

The Gospel and How it Changes Us

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[0 : 00] When you walk into a worship service like this, and you see that the Lord's Supper is going to be observed, what do you think?

When I was a kid growing up in the church I went to, when I walked in and saw the table set up, we were going to have the Lord's Supper, I thought, we're going to get out today a whole lot early.

Really. We started at 11 o'clock, and we had the Lord's Supper in the church I grew up in. We were always out by 20 minutes till 11, 20 minutes till 12. 30 to 40 minutes tops.

That's not going to happen here. Don't even think about that. But on a more serious note, when you walk in, when you walked in today, or when you walk in anytime, and you see the elements on the table, you know we're going to observe the Lord's Supper.

Maybe you saw it in the newsletter. What do you think? Do you think about what these elements represent? The broken body and shed blood of Jesus Christ as He died on the cross to pay the penalty for your sins if you're a Christian.

[1 : 19] Another way to think about that is when you see the Lord's Supper set up like this, do you think about the gospel? That is a word that's used a lot in church.

You've probably heard it in Sunday school today. You may have read something this past week, that word gospel, in relation to who we are as Christians. Well, the word gospel simply means good news.

It is the good news of how God has provided a way for sinners like you and me to be forgiven, made right with Him, and even made His child so that we can have a relationship with Him now and forever.

I want you to turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 15 this morning and we're going to look at one of the clearest, one of the most simple statements of the gospel that you'll find in Scripture.

In fact, it's really the most clear, concise statement of the gospel message that you're going to find. 1 Corinthians chapter 15.

[2 : 32] Now, most of this chapter is explaining the significance of the resurrection of Jesus. But Paul begins in verses 1 through 8.

He begins by reminding the Corinthians, these Christians, what he has preached, what they have believed.

He explains it in detail and then he talks about how there are so many eyewitnesses to the resurrection of Jesus.

Let's look at it together. 1 Corinthians chapter 15, beginning in verse 1. Now, I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.

[3 : 51] Now, when he says that, he's referring to how the Old Testament foretold this was going to take place. Maybe he's thinking about Isaiah chapter 53 and 54, where Isaiah's talking about the Lord's suffering servant, talking about really what Jesus experienced on the cross.

That's the kind of thing he's referring to when he says, according to the Scriptures, according to the Old Testament prophecies. For Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, that's Peter, then to the twelve, then he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.

Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

I want us to answer three questions from this passage this morning that I pray will help us to prepare for the Lord's Supper. Number one, what is the gospel?

What is the gospel? I would love to have the opportunity to pass out a sheet of paper and let everyone in this room write down your response to that question, your answer.

[5 : 26] What is the gospel? Every survey that is taken of church members indicates that most church members cannot give a simple, clear explanation of the gospel message.

That is a shame. That should not be. And that's one of the reasons why we're looking at this passage this morning as we prepare for the Lord's Supper.

we all need to understand to be able to explain the good news of Jesus.

We ought to be able to explain what we believe and be able to communicate it to someone and encourage them to believe as well. What is the gospel?

Well, Paul provides a concise summary in verses 3 and 4. I want you to look at three phrases. First, Christ died for our sins in verse 3.

[6 : 32] The death of Jesus on the cross is the heart of the gospel. The death of Jesus on the cross, that is the heart of the gospel.

But note why he died. He died for our sins. Sin is everyone's biggest problem. You know, every one of us in this room, we've got problems.

We've got issues. And it may be that you have some relational problems. It may be that you have some addiction type problems.

The root of those problems is that it's sin. You're violating God's law. You're breaking His commandments. You're breaking His rules, boys and girls.

That's our problem. And you know, we come into this world being able to do that just automatically, don't we? We're sinners by nature. No one ever had to teach you to tell a lie.

[7 : 34] No one ever had to teach you to talk back to your parent, to disobey your parent. We just come with this built-in bent on being selfish, being self-centered, certainly not God-centered.

We're sinners by nature. We're sinners by choice. Our sin separates us from our relationship with God. And if we die in that condition, we'll be eternally separated from Him in hell.

And that's the bad news of the Bible. Everyone needs to understand this bad news, how serious it is, so that we will understand just how great this good news is.

And the good news is that even though we are sinners, sinners, and we're happy in it if we just go along in life and God leaves us alone, we'll be happy just doing what we want to do.

But the good news of the Bible is God loves us, and God devised a way for us to be forgiven and made right with Him. He did this by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, into this world to die for our sins, to pay the penalty that our sins deserve.

[8 : 57] When Jesus hung on the cross, and understand, this is something supernatural. When Jesus hung on the cross, it's like God placed our sins upon Him.

And there, He incurred God's wrath, His righteous wrath against sin. He suffered the punishment. I tell boys and girls when I explain the gospel to them, when Jesus died on the cross, He did not go to the place called hell, but He experienced the pain and punishment of hell.

He experienced being separated from God, which is why He cried out, My God, My God, why have you forsaken me? As Jesus hung on the cross, our sin bearer, our substitute, God turned away.

That's why He cried out, My God, My God, why have you forsaken me? He was paying the penalty, suffering the punishment that our sins deserve. Jesus died for our sins.

The first statement in verse 3. Verse 4, He was buried. Now this is stated this way, but to emphasize, Jesus really did die. He didn't just pass out.

[10 : 11] Jesus died and was buried. He was buried. He was buried. He was wrapped in grave clothes. He was left.

Now, that also points out that when Jesus rose from the grave, it was a true resurrection, a bodily resurrection from the dead. And that's the third statement, verse 4.

He was raised on the third day. Jesus was raised from the dead by the Heavenly Father. And when Jesus arose from the grave, it was not something done in secret.

As you read through verses 5 through 8 there, Jesus appeared to a lot of people over a period of 40 days, we read in Acts chapter 1 in verse 3.

Jesus died on the cross. He arose from the grave. And He was seen by people who saw Him die. He was seen by people who knew that He was dead.

[11 : 18] But He came back to life. And His resurrection appearances, it just transformed those disciples who had run away from Him at first when He was arrested.

But now, after they've seen the resurrected Lord and after the Holy Spirit came to live within them, that you read about in Acts chapter 2, they were never the same again.

God did what He did in sending Jesus to die for our sins because He loves us and He wanted to save us even though we didn't deserve it and we could never earn it.

Paul said it like this in Romans chapter 5. He says, But God demonstrates His own love for us in this. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

By doing what He did, God has done everything necessary for us to be forgiven and made His child. God's done everything necessary for us to be saved, made right with Him.

[12 : 23] But I want you to understand. Jesus' death on the cross, just the fact that it happened, it's a historical fact. But that doesn't, in and of itself, save anyone.

No, the Bible says, we must respond to this good news. We must respond to this gospel. And that leads to the second question. How do we respond to the gospel?

You know, it makes sense. Everything that, just about everything in life that good news that comes to you, you've got to do something with it if it's going to help you in any way.

For an example, if you were to go to the doctor tomorrow, he does some tests. By the end of the week, you are told, you've got a blockage in an artery. And it's a serious blockage.

You've got to have something done. The good news is, he tells you that we've caught it at such a point where there's just medication. You don't have to have anything else. We can give you some medication.

[13 : 26] You can change your lifestyle. And this blockage won't ever give you a problem. That's good news. But you've got to act on that good news.

You've got to respond to that good news for it to do you any good. You've got to take the medication. You've got to change that diet. Do some exercise.

If you don't respond, the good news will do you absolutely no good. Well, the Bible teaches that we've got to respond to what God has done for us in Christ in order for us to get any good out of it, in order for us to be forgiven.

The Bible says that we've got to respond to the gospel like this. We must repent of our sin and put our faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord. That's what the Apostle Paul told everyone when he preached the gospel.

He summarizes this in Acts chapter 20. Look at what he says. He says, I have declared to both Jews and Greeks and that's his way of saying everyone. Everywhere I go, everywhere I preach, I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

[14 : 48] Let's think about those two words, repentance and faith. Repentance is a change of mind about sin, but it's more than that. If we're truly repentant, we're not only going to change our mind about our sin, but we're going to be truly grieved by it.

It's going to bother us to think that I have disobeyed God. I have offended Almighty God. We're going to want to change our mind about it. We're going to want to turn away from it.

We're going to grieve over it. It's just going to bother us. If God is truly convicting us of our sin, He's shown us that we're separated from Him and there's no hope unless we come to Christ, if God's working in us, He's going to give us this desire to turn from our sin, change our mind about it.

We'll grieve over it. We'll be sorry that we have committed this, we've lived this kind of way. We'll want to be different. We'll want to change. And what we'll do is we'll turn from our sin and we'll turn to Jesus Christ in faith.

We will trust Him, put our confidence in Him, count on Him that when He died on the cross, He died to save me. He paid the penalty for my sin.

[15 : 58] Faith involves trusting in Jesus, who He is. He's the Son of God. And what He has done, dying on the cross, to pay the penalty for your sins. If you will respond to the good news of Jesus like this, God will save you.

He will forgive you. He'll make you His child now and forever. And if you truly respond this way, God will so change you, you'll never be the same again.

And that leads us to the third question. What difference has the gospel made in your life? What difference has this good news made in your life?

The New Testament consistently points out that saving faith is continuing faith. It's really life-changing faith.

I want you to just note how Paul points it out in verses 1 and 2. Look at it again. Writing to Christians, Now I would remind you, brothers, brothers and sisters, of the gospel I preached to you, look at it, which you received, you accepted, you believed in.

[17 : 26] verse 2, in which you stand. You've taken a stand. You not only believe it, you're living it.

Verse 2, by which you are being saved. Salvation is both a past experience and a present experience and a future experience.

It's like this. When you put your faith in Jesus as your Savior and Lord, at that moment in time, God declares you to be righteous. He declares you to be right with Him through faith in Jesus.

The penalty for your sin has been paid. It was paid by Jesus. The righteous, perfect life that Jesus lived, that's credited to you. It's all at one time. God justifies you, declares you to be right with Him at the moment you believe.

But from that moment on, God works in you, if you're a Christian. If you're truly saved, God will work in you. You will continue to believe and trust in Jesus.

[18 : 32] You'll continue to hate sin and turn from it, repent of it. You'll continue to believe and you will grow and you'll make progress in developing Christ-like character.

That's what the Bible calls sanctification, becoming like Jesus. And then, whenever we die, true Christians, when we die, all the baggage of our sin and selfishness and worldliness, we leave it behind.

We're glorified. we're going to be like Jesus, finally. But it's at the end of our life in this world. Right here, Paul is talking about the gospel, it continues to work in a person's life.

But look at verse 2. There's a qualification here. I want to remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you're being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you.

If you continue to believe, the person who makes a profession of faith and then just goes on about their life as if nothing ever happened, nothing ever happened.

[19 : 56] I tell, whether it be a child, eight or nine years old, we saw some baptized this morning, or whether it be someone 80 years old.

Making a profession of faith is important, but if that's all that ever happens to you, you cannot have assurance. I tell everybody I baptized.

We went over it this morning before we did this. Baptism does not save you. It does not make you, make God love you more or accept you more. It is an act of obedience that a Christian does, somebody who's trusting in Jesus does, to make their faith known.

Genuine faith, if it's real, if a person's truly born again by the Spirit of God, that person will continue in faith. But, don't make, don't jump to any kind of conclusions here.

I am not teaching, Paul is not teaching, that we're saved by our own efforts. He's not trying to say that you become a Christian through faith in Jesus and then you do your best to hang on yourself.

[21 : 03] No. Saving faith is a gift from God. Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 8 tells us, when God so works in us to enable us to believe and we believe, God's going to continue to work in us to enable us to continue to believe and we will continue to believe.

That's because what God starts, God finishes. As Paul says it like this in Philippians 1, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

That's the day when Jesus comes back. What God starts, he finishes. He never gives up. He never quits. True Christians will continue in their faith because God continues with us.

We become his and he won't let us alone. The way God does this, he gives us desires if we're really his. If his spirit lives within us, he gives us the desire to be faithful to him.

As Paul points out again in Philippians, this time chapter 2, verse 13, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. There's a major problem in churches across all denominational lines today.

[22 : 22] Many people who claim to be Christians show absolutely no sign of having spiritual life. many Christians just don't seem to give a rip about God and the things of God.

Church, prayer, Bible study, it's just boring. Just a waste of time in their mind. That cannot happen if the spirit of God lives within you because the spirit of God is going to cause you to want to know your heavenly father better.

It's going to cause you to want to pray, to want to study the word, to want to grow in your knowledge and fellowship and relationship with God and with other Christians.

The problem is that some people do what Paul said in verse 2 that we've already looked at. Some people have believed in vain. John MacArthur explains that this is a real problem with this statement.

He says, by this qualifying statement, Paul recognizes and called to their attention that some may have had a shallow, non-saving faith.

[23 : 35] There's church members who've made professions of faith. They've had some kind of emotional experience maybe. They've been baptized. Their name's on the church roll. But, they believed in vain.

It was shallow. There was never any real life changing, there was no transformation by the Spirit of God. It was just believing facts. Not trusting the Lord Jesus Christ.

Since the beginning of the Christian church, since New Testament days, there have been people who claim to be Christians, but they showed no real signs of a relationship with Jesus.

And Jesus made it very clear that such people are not saved. Look at it from Matthew 7. Jesus said, Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Many will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles? Then I will tell them plainly, I never knew you.

[24 : 40] Away from me, you evildoers. Now, I want to make it real clear. There is no Christian who just perfectly follows the Lord and never falls into temptation, never gives into temptation, never falls into sin.

That doesn't happen. We all, as Christians, Paul talked about it in Romans chapter 7. He talks about it in Galatians chapter 5. We all have struggles. We all struggle with the desires of our sinful nature.

We all have temptations. And the truth is, we all fail more than we like to admit. We do sin. But to think about a true Christian, sooner or later when we sin, the Spirit of God within us is grieved.

And He will convict us. He will inflict guilt on us for the purpose of causing us to confess our sin, to turn from it, to seek God's forgiveness, to not live out of fellowship with Him, but to come back to Him if we're true Christians.

If you're not a Christian this morning, I want you to know that you can come to God right now, no matter who you are, what you've done. If you will come and as Paul said, repent of your sins, put your faith in Jesus Christ and Him alone for your salvation, God will save you.

[26 : 18] Scripture says, whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. And I encourage you to do that this moment if you're not a believer, if you are a Christian. But right now, you would say, I've drifted away from the Lord.

I'm not close to Him like I once was. Or, it's not that you drifted away, you've rebelled. And the truth is, you've been living in willful disobedience.

But if God, through this message, has gotten your attention, softened your heart, and you truly want to come back and be close to Him, then confess your sin.

He will forgive you and cleanse you. He will renew your commitment to Him right now. I encourage you to do that. I want us to take the next few minutes to prepare to observe the Lord's Supper by thinking seriously about what Jesus has done for us, how we have responded, and how we are living in relationship with Him right now.

Listen to the Lord and you respond to Him as we have it just in time of prayer and preparation for the Lord's Supper. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.