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What is the Gospel? — Its Core

Outline

1. What is the Gospel?
2. From where does it come?
3. For whom is it?
4. What is the gospel's core (central part or heart of the gospel)?

1. What is the Gospel?

The gospel is (not a philosophy or good advice), but it is simply the Good News of God's actions through His Son Jesus Christ. Jesus died on the cross for human beings and rose again to set us free from sin, Satan and death that has caused human misery and is destroying God's creation. Jesus also brings a new creation on earth, and those who believe in Him as Saviour and Lord will be a part of it.

2. From where does it come?

Romans 1:1-2 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God —² the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures.

- **The gospel comes from God** (*Rom 1:1, the Gospel of God*) — meaning it is from God and belongs to God. It starts with God. In other words, the gospel (good news) is NOT a human invention but a divine revelation. [Paul says in *Galatians 1:11-12 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*].
- **The gospel comes from God's love** — *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.*
- **The gospel is promised in the Old Testament Scriptures** (*Romans 1:2: the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures*). The gospel was what God promised from Genesis 3:15, when He said the woman's seed would crush the serpent's head. The OT prophets spoke of a new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27). They spoke of the Messiah whose sacrifice would make it possible (Isaiah 9:6-7; 53:1-12). The gospel is in the story of Exodus, in the Passover festival etc.

3. For whom is it? It is for everyone who believes

*Romans 1: 16 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".*

(a) We must proclaim the gospel to everyone

Paul says in *Rom 1:14 I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish.* (Greeks are Greek-speaking Gentiles—mostly educated, and non-Greeks are barbarians, primarily uneducated), then he includes the wise and the foolish — **so everyone is included**. Note that Paul feels obligated to preach — meaning that he **owes** everyone the opportunity to hear the gospel.

The gospel is good news to humanity, whom God created in His image. He presented His Son as the ONLY

means we are rescued from slavery to sin; we can find forgiveness, sonship, and eternal life.

The gospel is precious to God (because it involves the sacrifice of His one and only Son). It is also precious to humanity (because it is the **ONLY** means of our rescue from slavery to sin and the only way to eternal life). Therefore, we must **proclaim it to everyone**.

(b) We must use words to proclaim news (the good news or gospel). A good and faithful proclamation of the gospel “should” include the godly life and testimony of those who proclaim it (e.g. holy living, acts of mercy and charity to our neighbours). Without these, preaching the gospel appears hypocritical and a bad witness. However, holy living and testimony by itself are not the gospel. We must use words to proclaim the gospel because we use words to proclaim news.

(c) We must not be ashamed to proclaim the gospel. Because it is the power of God for salvation (Rom 1:16). God will not give His power for salvation except through the gospel. When we proclaim it, we must remember two things:

- The gospel does not belong to us, nor comes from us, but it is of God and belongs to Him (Romans 1:1).
- Preaching the gospel will cause conflict and anger in many who hear it. We must preach it in love, but we cannot alter the gospel or sugarcoat it to suit the people.

4. What is the gospel’s core? (or essentials or central part of the gospel)

At its core, the gospel is Jesus Christ — His Person (Romans 1:3-4) and His work on our behalf (Romans 1:17). **Jesus is the gospel!**

His Person: Jesus is fully or 100% man (Rom 1:3) and fully or 100% God (Rom 1:4).

Romans 1:3-4 regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, 4 and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.

Rom 1:3: “his earthly life” Two reliable ancient historians (not Christians) mention Jesus’ existence as an actual historical human being, not a myth. The Roman historian Tacitus (56-120 AD) mentions Jesus in his Annals XV-44 and the Jewish historian Josephus (38-100 AD) in his Antiquities of the Jews (2.18.3). Modern scholars accept these two references as genuine. **Jesus is a 100% man who existed in human history.** Many modern history scholars (unbelievers and believers) accept the four gospels and almost all of Paul’s epistles as historically accurate. Jesus is not a myth.

Rom 1:3: “descendant of David” OT prophets said the Messiah would be a descendant of David (2Sam 7:12-13; Ps 89:3-4; Isa 11:1-5; Jer 23:5-6). Joseph, Jesus’ legal father (Matt 1:16), was King David’s descendant.

Rom 1:4: Spirit of holiness is another title of the Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead.

Rom 1:4: The Son of God, used nearly 30 times in the gospels, means Jesus Christ is the same as God in His nature and essence. Jesus is the eternal Son and 2nd Person of the Trinity (Isa 9:6, Gal 4:4). He is entirely (100%) God from eternity. Even when He became man in His incarnation, Jesus did not cease to be God 100%. In Jewish culture, the only son would inherit all the father had, so they considered the only son equal to the father. Jesus claimed to be **“the Son of God”** (not just a son of God). The Jewish leaders understood its significance and accused Jesus of blasphemy for claiming to be God. So they crucified Him (Matt 26:65-66; Mark 14:63-64; John 10:33). But His rise from the dead proves He is God’s Son.

Rom 1:4: Was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: The Greek word for “appointed” (or declared) is “*horizo*”, from which the English word “horizon” comes. Just as the horizon is a clear line separating earth and sky, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a clear sign that separates Him from

the rest of humanity. By His resurrection, Jesus demonstrates His victory over death and provides the most conclusive evidence that He is who He claimed to be — the Son of God. Hundreds of people witnessed His resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:4-8), and overnight, those Jews who saw it believed that Jesus, a man, could be the God He claimed to be. The Jewish understanding of this sudden belief that a man could be God is amazing. Jesus' divinity is, therefore, part of the gospel that saves you (Rom 10:9-10). It proves that Jesus Christ is who He claims to be. And the Father accepted His sacrifice in place of sinners (Rom 4:24).

Without Jesus' resurrection, our faith is useless; there is no salvation (1 Corinthians 15:14, 17) and no gospel.

His work on our behalf:

Romans 1:17 *For in the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith”.*

Alistair Begg refers to John Stott giving the CORE OF THE GOSPEL in 4 words — REQUIRES, ACHIEVES, REVEALS & GRANTS (or bestows or gives)

(i) REQUIRES: God **requires** absolute moral perfection if we ever stand before Him. And that moral perfection we can never produce by our efforts. The prophet Isaiah was a decent man by human standards. Yet, when he had a vision of God, he immediately cried, “Woe to me!... I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.” (Isa 6:5).

Everyone will one-day face judgment by God. The Bible says in Heb 9:27, “Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment”. And as mentioned, God requires absolute moral perfection as we stand before Him, and we would be held accountable by Him. But we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Four words describe every one of us when God judges us — **sinful, guilty, accountable and lost** (damned).

(ii) ACHIEVES: The perfect righteousness that God requires of us but which we cannot produce to stand before Him, God achieves in the perfect sacrifice of His Son Jesus. From birth to death, Jesus lived sinless as a man we should have lived but didn't. He then took our sin upon Himself and died on the cross to pay the penalty we should have paid, but He paid for it.

So, God displays and satisfies His perfect justice in dealing with sin by punishment on the cross. Without Jesus' sacrifice, God would never be a God of justice if He ever chose to forgive us. But because of Jesus' perfect sacrifice on our behalf, God could legally declare us NOT GUILTY. God could also accept us as having Jesus' righteousness, which is the righteousness of God. (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*). This is the **essential exchange at the cross**. This is justification.

(iii) REVEALS: God not only requires perfect righteousness from us, then achieves it for us, but He also reveals it to us in the gospel. “*For in the gospel, the righteousness of God is **revealed***” (Rom 1:17). That's why we must be a people of the gospel and declare it to **everyone**. Because, as we have seen before, the gospel is *the power of God that brings salvation to **everyone** who believes*.

(iv) GRANTS: God's righteousness is what God requires if we can ever stand before Him. That which He requires, God achieves in the sacrifice of Christ, and He reveals in the gospel (good news), and finally, that righteousness of God which He requires, God **grants** to all those who trust (believe, have faith) in the gospel. The word grant is another word for grace.

So our salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. And the righteous will live by faith.

End Notes:

1. What is meant by faith that saves us? It has three components— (i) We must know the gospel content, (ii) We must mentally agree with the gospel content (iii) we must trust our lives on the gospel content, which includes repentance. All three are necessary for transformation.
2. Why must the gospel be proclaimed first to the Jews (Romans 1:16)? Because:
 - God trusted the Jews with His revelation in the Old Testament (Rom 3:2), and Jesus said salvation is from the Jews (John 4:22).
 - Jews were God's chosen people (Rom 11:1)
 - Jesus came on earth through the Jews (Rom 9:5)

Paul consistently went first to the Jews to preach the gospel (Acts 13:5,14, 14:1, 17:2,10,17, 18:4,19, 19:8), and when they rejected him, he turned to preach to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46, 18:6, 28:25-28). Today, we continue to evangelise the Jews, but Jesus and the apostles fulfilled their priority.