

# The Central Message Of The Bible

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## Introduction

Every book has a main point. Even poems and articles have a main theme. There is always, “*the moral to the story,*” right? Well, the Bible has a main point too. While it addresses many subjects of great importance, there is *one subject* that overshadows all others - our relationship and standing before God. There are four parts to this message and each will be explored in order. The first part is **the bad news**, or man’s condition before God. The second part is **the good news**, explaining what God has done about this problem. The third part concerns **man’s response** to this good news. And the fourth part addresses some of **the results of a positive response** to this good news message.

## The Bad News - Man’s Condition

Every person knows there is a Creator. God declares that He has made this known *within each person* (Ro 1:18-20). But a problem has arisen between the Creator and each person. It’s called sin. The most simple definition for sin is, “*all unrighteousness is sin*” (1Jn 5:17). But what constitutes unrighteousness? Most people compare themselves *to other people* in assessing if they are basically “righteous” or not. When we do this, the Bible says we are “*without understanding*” (2Cor 10:12). God compares each individual to *His standard* of righteousness. That’s where The Mosaic Law enters the picture. It is a written record - an objective standard - as to what *He deems* as righteous or unrighteous behavior. This is what we are to measure ourselves against. So, here is the bad news. *Everyone* falls short of His expectations. “*There is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins*” (Eccl 7:20). “*All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God*” (Rom 3:23). “*There is none righteous, not even one*” (Ro 3:10). The Mosaic Law, rightly understood, *condemns every person*. That is why the New Testament states that “*the Law is holy, righteous and just,*” but it is “*the ministry of death*” (Ro 7:12 and 2Cor 3:7-11)! This bad news carries many negative consequences. For our purposes, we will look at sin’s affect upon man’s relationship with God. Isaiah flatly states, “*your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God and your sins have hid His face from you so that He does not hear*” (Isa 59:1,2). When the sky is completely overcast, you still know there is a sun even though it is hidden. Sin is like that overcast of clouds. Most people acknowledge “God,” but can only guess as to who He is, what He’s like, what He wants, or what involvement He has (if any) in one’s life or world affairs in general. Sin creates an impregnable veil. With this in view, it is understandable why some doubt if God even exists. This barrier creates many current troubles ... but the bad news gets worse. “*It is appointed for man to die once and after this comes the Judgment*” (Heb 9:27). Each individual will appear before God to account for his/her life (Ro 14:12). Every action will be recounted, as well as each word, *and even each secret* (Rev 20:13, Mt 12:36 and Ro 2:16). No person can endure this level of scrutiny and come forth innocent. Even if we correct all of our actions, words, and thoughts from this moment on, our past will still damn us. This day of reckoning is called, “*the Day of Judgment*” (Mt 12:36) or, “*the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord*” (Mal 4:5). The consequences for coming forth guilty is “*the second death*” (Rev 20:11-15). This is an eternal state of unending suffering (Heb 6:2 and Mt 25:46). This is bad news - very bad news. Fortunately, while the “bad news” is *the foundation* of the Central Message of the Bible, it is not *the end* of that message. But until one is convinced this “bad news” is indeed true, there will be no genuine interest in the Bible’s “good news.” People do not seek a remedy to a problem unless they perceive there is a problem that needs remedied. That is why a proper understanding of “the bad news” is very important. Jesus put it

this way: *“It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are ill”* (Mt 9:12).

## The Good News

Many errantly teach that the Ten Commandments, and all the Mosaic Law, have been given to us as a *guideline for right living*. As seen earlier, the New Testament calls the Mosaic Law, *“the ministry of death.”* It is the *“Old Covenant”* that *“fades away”* (2Cor 3:14,11). *“No one is justified (made right with God) by the Law”* (Gal 3:11). And the Law is not to be the guide for Christian living (Gal 3). There is nothing wrong with the Law - the problem is with us. But there is a right use for the Law today. It is *“a tutor to lead us to Christ”* (Gal 3:24). The Law, used rightly, points us *away from itself* and points us *to Christ*. Listen carefully here. The Law consists of *two primary tracks*. The *first* is the revealing of a *moral code* that God requires of each person. The *second* is a *sacrificial system* in which the blood of animals is used *“to pay”* for sins. Concerning this **first track**, no one has, or ever will, keep the Law perfectly (with one exception as will be seen shortly). The penalty for this failure is death. That is why death reigns over the entire human race. No one escapes this verdict. Concerning the **second track**, God demands *life* for sin. He declares *“the life of the flesh is in the blood”* (Lev 17:11,14), and *“without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness”* (Heb 9:22). In the Old Testament, those with spiritual insight knew two things. First, no one continually kept the Law (Eccl 7:20 - thus failed the *first track*) and second, the blood of sacrificial bulls and goats *could not pay* for human sin (Heb 10:4 - thus an inadequate remedy for the *second track*). Therefore, they were looking for what was to be *the real solution* for man’s moral failure. Here is where *“the good news”* begins.

God decided to do something *for us* in reference to both of these tracks of the Law. Concerning the **first track**, He decided to enter the human race and completely fulfill all the requirements of the Mosaic Law. In other words, He came here and practiced what He had preached. This is who Jesus is. Concerning the **second track**, Jesus is called *“the Lamb of God”* (Jn 1:29). When Jesus was framed and murdered by His enemies, God the Father, took advantage of that unjust action. While on the cross, the Father made Him who had committed no sin *“to be sin on our behalf”* (2Cor 5:21). He *“bore our sins in His body”* and *“was crushed for our iniquities”* (1Pet 2:24 and Isa 53:5). Jesus *“presented Himself as a guilt offering”* making His own blood (life) available as payment for our sins (Isa 53:10 and Heb 9:12). Christ *“died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order that He might bring us to God”* (1Pet 3:18). This is why people say, *“Jesus died for me.”* He died to pay for my sins.

Because Jesus Himself had no personal sin, death had no rightful claim to Him. The moment He died, all the sins that had been placed upon Him *were paid for*. So, there He stood, on the other side of death’s door, with no sin. Death only has jurisdiction when sin is present. Jesus had to rise from the dead. And this is exactly the record we find in the New Testament. Three days after His burial, the writers of the New Testament declare Jesus physically walked out of the grave. He appeared *“to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God”* and even *“appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time”* (Acts 10:42 and 1Cor 15:6 ). They ate with Him, drank with Him, and talked with Him. The authority for this *“Good News”* message hinges entirely on the resurrection claim. It is either an actual event or a myth. If true, this message is given unparalleled authority. If myth, like Paul said, *“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die”* (1Cor 15:32).

The *“good news”* is that God has provided a solution for our sin problem. *The blood of Jesus* is powerful enough *to pay for any sin* we have committed - or will commit. If you are reading this right now, there is no sin **you** have ever committed that is more powerful than His blood. Indeed, it is an affront to God for you to believe your sin is more powerful than the blood of the Son. But in addition to this sin payment, God has made something else available that is of equal value. It is *the righteousness of Christ*. Jesus fulfilled all the Law's moral demands and that *can now be credited to us*. This is referred to as *“the gift of righteousness”* (Ro 5:17). This is good news. This is very good news. This is

exceedingly great news! In Christ, *both tracks* of the Law's demands have been satisfied *for us*. What then must be done to acquire the blood and the righteousness of Christ? Let's proceed to ...

### Man's Response

If a cure for cancer is developed, it must still be secured if death is to be avoided. So it is with our sin/righteousness problem. God has provided the remedy, but it is of no value unless secured. So how does one secure this remedy? Because of the great importance of getting the correct answer to this question, I will first present the Bible statements relating directly to this inquiry. I will then add my own observations.

\* "*But as many as **received Him**, to them He gave the right (the authority) to become the children of God*" (Jn. 1:12).

\* "*If you **confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead**, you will be saved*" (Ro 10:9).

\* "*Whoever **calls upon the Name of the Lord** will be saved*" (Ro 10:13).

\* "*Whenever a person **turns to the Lord**, the veil is taken away*" (2Cor 3:16).

\* "*Everyone **who beholds the Son and believes in Him** acquires eternal life*" (Jn 6:40).

\* Peter told one crowd, "***Repent** (change your mind), and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ as a result of the forgiveness of your sins*" (Acts 2:38).

\* Paul wrote, "***after listening to the message of the truth, the good news of your salvation, (and) after having believed**, you were sealed in the Holy Spirit*" (Eph 1:13).

This is basically all the Scripture dealing with what one must do to acquire God's remedy for our sin problem. The Bible talks of *receiving Christ, turning to Christ, confessing He is Lord, believing in Christ, believing in His resurrection, calling upon Him, repenting* (literally, "change your mind"), and *believing after hearing the good news message*.

Many salvation formulas have been developed from these statements. Often, *an interpretation of a passage gets welded to the passage*. For example, Peter did not say, "*Repent **of your sins** ....*" In fact, the word, "repent" means, "*to change the mind.*" In this context, Peter was calling the Jews to change their mind **about who they believed Jesus was**. Similarly, when Paul said "*confess with your mouth 'Jesus is Lord,'*" he did not add, "*publicly*" or "*by means of an altar call.*" In fact, in the original language, the verse calls for *a continuing confession of Jesus as Lord*, and not just a one time act in a salvation formula (Mt 10:32 also). It is a disservice, if not a great travesty, to add interpretive statements and practices to these passages without a clear explanation of the addition. "*Good intentions*" cannot be validated when dealing with such a critical subject. Those unfamiliar with these salvation passages cannot be expected to distinguish between the actual verse *and an interpretation added to the verse*. They need exposure to uncluttered passages. But there is another important thrust behind these salvation passages that is usually neglected. Please listen to this next part very carefully.

There are two main issues in responding positively to the "good news" message. The first deals with the need for *right knowledge*. We must come to God *on His terms*. The foregoing material is directed toward this need. Indeed, this entire article is directed toward this need. In fact, all of my

articles, all of my songs, and all the commentaries to my songs are directed at this need. But knowledge is only *one part* of the equation. The second part deals with the need for a *right attitude*. Many Christian circles are quite intense on the knowledge part, but neglect the attitude issue. That is why many respond to a salvation formula - but it doesn't "take." The problem is often the attitude. A right attitude is as important as right knowledge. *Both* must be present and intricately interwoven for a genuine, positive response to occur to the "good news" message. So what is the right attitude?

Jesus told a tremendous story about two men who had gone to The Temple to pray. It turns out that one was a self righteous man, but the other man approached God in an entirely different manner. He "*was unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'*" Jesus declared this man went back to his house "justified" - right with God - rather than the other man. The key to this successful transaction centered on *genuine humility before God* (Lk 18:9-14). Humility includes *honesty* and *earnestness*. Jesus said the Father is seeking worshipers who worship "*in spirit and truth*" (Jn 4:23,24). He is seeking *honesty* - even if it might be brutal or off-centered (Isa 41:21 and Isa 43:26). Concerning *earnestness*, He says, "*you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart*" (Jer 29:13). These matters are dealing with attitude. I suspect the reason this attitude issue is neglected is because it is so *subjective*. Who can know the genuine sincerity of another? Often, we even fool our own selves. God says, "*the heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick. Who can know it?*" (Jer 17:9). We can't. It is easy to degrade "Man's Response" to simple steps that only require mental assent. But that is only half the picture. It is "*with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness*" (Ro 10:10). This will become more clear as we look at the Bible material on "Results of a Positive Response."

## Results of a Positive Response

Jesus declared we must be "*born again*" (Jn 3:3). Our mind is to be "*renewed*" and we are to "*put on the new self*" (Eph 4:23,24 and Col 3:10). Paul stated this change in this way: "*if any man is in Christ - a new creature! Old things have passed away. Behold! New things have come*" (2Cor 5:18)! Conversion to Christ results in a changed person. So, what are these "old things" and "new things?" While there are many, here are a few of the most important.

- 1. The Bible becomes a "new thing."** One truly converted has a great desire for Bible information. It compares itself to food - milk and solid food (1Pet 2:2 and Heb 5:12-14). The Bible is the primary ingredient for a Christian's growth and development. Even one's subjective experiences (i.e., one's life as it unfolds), is framed and shaped by the Bible's very words. This is really quite amazing.
- 2. Another "new thing" is prayer.** Real prayer. Also, there is an instinctive, relational knowledge that God the Father truly is our very own Father and He wants us communicating with Him (Ro 8:15).
- 3. Behavior changes occur.** New behaviors and activities develop while old agendas and behaviors are challenged, altered - and oftentimes demolished. Sometimes the changes are quite dramatic; other times quite subtle. God uses many tools to make the Christian more Christlike.
- 4. New life purposes become a "new thing."** We are "*created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them*" (Eph 2:10). A person becomes interested in God's agenda and His desire for his/her life. God's purposes and priorities become more and more dominant in the true believer's life. The more obedient a child is, the more that child can learn from his/her parents. Our relationship with God works the same way.

This is all just the tip of the iceberg. God is an inexhaustible fount of knowledge. The depths of His understandings are beyond our ability to find out. And His wisdom, which is hidden in His mystery, that is Christ (Col 2:2,3) is unfathomable. Yet He makes all three areas accessible and let's us

go as deep as we can. The gate is small to get in and the way is compressed (Mt 7:14 ), but once you come to Him on His terms, you will find a new world opens ... and that His commands are exceedingly broad (Ps 119:96). Everything I just stated is a massive understatement of the reality.

## Conclusion

When a person responds positively to the “good news,” the clouds of that overcast day are **totally** removed. Our sins are *paid for* and removed “*as far as the east is from the west*” (Ps 103:12). Justice is not negated or ignored - but dealt with in the cross. “*When you were dead in your transgressions, He (the Father) made you alive together with Him (Christ) having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us which were hostile to us and He (the Father) has taken it out of the way having nailed it to the cross*” (Col 2:13). God, for His own reasons, is interested in having a relationship with us. It is my hope that everyone who reads this will search this matter out and take advantage of the pardon that is found in Christ. Do this for yourself - for your own well being and future. May God grant you the power, wisdom, insight and ability to come to Him, respond to Him, learn from Him, know Him - indeed, to be right with Him. This is the central message of the Bible. Lord bless you!

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