

*Paraphrase of the Book of Romans***PREFACE**

No book in the whole of the Bible explains so clearly and so masterfully the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as Paul's epistle to the Romans. Here, the great apostle expounds fully the whole counsel of God pertaining to our salvation in Christ. Paul's purpose in writing this somewhat lengthy letter to the Christians in Rome was to reveal to them the full significance of the everlasting gospel so that they may be fully established in their Christian faith. It is for this reason Luther labeled this epistle as "the clearest gospel of all."

Further, no book in the whole Bible has made such an impact on the Christian Church in bringing spiritual revival and reformation as the epistle to the Romans. It was through being enlightened as to the truth of justification by faith, so clearly expounded in Romans, that Martin Luther was delivered from his bondage to legalism and became the leader of the Protestant Reformation. The same doctrine, expounded by Luther, led to the conversion of John Bunyan, the "Immortal Tinker of Bedford." Similarly, it was as he listened to a man reading from the preface of Luther's Commentary on Romans that John Wesley's heart was "strangely warmed" on the evening of May 24, 1738, resulting in the great English revival of the 18th century. Many other experiences could be added to the above.

Not only is the need for revival and reformation in the Christian Church today so desperate, but never in the history of God's people has it been more important for believers to be fully established in Christ than in our present day, "the time of the end." Had Paul been living in these last days of this earth's history he certainly would have had as great a concern for the believers as he had for the Roman Christians who in his day faced great persecution. However, while the substance of his gospel would have been the same, the style of his letter to 20th century Christians would have been different. The Christians of his day belonged to a very different culture, background, and mentality than their modern counterparts. This is one reason why so many today find Romans such a difficult book to understand.

The purpose of this somewhat free paraphrase of Paul's epistle to the Romans is to bridge that gap between the world of Paul's day and ours, so that the message of Romans may become meaningful to the modern Christian. This in turn, I hope, will bring revival and reformation in the lives of all those who are hungering and thirsting after the righteousness of Christ. Jesus made it clear that before the end comes "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness" (Matt. 24:14).

The fulfillment of this prophecy is referred to in the book of Revelation as the three angels' messages—the Everlasting Gospel, proclaimed in the setting of God's final judgment (Rev. 14:6-12). It is my firm conviction that this epistle to the Romans, along with its sister epistle to the Galatians, will never be separated from the proclamation of the threefold message of Revelation 14 in their worldwide work and influence. How important, then, that we come to grips with the message of Romans!

<http://www.gospeltruth.org/Sequeira/RomansParaphrased/romans.htm>

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Every attempt has been made to be as accurate as possible to Paul's thought expressed in each text. However, I do not claim infallibility, and the best I can hope for is that you let this stimulate you to a deeper, prayerful study of Romans. Keep close to several good Bible translations or, if you know it, the Greek. My sincere prayer in presenting Paul's letter to the Romans in today's terms is that "you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

—E.H. "Jack" Sequeira

We  
Celebrate the  
Good News

# EVANGELION

## What is the Gospel?

by  
J. Hampton Keathley III, Th.M.

### Introduction

In a day of depressing headlines and uncertainty all around us, good news is very welcome. What better news could there be than as the old hymn says: "The vilest offender who truly believes, that moment from Jesus a pardon receives?" When Christians refer to the "Gospel" they are referring to the "good news" that Jesus Christ died to pay the penalty for our sin so that we might become the children of God through faith alone in Christ alone. In short, "the Gospel" is the sum total of the saving truth as God has communicated it to lost humanity as it is revealed in the person of His Son and in the Holy Scriptures, the Bible. If you aren't sure whether or not you are God's child, you might want to read *God's Plan of Salvation* before you read on in this lesson.

### The Basic Meaning of the Term

The term *gospel* is found ninety-nine times in the NASB and ninety-two times in the NET Bible. In the Greek New *gospel* is the translation of the Greek noun *euangelion* (occurring 76 times) "good news," and the verb *euangelizo*, (occurring 54 times), meaning "to bring or announce good news." Both words are derived from the noun *angelos*, "messenger." In classical Greek, an *euangelos* was one who brought a message of victory or other political or personal news that caused joy. In addition, *euangelizomai* (the middle voice form of the verb) meant "to speak as a messenger of gladness, to proclaim good news."<sup>1</sup> Further, the noun *euangelion* became a technical term for the message of victory, though it was also used for a political or private message that brought joy.<sup>2</sup>

That both the noun and the verb are used so extensively in the New Testament demonstrate how it developed a distinctly Christian use and emphasis because of the glorious news announced to mankind of salvation and victory over sin and death that God offers to all people through the person and accomplished work of Jesus Christ on the cross as proven by His resurrection, ascension, and session at God's right hand. In the New Testament these two words, *euangelion* and *euangelizo*, became technical terms for this message of good news offered to all men through faith in Christ.

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The *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia* summarizes the gospel message this way:

The central truth of the gospel is that God has provided a way of salvation for men through the gift of His son to the world. He suffered as a sacrifice for sin, overcame death, and now offers a share in His triumph to all who will accept it. The gospel is good news because it is a gift of God, not something that must be earned by penance or by self-improvement (Jn 3:16; Rom 5:8-11; II Cor 5:14-19; Tit 2:11-14).<sup>3</sup>

### The Gospel in a Nutshell

In I Corinthians 15:1-8, the apostle Paul summarizes the most basic ingredients of the gospel message, namely, the death, burial, resurrection, and appearances of the resurrected Christ. Note the four clauses introduced by *that* in bold type in verses 3-5 below:

15:1 Now I want to make clear for you, brothers and sisters, the gospel that I preached to you, that you received and on which you stand, 15:2 and by which you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. 15:3 For I passed on to you as of first importance what I also received—**that** Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, 15:4 and **that** he was buried, and **that** he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures, 15:5 and **that** he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve...<sup>4</sup>

These verses, which were an early Christian confession, give us the heart of the gospel and show that the resurrection is an integral part of the gospel. Note that Paul described this as "of first importance"—a phrase that stresses priority, not time. The stress is on the centrality of these truths to the gospel message.

Actually, the central ingredient of the gospel message is a two-fold confession: (1) Christ died for our sins and (2) He was raised on the third day. The reality of these two elements can be verified by the Scriptures (cf. Ps. 16:10; Isa. 53:8-10) and by such awesome historical evidence as the empty tomb and the eye witnesses. Thus, the other two elements mentioned here accomplish two important facts regarding the gospel. The fact that He was buried *verified His death*, and the fact that He appeared to others *verified His resurrection*.

### Modifying Terms

While *gospel* is often found alone, it is very often modified by various terms that focus on a particular aspect of the gospel.

It is modified by various descriptive phrases, such as, "the gospel of God" (Mk 1:14, ASV; Rom 15:16), "the gospel of Jesus Christ," (Mk 1:1; 1 Cor 9:12), "the gospel of his Son" (Rom 1:9), "the gospel of the kingdom" (Mt 4:23; 9:35; 24:14), "the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24), "the gospel of the glory of Christ" (II Cor 4:4, ASV), "the gospel of peace" (Eph 6:15), "an eternal gospel" (Rev 14:6, RSV). Although distinctive aspects of the message are indicated by the various modifiers, the gospel is essentially one. Paul speaks of "another gospel" which is not an equivalent, for the gospel of God is His revelation, not the result of discovery (Gal 1:6-11).<sup>2</sup>

In the New Testament, the various modifiers bring out some aspect of the gospel that is being stressed in the context and is a part of the good news of what God offers us in Christ.

(1) **The gospel of Jesus Christ** (Mark 1:1; 1 Cor. 9:12) and **the gospel of His Son** (Rom. 1:9). These two descriptions speak of the good news of salvation that comes through the person and work of Jesus Christ who is the very Son of God in human flesh. Again, this is a good news of deliverance from sin's penalty, power and presence through the two advents of Christ.

(2) **The gospel of the grace of God** (Acts 20:24) emphasizes that salvation in all of its aspects is on the basis of grace rather than on some meritorious system of works.

(3) **The gospel of the kingdom** (Matt. 4:23; 9:35; 24:14) is the good news that God will establish His kingdom on earth through the two advents of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(4) **The gospel of peace** (Eph. 6:15) describes how this good news of salvation in Christ brings peace in all its many aspects (peace with God, the peace of God, peace with others, and world peace) through the victory accomplished by the Savior.

(5) **The eternal or everlasting gospel** (Rev. 14:6) expands our perspective of gospel as we normally think of it. This gospel as proclaimed by the angel has several key elements of gloriously good news that are developed in three commands and two reasons:

- **Command #1: "Fear God."** This refers to a holy reverence that recognizes the sovereign authority and power of God to deal with man in His holy wrath and thus, to bring an end to the world of sin as we now know it. To fear God is to recognize Him as the true God who can destroy the soul and not just the body as God will do with the beast of Revelation and His anti-God system.
- **Command #2: "Give Him glory."** This refers to the praise and honor that should accrue to God from mankind due to our recognition and high estimation of God as the sovereign Creator of the universe.

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- **Command #3: "And worship Him who made ..."** The word "worship" means to show reverence or respect. This word emphasizes the external display as seen in our obedience, prayer, singing, and formal worship. The word "fear" emphasizes the reverential mental attitude behind the worship. In the Tribulation people will be forced to fear and formally acknowledge the beast and his image. In this message the angel is demanding that mankind reject the beast and formally turn to God to worship Him (cf. Rev. 14:11).
- **Reason #1:** "The hour of his judgment has come" is a reference to the final judgments of the Tribulation—the bowl judgments—which are about to occur that will put an end to the system of the beast and bring the rule the Lord Jesus, the King of kings. These will conclude with the return of Christ Himself (Rev. 19) and lead to the removal of all unbelievers from the earth. The emphasis is to not delay because the time is short.
- **Reason #2:** This is seen in the reference to God as the Creator in verse 7b. Here we are called to pay attention to the ageless and universal message of the creation itself. Age after age creation has called mankind to recognize God's existence and to seek after Him (cf. Acts 17:26-27 with Psalm 19:1-6). This means people are without excuse and that, when the angel proclaims this gospel, the hour of the Creator's judgment is about to fall (see Rom. 1:18f). Though this is the essential and primary element of the angel's everlasting gospel, perhaps he will say more than this for from age to age a person's capacity to reverence, glorify and worship God has come only through believing and knowing Christ (cf. John 14:6 with Acts 4:12; John 4:23-24).

### Popular Notions Limit the Meaning of the Gospel

Popular notions about the term 'gospel' tend to limit it to the message of how one may receive eternal life through faith in Christ, but it is much broader than that. For instance, Paul says in Romans 1:16-17, "For I am not ashamed of the *gospel*, for it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For the righteousness of God is revealed in the *gospel* from faith to faith, just as it is written, "*the righteous by faith will live.*" But by using the term "gospel" here, Paul is not

... limiting his thoughts to those central truths by which a person is given eternal life. For Paul, his gospel included such matters as justification by faith (3-5), sanctification through the Spirit (6-8), and God's future for Israel (9-11). In fact, the gospel gathers together all the truths that are found in Romans. Therefore, we can conclude that in Rom 1:16, Paul is expressing his confidence that the truths of justification, sanctification, and even glorification provide God's power to deliver us from enslavement and bondage to sin.<sup>6</sup>

In a footnote to the above statement, Hart adds the following explanation.

Romans 16:25 demonstrates that sanctification truth (Romans 6-8) was part of Paul's gospel"; "Now to Him who is able to *establish* you according to my gospel..." (italics added). In Romans, Paul is defending the gospel he preached. While the apostle preached "the gospel of His [God's] Son" (1:9), the "gospel of God" (1:1; 15:16), and the "gospel of Christ" (1:16; MajT; 15:19), Paul also found it necessary to use the phrase "my gospel" (Rom 2:16; 16:25). Paul's use of the term "gospel" is very broad, including all the truths about Christ in the Old Testament and the New Testament. The gospel (1:1) concerned Old Testament revelation about Christ (1:2), his Davidic lineage (1:3), the Holy Spirit's role in the resurrection (1:4), and Paul's apostleship to Gentiles (1:5)... It is more adequate to see Paul as using the term "gospel" in a wider scope than popular notions about the word.<sup>2</sup>

#### Reception of the Gospel

One of the important issues about this gospel message has to do with how one receives the salvation offered in the gospel. The fact that God offers us salvation from sin's penalty and power with the glorious promise that this will one day result in the glorious reign of Christ on earth with sin, death, and Satan as vanquished foes is glorious news to be sure. However, the fact that God offers us salvation as a free gift through faith in Christ is good news beyond description. Paul clearly links the gospel with faith in Galatians 3:6-9.

**3:6** Just as Abraham "*believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,*" **3:7** so then, understand that those who believe are the sons of Abraham. **3:8** And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, proclaimed the gospel to Abraham ahead of time, saying, "*all the nations will be blessed in you.*" **3:9** So then those who believe are blessed along with Abraham the believer.

If the salvation offered to us were dependent on our merit or our ability to keep the law, it would not be good news because of our sinfulness and complete inability to keep the law or any kind of righteous principles as a means of our justification or right standing with God.

**19** Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God; **20** because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:19-20 NASB).

**16** yet we know that no one is justified by the works of the law but by the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by the faithfulness of Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified (Gal. 2:16 NASB).

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Why is this element of grace such wonderful news? Because it guarantees justification with God and the reason is that justification is based on the accomplished work and merit of Jesus Christ.

**4:13** For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would inherit the world was not through the law, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. **4:14** For if they become heirs by the law, faith is empty and the promise is nullified. **4:15** For the law brings wrath, because where there is no law there is no transgression either. **4:16** For this reason it is by faith that it may be by grace, with the result that *the promise may be certain* to all the descendants—not only to those who are under the law, but also to those who have the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all (Rom. 4:13-16, emphasis mine).

#### Warnings About 'Another Gospel' Which is Not a Gospel

One of the beautiful and joyful aspects of the message of salvation in Christ that makes it such good news is the element of grace (Acts 20:24). Salvation is the free gift of God to be received by faith alone in Christ alone (Rev. 21:6; 22:17; Rom. 4:4-5; Eph. 2:8-9; Tit. 3:4-5). But the message of grace goes contrary to the heart and thinking of man who intuitively thinks in terms of merit: After all, you can't get something for nothing—at least not if its worth anything. Man has always had a problem with grace and this is easily seen in the book of Acts. From the very early days of the church, it has faced the problem of those who wanted to add some form of works to the message of grace.

In Acts 15:1 we read these words: "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." Verse 5 tells us that these were men from the sect of the Pharisees who had believed. From within its own ranks (they were members of the church) a controversy broke out concerning the exact nature and content of the gospel message. Later the apostle Paul had to deal with a similar controversy in the book of Galatians. Writing regarding those who wanted to deny the gospel of grace, Paul wrote, "Now this matter arose because of the false brothers with false pretenses who slipped in unnoticed to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, to make us slaves. But we did not surrender to them even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you" (Gal. 2:4-5).

So, the apostle warned of those who offer a gospel of works for salvation rather than grace. We should remember, as Paul teaches us in Romans 4 and 11. If it is by grace, it is no longer by works and if by works, it is no longer by grace (see Rom. 4:3-4; 11:6). So in reality, any time someone offers a gospel of works, it is not the gospel—a message of good news. Instead it is bad news, it is false, and a terrible distortion.

**1:6** I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and following

a different gospel— 1:7 not that there is another gospel; but there are some who are disturbing you and wanting to distort the gospel of Christ. 1:8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be condemned to hell! 1:9 As we have said before, and now I say again, if any one is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let him be condemned to hell! 1:10 Am I now trying to gain the approval of people or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a slave of Christ (Gal. 1:6-10).

Therefore, if distorted by rejection of the truth that all God does for us in Christ is by grace alone through faith apart from works or by a denial of who Jesus is, then the "gospel" is a "different gospel, which is in fact, no gospel at all (Gal. 1:7)."

### Conclusion

In summary, what is the gospel? It is the message of the good news of salvation, the word of truth offered to mankind by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross. It is a message not only of eternal life, but one that encompasses the total plan of God to redeem people from the ravages of sin, death, Satan, and the curse that now covers the earth.

The world is blinded to the gospel by Satan who wants to keep people from seeing the glorious nature of the gospel of Christ (2 Cor. 4:3-4), but the Christian should never be ashamed of the gospel nor reticent to share it because the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes for the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17).

Furthermore, the gospel does not come simply in words. "For our gospel did not come to you merely in words, but in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction (in much assurance) (1 Thess. 1:5).

Of course, the gospel is a message of words since words are basic to the intelligent communication of God's truth. As a message, the gospel is a witness to the historical work of God in the person and work of Christ for which the right words are crucial. However, this message is not merely a message of words. Words can be very eloquent, persuasive, and entertaining and they may move people emotionally and intellectually, but such can not save them and bring them into the family of God (see 1 Cor. 2:1ff). Thus, the apostle added, the gospel came "also in power."

In contrast to mere words, the gospel came "with power." Some would like to relate this to miraculous works as authenticating signs, but normally, the plural, "powers," would be used if that were meant (see Matt. 13:54; 14:2; 1 Cor. 12:10; Gal. 3:5; Heb. 2:4; 6:5). Others would relate it to the inward power in the messengers as a result of the filling of the Spirit, but this important characteristic is brought out by the next prepositional phrase mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 1:5, "with" or "by the Spirit." Rather, could it not refer simply to the inherent power of the gospel as the "Word of God which is alive and

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powerful" (Heb. 4:12)? It is not just a message of words, but a message which is living, active, powerful and able to bring people into a saving relationship with the living God for one simple reason: It is God's Word and it is truth. It is the true revelation of God's activity in Jesus Christ. See also the apostle's comment in 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

But Paul quickly adds, "and in the Holy Spirit." This takes us to the second of the positive elements that gave these missionaries their boldness in presenting the gospel. Paul and his associates knew they were indwelt by the Spirit as their helper or enabler for ministry (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7f; Acts 1:8). The Spirit of God, as the third person of the Trinity, is called "the Spirit of Truth" because of His role in taking the truth of the Word and revealing it to men (see John 14:17; 15:26; 16:8-13; 1 John 4:6; Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 2:6-16). Because of the blindness and hardness of men's heart, they are powerless to even desire, much less grasp the life-giving truth of the gospel (cf. Rom. 3:11), but by the powerful pre-salvation ministry of the Spirit who led the missionaries (see Acts 16:6-10), who prepares hearts (Acts 16:14), and who convicts and draws men to God (Rom. 2:4; John 12:32; 16:8f), some will listen, grasp, and believe the gospel and experience its saving power (see also 2 Thess. 2:13).

Thus, the apostle added a third positive element concerning the gospel which they brought to the Thessalonians—"and with full conviction." This points us to the faith and confidence of the missionaries. It was not in their looks, in their beaming personalities, in their eloquence or oratorical skill, nor in their methodology that they trusted. They preached the gospel with conviction resting in the fact they were preaching the powerful, life-giving truth of God fortified by the powerful ministry of the Spirit of God who worked both in the missionaries and in their hearers.

May we realize with Paul that the gospel is a sacred trust (1 Tim. 1:11). Thus, may we with the apostle be under divine compulsion to proclaim it (1 Cor. 9:16), and seek the prayer of others that we may carry out the task of sharing the gospel with boldness (Eph. 6:19). This will often involve us in opposition (1 Thess. 2:2) and affliction (2 Tim. 1:8), but the gospel of salvation is "the word of truth" (Eph. 1:13).

1 Colin Brown, general editor, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1976), Volume 2, 107.

2 Colin Brown, 107.

3 Charles F. Pfeiffer, *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia*, (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1975), electronic media.

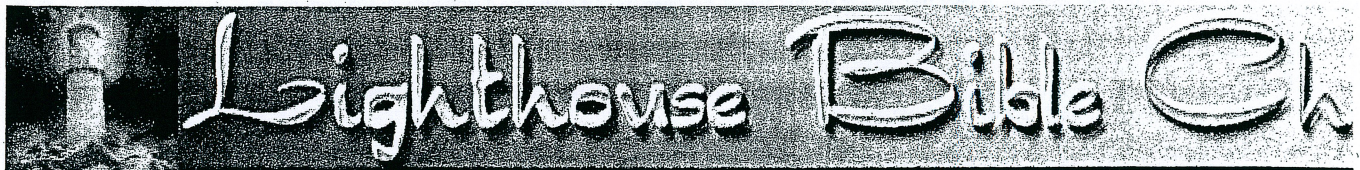
4 Unless otherwise note, all quotations are from the NET Bible [www.bible.org](http://www.bible.org).

5 Charles F. Pfeiffer, electronic media.

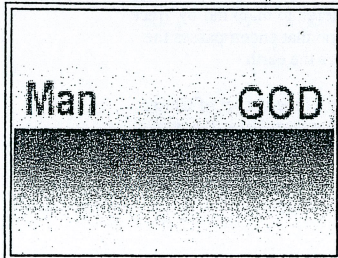
6 John Hart, "The Use and Abuse of Romans 10:9-10," *Journal of Grace Evangelical Society*, ed. Robert N. Wilkin, Vol. 12, no. 23, Autumn (1999): 17.

7 Hart, 17.



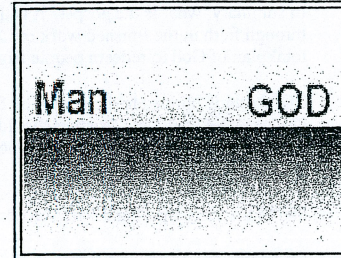

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For as much as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things...but with the precious blood of Christ. I Peter



## What is the Gospel?

by Rolaant L. McKenzie



What is the gospel? Knowing the answer to this question is vital if one is to receive salvation and have a life-transforming relationship with Jesus Christ, for belief in the wrong gospel will not save, but condemn (Galatians 1:6-9). 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 provides a good summary of what the gospel is:

"Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."

The gospel is the good news of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ that provides full and free deliverance from the power and penalty of sin according to the grace of God alone through faith in Jesus Christ alone. Why is this such wonderful news?

You and everyone else have been born with a fatal condition. This condition is called sin. Why is this condition so serious? Because God is sinless and hates sin, for sin is rebellion against His perfect and righteous standard. And your sinful actions makes you an enemy of God (Romans 3:23; James 4:4). God made man imperishable, in His own image (Genesis 1:27). He made man so that he may have continual fellowship with Him. But when sin came, the intimate fellowship between man and God changed.

According to Genesis 3, humanity became separated from God when Adam and Eve disobeyed Him and ate the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the tree from which God had forbidden them to eat. Humanity became separated from God because all people are descended from Adam. As a result, the sinful nature Adam acquired through his disobedience was passed down to all people, including you. Because of this inherited sin nature everyone sins. It comes naturally. It is part of the fabric of being human. Adam's sin placed you apart from God and under His condemnation (Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:22). The effect of sin on you is that it extends to every part of your personality -- your thinking, your emotions, and your will. This does not mean that you are as evil as you can be, but it does mean that sin has extended to your entire being. The lost person is dead in his sins. All are sinners and cannot do anything to save themselves. Without the sovereign, regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, such a person is blind and deaf to the message of the gospel (Romans 8:7-8; 1 Corinthians 2:14), and is totally unable and unwilling to accept salvation through Jesus Christ alone.



Many continually try to end the separation between themselves and God by their own efforts. They live "a good life", or are religious, or adhere to a particular ethical philosophy. But these attempts at reaching God are futile, and fall infinitely short. They are all tainted with sin. Sin is a cancer that infects all. And you either get the cancer, or the cancer will get you!

But there is hope! There is an antidote to sin and its deadly effects. As John 3:16 states, God loved fallen humanity so much that He sent His only Son to redeem sinners like you. Also, God demonstrated His own love toward sinners in that while they were yet in the depths of sin and rebellion against Him, Christ died for them (Romans 5:8). Jesus bridged the gap by His atoning death on the cross and ended the separation. Jesus was special because He was born of a virgin by the Holy Spirit. He was not born of Adam's seed as all other human beings are, and so therefore did not inherit a sinful nature. He did not have the tendency to sin as we all do. The Bible teaches that the payment for sin is death (Romans 6:23). It also teaches that without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness of sin (Hebrews 9:22).

In the Old Testament, God forbade sacrifice of spotted, deformed, and sickly animals (Deuteronomy 15:21; Malachi 1:7-14). He did this because a spotted, sickly, or deformed animal could not be a perfect sacrifice to pay for sin. Only a clean, healthy lamb without spot or blemish could be sacrificed. The lambs offered as the payment for sin in the Old Testament pointed forward to the time when Jesus Christ, the perfect, unblemished Lamb of God, would take the place of sinners and take upon Himself the just punishment for all their sins. As in New Testament times, people living in the Old Testament period were saved by faith (Habakkuk 2:4). They looked forward to a perfect Savior who would cleanse from sin and establish righteousness. Not merely outwardly, but most importantly, inwardly. God is more interested in what is inside us rather than in externals. He is more concerned with our motives than outward appearances (1 Samuel 16:7). God is more interested in a humble and repentant heart than in sacrifices or offerings (Psalms 51:16-17).

The good news that Jesus Christ commissioned His apostles to preach was His death on the cross for sinners and His resurrection from the dead (an historical event that provided immutable proof of His deity and the truth of His teachings, especially those regarding Himself being the only way to salvation). This *good news*, or *gospel*, is called "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16). The apostles taught that salvation is by the grace of God alone through faith in Jesus Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 3:4-7; Romans 4:3-5, 10:5-13). They were uncompromising in this message, and condemned all attempts by others to add anything to it. The Apostle Paul taught that belief in any other gospel that was a "different gospel" brought the condemnation of God rather than salvation (Galatians 1:6-9).

A "different gospel" is a gospel that on the surface may appear to be genuine and lead to salvation, but in the end it leads to eternal condemnation. This "different gospel" is a counterfeit gospel. It is a perversion of the gospel of the grace of God. It denies the complete ability of God's grace alone to save, to preserve, and to perfect the believer, and adds human works or merit. It is a "gospel" that seems right, feels right, and appears to offer the way to eternal life, but in the end it leads to death (Proverbs 14:12, 16:25).

There are some religious groups that teach that Jesus' death on the cross was not enough to pay for all of our sins. They say that one has to perform certain good works, certain rituals like water baptism, belong to a particular church, observe certain religious days, or make other human additions in order to be saved. Or they teach that Jesus' sacrifice covers only previous sins, but good works must be performed to cover present and future sins so that salvation may be received. This, however, is contrary to what the Bible

teaches. Jesus, before He died said, "It is finished" (John 19:30). The Greek text uses the word *tetelestai*, which means *paid in full*. This means that our sins were paid for completely, rather than just a down payment being made, making it necessary for us to make regular payments to prevent the gift of salvation from being "repossessed" by God.

Jesus did all the works necessary to secure salvation for sinners without their help. He didn't pay for some sins and then require sinners to pay the remaining balance with certain rituals or with good works. He paid for all sins -- past, present, and future.

Atonement for sin was done once and for all on the cross. It was not a down payment. The full price was paid at that time. God is not a loan company and His grace is not a loan. His grace is a gift. Jesus did not do an incomplete work that requires sinners to finish it. He is a perfect Savior who actually saved sinners, not a potential Savior who actually saved no one (Hebrews 9:12), but needed human help for His grace to perhaps become effective.

Ephesians 2:8-10 says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."

Romans 4:25 says that Jesus "was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification." And Hebrews 9:26 says that "now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

Jesus Christ died an excruciatingly terrible death on the cross. He was the perfect, unblemished Lamb of God, who paid the price sin in order to end the separation between humanity and God. He suffered the punishment and separation from God that was the due reward for your sins. He did this because of His unfathomable love for sinners.

When you understand that you are a sinner worthy of death (Romans 3:23, 6:23) and that you cannot earn God's love in any way, you are beginning to see your need for a Savior. When you confess your sins to God and accept Jesus as your Savior and Lord, He forgives you eagerly, instantly, and completely. God does not keep a record of your sins; He removes them far from you; God remembers your sins no more; your sins are blotted out like a thick cloud; and your sins are thrown down into the depths of the sea, never to be remembered against you anymore (Psalms 103:12, 130:3-4; Ezekiel 33:16; Isaiah 44:22; Micah 7:19). Scripture teaches that the blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin (1 John 1:7). Not just some sin or most sin, but all sin. He was buried and He rose from the grave three days later (1 Corinthians 15:1-11). When you truly believe this in your heart and place full trust in Him your entire life becomes transformed (2 Corinthians 5:17). You will begin to bear good fruit, and you will have the promise of God that He who began this good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6). He will never abandon or cast you away from Him (John 6:37; Hebrews 13:5). According to His sovereign grace He will see to it that you make it home to heaven (1 Corinthians 1:8; Jude 24).

The entire Trinity is involved in the safekeeping of Christians. The Father has given believers to the Son (John 6:37-44, 17:9), the Son has asked that they be kept (John 17:11, 20), and the Holy Spirit dwells within every believer forever (John 14:16; 1 Corinthians 6:19).

Romans 10:9-10 says: "That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in



salvation."

Ephesians 1:13-14 says: "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation -- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory."

Galatians 5:22-25 says: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit."

When you believe the gospel you will become a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). Christ will live in you (2 Corinthians 13:5) and you will have a totally new outlook on life. Before, with your sinful nature, you sinned without much concern. But with Jesus in your life, you will now desire to love and serve Him, and others (Galatians 5:13). The Holy Spirit transforms sinners like yourself into the kind of people God wants you to be, and fulfills the very purpose for which Jesus died: to redeem sinners and change them so that they will truly love God and serve others as He commanded in John 13:34-35.

When you as a believer in Christ Jesus live your life focusing on the goodness and glory of God, you will become changed into His likeness (2 Corinthians 3:18) and naturally seek to do what is pleasing to Him.

When you trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, He becomes your peace (Ephesians 2:14) and you have true fellowship with God. There are times when you will sin after being saved. You will struggle with sin till your dying day or until Jesus comes again. What gives you hope is that salvation is assured to those who trust completely in Jesus' finished work of redemption (His life, death, and resurrection). So you should never feel that salvation is lost due to sins committed out of weakness. You should repent, confess your sin, accept the Lord's promise of forgiveness, and let Him help you back to your feet. But you should never allow the devil to trick you into thinking that salvation is lost. You can rest in the promises of God's word that salvation is assured to those who believe in Christ Jesus (1 John 5:11-13), and that God who begins this good work in the believer will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6). However, sin does break your fellowship with God, though not your union with Him. Sin also brings down God's chastisement on you to discipline you and turn you around, as a loving parent would do for his own child (Hebrews 12:6-7). 1 John 1:9 grants the assurance that in confessing your sin to God fellowship is restored. God's grace is powerful and sufficient to save. It is not an ineffective grace that necessitates human additions (i.e. works, performance, etc.) to perhaps make it effective.

To summarize, the gospel of Christ reveals that:

- All are sinners and cannot do anything to save themselves. (Romans 3:23)
- Jesus Christ, God's Son, is a perfect Savior for sinners, even the worst. (John 6:37-44; Hebrews 7:25)
- Jesus Christ died for sinners, was buried, and rose again on the third day. (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)
- It is the power of God for salvation to all who believe. (Romans 1:16)
- Salvation comes only through Jesus. (Acts 4:12)
- Salvation is the gift of God by His grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ alone, and not by any works you do. (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:4-7)
- Salvation comes through the blood of Christ, which makes the sinner righteous.

- before God and brings reconciliation with Him. (Romans 3:25, 5:9)
- Salvation comes at the moment the sinner believes the gospel. (Romans 10:9-13; Ephesians 1:13-14)
- Salvation is granted by God and secured by God. (John 10:27-30)
- Jesus perfectly accomplished and completed all the works necessary to save sinners just like you. (John 19:30)
- Salvation is completely of God and not of man in any way, and it is to the glory of God alone. (Romans 8:28-30; Romans 9; Ephesians 1)

The Bible says, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31). But what does it mean to "believe on the Lord Jesus"? It means knowing yourself to be a sinner, and that Christ died for sinners. It means abandoning all self-righteousness and self-confidence in your own works, supposed merits, faith, repentance, and personal obedience, casting yourself completely upon Him for mercy and peace. It means exchanging your natural hatred and rebellion against God for a spirit of grateful submission to the will of Christ through the renewing of your heart by the Holy Spirit.

You may wonder how you, a person lost and dead in sin, can repent of your sins and place your trust in Christ if I have no natural ability to do these things. Look to Jesus, speak to Jesus, cry out to Jesus, just as you are. Confess your sin, your impenitence, your unbelief, and cast yourself on His mercy. Ask Him to give you a new heart, working in you true repentance and saving faith. Ask Him to take away your evil heart of unbelief and to write His law within you, that you may never stray from Him. Turn to Jesus and trust Him as best you can, and pray for grace to turn and trust more thoroughly. Look to Christ to draw near to you as you seek to draw near to Him. Watch, pray, and read and hear God's Word (the Bible); worship and commune with God's people in a local church, and so continue till you know in yourself beyond doubt that you are indeed a person changed, a repentant believer, and the new heart which you desired has been placed within you by God.

Jesus holds out His hands to you in invitation. You do not need to go to eternal punishment in hell for your sins. No matter where you have been or what you have done, come to Him and He will welcome you with open arms. Please do not harden your heart in refusal; do not say tomorrow you will come to Him. Tomorrow may never come (Proverbs 27:1; 2 Corinthians 6:2; Hebrews 3:15-19).

Sinner, there is grace from the throne of God through the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for sinners like you so that you may not be condemned for the wicked things you have done. No matter what they are or how terrible or numerous they have been, His grace is greater than your sin and is able to save you. The Bible declares that anyone who trusts in Jesus will never be put to shame (Romans 10:11). It also says that there is now no condemnation for those who place their faith in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1).

Isaiah 55:6-7 says, "Seek the LORD while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the LORD, and He will have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

If you have not accepted Jesus as your personal Savior and Lord, please accept His free gift of salvation right **now**. Do not postpone acceptance for what you think is a more convenient time, but honestly confess your sin and give yourself up here and now to Christ, who alone can save you.

"As I live!' declares the Lord GOD, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die?'" (Ezekiel 33:11)

(3)

## Chapter One

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1.0 PAUL WAS NOT ASHAMED [RealAudio](#)

The Apostle Paul had reached a high point of sorts in his ministry. He stood before the Areopagus in Athens, the cultural center of his world. He began to proclaim the Gospel to the learned council who determined the meaning of knowledge for the Greeks, the acknowledged pacesetters for the rest of the Roman Empire. One can only imagine what he felt at that moment. At very least it must have seemed something like the sweaty-palm excitement of a doctoral dissertation.

As Paul began to describe Jesus' resurrection from the dead, many in the council laughed at him. Their laughter had an impact on Paul. He changed his method of presenting the Gospel in Corinth, his next stop on his second missionary journey, telling people about Jesus. He wrote the letter preserved in the Bible as 1 Corinthians to undo much of the effect of that change. In his second letter to the Corinthians, written in part to soften some of the effect of his first letter, Paul admitted being almost suicidal when he left an eager and receptive congregation in Ephesus to hurry home and regroup. But regroup he did. He returned to Ephesus, and later set his sights on Rome itself.

Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel. That's what he said in the letter written "to all those loved by God in Rome." But before he penned those words, he lived them. His body bore the marks of Jesus, the scars and bruises of a hard life on the road preaching the Gospel.

"Five times I received from the Jews forty lashes less one," he explained to the Corinthians. "Three times I was beaten with a rod. Once I received a stoning. Three times I suffered shipwreck. A night and a day I spent adrift in the open sea. I have been on journeys many times; in dangers from rivers, in dangers from robbers, in dangers from my own countrymen, in dangers from Gentiles, in dangers in the city, in dangers in the wilderness, in dangers at sea, in dangers from false brothers...."

Yet this is exactly the treatment Paul had been prepared to expect.

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1.1 SET APART FOR THE GOSPEL [RealAudio](#)

When he was called as an apostle, one sent out to others with the Gospel of Christ, Paul was "still breathing out threats to murder the Lord's disciples." He was on his way to Damascus to arrest any he found there and take them back to Jerusalem. Suddenly, there was a blinding light on the highway, and a voice asked him, "Why are you persecuting me?"

"Who are you, Lord?" Paul asked in turn.

The voice answered, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But stand up and enter the city and you will be told what you must do."

Then, literally blinded by the light of Jesus' appearance, Paul was led into the city of Damascus by his companions. He came to the house of a man named Judas on a street called Straight, and he prayed.

Three days later the Lord spoke to Ananias, one of the disciple's in Damascus whom Paul had the authority to arrest. He told Ananias to go to Paul at Judas' house on Straight Street. "He has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and place his hands on him so that he may see again," Jesus said. Ananias didn't want to go. But the Lord said, "This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before Gentiles and kings and the people of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."

Paul described what happened next:

A man named Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well spoken of by all the Jews who live there, came to me and stood beside me and said to me, "Brother ... regain your sight!" And at that very moment I looked up and saw him. Then he said, "The God of our ancestors has already chosen you to know his will, to see the Righteous One, and to hear a command from his mouth, because you will be his witness to all people of what you have seen and heard. And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized, and have your sins washed away, calling on his name." (Acts 22:12-16 NET)

Later in Jerusalem, Paul fell into a trance while praying in the temple. The Lord told him to leave immediately "because they will not accept your testimony about me."

"Lord," Paul protested, "they themselves know that I imprisoned and beat those in the various synagogues who believed in you."

And when the blood of your witness Stephen was shed, I myself was standing nearby, approving, and guarding the cloaks of those who were killing him."

"Go," the Lord commanded him. "I will send you far away to the Gentiles."

Paul was truly set apart for the Gospel. The Holy Spirit chose him along with Barnabas from among the many prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch where Paul finally settled. "Then, after they had fasted and prayed and placed their hands on them" the church at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas to take the Gospel to the Gentiles. But Paul told people from a region called Galatia he had been set apart for this purpose even earlier than that: God "set me apart from birth and called me by his grace . . . so that I could preach him among the Gentiles. . . ."

## 1.2 THE GOSPEL PROMISED BEFOREHAND [RealAudio](#)

Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel because it has a long and distinguished history. God promised the Gospel "beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures." Jesus was a descendant of King David on the one hand, and "was appointed the Son-of-God-in-power according to the Holy Spirit by the resurrection from the dead" on the other. Israel's very reason for existence was to give birth to Jesus, God's Messiah or Christ.

"Israelite men, and you Gentiles who fear God," Paul preached in Pisidian Antioch, "The God of this people Israel chose our ancestors and made the people great during their stay as foreigners in the country of Egypt." He reminded them how God led the people out of slavery there, the plagues, the Passover and the parting of the Red Sea. "For a period of about forty years he put up with them in the wilderness," Paul continued, recalling Mount Sinai and the law, Israel's unbelief, and the forty-year delay entering the promised land. "After he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave his people their land as an inheritance. All this took about four hundred fifty years."

Judges led Israel until the time of Samuel the prophet. Paul continued his history lesson, "Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul son of Kish, a man from the tribe of Benjamin, who ruled forty years." Saul did not please God so he made David king. God said, "I have found David the son of Jesse to be a man after my heart, who will accomplish everything I want him to do." Jesus was a descendant of David.

The psalms of David - hymns sung in the temple and synagogues - and the writings of the other prophets tell of Jesus death, burial and resurrection. And Paul quoted them freely.

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"And we proclaim to you the good news about the promise to our ancestors," Paul continued his sermon, "that this promise God has fulfilled to us, their children, by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second psalm, 'You are my Son; today I have fathered you.'" Paul quoted another psalm, "You will not permit your Holy One to experience decay," supporting the fact that Jesus' body did not decay in a tomb. David died. He was buried and his body decayed, "but the one whom God raised up did not experience decay."

"Therefore let it be known to you, brothers," Paul continued, "that through this one forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by this one everyone who believes is justified from everything from which the law of Moses could not justify you." But watch out! The same prophets who wrote so accurately about Jesus' death, burial and resurrection, wrote about Israel, too: "Look, you scoffers; be amazed and perish! For I am doing a work in your days, A work you would never believe, even if someone tells you."

## A RIGHTEOUSNESS FROM GOD

Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel: "It is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes" because "the righteousness of God is revealed" there. How the Gospel functions so powerfully in the believer's life will be discussed in more detail in chapter three.

Israel, God's own chosen people, ignored "the righteousness that comes from God." They tried to please God. Paul admitted that. But all their efforts were not in line with a clear understanding of the prophets' teaching about Jesus:

"For the people who live in Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize him," Paul preached in Pisidian Antioch. "They fulfilled the sayings of the prophets that are read every Sabbath by condemning him. Though they found no basis for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed. When they had accomplished everything that was written about him, they took him down from the cross and placed him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead, and for many days he appeared to those who had accompanied him from Galilee to Jerusalem. These are now his witnesses to the people."

Paul addressed "the message of this salvation" to his "brothers, descendants of Abraham's family, and those Gentiles . . . who fear God" gathered in the synagogue. But when the religious people saw the crowds that gathered to hear Paul the next week, "they were filled with jealousy, and they began to contradict what Paul was saying. . . ." They treated the apostle to a taste of his own self-righteous venom from the days when he persecuted Jesus' followers.

Paul was probably angry when he heard Stephen's accusations the day the Jews stoned him. "You stubborn people," Stephen shouted, "with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are always resisting the Holy Spirit, like your ancestors did!" But Paul learned the hard way how true these accusations were. "Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute?" Stephen continued. "They killed those who foretold long ago the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now



become! You received the law by decrees given by angels, but you did not keep it."

The word translated "keep" means more than simply "obey." Stephen accused Israel of not guarding or preserving the law. They used God's law for their own purposes: "Ignoring the righteousness that comes from God," Paul wrote the Romans, the people of Israel were "seeking instead to establish their own righteousness." Jesus described a situation like this when some Pharisees and teachers of the law asked him a question:

"Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with unwashed hands?"

"Isaiah prophesied correctly about you hypocrites," Jesus answered. "These people honor me with their lips," he quoted the prophet Isaiah, "but their heart is far from me. They worship me in vain, teaching as doctrine human commandments." Jesus said they ignored God's command but held firmly to rules made up by people. "You neatly reject the commandment of God in order to set up your tradition."

The law commanded adult children to care for their aging parents, according to Jesus. But the people of Israel decided that giving money or other wealth to God was more important than obeying God's law. So people who gave to God were released from the responsibility of caring for their aging parents. They made God's law in this case meaningless. "And you do many things like this," Jesus said.

This is an obvious example of putting their standards of righteousness above God's. But even sincere efforts to please God by trying to obey laws ignores God's righteousness. Paul obeyed the law as he understood it. He called himself "blameless" in a letter written to the Philippians from prison. He told them his story. Paul was a son of the people of Israel, one of God's chosen people. He was from the family of Benjamin. Israel's first king came from that family. Paul was a Hebrew of Hebrews, a member of the group of religious people who worked the hardest to obey God's laws and many other rules. He was circumcised on the eighth day, exactly as the law commanded. Then he claimed that he considered all of these assets as liabilities when compared to knowing Jesus, for whom he had "suffered the loss of all things."

I regard them as dung!—that I might gain Christ, and be found in him, *not because of having my own righteousness derived from the law*, but because of having the righteousness that comes by way of Christ's faithfulness—a righteousness from God that is based on Christ's faithfulness. (Philippians 3:8-9 NET)

"Ignoring the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking instead to establish their own righteousness," Paul wrote about his own people, "they did not submit to God's righteousness." They were not able to submit to, or "be under," God's righteousness. People striving to obey rules do not experience God's righteousness. It is impossible to please God like this.

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For example: Exiles, returning from Babylon to Jerusalem, violated God's law forbidding intermarriage with Israel's neighbors. Leading citizens came to Ezra, a priest who represented the people before God. They said, "The people of Israel, the priests, and the Levites have not separated themselves from the local residents who practice detestable things. . . ." Quite the contrary, many had joined themselves to such people in marriage.

Malachi, a prophet who represented God before the people, agreed: "Judah has become disloyal," he wrote, "and unspeakable sins have been committed in Israel and Jerusalem. For Judah has profaned the holy things that the Lord loves and has turned to a foreign god (literally: has married the daughter of a foreign god). May the Lord cut off from the community of Jacob every last person who does this. . . ."

The tale continues in Ezra: "While Ezra was praying and confessing, weeping and falling down before the temple of God, a very large assembly of Israelites—men, women and children alike—were gathered around him. The people wept loudly."

Then Shecaniah said to Ezra, "We have been unfaithful to our God in that we have married foreign women from the local peoples. Nonetheless, there is still hope for Israel in this regard. Therefore let us enact a covenant with our God to send away all these women and their offspring, in keeping with the counsel of my lord and of those who have regard for the commandments of our God. And let it be done according to the law."

"You also do this," Malachi scolded. "You cover the altar of the Lord with tears as you weep and groan, because he no longer pays any attention to the offering nor accepts it favorably from you. Yet you ask, 'Why?' The answer is that the Lord is testifying against you on behalf of the wife you married when you were young and to whom you have become unfaithful, though she is your companion and wife by covenant. No one does this who has even a small portion of the Spirit in him. . . . Be attentive then to your own spirit, for one should not be disloyal to the wife he took in his youth."

But the exiles did what Shecaniah proposed. After three months of solemn legal proceedings the men who married foreign women divorced their wives and sent them away along with their children.

"I hate divorce," says the Lord God of Israel, "and the one who is guilty of violence," says the sovereign Lord. "Pay attention to your conscience, and do not be unfaithful," Malachi concluded. All their efforts failed to please God. In fact, they simply proved they did not have "even a small portion" of God's Spirit in them.

RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH

Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel because a righteousness from God is revealed there, "from faith to faith." He began to explain this righteousness by contrasting it to righteousness that is by law. "Moses writes about the righteousness that is by the law," Paul wrote the Romans. "The one who does these things will live by them." This is the way the people of Israel attempted to be righteous and failed. But the righteousness that is by faith says, "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart."

Jesus called various people "hypocrites" twenty-one times in the gospel accounts of his life and ministry. The Greek word "hupokrites" means actor. They were actors, those who pursued righteousness by law. Some were better actors than others were. Some "did more things" of the law than others did. But these "things" were external to the actor. They were not near the actor. They were not in the actor's mouth or heart.

The term "hypocrite" has become so perjorative that I missed its significance until my wife cared for an autistic foster child for fourteen months. He was often devious and cunning, but never hypocritical. He had not developed the ability to act – to go along or get along. He always wanted only his own will, and reacted violently whenever that will was thwarted. Our parental roles invariably thwart the will of our children.

Our own children comply more or less willingly when we correct or redirect them. They share some real spiritual power and desire to obey God by obeying their parents. But there are other layers of self-interest and dissimulation at work as well. In other words, they have become good actors.

They know, for instance, that their own domestic tranquility depends on at least the illusion that my wife and I are getting our way in the household. They often try to convince us that is the case. Sometimes they are successful and fool us completely. Other times, though not fooled, we are placated by their antics. But Jesus said that God is neither fooled nor so easily placated.

Our children have had difficult young lives. They believe their present situation is better at its worst than their former condition at its best. And they act accordingly. They go along even when their hearts are not in it. Our foster child, on the other hand, would have none of this hypocrisy. When he did not get his way he shrieked and stamped his feet. He punched holes in the wall with his backside. He tried to hurt himself or others with his fists, his feet, his head and his teeth. He taught me the human value of

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hypocrisy.

Imagine a world where everyone was as incapable of hypocrisy as our foster child was. What would happen to your relationships if you treated every family member, friend and associate with the same heartfelt sincerity as the miserable wretch who cut you off in traffic? The answer is as simple as recalling the times you were unable to maintain your character, when you treated someone with a white-hot flash of honest passion, genuine disdain or authentic disgust. Then multiply those lapses by always and everyone.

The ability to act in a contrary manner to one's own will or desire of the moment is humanity's highest moral achievement, one we could hardly live without. And yet, have you ever thought you had found genuine righteousness in another person only to be disappointed? Is there anything more devastating than finding that someone's claim to godliness was only an act? This is the hypocrisy, both the humanly useful ability and the spiritual fraud, that is contrasted here to something else, to something other. It is those who do the law, Paul wrote, the "poietes" or poet of the law, who will be declared righteous.

In the Greek theater the actor, the hypocrite, stood on stage wearing a mask and reciting a poet's lines. The poet, on the other hand, performed with his own face, his own voice, speaking his own lines from his own heart. The righteousness that is from faith to faith makes the believer a poet of God's law rather than an actor, just as God promised:

"Indeed a time is coming," says the Lord, "when I will make a new agreement with the people of Israel and Judah. It will not be like the old agreement that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and led them out of Egypt. For they violated that agreement even though I was a faithful husband to them," says the Lord. "But I will make a new agreement with the whole nation of Israel after I plant them back in the land," says the Lord. "I will put my law within them and write it on their hearts and minds. And I will be their God and they will be my people. People will no longer need to teach their neighbors and relatives to know me. That is because all of them from the least important to the most important will know me," says the Lord. "All of this is based on the fact that I will forgive their sin and will no longer call to mind the wrong they have done." (Jeremiah 31:31-34 NET)

No, Paul was not ashamed of this Gospel. It was God's only remedy for the pervasive problem that plagued Paul and every other man, woman and child on earth.

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# Gospel, Godspel, Godspell, Evangelion

## General Information

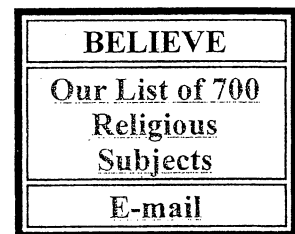
A Gospel is one of the four accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ that begin the New Testament; selections from these books are read or sung in Christian churches during worship services. The English word Gospel is derived from the Old English **godspel** (good tidings), which is a rendering of the Greek **evangelion** (good news). Scholars generally agree that all four Gospels, which are written in Greek, draw on earlier Aramaic oral or written sources that preserved many of the actual works and sayings of Jesus.

## Synoptic Gospels

The first three Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) are called the Synoptic Gospels (Greek *synoptikos*, "viewing at a glance") because they provide the same general view of the life and teaching of Jesus. They narrate almost the same incidents, often agreeing in the order of events, and use similar phrasing. In many instances they use identical phrasing.

Until the 19th century nearly all scholars and theologians believed that Matthew was the earliest Gospel. Mark was believed to be an abridged version of Matthew. Luke, which appeared to be based on Matthew and Mark, was believed to be the latest of the three. With some modification, this remains the view of some conservative scholars.

Today, most other scholars accept some modified form of the two-document hypothesis, first developed in the latter part of the 19th century. According to this hypothesis, Mark is the earliest Gospel and provided much of the narrative material, as well as the chronological framework, for both Matthew and Luke. A collection of sayings (with a few narratives) of Jesus, which may have been written in Aramaic, was the second main document, or source, employed by Matthew and Luke (a number of scholars, however, do not agree that it was a single document). This document provided the material lacking in Mark and then, apparently, was lost. It usually is designated as **Q** (German *Quelle*, "source"), but sometimes as **Logia** (Greek for "words" or "sayings"). The authors of Matthew and Luke may also have drawn material from other sources available to them individually.



## John

The Gospel attributed to John the Evangelist differs in many respects from the Synoptics. Several incidents mentioned in John do not occur in any of the Synoptics, and others recorded in the Synoptics are not recorded in John. Also, some of the events common to all of the Gospels appear in a different order in John's narrative: The cleansing of the Temple, for example, appears almost at the beginning of John (2:13-25), but in the Synoptics it is put after Jesus' triumphant final entry into Jerusalem. Most important, John gives different dates for the Last Supper and for the Crucifixion; the former occurs in John before the feast of the Passover, and the latter before the first day of the Passover. Furthermore, in John, Jesus' public ministry is described as lasting for more than two years, whereas the Synoptists describe it as lasting for about one year. Finally, in John, Jesus spends much of his time in Judea, often visiting Jerusalem; the Synoptists center his public ministry in and about the province of Galilee.

Not only the chronology of the narrative, but also the form and content of Jesus' teaching is different in



John. The Synoptists present it mainly in the form of parable and epigram. The author of John, however, presents it in long allegorical or meditative discourses and discussions - for example, those on the Good Shepherd (chapter 10) and the Vine (chapter 15). Characteristically, during some of these lengthy discourses, Jesus frequently expresses himself in pithy one-sentence metaphors, such as the following: "I am the bread of life" (6:35); "I am the light of the world" (8:12); "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (14:6). The teaching of Jesus in John generally is concerned more with Jesus' divine nature and relationship to God, whereas the Synoptists tend to emphasize his messianic vocation and dwell more on everyday religious and ethical matters. In addition, John emphasizes the nature and purpose of Jesus from the start of his Gospel. In the Synoptics, these are revealed later in the ministry.

Modern biblical scholars agree that the Gospel of John was written after the Synoptic Gospels. However, there is considerable disagreement over whether the author of John knew the Synoptics and used them as sources. Some scholars believe the author may have known and used the Gospels of Mark and Luke.

### Liturgical Use

In the liturgical sense, the term Gospel is applied to the short selections from the four Gospels that are read or sung in the Roman Catholic Mass and the Anglican Communion service, between the Epistle and the creed. In the early centuries of the Christian era, Gospel readings were continuous: A day's reading began at the point in the Gospel at which it had been interrupted in the previous service. The Gospel selection now used for each day is determined by the order of worship set forth in the missal or, according to certain rules, is one chosen by the celebrant from a special lectionary.

## Gospel

### Advanced Information

The English word "gospel" (from the Anglo-Saxon god-spell, i.e., God-story) is the usual NT translation of the Greek euangelion. According to Tyndale, the renowned English Reformer and Bible translator, it signified "good, mery, glad and ioyfull tydinge, that maketh a mannes hert glad, and maketh hym synge, daunce, and leepe for ioye" (Prologue to NT). While his definition is more experiential than explicative, it has touched that inner quality which brings the word to life. The gospel is the joyous proclamation of God's redemptive activity in Christ Jesus on behalf of man enslaved by sin.

### Origin

Euangelion (neut. sing.) is rarely found in the sense of "good tidings" outside of early Christian literature. As used by Homer it referred not to the message but to the reward given to the messenger (e.g., *Odyssey* xiv. 152). In Attic Greek it always occurred in the plural and generally referred to sacrifices or thank offerings made in behalf of good tidings. Even in the LXX euangelion is found for sure but once (*II Kings* 4:10: Eng. versions, *II Sam.*) and there it has the classical meaning of a reward given for good tidings. (In *II Kings* 18:22, 25, euangelion should undoubtedly be taken as fem. sing. in harmony with vss. 20 and 27 where this form is certain.) Euangelion in the sense of the good news itself belongs to a later period. Outside of Christian literature the neuter singular first appears with this meaning in a papyrus letter from an Egyptian official of the third century A.D. In the plural it is found in a calendar inscription from Priene about 9 B.C. It is not until the writings of the apostolic fathers (e.g.,

Didache 8:2; II Clement 8:5) that we sense a transition to the later Christian usage of euangelion as referring to a book which sets forth the life and teaching of Jesus (Justin, Apology i. 66).

Against this background the frequency with which euangelion occurs in the NT (more than seventy-five times) with the specific connotation of "good news" is highly informative. It suggests that euangelion is quite distinctively a NT word. Its true significance is therefore found, not by probing its linguistic background, but by observing its specific Christian usage.

This is not to deny, of course, that the basic concept has its rightful origin in the religious aspirations of the nation Israel. Some seven centuries before Christ the prophet Isaiah had delivered a series of prophetic utterances. With vivid imagery he portrayed the coming deliverance of Israel from captivity in Babylon. A Redeemer shall come to Zion preaching good tidings unto the meek and liberty to the captives (Isa. 60:1-2). "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings" (Isa. 52:7). Jerusalem itself is pictured as a herald whose message is good tidings (Isa. 40:9).

Jesus saw in these prophecies a description of his own mission (Luke 4:18-21; 7:22). They expressed that same sense of liberation and exultation which was the true characteristic of his messianic proclamation. What was at first simply a literary allusion came easily to represent the actual message which was being proclaimed. Euangelion was the natural result of the LXX's euangelizein. Thus Mark could write that Jesus came into Galilee "heralding the euangelion of God" (Mark 1:14).

### **Euangelion in the Gospels**

Upon examining the four Gospels we find that the word euangelion is used only by Matthew and Mark. The concept, however, is not foreign to Luke. He uses the verb form twenty-six times in Luke-Acts, and the noun twice in the latter book. In the Fourth Gospel there is no trace of either verb or noun.

In all but one instance Matthew further describes euangelion as the gospel "of the kingdom." This gospel is not to be distinguished from what Mark calls the "gospel of God" (many manuscripts read "the gospel of the kingdom of God") and summarizes in the words, "the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:14-15). On the other occasion Matthew writes "this gospel" (Matt. 26:13), the context indicating that Jesus is alluding to his coming death. The phrase "preaching the gospel of the kingdom" is twice used in summary statements of the ministry of Jesus (Matt. 4:23; 9:35). This gospel is to be preached throughout the entire world prior to the consummation of the age (Matt. 24:14; cf. Mark 13:10).

The way in which Mark uses euangelion is suggested by his opening words, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Here euangelion is a semitechnical term meaning "the glad news which tells about Jesus Christ." Where Luke writes "for the sake of the kingdom of God" (Luke 18:29), the Markan parallel is "for my sake and for the gospel" (Mark 10:29). This gospel is of such tremendous import that for its sake a man must be willing to enter upon a life of complete self-denial (Mark 8:35). In the long ending of Mark, Christ commands his disciples to "preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15).

### **The Gospel According to Paul**

Over against the six occasions (discounting parallels) on which euangelion is used by the Gospel it is found a total of sixty times in the writings of Paul. Euangelion is a favorite Pauline term. It is evenly distributed throughout his epistles, missing only in his note to Titus.

Paul's ministry was distinctively that of the propagation of the gospel. Unto this gospel he was set apart (Rom. 1:1) and made a minister according to the grace of God (Eph. 3:7). His special sphere of action was the Gentile world (Rom. 16:16; Gal. 2:7). Since Paul accepted the gospel as a sacred trust (Gal. 2:7), it was necessary that in the discharge of this obligation he speak so as to please God rather than man (I Tim. 2:4). The divine commission had created a sense of urgency that made him cry out, "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel" (I Cor. 9:16). For the sake of the gospel Paul was willing to become all things to all men (I Cor. 9:22-23). No sacrifice was too great. Eternal issues were at stake. Those whose minds were blinded and did not obey the gospel were perishing and would ultimately reap the of divine wrath (II Cor. 4:3; II Thess. 1:9). On the other hand, to those who believed, the gospel had effectively become the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16).

Because Paul on occasion speaks of his message as "my gospel" (Rom. 2:16; II Tim. 2:8), and because in his letter to the Galatians he goes to some pains to stress that he did not receive it from man (Gal. 1:11ff.), it is sometimes maintained that Paul's gospel should be distinguished from that of apostolic Christianity in general.

This does not follow. I Cor. 15:3-5 sets forth with crystal clarity the message of primitive Christianity. Paul, using terms equivalent to the technical rabbinic words for the reception and transmission of tradition, refers to this message as something which he had received and passed on (vs. 3). In vs. 11 he can say, "Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed." In Galatians, Paul tells how he laid before the apostles at Jerusalem the gospel which he had preached. Far from finding fault with the message, they extended to him the right hand of fellowship (Gal. 2:9). What Paul meant by his earlier remarks is that the charges against his gospel as a mere human message were completely fraudulent. The revelation of the full theological impact of the Christ-event was God-given and stemmed from his encounter on the Damascus road. Thus he speaks of "my gospel" meaning his own personal apprehension of the gospel. On other occasions he can speak freely of "our gospel" (II Cor. 4:3; I Thess. 1:5).

For Paul, the euangelion is preeminently the "gospel of God" (Rom. 1:1; 15:16; II Cor. 11:7; I Thes. 2:2, 8-9). It proclaims the redemptive activity of God. This activity is bound up with the person and work of God's Son, Christ Jesus. Thus it is also the "gospel of Christ" (I Cor. 9:12; II Cor. 2:12; 9:13; 10:14; Gal. 1:7; I Thess. 3:2; vss. 16 and 19 of Rom. 15 indicate that these are interchangeable terms). This gospel is variously expressed as "the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (II Thess. 1:8), "the gospel of the glory of the blessed God" (I Tim. 1:11), "the gospel of his Son" (Rom. 1:9), and "the gospel of the glory of Christ" (II Cor. 4:4). It is a gospel of salvation (Eph. 1:13) and peace (Eph. 6:15). It proclaims the hope of eternal life (Col. 1:23). It is "the word of truth" (Col. 1:5; Eph. 1:13). Through this gospel, life and immortality are brought to light (II Tim. 1:10).

## The Apostolic Preaching

If we wish to investigate more closely the specific content of the primitive gospel, we will do well to adopt the basic approach of C. H. Dodd (*The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments*). While Dodd refers to the message as kerygma, he is ready to admit that this term is a virtual equivalent of euangelion. (Kerygma stresses the manner of delivery; euangelion, the essential nature of the content.)

There are two sources for the determination of the primitive proclamation. Of primary importance are the fragments of pre-Pauline tradition that lie embedded in the writings of the apostle. These segments can be uncovered by the judicious application of certain literary and formal criteria. While at least one purports to be the actual terms in which the gospel was preached (I Cor. 15:3-5), others take the form of early Christian hymns (e.g., Phil. 2:6-11), summaries of the message (e.g., Rom. 10:9), or creedal

formulas (I Cor. 12:3; I Tim. 3:16).

A second source is the early Petrine speeches in Acts. These speeches (on the basis of their Aramaic background, freedom from Paulinism, and the general trustworthiness of Luke as a historian) can be shown to give reliably the gist of what Peter actually said and not what a second generation Christian thought he might have said.

These two sources combine to set forth one common apostolic gospel. In briefest outline, this message contained: (1) a historical proclamation of the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus, set forth as the fulfillment of prophecy and involving man's responsibility; (2) a theological evaluation of the person of Jesus as both Lord and Christ; (3) a summons to repent and receive the forgiveness of sins.

It will be noticed that the essential core of this message is not the dawn of the messianic age (as Dodd implies), although this is most certainly involved, but that sequence of redemptive events which sweeps the hearer along with compelling logic toward the climactic confession that Jesus is Lord.

The gospel is not the product of a bewildered church pondering the theological significance of Good Friday. It is rather the result of a natural development which had its origins in the teachings of Jesus himself. The Passion sayings of Jesus, far from being "prophecies after the event" (cf. R. Bultmann, *Theology of the NT*, I 29), are undeniable evidence that Jesus laid the foundation for a theology of the cross. In his teaching regarding his own person Jesus furnished what R. H. Fuller has aptly termed "the raw materials of Christology" (*The Mission and Achievement of Jesus*). The resurrection was the catalyst which precipitated in the minds of the disciples the total significance of God's redemptive activity. It released the gospel!

This gospel is power (Rom. 1:16). As an instrument of the Holy Spirit it convicts (I Thess. 1:5) and converts (Col. 1:6). It cannot be fettered (II Tim. 2:9). Although it is good news, it is strenuously opposed by a rebellious world (I Thess. 2:2). Opposition to the message takes the form of opposition to the messenger (II Tim. 1:11-12; Philem. 13). Yet those who proclaim it must do so boldly (Eph. 6:19) and with transparent simplicity (II Cor. 4:2), not with eloquence lest the cross of Christ be robbed of its power (I Cor. 1:17). To those who refuse the gospel it is both foolishness and a stumbling block (I Cor. 1:18ff.), but to those who respond in faith it proves itself to be "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16).

R H Mounce  
(Elwell Evangelical Dictionary)

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## **Gos'pel**

### **Advanced Information**



Gospel is a word of Anglo-Saxon origin, and meaning "God's spell", i.e., word of God, or rather, according to others, "good spell", i.e., good news. It is the rendering of the Greek evangelion, i.e., "good message." It denotes

- (1) "the welcome intelligence of salvation to man as preached by our Lord and his followers.
- (2.) It was afterwards transitively applied to each of the four histories of our Lord's life, published by those who are therefore called 'Evangelists', writers of the history of the gospel (the evangelion).
- (3.) The term is often used to express collectively the gospel doctrines; and 'preaching the gospel' is often used to include not only the proclaiming of the good tidings, but the teaching men how to avail themselves of the offer of salvation, the declaring of all the truths, precepts, promises, and threatenings of Christianity." It is termed "the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24), "the gospel of the kingdom" (Matt. 4:23), "the gospel of Christ" (Rom. 1:16), "the gospel of peace" (Eph. 6:15), "the glorious gospel," "the everlasting gospel," "the gospel of salvation" (Eph. 1:13).

(Easton Illustrated Dictionary)

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## Gos'pels

### Advanced Information

The central fact of Christian preaching was the intelligence that the Saviour had come into the world (Matt. 4:23; Rom. 10:15); and the first Christian preachers who called their account of the person and mission of Christ by the term evangelion (= good message) were called evangelistai (= evangelists) (Eph. 4:11; Acts 21:8). There are four historical accounts of the person and work of Christ: "the first by Matthew, announcing the Redeemer as the promised King of the kingdom of God; the second by Mark, declaring him 'a prophet, mighty in deed and word; the third by Luke, of whom it might be said that he represents Christ in the special character of the Saviour of sinners (Luke 7:36; 15:18); the fourth by John, who represents Christ as the Son of God, in whom deity and humanity become one. The ancient Church gave to Matthew the symbol of the lion, to Mark that of a man, to Luke that of the ox, and to John that of the eagle: these were the four faces of the cherubim" (Ezek. 1:10).

### Date

The Gospels were all composed during the latter part of the first century, and there is distinct historical evidence to show that they were used and accepted as authentic before the end of the second century.

### Mutual relation

"If the extent of all the coincidences be represented by 100, their proportionate distribution will be: Matthew, Mark, and Luke, 53; Matthew and Luke, 21; Matthew and Mark, 20; Mark and Luke, 6. Looking only at the general result, it may be said that of the contents of the synoptic Gospels [i.e., the first three Gospels] about two-fifths are common to the three, and that the parts peculiar to one or other of them are little more than one-third of the whole."

## Origin

Did the evangelists copy from one another? The opinion is well founded that the Gospels were by the apostles orally before they were committed to writing, and that each had an independent origin.

(Easton Illustrated Dictionary)

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## Social Implications of Gospel

### Advanced Information

The gospel is the proclamation and demonstration of God's redemptive activity in Jesus Christ to a world enslaved by sin. Redemption is personal as men and women respond to the claims of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Redemption is also social, but the nature, priority, and extent of the social implications of the gospel have not been as readily agreed upon.

### Early Period

The social implications of the gospel have been evident in every era of the church's life. The early church, for example, expressed a social witness by faithfulness to the radical demands of Christian community (Acts 2:42-46). Limited in their social expression by virtue of being members of a persecuted sect, many Christians challenged cultural values in their refusal to bear arms.

The church continuously manifested its social conscience with a concern for the poor. Basil the Great, for example, created a whole complex of charitable institutions in the fourth century. The monastic movement generated much philanthropic activity. The institutional charities of the Roman Catholic Church take their impetus from this medieval social heritage.

The Reformation heralded a renewal of biblical faith, including the Scripture's social emphasis. Though Martin Luther denied that good works had any place in the drama of salvation, he nevertheless commended good works as the proper response to the gracious gift of redemption. John Calvin, a second-generation Reformer, gave greater attention to the implications of the gospel for society. Whereas for Luther the civil rule was a restraining force because of sin, for Calvin government should be a positive force for the common welfare. In Calvin's Geneva this meant a commitment to education and to welfare for refugees, and outside Geneva sanctioning, under certain circumstances, the right of resistance for peoples suffering under unjust rulers.

Modern evangelicalism traces its roots to the Reformation, but is more directly the result of a variety of post-Reformation movements. Puritanism grew up in England in the sixteenth century, but its spirit flowered in America in the seventeenth century. "The Puritan dilemma" in America was the tension between individual freedom and social order. The strong emphasis on the covenant, though, meant an impetus toward self-sacrifice for the common good. Puritanism is sometimes remembered for its individualism, but it deserves to be known as much for its contribution to the social realm, bequeathing elements that would help form the American political tradition.

German pietism infused new life into seventeenth century Lutheranism. Though often characterized as individualistic, legalistic, and other-worldly, the pietists nevertheless complained heartily against a

lifeless orthodoxy that did not translate into love and compassion. Thus Philipp Jakob Spener challenged wealthy Christians to give their goods to the poor in order to eliminate begging. Spencer's pupil, August Hermann Francke, transformed the University of Halle into a training center for pastors and missionaries, and in the town itself an orphanage and hospital were founded and the poor were both catechized and fed.

Fueled in part by the example of pietism, and especially the influence of the Moravians, an evangelical revival swept across Great Britain in the eighteenth century. John and Charles Wesley, along with George Whitefield, preached in fields and streets in an attempt to recapture the alienated poor for the church. Their emphasis on sanctification and the holy life energized their followers into opposing slavery, exhibiting concern for prisoners, and initiating reforms related to the industrial revolution.

In America the First Great Awakening, which began as a season of individual conversions, resulted in an intercolonial movement that reshaped the social order. Under the leadership of Jonathan Edwards and Whitefield the hierarchical nature of both church and society was challenged. Indeed, it is widely recognized that this movement, with its democratizing influence, helped prepare the way for the American Revolution.

## Modern Period

The modern discussion about the social implications of the gospel has been shaped by a variety of movements and factors. Revivalism has been a crucial force in determining the nature of the discussion because of the prominence of revival leaders in molding modern evangelicalism. In the nineteenth century Charles G. Finney maintained that religion came first, reform second, but he sent his converts from the "anxious bench" into a variety of reform movements, including abolitionism. Energized by a postmillennial theology, Finney often said that "the great business of the church is to reform the world." Dwight L. Moody, on the other hand, saw little hope for society. As a premillennialist he pictured the world as a wrecked ship: "God had commissioned Christians to use their lifeboats to rescue every man they could."

This shift in the relationship between revivalism and reform, present in Moody and more pronounced in Billy Sunday, has been characterized by evangelical scholars as "the great reversal." Beginning at the end of the nineteenth century and continuing past the midpoint of the twentieth century, the social implications of the gospel were neglected, sometimes abandoned, and most often declared to be of secondary importance by those who called themselves conservatives or fundamentalists. Groups that had hitherto supported social reform retreated into a posture where the primary concern after conversion was the purity of individuals rather than justice in society.

At the same time, however, a movement was on the rise which challenged this uncoupling of evangelism and reform, the social gospel. Born in post-Civil War America, growing to maturity in the era of progressivism, the impact of the social gospel continued long after its formal demise following World War I. The social gospel has been defined by one of its adherents as "the application of the teaching of Jesus and the total message of the Christian salvation to society, the economic life, and social institutions... as well as to individuals." Interacting with the changing realities of an increasingly industrialized and urbanized nation, the social gospel viewed itself as a crusade for justice and righteousness in all areas of the common life.

Walter Rauschenbusch was its foremost theologian, and his own pilgrimage is typical. Reared in the piety of a German Baptist minister's family, Rauschenbusch began his first charge in the Hell's Kitchen neighborhood of New York City. Encountering conditions that stifled the lives of his people, he wrote

that Hell's Kitchen "was not a safe place for saved souls." This experience forced Rauschenbusch to return to the Bible in search of resources for a more viable ministry. He discovered there both in the prophets and in the teaching of Jesus the dynamic concept of the kingdom of God was left undeveloped by individualistic theology," so that "the original teaching of our Lord has become an incongruous element in so-called evangelical theology."

The discoveries of Rauschenbusch, Washington Gladden, and other social gospel leaders, however, helped exacerbate a deep division that was developing within American Protestantism. Because the social gospel was closely identified with theological liberalism, a popular logic developed whereby conservatives tended to reject social action as part of their rejection of liberalism. As a matter of record, not all social gospelers were liberals and not all liberals were social gospelers. Indeed, Rauschenbusch characterized himself as an "evangelical in their adherence to personal faith and piety, but liberal in their openness to critical biblical studies and their insistence on a social ministry based on the social conception of sin which demanded social action beyond individual acts of benevolence.

### **Recent Discussion**

In the contemporary period there are numerous attempts to return to a balance of individual and social emphasis in the Christian faith. Carl F.H. Henry, in *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (1947), decried the lack of social compassion among conservatives. Further, the civil rights crisis and the Vietnam war pricked the consciences of younger evangelicals who wondered whether their spiritual parents had not accommodated their faith to an American "civil religion." The last two decades have seen a rebirth of social concern. Evangelicals have been rediscovering their roots in Finney and earlier evangelical leadership. The Chicago Declaration of 1973 acknowledged that "we have not proclaimed or demonstrated [God's] justice to an unjust American society." Today organizations such as Evangelicals for Social Action and journals such as *Sojourners* and *The Other Side* advocate the involvement of evangelicals in all aspects of society.

A new perspective is the liberation theologies emanating from Latin America, Asia, and Africa. The demand is for theological reflection that begins, not in the classroom, but in the midst of the poverty and injustice that defines the human situation for many of the peoples of the world today. The call is for a theology of "praxis" (practice). Many evangelicals recoil from liberation theologies because of the use of Marxist analysis. But others believe that the affirmation that God is on the side of the poor is a starting place for yet more faithful understandings of the meaning of discipleship. Although the Third World liberation theologians state that their programs cannot be directly translated to North America, at the same time there has been fruitful interchange with black, feminist, and other theologians working out the meaning of justice.

In summary, historical study helps focus present options. As for priority the question remains: Are the social implications equal, secondary, or prior to the individual implications of the gospel? Continuing discussion about the nature and extent of social ministry revolves around such options as (1) individual and/or social action; (2) charity and/or justice. However one chooses, the challenge is to translate love and justice into meaningful strategies so that proclamation becomes demonstration.

R C White, Jr  
(Elwell Evangelical Dictionary)

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