

The Gospel of God

1. Know it—in its center and fullness

Eph. 1:13 ...Having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation...

1 Tim. 1:4 God desires all men to be saved and to come to the full knowledge of the truth.

1 Cor. 15:1-4 Now I make known to you... the gospel which I announced to you... that Christ died for our sins... that He was buried, and that He has been raised on the third day...

Rom. 1:1, 15 Paul... a called apostle, separated unto the gospel of God... So, for my part, I am ready to announce the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

2. Believe it—in its truth and power

Mark 1:14-15 ...Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has drawn near. Repent and believe in the gospel.

Heb. 4:2 We have had the good news announced to us, even as they also; but the word heard did not profit them, not being mixed together with faith in those who heard.

2 Cor. 5:7 We walk by faith, not by appearance.

Heb. 11:1 Faith is the substantiation of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Rom. 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes...

3. Tell it out—in its goodness and glory

1 Pet. 2:9 You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people acquired for a possession, so that you may tell out the virtues of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

1 Thes. 2:9 ...While working night and day so as not to be burdensome to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.

Mark 13:10 Yet the gospel must first be proclaimed to all the nations.

The gospel is good news. Now, more than ever, we need to know, believe in, and tell out the good news to the aching world around us. In a world full of bad news and fake news, we need to be a people of good news.

ex. Some Good News

John Krasinski—“A news show dedicated entirely to good news” during COVID.

We have a book dedicated entirely to good news — the Bible!

Gospel

Background of word:

Jewish — prophets — Isa. 40:9-11; 52:7-10; 61:1-2
Roman — Caesars — imperial cult

NT usage, 122x

Augustus was titled Lord and Savior and was a son of a god. (Kyrios Kaisar)

Aeneid (19 BC)

“Augustus Caesar, a god’s son, and [the] bringer of a new age of gold.”

Jupiter
(Zeus) says:

“For them I will not limit time or space. Their rule will have no end... with worldwide empire, glory heaven-high... then wars will end, cruel history [will] grow gentle.”¹

Priene Calendar Inscription (9 BC)—“The birthday of the god Augustus was for the world the beginning of the good tidings [gospel] that came by reason of him.”

“The Roman emperors understood themselves as lords, saviors, and redeemers of the world. The messages they issued were called *evangelium*... the idea was that what comes for the emperor is a saving message, that it is not just a piece of news.”²

Lk 1:32
Jesus = Son of
the Most High
who is given
the throne

5 years later: The angel said to them... Behold, I announce to you good news of great joy, which will be for all the people, because today a Savior has been born to you in David’s city, who is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:10-11)

**** Gospel fulfills the prophets’ expectations and confronts the caesars’ pretensions.**³

America’s gospel

Expressive individualism. Gospel of self-fulfillment and self-expression = accept yourself and express your self. And you will be happy and achieve all your dreams.

Powerful combo: authenticity (Disney) + achievement (Wall Street). BUT doesn’t satisfy!

Eccl. 1:7; 2:11

Describe
mouthwatering
steaks to a
culture feeding
on bacon bits!

“Our desires are not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us.”⁴

¹ Vergil, and Sarah Ruden, *The Aeneid* 6.792-793; 1.278-279, 288, 291

² Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, pp. 46-47

³ C.E.B. Cranfield, *Romans 1-8* (ICC), p. 55: “The pretentious claims of self-important men.”

⁴ C.S. Lewis, *Weight of Glory*, p. 26

Of God

Who is behind the true good news? GOD! If the Gospel does not come from above it is not good news at all—just another human thought in the market place of ideas.

When a person of this status, rank, and dignity has something to official, we should listen! The omni- God who is love! AS SUCH A PERSON, He brings the fullness of his being to bear on the nature of His news. Our Savior GOD (1 Tim. 2:3).

He is both the source and substance!

Gospel is planned, promised, produced, and proclaimed by GOD.

Gospel is not an after thought or a contingency plan if things go wrong. It is what God had planned from eternity past! He WANTS something and gets it in the gospel—sons.

“The central point of the gospel is not forgiveness of sins. It is the producing of the sons of God.”⁵

The “good news” in 1:13 is connected to the “good pleasure” in 1:5.

Good news of your salvation IS FOR the good pleasure of God’s will.

****The good news (an event in time) flows from a good pleasure (a being before time).** God has eternal & infinite joy in Himself (Matt. 3:17). The gospel is His free decision to invite human beings into that joy, to participate in the glad overflow of His life!

This points to 2 main things God does in the gospel: forgive our sins AND impart His life.

News

Something has happened; not just a theory or an idea or good advice.

What happened: God stepped into the ugliness and unloveliness of human history with its sin and death and took our place under God’s wrath.

⁵ Witness Lee, *Life-Study of Romans*, p. 544

1. Know it—in its center and fullness⁶

Eph. 1:13 ...Having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation...

Apposition: ex. directions—turn right and you'll see my house, the mansion on the corner (lol)

Not one truth among many,⁷ but the totality of the divine truths⁸

This includes the OT—all the promises, prophecies, types fulfilled in Jesus⁹

He's the true:
Isaac
Solomon
Jonah
Lamb
Manna
Rock

"The OT is not merely a record of creation and history. In it are revealed some crucial elements pertaining to the gospel."¹⁰

Gospel in OT—Gal. 3:8 // Gen. 12 —> gospel precedes law (Exo. 20)

Extensiveness of the gospel

Not the ABCS of the faith, but the whole alphabet

Not the appetizer, but the whole meal

Not the front door, but the whole house

1 Tim. 1:4—Need to KNOW it! Not just get saved.

How big is your gospel? How much good news do you know?

ex. Like a freshmen at UT, who's never left campus all semester, do they know Austin?

Gospel has a dense, central hub (a downtown) and an expansive, outer city limits.
EXPLORE!

We should be overwhelmed, speechless, and awestruck by the glorious vastness of the gospel. Like looking at the night sky in the middle of nowhere. (ex. NZ seeing milky way, thought it was a cloud). Our media and music and movies is like cultural light pollution that blocks out the brightness and beauty of the gospel night sky.

One of the main reasons we live a sad and impoverished Christian life is bc we don't know what the gospel entails. We've never seen the NZ night sky; if you do it will dazzle you!

Center—1 Cor. 15:1-4

Fullness—Rom. 1:1, 15 = The gospel to Christians. Everything in Romans is the gospel.¹¹

⁶ Lee uses these two words to describe the gospel in *Crystallization-study of the Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 27, 36

⁷ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 6th ed., p. 35: "The Gospel is not a truth among other truths. Rather, it sets a question-mark against all truths."

⁸ Ron Kangas, *The Crystallization-Study of the Gospel of God*, msg 1

⁹ Lee, *Life-Study of Mark*, p. 20: "The gospel is the fulfillment of the entire OT. Therefore, in order to know what the gospel is, we need to read the thirty-nine books of the OT and be enlightened concerning the revelation that is given there."

¹⁰ Lee, *Life-Study of Romans*, p. 542

¹¹ Ibid., "The entire book unfolds the gospel, the glad tidings of God, in its fullest way."

2. Believe it—in its truth and power

Mark 1:15—repent and believe = imperative.

“Sounds harsh and in your face”—but what’s it really saying? “Change how you think about life, stop trying to be something to prove your worth and receive what I have done for you.”

All other religions tell you—achieve something. Bible says receive something! Nothing pleases God like our faith. Faith glorifies God by saying, “What You have done is enough.” Faith receives all God has done. Faith “avails” (Gal. 5:6) = “has force, practical power.”¹²

God’s job = to be¹³

Our job = to be-lieve

And believing enables God to be to us everything we need to do His will

Go out, God will come in;

Die thou and let Him live;

Be not and He will be;

Wait and He'll all things give¹⁴

ex. Jude—viewing me in terms of verbs, “Are you the reader, sitter, layer?”

Psa.
116:12-13

“The story of the prodigal son gives a supreme illustration of the way to please God... He longs for us to simply allow Him to do everything. He wants to be the Giver and the Doer eternally. If only we saw how rich and how great He is, we would leave all the giving and doing to Him.”¹⁵

Heb. 4:2—Unbelief short circuits the divine transmission.

Often our current struggles and spiritual condition and problems eclipse God’s Word and our faith disappears. Don’t believe your apparent condition more than God’s word!

2 Cor. 5:7—walk by faith, not by appearance.

Faith is always meeting a mountain:

“All temptation is primarily to look within; to take our eyes off the Lord and to take account of appearances. Faith is always meeting a mountain, a mountain of evidence that seems to contradict God’s Word, a mountain of apparent contradiction in the realm of tangible fact—failures in deed or feelings of despair—and either faith or the mountain has to go... If we resort to our senses to discover the truth, we shall find that Satan’s lies are often enough true to our experience; but if we refuse to accept as binding anything that contradicts God’s Word and maintain an attitude of faith in Him alone, we shall find instead that Satan’s lies begin to dissolve and that our experience come to progressively match His Word.”¹⁶

¹² Recovery Version, Galatians 5:6, note 1

¹³ Lee, *Crystallization-study of the Epistle to the Romans*, p. 118: “Faith is to believe that God is and I am not.”

¹⁴ *Hymns* #477, written in 3rd c.

¹⁵ Watchman Nee, CWWN, vol. 46, p. 1162

¹⁶ Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, p. 72

How does faith work? Substantiation—Heb. 11:1

ex. Blind—
color is still
real

Faith substantiates all the divine realities.¹⁷ If we do not believe the accomplished facts, they remain as real as ever, but they don't profit us. Faith doesn't make things real, it makes them real *to us* (our experience).

Faith → Substance → Things
Assurance
Substantiation

Power of God—Rom. 1:16

Not ashamed: like taking an old, unreliable car on a cross country road trip. Ashamed to take it bc you know it will break down half-way. (**ex. limo**) Gospel will take us all the way!

To everyone: doesn't matter who you are, what you've done, what kind of history of rebellion you have, what kind of moods you fall prey to. Not to everyone who is strong, capable, intelligent, good, faithful. To everyone who BELIEVES!

Greek = dynamite (δύναμις): “Denoting a powerful force that can break through any obstacle.”¹⁸

Joy

If we see this and if we believe it, the issue will be not just experience but joy!¹⁹

“The gospel is news that gladdens those who hear it.”²⁰

Line of joy:

Acts 8:4-5, 8 ...They went throughout the land announcing the word as the gospel. And Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed the Christ to them... And there was much joy in that city.

1 Pet. 1:8 ...Though not seeing Him at present, yet believing, you exult with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory.

Have you
experienced
this?

Luke 15—prodigal son returns / father throws a party—“music and dancing”, “we HAD TO be merry and rejoice.” Have you ever danced to the music of God’s salvation? Many of you are too formal, serious, too stoic. ex. David danced before the Lord (2 Sam 6:14)

“If we’ve never been beside ourselves or ‘crazy,’ if we’ve never been in ecstasy before God, we’re not up to the standard... Shows that we do not have a sufficient enjoyment of God.”²¹

Psa. 89:15 Blessed are the people who know the joyful shout...

¹⁷ Nee, *The Normal Christian Faith*, Ch. 13

¹⁸ Recovery Version, Romans 1:16, note 1

¹⁹ See David Bentley Hart, “A Glorious Sadness,” *Atheist Delusions*, pp. 143-145

²⁰ Lee, *Life-study of Romans*, p. 542

²¹ Lee, *CWWL 1984*, vol. 4, p. 15

3. Tell it out—in its goodness and glory

Although you experience the gospel personally, the gospel shouldn't remain a private affair.

1 Pet. 2:9—SO THAT

Our faith is not like the shell of a hermit crab that we retreat into and hide from the world!
Don't only care about your own comfort and enclosure.

The world NEEDS this news—social injustice, black lives, police brutality, pandemic, tanking economy, election interference, political circus. God has given us the joyful privilege of proclaiming good news.

ex. Have you ever had a really good surprise and fight about who gets to say it, “No let me tell him!”

The power and effectiveness of our gospel lies in the beauty and brightness of our living.

“It behooves us to declare these virtues or excellencies not only by our tongue, but also by our whole life.”²² —Calvin

Goodness = “virtue”

Good, well pleasing, and perfect (Rom. 12:2) refers “to the impression produced on men when they contemplate [God’s] will realized in the believer’s life. They cannot help paying it a tribute of admiration, and finding it beautiful as well as good.”²³ —Godet

Glory = “marvelous light”

1 Thes. 2:9—while working = not the job of professional preachers only

Someone who shares the gospel is simply a witness. Not a skilled orator, not a seasoned debater, and not a motivational speaker.

Proclaiming the news is our job, convicting people to believe it is God’s.²⁴ When I learned this it released me from viewing the gospel as a hard thing to do.

ex. Telling someone about your favorite show—you don’t feel this existential burden to force them to love it too. You genuinely love talking about it. And you genuinely want them to love it too, but the whole thing is the easiest thing in the world to do.²⁵

Mark 13:10—yet first the gospel

Gospel proclamation precedes Jesus’ manifestation.

**We are waiting for Jesus to come back to this world with his kingdom to turn it right side up.
He is waiting for us to go out into this world with the gospel to turn it inside out.**

²² John Calvin, *Commentary on 1 Peter*, notes on 1 Pet. 2:9

²³ Frédéric Godet, *Commentary on Romans*, notes on Rom. 12:2

²⁴ Kangas, p. 29: “A herald does not have to convince anyone, he does not have to persuade others... he simply proclaims.”

²⁵ See Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 1.29.30: “The more passionate he is in his love [for the actor], the more he tries by whatever methods he can to make his hero loved by a greater number of people, and the more he desires to point him out...”