

“What is the gospel?” This question is at very heartbeat of the Christian faith. The word “gospel” literally means “Good News”. To understand the gospel is to grasp and believe the narrative of redemption, and the symphony of grace and love that God extends through the work of His Son. Understanding is just the beginning; Paul challenges us to appropriate it into our lives. After all, it is the very power power of salvation according to Romans 1:16 which tells us: “

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.”

Thus, the more pressing question should be, “Why does the gospel matter to each of us?”

The Gospel’s Foundation: Romans 10:9

The Apostle Paul, a masterful communicator and a profound theologian, succinctly states the essence of the Christian gospel in Romans 10:9:

“If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

There is no ambiguity in this scripture. It is not an invitation to a theological debate but rather the cornerstone of faith in Christ, a faith that saves. It underscores three indispensable elements for salvation: acknowledging Jesus as God, recognizing His sacrificial death, and believing in His triumphant resurrection.

Jesus as God: A Pivotal Recognition

It is certain that Jesus is much more than a man when we proclaim “Jesus is Lord”. We assert Jesus’ divinity in this statement - He is the eternal God. When embraced, it becomes a declaration of His sovereignty over all creation, over every power and principality, and over our lives. To declare Jesus as Lord is to recognize His preeminence and to yield to His authority in every aspect of our existence. This submission, rooted in reverence, respect, and profound love, is the cornerstone of our faith. Without accepting Jesus as God, the rest of the gospel message loses its significance and potency.

The Death of Jesus: The Ultimate Sacrifice for Sin

The result of sin, as Paul elaborates in Romans 6:23, is death. Every human being, irrespective of their deeds, carries this innate burden. It’s not just a physical demise, but a spiritual death—a separation from God, the fountainhead of life. This grim reality paints a somber picture. But, as with any profound narrative, there’s a twist: God’s unyielding love for humanity.



Jesus' death on the cross isn't just an act of sacrifice; it's a substitution. He took upon Himself the sins of the world, becoming the very embodiment of sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). In His death, Christ bore the wrath that was rightfully ours, settling once and for all the immense debt we owed. This act is grace in its purest form and has been the plan of God since the beginning of time.

The Resurrection: Victory Over Death and Assurance of Life

Paul's emphasis on believing that God raised Jesus from the dead is not a mere addition to a creed but the foundation upon which our hope stands. Jesus' resurrection is the validation of His divine identity, the proof of His victory over sin and death, and the assurance of our own resurrection. Without it, the cross would be a symbol of defeat rather than victory. The empty tomb signals not just Christ's triumph but our own impending victory over death for those who believe.

1 Corinthians 15:1-5: The Gospel Grounded in Scripture

The Apostle Paul's discourse in 1 Corinthians 15 stands as a potent declaration of the gospel's essence and the eternal plan of God over all time. Yet, it's not merely its creedal nature that makes it significant. Within verses 3 and 4, Paul makes a deliberate reference to the Scriptures appealing to the promises that God made through the writers of the Old

Testament:

“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.”

Fulfillment of the Scriptures: The Validation of Jesus’ Messianic Role

To comprehend the magnitude of Paul’s assertion that these events occurred “according to the Scriptures,” one must first recognize the central role the Old Testament (often just referred to as “the Scriptures” in New Testament times) played in the Jewish faith. These sacred writings, revered by the Jewish community, foretold many aspects of the coming Messiah’s life, death, and resurrection. Prophecies from the Psalms, Isaiah, and other books spoke of a suffering servant, a lamb led to the slaughter, and a ruler who would be pierced for transgressions not His own.

When Paul emphasizes that Christ’s death and resurrection occurred “*according to the Scriptures*” he’s pointing to the fulfillment of these ancient prophecies. Jesus wasn’t just another historical figure; He was the promised Messiah whose life and mission had been preordained and prophesied for centuries.

The Importance of Scriptural Fulfillment

Continuity with God’s Plan: By fulfilling Old Testament prophecies, Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection prove a divine continuity in God’s redemption plan. It demonstrates that God’s intent to save humanity through Christ wasn’t an afterthought but a purpose established from before the foundations of the cosmos were laid.

- **Legitimacy of Jesus’ Mission:** In a time when many claimed to be the Messiah, the exact fulfillment of scriptural prophecies by Jesus distinguished Him from imposters. His life mirrored what the Scriptures had foretold, thereby authenticating His claim and mission.
- **A Foundation for Faith:** For early Jewish believers, the Scriptures were foundational. Demonstrating that Jesus’ actions aligned with them would have fortified their faith, offering reassurance that in believing Jesus, they were not abandoning their heritage but seeing it come to fruition.
- **A Defense against Skeptics:** Paul’s emphasis on scriptural fulfillment also serves as a defense against skeptics. By grounding Christ’s actions in prophetic fulfillment, Paul is reinforcing the objective truth of the gospel against those who might dismiss it as mere legend or fabrication.

The Timeless Relevance of 1 Corinthians 15

While the immediate audience of Paul's letter was the early Christian community in Corinth, the truths he communicates in 1 Corinthians 15:1-5 have lasting implications. They serve as a perennial reminder of the rootedness of the Christian faith—not in abstract philosophies or transient experiences but in the enduring word of God, validated by the unfolding of history. The gospel, therefore, stands as the culmination of God's grand narrative, a story of love, redemption, and hope, foretold by prophets and fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Why All Three Elements Are Indispensable

Paul's emphasis on all three elements—Jesus as God, His death, and His resurrection—is not coincidental. Each element plays a critical role in the tapestry of salvation:

- **Jesus as God:** Without recognizing Jesus' divine nature, His death would be just another martyr's end. His divinity ensures that His sacrifice was sufficient to atone for the sins of the entire world.
- **His Death:** Without His sacrificial death - the shedding of blood as required in the law - the problem of sin remains unresolved. His death is the bridge that mends the chasm between a holy God and sinful humanity.
- **His Resurrection:** Without His resurrection, there's no victory over death, no hope for eternal life. It's the assurance that His sacrifice was accepted, and death's sting has been nullified. It is the cornerstone on which we place our hope and faith; as Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15: 17-19, without it we hope in vain: *And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. (18) Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. (19) If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.*

So, Why Does the Gospel Matter?

This is the question we began with. Paul presents his case in Romans 10:9 and 1 Corinthians 15:1-19. We see that the heart of the Gospel lies the profound message of salvation, of redemption through the unmatched sacrifice of the God of this universe for His creation. Through which we are challenged by our saviors boundless grace. It chronicles the unparalleled work of Christ on the cross, where He took upon Himself the immense burden of our sins. These sins which are beyond our capability to atone for. Yet, it's through this monumental act of love that Christ offers us a way to stand justified before the holy throne of God, inviting us to be counted as His beloved children. The key to this magnificent gift? It is simple: **Belief grounded in Faith.**



Belief that Jesus is God incarnate, the Son from the Father, who lived and died to carry the burden of our sins and has been raised from death to life by the Father!

Belief, in Paul's exhortation, isn't merely intellectual acknowledgment. It is a belief firmly grounded in faith. He tells us that this faith is transformative bringing peace between God and man. Romans 5:1:

"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." In this justification, we find our new identity.

But what does it truly mean to be "**justified**"? To be justified is to be declared righteous before God. It's a legal term, akin to a verdict in a courtroom where one is declared 'not guilty'. In theological essence, to be justified means our record of wrongs, which once stood as an indictment against us, is now wiped clean, not by our own merit but because of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9).

The gravity of this justification, and by inference, the severe consequence of lacking it, is

starkly illuminated in Romans 6:23:

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

This isn't a mere cessation of biological function; it's a second death, the eternal separation from God, delineated in Revelation 20:14:

“Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.”

The Gospel points to the way out of this eternal death: Salvation! A new life in Christ covered by His blood and credited a right standing with God. This is rebirth, often called “being Born Again”. Jesus, during His poignant discourse with Nicodemus, expounds on the idea of spiritual rebirth, an essential precursor to justification through the saving work of Christ. He explains in John 3:3,

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

This spiritual rebirth presents a profound transition, not of the body but of the spirit. Through it we are made children of God.

It has been said that we have a choice:

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We can be born once and die twice. Or we can be born twice and die once.

And that, in essence, is why the Gospel is so pivotal. It beckons for us to chose how will be spend eternity.