

What Is the Gospel? (Part 2)

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2023 Passion Week / Gospel; Christ; Sin / 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

1 Corinthians 15:1-11 teaches us what is the gospel.

Introduction

This is Passion Week in which we particularly remember the final week of Christ.

The text we are considering for our 2023 Passion Week meditations is [1 Corinthians 15:1-11](#).

Last night was Maundy Thursday, and we focused on Christ.

Tonight is Good Friday, and we will focus on Christ's sacrifice for sin.

Scripture

Let us read [1 Corinthians 15:1-11](#):

¹ Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ² and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. ¹¹ Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

Review

Our foundational question for this 2023 Passion Week series is this: What exactly is the essence of Christianity?

Paul wrote in [1 Corinthians 15:1-2a](#), “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.” According to Paul, the essence of Christianity is the gospel.

[1 Corinthians 15:1-11](#) teaches us what is the gospel.

There are four parts to the gospel.

Last night, we considered the first point of the gospel.

I. The Gospel Is about Christ (15:3a)

First, the gospel is about Christ.

Paul wrote in verse 3a, “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ...”

For Paul, the gospel was all summed up in Christ. Everything in the paragraph explains Christ. It points to Christ. It is found in Christ.

The Greek word for “gospel” (*euangelion*) means “good news.” In ancient times, a messenger would go into a town square and herald the “gospel,” the “good news.”

If the Greeks were fighting against an invading army, which it seems that they often did, the people back home waited anxiously for news of the outcome. They wondered if their army would be victorious or defeated.

When the battle was over and the Greek army was victorious, a messenger would be dispatched to deliver the good news to the people back home. When he arrived, he would go to the town square and herald the good news, “We triumph!”

Paul used the word “gospel,” as did the other Biblical writers, to announce the foundational Christian message. In essence, the good news is that a battle has

been fought and won, and now we are free from slavery. And that battle has been fought and won by Jesus Christ.

The core of Christianity is good news about something that has happened.

On that first Good Friday, Christ died to pay the penalty for sin. Three days later, on Easter Sunday morning, he was raised back to life by the Father.

It is in this sense that Christianity is different from every other religion in the world. Every religion teaches that you must do something to earn salvation. Every religion is about works-righteousness that must be done to be saved.

Only Christianity teaches that Christ has won salvation for his people. That is the good news of the gospel.

So, first, the gospel is about Christ.

Lesson

Tonight, we want to consider the second point of the gospel.

II. The Gospel Is about Sin (15:3b)

Second, the gospel is about sin.

Paul wrote in verse 3b, "... that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures."

Any thinking person knows that there is a great deal that is wrong in the world. We have pain. We have suffering. We have inequality. We have misunderstanding. We have injustice. We have crime.

Isn't it interesting that Paul said that "Christ died for our sins"? Why was that Jesus' top priority?

It is because God created humankind. And when God created Adam and Eve, they were without sin. They lived in a beautiful garden and there were no problems there at all. It is hard for us to fathom how that can be because problems and difficulties and trials and suffering are so pervasive in our world today.

One day, however, Adam disobeyed God by eating the fruit which God said he was not to eat. And as soon as he did so, sin entered the world. Adam and Eve were sent into exile and were banished from the garden and the presence of God. Everything just went downhill from there—and has continued to go downhill.

The great 19th-century preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, once said, “Sin is a thief. It will rob your soul of its life. It will rob God of his glory. Sin is a murderer. It stabbed our father Adam. It slew our purity. Sin is a traitor. It rebels against the king of heaven and earth.”

At its root, sin cuts off relationships. Think of Adam and Eve. They enjoyed a perfect, personal, face-to-face relationship with God. But as soon as they sinned, as soon as they rebelled against God and his word, that relationship was fractured. They were banished from his presence. They were personally and legally alienated from their Creator. Sin was the barrier between them and God.

We see that in relationships among ourselves, don't we?

Suppose you have a friend that you have known since kindergarten. You are best friends and have been so all your lives. You grow up and you go into business together. Everything is going great.

But then you notice that your best friend uses things of yours without acknowledgment or gratitude. Then it gets worse. Your best friend starts shading the truth with you.

Later, you discover that your best friend doesn't keep the promises that were made to you.

Finally, it gets to the point where you discover that your friend has stolen a massive amount of money from you.

Suppose you confront your friend about this. Your friend says, “I am sorry. I will try to do better. Can we still stay friends?”

What are you going to say? There has been a breach of the relationship. There is a state of alienation now between you and your friend that is not only personal but it is also legal.

You are going to say something like this, “Yes, I know that you are sorry. I believe that you want to do better. But, you have stolen a massive amount of money from me. You have a massive debt that you owe me now. You have committed a crime against me. There is an injustice that must be dealt with if we are ever going to be friends again.”

Do you see that there is a personal and legal barrier that must be dealt with?

Our alienation from God is infinitely greater. We have broken God’s law countless times in our lives. There is a massive alienation between God and us. And that alienation is because of our sin.

Someone once said,

If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator;

If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist;

If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist;

If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer;

But our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Savior (Galaxie Software, *10,000 Sermon Illustrations* [Biblical Studies Press, 2002]).

Friends, our root problem is sin. God sent Christ to deal with our root problem. We deserve to go to hell for all eternity because every one of us has broken God’s law.

But the good news—the gospel—is that God sent his son, Jesus Christ, to pay our penalty for sin. He died so that we might live. He suffered on the cross on that first Good Friday so that we might be reconciled to God. He bled and died so that we might have our relationship with God restored.

Conclusion

On March 21, 2023, five boys crawled through a storm drain in New York City and ultimately got lost in the massive sewer system. The 11 and 12-year-olds started

their journey on Staten Island around 6 pm and walked about a quarter mile. When they turned to walk back, the maze of tunnels left them disoriented.

In desperation, they called 911.

When the official answered, a fearful boy stated, “We’re stuck in the sewer!”

With a well-orchestrated rescue and some innovative maneuvers, the boys were rescued after about an hour.

FDNY Chief said, “Amazing that the cell phone worked in the tunnel.”

This recent event is a snapshot of us all. By our own doing, we’re stuck in the sewer of sin and desperately need to be rescued (*Beaumont Enterprise*, 3/24/23, p.A2).

Friends, Christ died on Good Friday to rescue lost sinners like you and me from the sewer of our sin.

That is good news! The good news of the gospel is the only way by which anyone can be reconciled to God. There is no other way. So, receive the gospel, stand on the gospel, and be saved by the gospel. Amen.