

Gospel Dictionary Series

A ten part message series that defines big theological and doctrinal concepts using simple terms and familiar passages.

"For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."

1 Corinthians 2:2 NIV

INTRODUCTION

The reason for such a big series is because we never graduate from the basic or foundational truths of the Bible. Our theology of the biblical Gospel must never grow *stale*, *expire* or turn into something *else*. We must constantly refresh our theology by getting back to the basics. This series will help us do that.

This series aims to do two things

1. To bring Jesus and the biblical Gospel into clear focus.
2. To bring us (our thinking and theology) into alignment with the biblical Gospel.

Q: Why refresh our focus on Jesus and the biblical Gospel over the next ten weeks?

A: Because in much of the visible church there are many who preach a *different* Gospel. We must make the choice to *know* the Gospel of, "Christ crucified for the forgiveness of sin."

A: The entire scope of the Bible is the story of Jesus and the Gospel.

"There is more to know in the Bible than Jesus and the Gospel, but apart from them, nothing is worth knowing."

- Michael Horton

Only when we have a firm grasp on the *biblical* Gospel are we ready to talk about things like a). Who God is, b). How we know him, and c). How we are known by him.

PART ONE: Gospel

Definition

The word Gospel (euangelion) simply means, "Good message, good story or good news." The *biblical* Gospel then is God's story. A story that weaves itself like a red ribbon through every page of the Bible and every age of human history. A story that finds its climax on top of Calvary's mountain with the hero hanging naked and bleeding on a cross. And a story that will end when God has put everything under the feet of Jesus.

"Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God."

Romans 1:1

Q: If the Gospel is such great news, why is it so often overlooked or rejected?

Common Objections to the Gospel

1. Though the Gospel is *good news*, it is **also** the most scandalous claim in the entire Bible (*causing general public outrage by a perceived offense against morality or law*) and the most controversial point of the Christian faith. Preaching Jesus is not objectionable to most people, but preaching that Jesus was crucified and shed his precious blood for the forgiveness of their sins (and the consequence for not accepting his free gift, eternity in hell) most certainly is. That is why many within the visible church have chosen to water down the message of the Gospel so as not to offend the reasonable.

“But we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block (skandalon) and to Gentiles foolishness. but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God”

1 Corinthians 1:23-24

2. Though the Gospel is *God’s story*, many people prefer to vainly (*in a way that produces no result*) believe in God apart from His redemptive story.

“I do not believe the Gospel because I believe in God, I believe in God because I believe the Gospel.”

- Michael Horton

There are great arguments for the existence of a supreme being that most reasonable people can agree on, but unless the Gospel is true the existence of God is a). Personally meaningless or, b). A horrible threat.

The God that so many claim to believe in is **only** known in Jesus Christ and the result of believing in God’s story is eternal salvation.

Jesus said to him [Thomas] “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father **except** through me.”

John 14:6

If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with your heart you believe and are justified, and with your mouth you confess and are saved.

Romans 10:9-10

Christian Objections to the Gospel

1. Many Christians view the Gospel as being irrelevant for daily living.

“His **divine power** has given us everything we need for a **godly life** through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.”

2 Peter 1:3 NIV

"For the **grace of God** has appeared that offers salvation to all people. **It** teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age."

Titus 2:11-12 NIV

2. Some Christians believe that the Gospel is too impersonal and instead they have chosen to experience God in a "personal relationship" apart from sound doctrine concerning the Gospel. But you cannot experience God apart from a). Knowing who he is, b). What he has done, and c). Who you are in relation to him. These things are **only known through the Scriptures**, the only standard for absolute truth. This is why we must align ourselves with the *biblical* Gospel which is the only Gospel with power for salvation and right relationship with God.

"Therefore if you have any encouragement from being **united with Christ**, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind."

Philippians 2:1-2 NIV

3. Some Christians say that they want to, "Move beyond the Gospel to the deeper things of God." But this is impossible. The deepest thing in the Bible is the Gospel. It's the climax of God's story! Everything flows into it and out from it. The Gospel is not something you tack on to your world view, it's not an achievement badge. It is everything and it reshapes everything; rebuilds everything from the ground up, from the center out.

"So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to **grasp** how **wide** and **long** and **high** and **deep** is the love of Christ, and to **know** this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."

Ephesians 3:17-19 NIV

What the Gospel is not

The Gospel is **not** the first step on the pathway to improved mortality, behaviour modification, personal growth. When we see the Gospel this way the Christ-centered, biblical Gospel is pushed aside and the result is a message and a faith that are, "trivial, sentimental, experiential, affirming, and irrelevant." This alternative "gospel" is a message of moralism, personal comfort, self-help, self-improvement, individualistic religion and therapeutic deism. [We'll talk more about this when we deal with "discipleship and good works."](#) This other "gospel" trivializes God, making him a means to our selfish ends.

The Gospel is **not** about our religious or moral ascent to God but about God's gracious descent to us.

What the Gospel is

The Gospel is the solution to a big problem... Sin.

1). Everyone is a sinner

What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together

become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.” “Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit.” “The poison of vipers is on their lips.” “Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.” “Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know.” “There is no fear of God before their eyes.” Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.

Romans 3:9-20 NIV

2). Everyone was dead in sin

As for you, you were **dead in your transgressions and sins**, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. **All of us** also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. **But because of his great love for us**, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

Ephesians 2:1-5 NIV

3). Everyone who believes is made alive to righteousness

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

Romans 6:1-10 NIV

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Galatians 2:20 NKJV

The Gospel encourages us to believe and trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins and the promise of a new life, Christ’s life. Next week we will look at the Gospel phrase, “vicarious blood atonement.”