de Chenez], 1841–1923)
5. It Is Well with My Soul (1873; Horatio G. Spafford, 1828–88)
6. Hallelujah! What a Savior! (1875; Philip P. Bliss, 1838–76)
7. How Deep the Father’s Love for Us (1995; Stuart Townend)
8. I Will Glory in My Redeemer (2001; Steve and Vikki Cook)
9. In Christ Alone (2001; Keith Getty and Stuart Townend)
10. Jesus, My Only Hope (2002; Mark Altrogge)
11. The Gospel Song (2002; Drew Jones and Bob Kauflin)
12. Jesus, Thank You (2003; Pat Sczebel)
13. See, What a Morning (2003; Keith Getty and Stuart Townend)
14. O Church, Arise (2005; Keith Getty and Stuart Townend)
15. The Power of the Cross (2005; Keith Getty and Stuart Townend)
16. O Great God (2006; Bob Kauflin)

8. Recommended Reading

1. Barrett, Michael P. V. *Complete in Him: A Guide to Understanding and Enjoying the Gospel*. Greenville, SC: Ambassador-Emerald International, 2000.
2. Bridges, Jerry. *The Gospel for Real Life: Turn to the Liberating Power of the Cross . . . Every Day*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2003.
3. Carson, D. A. “The Biblical Gospel.” Pages 75–85 in *For Such a Time as This: Perspectives on Evangelicalism, Past, Present and Future*. Edited by Steve Brady and Harold Rowdon. London: Evangelical Alliance, 1996.
4. ———. “The Gospel of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:1–19).” May 23, 2007. Text, audio, and video [available](#). [A lightly edited manuscript of a sermon preached at The Gospel Coalition’s conference in Deerfield, IL.]
5. ———. “What Is the Gospel?—Revisited.” Pages 147–70 in *For the Fame of God’s Name: Essays in Honor of John Piper*. Edited by Sam Storms and Justin Taylor. Wheaton: Crossway, 2010.
6. Gilbert, Greg. *What Is the Gospel? IX Marks*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2010. [Foreword by D. A. Carson. Small, short (127 pp.), clear.]
7. Piper, John. *God Is the Gospel: Meditations on God’s Love as the Gift of Himself*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2005. [God himself is the greatest good of the gospel.]
8. Vincent, Milton. *A Gospel Primer for Christians: Learning to See the Glories of God’s Love*. Bemidji, MN: Focus, 2008. [Cf. [my review](#).]