

What is the Gospel? — Its Apostolic Foundation

Outline

1. What is the meaning of the word "gospel"?
2. The gospel is given in Galatians 1:1-5. 8-12
 - (a) Paul's divinely appointed authority
 - (b) What is the gospel?
 - (c) How did Jesus rescue us?

1. What is the meaning of the word "gospel"? The word "gospel" means "good news". Gospel does not mean good advice that a person can accept fully, partially, or even reject. Advice is something you give for the future. But the news is about an event that has already taken place, which you can believe or don't believe. There were no newspapers in the olden days. So, a person would shout the news on the streets. **"Good news"** came from the king, like when he ascended the throne or was victorious over his enemies. Under the king's orders, notable runners would proclaim it throughout his empire. In the Bible, the same word, **"good news" (gospel), refers to the good news from God— the King of kings.**

What is the good news? God sent His one and only Son, Jesus, to **rescue** us from human misery caused by our three enemies—sin, Satan and death. And to introduce His Kingdom (rule) on earth by defeating sin, Satan and death that ruled over us. When Jesus comes again, He will ultimately establish His kingdom throughout the world as in heaven. There will be a new creation (Rev 21:1-5)

2. The gospel given in Galatians 1:1-5, 8-12 *Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead— 2 and all the brothers and sisters with me. To the churches in Galatia: 3 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen... 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! 9 As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse! 10 Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings or God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ. 11 I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. 12 I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; instead, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.*

In the above scripture, we will examine (a) Paul's apostolic authority, (b) what is the gospel, and (c) how did Jesus rescue us.

(a) Paul's Divinely Appointed Apostolic Authority: Paul uses strong language in Gal 1:8-9 to preserve the gospel's truth. How could he say that? Because God appointed Paul to be an Apostle with apostolic authority. Apostles are ministers who are "sent". There were many apostles in the New Testament. But **God-appointed special apostles** had four distinguishing marks:

Jesus personally appointed them.

Jesus personally sent them.

Jesus personally taught them the gospel.

They all witnessed the bodily resurrection of Jesus.

Paul had all four (Gal 1:11-12, Acts 9:1-19), and so did the 12 Apostles. They have God-appointed, Holy Spirit-led, **apostolic authority** to write such truth.

Paul uses strong language (Gal 1:8-9) because the gospel did not come from man but came from Jesus, who directly revealed it to Paul (Galatians 1:11). Also, on this gospel depends the eternal life of human beings made in the image of God. So, no one should change or misinterpret the gospel. Since all humans are enemies of God (Romans 5:10) and hostile to God (Romans 8:7), many will respond angrily when we preach the gospel to them. Yet we are called to be servants of Christ and not pleasers of men (Galatians 1:10) but **preach the gospel with love** (2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

(b) What is the Gospel? Paul gives us an outline of the gospel message in *Galatians 1:4 (Jesus), who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.*

The word "gospel" means good news that God in the person of Jesus Christ came to **rescue** (save) His humanity from this present evil age. This present evil age is full of misery, sin and death—caused by humanity's disobedience to God's commands. When you hear any news, all you can do is believe it or reject it. Nothing else! God rescues those who believe this **good news**. But those who reject it will perish. (*John 3:18 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them*).

Despite enormous advances in science — disorder, misery, and death reign today and have been reigning throughout human history since our first parents sinned. Although everyone knows what is right and wrong, everyone seems to do some wrong virtually every day, even from childhood, despite being brought up by well-meaning parents. We call the wrong behaviour — a sin. We observe everybody sins, even from birth, so everybody is born a sinner. Even well-meaning religious founders and leaders are born sinners and also sin.

The sins of the world have caused disorder and misery throughout human history. There seems to be no remedy because everyone is born a sinner, and everyone sins. No religious leader can change this situation. The great Hindu guru Swami Vivekananda called Jesus the greatest guru. Indeed, Jesus is the greatest teacher. But we do not need a teacher. We need one who can rescue us from this present evil age — a world of misery, sin and death. When Paul gives us the essence of Jesus' ministry, he doesn't call Jesus a teacher but says **He is a rescuer (Saviour)**. So, we can say **Jesus is the gospel. Jesus is the good news sent from God**. (*John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life*).

(c) How did Jesus rescue us? He *"gave Himself for our sins (v4a)*. The word "for" means "on behalf of" or "in place of". **Jesus lived a perfect life from birth till death** — a life we should have lived but didn't. By His death and resurrection — He made the **essential exchange**. Jesus paid the penalty for our sins, and in exchange, Jesus put His righteousness into the account of our life. When God sees us, He sees the perfection of Jesus in us (2 Cor 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God). Therefore, Jesus is our Rescuer (Savior). In Jesus, we are free from penalty or condemnation. God declares us NOT GUILTY because we believe in His gospel. This essential exchange is called justification (legally declared JUST before God).

Jesus was raised from the dead: When a person is convicted of a crime, he is penalised and sentenced to prison (say, ten years). After he completes his term in prison, the government sets him free, acknowledging that he paid his penalty in full. The penalty for sin is death. Jesus took our penalty by His death. He was buried, and on the third day, the Father raised Him from the dead (*Galatians 1:1*), satisfied He fully paid the penalty on our behalf. We are now **reconciled** with God in Christ. We receive **grace** and peace with the Father through Jesus' death and resurrection (*Galatians 1:3*). Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we, too, will rise from the dead to live for eternity with Him (*1 Cor 15:12-13, John 3:16*). Jesus rising from the dead proved His claim that He was the Son of God. It proved His divinity (*Matt 12:38-40; 16:21; 17:9,23; 20:19; 27:63; Mark 8:31; 9:9,31; 10:34; 14:58; Luke 9:22; 18:33; John 2:19-21*).

1 Corinthians 15:12-13 But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.

Jesus rescues us entirely by His grace. Paul tells us in *Rom 5:6-11* that we were powerless, ungodly, and God's enemies. We could do nothing to save ourselves. Nothing! Furthermore, nothing good in us made us attractive to God. We were His enemies. God sent Jesus to rescue us entirely by His grace and reconcile us to God. When we believe the gospel, five main things happen to us:

- i. Jesus forgives us our sins plus puts His righteousness into our account by the essential exchange (2 Cor 5:21)
- ii. Jesus reconciles us to God even though we were His enemies (*Rom 5:8-10*).
- iii. Jesus gives us a new heart and a new spirit that we may want to obey God in the future (*Ezk 36:26-27*, *Heb 10:15-17*, 2 Cor 3:3).
- iv. Jesus makes us children of God (*John 1:12-13*, *Eph 1:5*), having a relationship with Him, crying, "Abba Father" (*Rom 8:15*)
- v. Jesus makes us part of **His new creation** (2 Cor 5:17). One day, this rebellious world will perish forever, and only His new creation will survive. Then God will be glorified throughout the earth (**Read Rev 21:1-5**).

2 Cor 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God

Rom 5:8-10 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! 10 For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

Ezk 36:26-27 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. (also, Heb 10:15-17, 2 Cor 3:3)

John 1:12-13 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

Rom 8:15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

2 Cor 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

Conclusion This is the good news (the gospel) of our Lord Jesus Christ, which the Bible teaches and Paul preached with apostolic authority. He severely warns us not to distort it. All we are called to do is to believe the good news and live our lives gratefully and humbly, trusting in the grace of God and giving Him the glory.