

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

The Apostle Paul has written that the gospel ". . . is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. . ." (Romans 1:16). The gospel is so profoundly important that accepting it determines one's eternal destiny. However, only the TRUE gospel can save. Since there are subtle counterfeit "gospels" (2 Corinthians 11:3,4), it is comforting to know the Bible clearly explains the nature of the true gospel.

By definition the gospel is good news. Not leaving this term to human interpretation, the Lord has declared just what the good news is:

"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel. . . . Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures. . ." (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

The Lord Jesus Christ has paid the price IN FULL for the forgiveness of our sins. He has won for us a complete victory over sin and all its consequences. The good news, the true gospel, is that salvation in the presence of God depends not on our inconsistent attempts at proving ourselves worthy, but wholly on the Lord Jesus Christ. His perfect person and work have secured salvation for the trusting sinner. What wonderful news! Since our Savior has already accomplished His divine mission, salvation is secure and absolutely certain for anyone who will accept it as such.

As if to anticipate one of the most common misconceptions of all, we are specifically told that not even baptism, a good and important act in its proper context, is to be considered part of the gospel (1 Corinthians 1:17). The gospel that saves is nothing more nor less than the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ for lost sinners.

GRACE (unmerited favor) is the essence of the Biblical gospel (Galatians 1:6). Any concept of "the gospel" which incorporates human merit is in fact not the gospel at all. It is a perversion (Galatians 1:7). Tragically, God's curse is upon all who propagate a distorted gospel. The Apostle Paul warns, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8).

The true gospel of grace is of such inestimable worth that God has pledged its uninterrupted preservation. It is the "everlasting gospel" of Revelation 14:6, the redeeming message of salvation by grace through simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lloyd A. Larkin
Baptist Mid-Missions, Emeritus