

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

“THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST”

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, James Gravelle.

“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith’” (Romans 1:16-17). Welcome to the Gospel of Christ. We are beginning our topical series of lessons with this lesson, titled “The Gospel of Christ.” The Gospel of Christ was not intended by its divine Author for merely a few learned or wise men, but was instead intended for every person—educated or ignorant, wise or foolish. Something that is intended for people at large—that is, the great mass of mankind—must be simple, easy to comprehend, and applicable to all people. It must be of such a nature that people can lay hold of it without lengthy, deep, or profound research.

The Gospel of Christ also was intended to be maintained in its pristine state. Read with me Galatians 1:8, where the apostle of Paul said, “Even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.” This is an apostolic and vine anathema that ought to be considered with great care. The intention of this anathema is to preserve the Gospel in its purity as the Lord gave it—without it being mutilated or perverted in any way. Galatians 1:8 is intended to help us understand the awful responsibility associated with how we handle God’s Word, which may not be mutilated, perverted, or corrupted by men or angels without incurring the curse of Heaven. In the same manner as Paul’s admonition, a warning comes from the apostle John near the close of God’s Word. In Revelation 22:18-19 John wrote,

“I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

These words, which are full of meaning, are placed at the close of the book to warn everyone of the terrible doom that will befall any person who adds anything to or takes anything from the book. Some have claimed that this warning applies solely to the Book of Revelation. There is no doubt that the warning does indeed apply to Revelation. But is it not **equally applicable** to every other part of the Word of God? May we add to the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke, Paul, Peter, James, or Jude—but not to the writings of John in Revelation? By no means! We may not add anything to what the Lord has said, and we may not pervert it, corrupt it, or preach any other Gospel. If we do, the curse of Heaven will fall upon us.

Let’s bring two more passages of Scripture into our discussion. Jesus said in Mark 16:16, “...He who does not believe will be condemned.” Jesus also said in John 3:36, “...He who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” Stop and think about the awful import of these words, which need no explaining. Their clear and terrible meaning is the first thing that commands the attention of everyone who reads them.

He who believes not the Gospel shall be condemned. He who preaches any other Gospel shall be accursed. He who adds anything to God's Word shall have the plagues recorded within it added to him. He who takes anything from God's Word shall have his part taken out of the Book of Life. The following conclusions flow from these premises. First, the Lord could not conscientiously condemn someone for preaching another Gospel, perverting the true Gospel, adding to it, or taking from it—if He had not made it so easy to comprehend, so clear, and so intelligible that any person who is capable of preaching at all can preach it as the Lord gave it—adding nothing to it, taking nothing from it, and not corrupting or perverting it. What such a preacher could not do consistently, he should not do at all. It is therefore clear that the Gospel is plain, and that the curse of Heaven will fall on any person who preaches any other Gospel, or who mutilates or corrupts the true one.

Second, the Lord could not conscientiously condemn a person for not believing the Gospel if He had not made it consistently clear, intelligible, and credible, so that by treating the subject fairly, a person could believe it. It is evident that the Gospel is clear, intelligible, and credible, and that the Lord will condemn anyone who does not believe it. In addition, our Lord considered the way to God plain, for He said, "They who seek shall find" (Mt. 7:8). The Lord did not intend that those who refused to follow His directions should find Him. They are instead to seek Him where He is—and in the way in which He said He could be found. When a clear description is given, and when full information is provided regarding where and how something may be found, and a man then goes somewhere else, he ought not to be surprised if he does not find that for which he is searching. When the new and living way was opened, and the door of the kingdom was thrown wide open, did sinners have difficulty seeking and finding the way? Let's take a look at the opening of the kingdom on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2.

People heard a single discourse and inquired, "What shall we do?" In one sentence, Peter answered their question by telling them what to do so that they understood him, did what he commanded, and the same day became Christians as they entered into the kingdom. We find no account of any of those seekers going away on that occasion, **still** seeking. Every man and woman who **inquired** about the way was **shown** the way, and was told what to do to be acceptable to the Lord. Those people did what they were told to do on that very day, and entered into the New Covenant. Thus, the Gospel is easily understood and obeyed. This fulfills the word of Jesus, "They who seek shall find."

Let's look once more at the verses with which we began this lesson. In Romans 1:16-17 Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'" In these words, the apostle Paul made a grave confession. He admitted that he was "not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." When we read the story of his life, we know that he most assuredly was telling the truth. In Acts 9, as he stood before the Jews in Damascus, we see the truth of Paul's statement. Later, we see the same thing in Acts 9 (before the Jews in Jerusalem), and again in Acts 13 on the Island of Pathos in the city of Cyprus (before the sorcerer, Bar-Jesus). We see the same thing in Acts 14 in Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. We see the same thing in Acts 17 as he stood alone in Athens on Mars Hill to proclaim the Gospel. In Acts 21, as Paul went to Jerusalem (as Agabus had foretold), and before the Jews in Jerusalem, we see the same thing. If we follow the sequence through Acts 24, 25, and 26 as Paul stands before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa, we see the same thing. In fact, we see the same thing as Paul stands before Caesar himself (on two different occasions with two different Caesars!). Paul told the truth, and he explained **why** as he discussed what the Gospel of Christ actually is.

Paul begins by telling us that the Gospel of Christ is power. It is mighty; hence it is called “power.” It is not a feeble and ineffective thing, but is, according to Paul in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5, “mighty in God, for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” That truly is power! The Gospel of Christ has gone up against the sins of the world, and in so doing has demonstrated its power to save sinners and to overcome and subdue every form of iniquity. Paul said that it is not just power, but that it is **power from God**. In Jeremiah 23:29 the prophet wrote, “‘Is not My word like a fire?’ says the Lord, ‘and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?’” Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:18 that “the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” Satan, too, has some power and influence. Remember the warning that Peter provided in 1 Peter 5:8? He said, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” The world, too, has power—the power of allurements. John helped us to understand this in 1 John 2:16 when he wrote, “All that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.” When sin entered the world for the very first time, it was the result of giving in to temptation that came from the lustful desires of forbidden pleasures. In Genesis 3:6 we read, “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.” Through Adam and Eve, sin entered the world. And it has affected men and women ever since. In Romans 3:23, Paul tells us just how far the blight of sin has spread: “**All** have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God.”

But, again, that is where the Gospel of Christ comes in. It is not only the power of God, but it also is “the power of God **unto salvation**.” The word “salvation” has reference to complete deliverance from sin, death, and all the other foes and dangers that may beset mankind. The Gospel saves from the power of sin. A moment ago when I read Romans 3:23, did you notice the **extent** of the power of sin? It says, “**All** have sinned.” Every man and woman who has been able to reason, and who has reached the age of accountability so that he or she knows the difference between right and wrong, has committed sin, and thus has come short of the glory of God. But the Gospel can save one from the practice of sin. Titus 2:12 says that we, “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.” The Gospel of Christ also saves from the pollution of sin. Do you remember the way in which Peter graphically described this point in 2 Peter 2:20-22?

“After they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: ‘A dog returns to his own vomit,’ and, ‘a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.’”

The Gospel saves from such pollutions related to sins of the world. The Gospel of Christ also saves from the guilt of sin. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 we read,

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”

There is surely not a single person hearing my voice today who cannot remember his or her situation at some point in the past, and **not** be included in sins such as those found in Paul's list. We all have been involved in sin at one point or another. Paul said, "**All** have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." It may be the case that right now **you** are included in that unrighteous group of people because you have yet to obey the Gospel of Christ. Paul said, "And such **were** some of you." What happened to those who were once included in Paul's list? Paul said that they were "washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus" by obeying the Gospel, which can remove the guilt of past sins.

The Gospel also saves from the spiritual ravages of sin. In Hebrews 10:31 we are warned, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." The reason why is found in Romans 6:23 where Paul said that "the wages of sin is death." This is not speaking merely of a physical death, but of a spiritual death. Revelation 21:8 contains another list of people who have been polluted by sins of the world. John said, "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." We understand that death is a separation. James 2:26 helps us better understand this: "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." The second death awaits those who have not overcome the first death. The first death occurs when a person commits his or her very first sin. In Genesis 2:17, God explained to Adam and Eve the consequences they would experience if they chose to commit sin. "In the day that you eat of it [the forbidden fruit] you shall surely die." Neither Adam nor Eve died immediately (i.e., physically) the moment they touched the fruit. They did not simply fall over dead. So what **did** happen? The answer is found in Isaiah 59:1-2. "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear." Sin is a separation (or death). After Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, they were dead in sin. This is the first death, which is a separation from God. But what can a person do to avoid the second, eternal separation from God? In Revelation 20:6 John wrote, "Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power." How does one achieve the first resurrection? Paul answered that question in no uncertain terms in Romans 6:3-4,

"Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

Paul tells us that baptism (immersion in water) is where the formula of God's plan for man's salvation comes to fruition. It is at this point that we overcome the first death—the sin that separates us from God. Paul then was able to say with full and complete assurance in Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." The Gospel of Christ is so powerful that it can save us from the ravages of sin.

Not only is the Gospel of the power of God to save, but it also is the power of God to save **without partiality**. Romans 1:16 says it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes." In Mark 16:15 Jesus said to His disciples, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to **every** creature." When the Gospel was first preached, it went to the Jews and to the Jews only. This was in keeping with God's plan, because the Gospel was "for the Jew first, and also for the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). It was approximately ten years after Peter first used the keys of the kingdom to open the church to the Jews, that he once more would use those keys to open the kingdom to the Gentiles as well. It was at the house of Cornelius where Peter said, "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality" (Acts 10:34). This blessed fact commends the Gospel to the hearts of **all** mankind.

The Gospel of Christ also is the power of God unto salvation in the simplest of terms “for everyone who believes.” Saving belief (or “saving faith”) is not just a mental exercise. In Galatians 5:6 we read, “In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith **working through love.**” In James 2:17 we read, “Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” One must incorporate the proper works—works necessary unto salvation. Some today teach that salvation is “by faith alone.” But the only time that “faith only” is found within the pages of God’s Word is in James 2:24, where we are told, “You see then that a man is justified by works, and **not by faith only.**”

We also learn that the Gospel of Christ is the way by which God has chosen to reveal Himself to us, since “in it [the Gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed.” God’s character—His goodness, His justice, His mercy, His wisdom, and His will—is revealed in the Gospel. The Gospel of Christ brings God very near to each of us. Do you remember Isaiah’s prophecy (which Matthew 1:23 records for us)? “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, ‘God with us.’” John 14:8-9 tells us, “Philip said to Him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me **has** seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”? In Acts 17:26-27 Luke wrote,

“And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.”

The Gospel of Christ brings God close to us all. Have **you** been saved by the Gospel? Have you “obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered” (Rom. 6:17)? Have you believed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (Jn. 8:24)? Have you made that confession before others (Mt. 10:32)? Have you repented of your sins (Lk. 13:3)? Have you been baptized for the remission of your sins (Acts 22:16)? If not, I would encourage you to seek out members of the church that He said He would build (Mt. 16:18)—the church of Christ. The people there will be more than happy to assist you. If you need help locating a faithful congregation, contact us and we will help you in any way we can. If you have already obeyed the Gospel, you should never be ashamed of it because the person who is ashamed of Christ or His Gospel has a bleak future. In Mark 8:38 we read, “Whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” The Gospel of Christ is God’s power unto salvation. Join us next time as we continue to proclaim the Gospel of Christ.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST”

1. In Romans 1:16, what did Paul say we should **not** do in regard to the Gospel of Christ?
2. In Romans 1:16, the apostle Paul said that we should **not** do something (the answer to question #1 above) in regard to the Gospel of Christ. **Why** did Paul say we should not do that “something”?
3. According to Paul’s statement in Galatians 1:8, how many gospels are there?
4. What does Revelation 22:18-19 forbid us from doing?
5. According to Christ’s statement in Mark 16:16, what will happen to the person who does not believe the Gospel?
6. According to John 3:36, what two things will happen to the person who does not believe the Gospel of Christ?
7. In Matthew 7:8, what promise did Jesus make?
8. Romans 1:16-17 gives two groups of people to whom the Gospel applies. Name those two groups.
9. According to Romans 1:16-17, to whom is the Gospel “the power of God to salvation”?
10. Jeremiah 23:29 compares the Word of God to two things. What are those two things?
11. In 2 Corinthians 10:4-5, Paul said that the Gospel is “mighty in God,” and is useful for three specific things. What are those things?
12. According to Romans 3:23, how many perfect, sinless people are there?
13. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Paul gave a lengthy list of sins, yet at the beginning of verse 11 he said something that should thrill every person who has been saved. What did he say?
14. In 2 Peter 2:20-22, what two graphic examples did Peter use to describe people who had once been saved, but who had returned to a life of sin?
15. About what does Hebrews 10:31 warn us?
16. According to Romans 6:23, what is “the wages of sin”?
17. In Revelation 21:8, John wrote of “the second death.” What is that second death?
18. When Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, what “death” did they immediately experience?
19. According to Acts 17:27, where is God **not**?