

LESSON TWO

THE LENS OF THE CROSS AND THE EMPTY TOMB

*The gospel is not only the most important message in all of history;
it is the only essential message in all of history.*

Jerry Bridges

Christianity is not a religion; it's the proclamation of the end of religion. Religion is the human activity of reconciling God to humanity and humanity to itself. The Gospel is the astonishing announcement that God has done the whole work of reconciliation without a scrap of human assistance. . . . All the efforts of the human race to straighten up the mess of history by plausible religious devices have been cancelled by God for lack of saving interest. More astonishingly still, their purpose has been fulfilled, once for all and free for nothing, by the totally non-religious death and resurrection of a Galilean nobody.

FF Capon

True or False

1. The Gospel is the basic message for “entering” the Christian life.
2. The Gospel is the message that Jesus died so that our sins could be forgiven and we can have eternal life if we trust in Him.
3. Believers need teaching beyond the Gospel in order to grow.
4. Christian living is basically about learning the rules for holy living and working at it in dependence upon God.
5. The primary focus of the Gospel is on the death of Jesus.
6. If I were to explain the Gospel, I would say

This lesson will focus on opening our eyes to see that the Gospel is more than a message about “how to get eternal life.” It is not focused on me, and it is bigger than my salvation. Each point will be followed by multiple Scriptures for you to follow and study on your own.

A. The Gospel is much bigger than a message about me and my salvation.

*¹⁸ For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." ²⁰ Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? **Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?** ²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God,*

C. What is Gospel centeredness?

1. NOT JUST OUR ENTRY (believing the Gospel is more than the beginning)

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.

1 Corinthians 15:1-2

and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

Colossians 2:19

Therefore, as you received Christ (Messiah) Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

Colossians 2:6-7

2. NOT A STORY ABOUT ME (you and I are not the story, Jesus is)

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. ⁴ In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ (Messiah), who is the image of God.

⁵ For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ (Messiah) as Lord (King), with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (Messiah).

2 Corinthians 4:3-6

Jesus Christ is the gospel. The good news is revealed in his birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension. Christ's crucifixion is the heart of the gospel, his resurrection is the power of the gospel, and his ascension is the glory of the gospel. From "The Gospel", Statement of Faith, Sovereign Grace Ministries.

3. NOT JUST MY SALVATION -

Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. ⁸ To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ (Messiah), ⁹ and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, ¹⁰ so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

¹¹ This was **according to the eternal purpose** that he has realized in Christ (Messiah) Jesus our Lord, ¹² in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. Ephesians 3:7-12

Now to him who is able to strengthen you **according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ (Messiah)**, according to **the revelation of the mystery** that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶ but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made **known to all nations**, according to **the command of the eternal God**, to bring about the **obedience of faith**- ²⁷ to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ (Messiah)! Amen. Romans 16:25-27

⁹ who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ (Messiah) Jesus before the ages began, ¹⁰ and which now has been manifested through **the appearing of our Savior Christ (Messiah) Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel** . .2 Timothy 1:9-10

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood ⁶ and **made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father**, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Revelation 1:5-6

4. LIVING BY THE GOSPEL (every question you and I ask in the Christian life is to be answered by the Gospel)

At the heart of all sound doctrine is the cross of Jesus Christ and the infinite privilege that redeemed sinners have of glorifying God because of what he has accomplished. Therefore, we want all that takes place in our hearts, churches and ministries to proceed from and be related to the cross.

From "The Gospel", Statement of Faith, Sovereign Grace Ministries.

The gospel is not just the A-B-C's, but the A to Z of Christianity. The gospel is not just the minimum required doctrine necessary to enter the kingdom, but the way we make all progress in the kingdom. We are not justified by the gospel and then sanctified by obedience, but the gospel is the way we grow (Gal. 3:1-3) and are renewed (Col. 1:6). It is the solution to each problem, the key to each closed door, the power through every barrier (Romans. 1:16-17).

Tim Keller

5. THE RISEN CHRIST (It is urgent to remember that Jesus conquered death and sin. The resurrection is the guarantee of our future glory,)

*At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. ⁹ But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. ¹⁰ For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, **in bringing many sons to glory**, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. Hebrews 2:8-10*

D. The Gospel is Everything: The hill we stand on to see everything

From the perspective of the New Testament, the Gospel is a message about the gracious work of God to save a new people and to create a new heavens and a new earth. Christians see everything differently because we stand at the cross and the empty tomb when we look. Christians do not merely live by rules. We live by the Gospel.

*But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, **by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.** ¹⁵ For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, **but a new creation.** Galatians 6:14-15*

So, how does this look in the life of a church?

APPLICATION OF THE GOSPEL AT GRACE:

New life, new community, new purpose

1. The Gospel creates New Life (Not cosmetic changes)

- 1 Cor 6:9-11
- Tit 2:11-4

'Niceness' - wholesome, integrated personality - is an excellent thing. We must try by every medical, educational, economic, and political means in our power to produce a world where as many people as possible grow up 'nice'. . . . But we must not suppose that even if we succeeded in making everyone nice we should have saved their souls. A world of nice people . . . would be just as desperately in need of salvation as a miserable world. . . . For mere improvement is not redemption . . . God became man to turn creatures into sons: not simply to produce better men of the old kind but to produce a new kind of man. It is not like teaching a horse to jump better and better but like turning a horse into a winged creature.

C S Lewis, Mere Christianity

2. The Gospel creates New Community

- 1 John 1:5-7
- Eph 4:1-3

The gospel creates a new community which not only nurtures individuals but serves as a sign of God's coming kingdom. Here we see classes of people loving one another who could not have gotten along without the healing power of the gospel. Here we see sex, money, and power used in unique non-destructive and life-giving ways.

Tim Keller

3. The Gospel creates New Purpose (a sufficient center)

- 2 Cor 5:14-17
- Phil 3:8-11

Most men are not satisfied with the permanent output of their lives. Nothing can wholly satisfy the life of Christ within his followers except the adoption of Christ's purpose toward the world he came to redeem. Fame, pleasure and riches are but husks and ashes in contrast with the boundless and abiding joy of working with God for the fulfillment of his eternal plans. The men who are putting everything into Christ's undertaking are getting out of life its sweetest and most priceless rewards. J. Campbell White

That brings us to this conclusion. In every situation, we must ask: *How does this situation look from the cross and the empty tomb?* The following is a list of passages where that is what the apostles do.

Eph 5:22-27
Eph 6:1-4
1 John 3:16-17
Gal 5:13-15
Phil 2:1-11

Phil 3:3-11
1 Cor 1:26-31
1 Pet 2:18-25
Col 3:22-4:1
2 Cor 8:9

Phil 1:15-18
Heb 3:9-14
James 4:1-6
1 John 2:15-17
Etc.

CASE STUDY 2 Cor 1:3-11 Suffering

**GRACE CHURCH SAN DIEGO
NEW LIFE, NEW COMMUNITY, NEW PURPOSE**

**OUR PURPOSE
BUILDING NEW LIVES AND NEW COMMUNITIES IN THE GOSPEL**