

## The Gospel

**Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word 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 in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).**

The word gospel (1Co 15:1) comes from the Greek word εὐαγγέλιον *euangelion* pronounced u-on-gel-le-on, and it literally means an announcement or proclamation of good news. Thus, the word is not always used in the context of the salvation Christ brings those who believe. For example, in Matthew 4:23, Jesus is proclaiming the good news (the gospel) of the arrival of the kingdom (the rule and reign) of Jesus. And the first four books of the New Testament are called the Gospels because they each tell a story of good news concerning the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The reader of the NT must pay special attention to the context of how Matthew, Mark, and Luke are using the word or its associated verb. Consider Luke 9:6, “And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.” The disciples were not preaching the same gospel Paul would preach in Acts or write about in his letters.

The gospel proclaimed in Acts is the narrative of Christ Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as God’s Lamb (John 1:29) atoning for the world’s sins (1Jo 2:2) for all who will believe (trust in or depend upon) this truth. The heart of the gospel is the narrow focus on Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. In the most concise sense, the gospel is the good news that Jesus died for your sins! Sin is what separated our first parents from their Creator in the Garden of Eden, and sin still separates sinners from their Holy Creator today. (Sin is not obeying God’s commandments.) Yet God has made a way for sinners to be reconciled (Rom 5:10) to their Creator. Through Christ’s atoning sacrificial and substitutionary death, the hostility between those God loves and Himself is eliminated if one believes in Christ and what He did for them. Jesus did not die for His own sins—He never sinned. God made the One who never sinned sin (2Co 5:21). He died for us (Rom 5:9). We describe His death as substitutionary because He died in the place of others. Peter writes, “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree.” The tree is the cross the Romans used to put Jesus to death between two criminals on a hill outside the city. Christ died so you and I do not have to experience the second death (Rev 21:8).

John, the human author of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, the last book of the NT, writes about a second death. “Second” sets this death apart from the first physical death all will eventually experience. The second death is God’s punishment for those who sin, remain in unbelief, and do not trust in Christ and His cross-work for their salvation from God’s wrath.

**But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.” Rev 21:8**

Faithless is the description John uses for those who do not believe there is a Creator God who has a Son, Jesus, who came to this earth and lived a sinless life so He could be crucified. Faithless is another way of describing unbelievers. In 1 Corinthians 4:4, Paul writes, “The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” In this way, all people can be sub-divided into two categories: believers and unbelievers. The gospel must be believed to be individually efficacious. By “efficacious”, we mean it impacts and benefits you personally. Your sins are forgiven (Col 1:24), and God gives you eternal life (John 3:15). The gospel promises salvation from sin’s penalty, power, and presence (Rom 1:1, 16) to all who believe. If I promise to buy you an ice cream cone after dinner, you don’t have to ask me for the ice cream. If I keep my promises, I will take you to DQ and buy you a cone. God always keeps His promises (covenants). We trust Him to keep His word.

Followers of Christ believe in all the promises associated with the Gospel. They believe that 2000 years ago, in Jerusalem, Jesus of Nazareth was crucified on a tree. They believe the tomb is empty because Jesus rose from the dead on that first “Resurrection” Sunday (Easter). “He is not here, for he has risen,” is what the angel told those looking for the dead body of Jesus. They believe Jesus is with God in heaven, mediating (1Ti 2:5, Heb 9:15) on their behalf. Finally, true Christians do not believe the gospel for a minute or a season of their lives, like “When I was a child, I believed.” Paul admonishes us to “continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel” (Col 1:23). Are you depending on Christ for your salvation from the wrath of God against your sin?