

What is the Gospel?

by David Orton

<http://lifemessenger.org/what-is-the-gospel/>

God's good news—the Gospel—is the best and most important news you will ever hear. It is found permanently recorded in God's Word—the Bible. The Bible is the final authority regarding God's news for us—and this is where you should go to check up on what anybody says about God and His relationship to man. There are many ways to summarize the Gospel. One way is:

The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord

Romans 6:23

Another is:

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life

John 3:16

These two verses sketch the whole story, and they are simple enough for any child to understand. But further detail is beneficial to elaborate on these brief accounts of God's good news. This article offers such detail using a seven point outline. It goes like this:

- A loving Creator continually blesses us
- As ungrateful creatures, we rebel against Him
- Therefore, righteous judgment awaits us all
- But God has made a Covenant of Grace
- Christ accomplished salvation for sinners
- To be saved we must repent and believe
- Those who are saved lead new lives

This news is not only good, it is also urgent. Your response to it is a matter of eternal life and death. Please read this article carefully and seriously—and consider where you stand before God. Those who reject or ignore God's good news only further alienate themselves from God. Those who receive it gladly and trust in Christ will find it to be the best thing that has ever—or could ever—happen to them.

A Loving Creator Continually Blesses Us

The living and true God created all things by His powerful word, and everything was very good. Man was made to know, enjoy, and serve God in loving dependence. Originally, man was morally upright, submitting to God's perfect will. Even though the human race has turned away from the Creator, God continues to bless us with good gifts—such as sunshine, crops, families, growth in knowledge, etc. He gave us His law for our good—to bring love and justice between men, to help us overcome fear, frustration, and failure, and to teach us how to worship God properly. Finally, God even sent His own Son into the world so that men might enjoy new, abundant, and eternal life through Him.

As Ungrateful Creatures, We Rebel Against Him

In selfish disobedience to God's will, we followed our own ways and pretended to be our own gods. We replaced God's Word with our own wisdom, being dominated by the wrong master. We have a bad heart controlling our attitude toward God and man—leading to hatred, unfairness, frustration, alienation, meaninglessness, and moral defeat. We have lived in an unthankful manner toward God. In our own individual ways, throughout our lives, whether by passive indifference or active defiance to God's will, we have each broken God's commandments. We do not conform to what He requires, and we do what He forbids. Far from having a perfect or even a good record, we are all found guilty before God. What we consider to be our best is still polluted in God's sight. Far from having spiritual life within us, we are dead in our sins.

Therefore, Righteous Judgement Awaits Us All

To be true to His own holiness, God cannot allow unholiness in His presence. To be true to His Word and to respect our personal choices, He cannot pretend that we have not ignored and broken His law. Because wrongdoing is, by definition, contrary to God's nature, our sins separate us from Him. God's wrath and curse will certainly be expressed against all sinners in this life and the next. They will be eternally separated from Him and suffer unending punishment—the final death.

But God Has Made a Covenant of Grace

In mercy toward undeserving sinners, God established a bond between Himself and those who trust and submit to Him as His people—a covenant of grace. This was a sovereignly imposed, one-sided, yet thoroughly gracious, transaction entered into by God for the undeserved benefit of sinful people. It stemmed from His lovingkindness. Its aim was that He would be our God, and we would be His people. In the covenant of grace, God made a promise of eternal salvation to sinners. With an inviolable oath, God bound Himself to this saving word of promise. The provisions of God's promise were progressively made known in various covenants through history. Every provision pointed to Jesus Christ, the coming Savior. In accord with the developing anticipation of the Old Testament, it was God Himself who came to save His people. Jesus was the divine Messiah (the Christ), God's eternal Son. Being of one substance and equal with the Father, He became man by taking on flesh, so that the divine and human natures were inseparably united in one single person. As the God-man, Jesus Christ was the perfect Mediator between God and men, fulfilling God's covenant promise of salvation. God's promise is not just to individuals, but to families and even nations. His gracious call of salvation creates "a people" or a community to be His own. Through the ages (no matter their race, gender, nationality, etc.), believers constitute one unified people of God—the Church.

Christ Accomplished Salvation for Sinners

God loves those who deserve only His wrath. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to live a perfect life and to die as a sacrificial substitute for His people, taking their condemnation upon Himself. Christ's death was a work of obedience and perfectly atones for the sins of His people. He obeyed the Law's precepts and suffered the Law's penalty. Jesus pacified the wrath of God to us, reconciling us to God in Himself. Jesus' blood is the ransom price that releases us from bondage, purchases our forgiveness, and purifies our defilement. He grants new life by giving us new hearts. Christ accomplished a thorough salvation by delivering us from the effects of sin in every aspect of our lives. Because we are ignorant, He is a prophet declaring the will of God. Because we are guilty, He is a priest interceding to God for us. Because we are undisciplined and helpless, He is a king ruling over all and defending us. Christ offers deliverance, reconciliation, and redemption in a way that is inclusive of sin in all of its aspects, consequences, and expressions. The salvation secured by Jesus Christ is completely by God's mercy and grace. Not one of us could earn it by anything we do. God gives it to us as a gift—an undeserved favor—and never on the basis of our imagined good works. Because God has clearly revealed Himself through nature and conscience to all people, we are without excuse. We have knowingly violated His standards and are justly condemned by Him. The only satisfaction of His justice which can be acceptable in His sight is that way of salvation He Himself provided through His Son in the covenant of grace. Thus the salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ is the one and only way to be made right with God.

To Be Saved We Must Repent and Believe

God's own Spirit powerfully applies Christ's redemptive work to His people by making the Gospel effective, inwardly testifying to its truth, and producing new spiritual life within us. Because sinners are unable to do what God requires, the Holy Spirit must change our hearts and make us fit for fellowship with God. God's free gift of salvation is received when the Holy Spirit unites us to Christ by producing faith and repentance within us. God's people are commanded to repent of sin and believe in Christ. Repentance is turning away from your sins, hating and forsaking them because they are displeasing to God. Having faith in Christ is entrusting yourself to Him alone, accepting His claims and promises, and resting on His work for

forgiveness, cleansing, and eternal life with God. Christ has secured wonderful benefits for those who trust in Him for salvation. Christ's righteousness is credited to us, so that we are treated by God as if we had never sinned. Having declared us righteous, God also promises to make us righteous over time in heart and conduct. We are assured of final acceptance with God as His children, and are strengthened to persevere in the faith. So believers now enjoy God's love, peace, joy, and hope. Then, at death, believers are made perfect in holiness, and they spiritually live to enjoy the very presence of God. At the general resurrection of all men, when Christ returns in glory for the Final Judgment of the world, believers are resurrected in redeemed bodies, glorified like unto the Savior, acknowledged and acquitted by Him, and enter into the holy, happy, and eternal life of God's consummated kingdom.

Those Who Are Saved Lead New Lives

By the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, believers determine to live according to God's will; as redeemed and renewed, we seek to give our lives new direction. The Spirit empowered change should characterize us and affect all areas of our lives. God's true people renounce self-centered sin, strive to live in love toward God and men, determine to obey the Lord's commandments, and generally demonstrate attitudes, affections, and behavior exemplary of a Spirit-filled life. Followers of Jesus Christ desire to witness about His saving mercy to others who are lost in sin. They are also willing to endure suffering for their commitment to the Savior. By making other disciples of Christ and witnessing to the will of God, Christians pray that the Kingdom of God might more and more come to expression in the world and—to the greatest degree possible—reform all areas of life for God's glory. Christians cultivate their new life by means of Bible reading, prayer, and the fellowship of God's people. They are united to other believers in a local church, where they worship God, observe the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and grow by the preaching of the Word of God.

Conclusion

Your response to God's good news is indeed an urgent matter. It is more important than any other decision you make in life. It is a choice between life and death itself. Let's review God's good news:

- A Loving Creator Continually Blesses Us
- As Ungrateful Creatures, We Rebel Against Him
- Therefore, Righteous Judgement Awaits Us All
- But God Has Made a Covenant of Grace
- Christ Accomplished Salvation for Sinners
- To Be Saved We Must Repent and Believe
- Those Who Are Saved Lead New Lives

Christ invites you to belong to Him by faith, and promises to receive you. "He who comes to me I will by no means cast out" (John 6:37). God commands your submission to Christ: "I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus"(Acts 20:21). While these things are still heavy on your heart, before secondary cares distract you, seek God's forgiveness in prayer. You may be unaccustomed to speaking with God, but He welcomes your prayer.

- Confess your sinfulness and your sorrow for it.
- Call upon the name of Jesus Christ as the only One you trust to save you in God's sight.
- Ask for new life by the Holy Spirit and commit yourself to following Christ in everything you do hereafter.

Then enjoy the privilege of being adopted as a child of God, one who can call Him "Father" and be assured of His love. And to strengthen and grow in your faith, find a Bible-believing fellowship of Christians where you can worship God and learn more from His Word.

By Dr. Greg L. Bahnsen, (author, philosopher, pastor and apologist).

[About Bahnsen](#) • [Bahnsen's articles](#)

Legendary Bahnsen-Stein debate "Does God Exist"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=anGAazNCfdY>

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