

What is the gospel?

Adapted from a resource by Steve Hart

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. Romans 1:16

Q: Describe a time when you tried to change. Maybe you were trying to end a bad habit or start a good habit. What was your motivation to change in that circumstance?

The Gospel in Three Statements

We can divide the message of the gospel into three statements which focus on what Jesus has done for us. Remember: the gospel is the message or “good news” about what has been accomplished on our behalf, though we’ve done nothing to earn it. Rather, through faith in Jesus Christ, (that is, by trusting our lives to his work on our behalf) we receive the following benefits:

- I. We have been saved from the penalty of sin because of Jesus’ life and death. (Past)
- II. We are being saved from the power of sin because of Jesus’ resurrection and ascension. (Present)
- III. We will be saved from the presence of sin because of Jesus’ return. (Future)

Q: How are these statements similar and how are they different?

Good News from God’s Word

Through faith, we have been saved from the penalty of sin because of Jesus’ life and death.

THE BAD NEWS ABOUT OUR RESUMÉ

Romans 3:9-10, 20

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9 What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. **10** As it is written:

“There is no one righteous, not even one;

...

20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.

Q: According to these verses, what is the bad news about the resumé that you have been developing--the one based on ‘works of the law’ or your obedience to God?

THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT JESUS’ PERFECT RESUMÉ

Read Romans 3:21-25

21 But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. **22** This righteousness is given through faith in^[a] Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, **23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **24** and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. **25** God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement,^[b] through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished

Q: According to vs 23 is anyone’s personal resumé good enough? Why? What is the standard?

Q: What is the good news according to vs 24?

6) According to vs 22 & 25, how do you get this perfect resumé that is now available?

7) When you have a bad rap sheet, you pay a penalty with prison time and financial restitution. Romans 6:23 says the penalty for our sin is death: "The wages of sin is death." According to Romans 3:24-25 how was our penalty paid off?

THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS' LIFE

Jesus always did what was good, right and perfect. He honored God and loved people with every thought, word, and deed. He was impeccable. He had the perfect resumé! He lived a perfect life, and by faith in Him we can be "credited" His perfection, and God will treat us based on His perfect life and not on our failure.

THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS' DEATH

As perfect as Jesus was, he died on the cross. The penalty for sin is death, but Jesus never sinned! So why did he die? The Bible tells us that he was paying the penalty for our rap sheet. He was willingly taking our punishment for us. And when we put our trust--not in ourselves and what we have done--but in what Jesus has done for us, our rap sheet is cleared and his resume becomes ours. An exchange takes place. In 1 Corinthians 5:21 we are told, "For our sake, God made him (Jesus) to be sin who knew no sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God."

Q: According to 1 Corinthians 5:21 what is the exchange that takes place?

THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS' RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION

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“Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” - **1**

Corinthians 15:55-56

Referring to the resurrection, Paul prays that the Ephesians would know: “what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.”

-Ephesians 1:19-21

Referring to his ascension, Jesus says to his disciples:

“But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor [the Holy Spirit] will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.” - **John 16:7**

Q: According to these passages, what are some of the reasons that Jesus’s resurrection and ascension are good news?

THE HOLY SPIRIT: A NEW POWER TO CHANGE

We each experience conflicting desires. We want to be kind, humble, and generous, but often we end up being rude, arrogant, and stingy. We want to do what is best for our family, but in the moment, we end up doing what is best for ourselves. It is a struggle. We are all under the influence of the power of sin.

The good news is that the power of the Holy Spirit is far stronger than the power of sin in our lives. Through trust in Jesus we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit who gives us a new ability to change.

Romans 8:9-11

“You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. 10 But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. 11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.”

2 Timothy 1:7

“For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.”

2 Peter 1:3

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

Q: Where do we receive power to live a life that honors God?

Q: Why do we sometimes think that there is not enough power to change?

THE GOSPEL: A NEW MOTIVATION TO CHANGE

The Holy Spirit gives us a new power to change. The gospel gives us a new motivation to change. Often times we want to change so that we will look better in our own eyes, others' eyes, or God's eyes--we want to prove ourselves. Other times we want to change in order to avoid the guilt and shame we experience when we sin--we are motivated by guilt. Other times we want to change out of fear of the consequences of our sin in this life or the next--we are motivated by fear.

Romans 2:4

“Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?”

Q: According to Romans 2:4, what is a Christian's motivation for repentance?

Change for a Christian is not motivated by fear, guilt, or proving oneself. It is motivated by love and gratitude in response to God's grace, God's 'kindness'.

Good News from God's Word

The gospel is good news for our everyday struggles with sin. Believing the gospel is how we experience increasing freedom from sin like anger, lust, greed, jealousy, and selfishness. Consider how believing the four truths below would make a difference in your everyday life.

GOD IS GRACIOUS » SO We Don't Need To Prove Ourselves

GOD IS GOOD » SO We Don't Need To Look Elsewhere

GOD IS GREAT » SO We Don't Have To Be In Control

GOD IS GLORIOUS » So We Don't Have To Fear Others

Pray with one another to believe the Gospel in your heart.