

What is the Gospel?

The word "gospel" simply means good news. The gospel is good news from God to us. What good news does God have for us? Speaking of Himself Jesus puts it this way in John 3:16, "For God loved the world in this way: He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life." The good news God has for us is His love for us. God has shown His love for us in sending the Son, Jesus, to us. God the Father sent us God the Son for our eternal life. God has not merely told us that He loves us, He has taken action demonstrating His love for us. What is the demonstration of God's love for us? God giving us His Son. God's love for us and for the whole world is shown in his sending the Son to us to die and rise for us. God the Father not only sent God the Son to us, but He sent us the Son with a purpose. Jesus says in Mark 10:45 that He came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom. The gospel is the good news that the Son came and died for our sins in our place as payment for our freedom. Three days later He rose from the dead in victory over sin and death. By His death all our sins are paid for. By His resurrection we have new life. This is true by what Christians over the centuries have referred to as "the great exchange." At the cross the sins of the whole world were given or imputed to Jesus. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says that Jesus became sin. Likewise when anyone trusts in Christ and His work for salvation His righteousness is given or imputed to them. It goes on says that in Christ we are the righteousness of God. This is the good news of the gospel.

As the old hymn goes:

*Our hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
We dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
When He shall come with trumpet
sound,*

*Oh, may we then in Him be found;
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.*

-Pastor Matt Peery

Experiencing the Gospel in Ghana

What an experience it is to go on a mission trip! Our mission to Ghana was a first for our church, but not a first for Seed Ministry. Founders Bob & Bonnie Parker have been on mission in Ghana for 20+ years. With the support, experience, and guidance they provided, it was difficult to go wrong. They have paved the way for so many of us to come and participate in whatever way we can in furthering the Great Commission as Jesus directed us in Matthew 28:19-20.

Seed Ministry has been actively growing the Christian faith through all of their activities including building churches & schools, establishing Bible clubs for children, sponsoring many mission trips throughout each year, establishing the Christian Leaders Training Academy (CLTA) where young men can get a solid foundation of Christian education, helping individuals in need whenever and wherever they can, expanding their presence and spreading the Gospel with the building of their fifth compound within Ghana, promoting cooperation and support among Christian churches of different denominations, and scheduling radio air time that allows the Gospel to be heard by thousands at one time.

It is very eye-opening to see first-hand the needs that persist among the Ghanaian people and at the same time see the provision from God for these people. Despite what we might consider extreme poverty, the Ghanaian people possess and pursue a belief in solid family unity, caring for their neighbors, great generosity, and a passion for the Lord and learning His ways.

Please keep Bob & Bonnie Parker, their co-workers, and our Ghanaian brothers & sisters in Christ in your prayers.

-Sheila Duncan

The Gospel

In this issue we focus on the Gospel – how it affects other's lives as well as our own.



"And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed through-out the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."

-Matthew 24:14 (ESV)

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

-Matthew 28:19 (ESV)

"Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people."

-Revelation 14:6 (ESV)

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

-Romans 1:16 (ESV)

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

-Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)

"When I thought that God was hard, I found it easy to sin. But when I found God so kind, so good, so overflowing with compassion, I smote upon my chest to think that I could have rebelled against one who loved so and sought my good."

-Charles Spurgeon

"The gospel is not speculation but fact. It is truth, because it is the record of a Person who is the Truth."

-Alexander MacLaren

A House Full of Sinners and a Gospel That Saves

The Gospel of the New Testament is the “Good News” that Jesus saves us from our sins. Jesus’ final command to us before ascending up to heaven was to tell us to go into all the earth and preach the gospel. While it is easy to see that the tribes of Africa worshipping false gods need the gospel, we must not forget that the people in our family need the gospel just as much. They are sinners also in need of the gospel. Sin destroys. It destroys relationships, destroys lives, and can destroy entire generations of families. Some sins take years to destroy us and others only a moment. But there is good news! Christ died to save us from our sins!

As Christians our family is our first mission field. God chose it for us. It is often one of the hardest mission fields assigned to us by God. These people KNOW us. Some know our silly childhood moments. Some know our awkward teenage years. Some know how we act deprived of sleep. Several know our strengths but also our weaknesses. Time and again they’ve personally witnessed our stupidest moments. They could tell the world better than anyone else just how messed up we are. Thank goodness for the grace and mercy that Jesus alone can provide us!

Yet we don’t get a pass when it comes to sharing the gospel with our family. With family members who are already saved we are called to use Scripture to rebuke, correct, and encourage, with long suffering, in season and out of season. Why? Because sin can still destroy THIS life. This means we don’t just speak kindly about or overlook sins to keep the peace at Christmas dinner. It means that we don’t wait for Sunday School hours for the teacher to speak the truth to the ones we love. It means that WE lovingly speak truth at 9:00 at night while sitting in our pj’s listening to the unexpected conversation a family member just decided to open up about in a current struggle they face. Or when we run into Aunt Gertrude over at the “Wal-Marts” when we had hoped to run in and out quickly for a gallon of milk but find she needs a listening ear and the light of Christ.

It means we are consciously organizing our time in a way that we repeatedly turn to scripture and fill our hearts and minds with truth to correct us and share when these unexpected conversations pop up. It means we allow God to use our own screwups to point those we love to truth.

With family members who are not claiming Christ, we are called to live our lives as an example of what the Gospel looks like — like a light that shines into the darkness.

With every family member, we, as followers of Christ, are called to live in a way that shows His love, His grace, and His truth. In what seems like an insane idea, God has called us to be an example of a perfect Savior, when we ourselves are far from perfect. The only way this can be done is with the recognition that we will mess up and so will our family. That is what a sinner does. The only way we can move forward is to fully comprehend that sin does not determine who is doing a good job and who is doing a bad job of living this life. Rather, we take a different view of sin. A view that is not popular with today’s society. The view that sin can utterly destroy. Some sins destroy quickly. Some sins can destroy so slowly that it takes generations to see the final destruction, and the generation that led into the sin is long gone when the force of the destruction finally hits.

As believers we are called to see sin for what it is. Destruction of a precious life God created. We recognize sins and speak truth in love about sins, because what kind of love sits quietly and lets someone they love be destroyed? We recognize sin by studying the Word of God. We recognize it in ourselves first, allowing God to point it out to us in our own lives. We ask forgiveness for it and then work to turn away from it. As one Christian once said, we should view sin like a deadly snake ready to strike. We should stomp on it’s head and grind it into the ground with our heel not letting up until it quits writhing. We recognize we will have to repeatedly turn from sin. It is rarely a one time deal. We seek the forgiveness of others when our sin hurts them. We

recognize the sin of those in our care and address it with them as well, repeatedly pointing them back to Christ who saves. This is the Gospel.

Under the Williams’ roof you will find a house full of sinners, each heart struggling with their own temptations. Temptations to give into fears or worries, temptations to lash out or try to control, temptations to be quick to anger and slow to forgive. Old temptations and “new to us” temptations cross our paths daily. Our sins are many, but our Savior is mighty. We are daily learning to live the gospel by recognizing the truth of Christ, admitting our sins, getting ourselves right with God, getting ourselves right with each other, and always reminding each other that each day is a new day. We get to try again. We need to try again because we are going to mess up somehow, again.

We do not want to ignore the sins that destroy us in our home. Therefore we try to call them out. We practice forgiveness by asking for forgiveness. Many times a day in our home you will hear the phrase, “I apologize for _____. Will you please forgive me?” And the answered reply is to always be, “I forgive you because Christ forgave me.”

There is nothing so humbling in a moment when you want to feel self-righteous towards the wrong doer as having to look them in the eye and acknowledge that you will forgive them because of the many times you needed Christ’s blood to cover your own nasty sins. But that’s the good news! That’s the gospel! In spite of all the sin that tries to entangle us daily, that threatens to destroy our relationships, destroy our family, destroy our lives, we only need to look up and see a Savior who knows how to take care of this mess. Young and old alike.

Each family’s battles are different. May you faithfully take the gospel daily to your family and point them to the One who can save them from the destruction of their sin as you gratefully accept the forgiveness Christ has provided for you. May you have strength to patiently fight the good fight in your family and have a heart to lift others up in prayer as you see them fighting the good fight for their families. I have good news for you! Our Lord Jesus saves!

-Jenny Williams

Noah & The Flood: Judgment & Grace

When we think about the Gospel message in the Bible, do we think of it as being present only in the New Testament? If so, we are limiting our understanding of the whole of God's word. As the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17) At the time of Paul's writing, the only "scripture" that he could have been referring to was what we call the Old Testament. As the street-preacher Ray Comfort often explains concerning the big-picture story of the Bible, in the Old Testament God promises to defeat sin and death, and the New Testament shows us how he did it through Jesus.

The foundation of the Gospel message begins in Genesis: The need for it because of the fall of mankind into sin (Genesis 3); the promise of a "seed of the woman" who would defeat sin (Genesis 3:15); then pointed to in God's merciful covenants with Noah, Abram, Isaac, Jacob, and the nation of Israel through Moses at Sinai. All these along with the writings of the prophets, the psalmists, and the books of wisdom provide a Gospel framework picturing God's desire and plan to save a faithful people from a fallen world. Even in the history of Israel after they left Egypt and settled in Canaan, we see a repeated pattern of Fall->Punishment & Sacrifice->Restoration in their history. In this, God has demonstrated that He is a merciful, restorative God, full of love, yet also full of righteousness that requires judgment: The perfect Father.

We are told explicitly of the New Covenant Gospel of Salvation by the prophet Jeremiah in Jeremiah 31:31-34, where he writes: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the

house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Amen!

With this backdrop in mind, let's take a look at one specific instance where the Gospel concept of God's merciful salvation is presented in the story of the days of Noah. We can see in the account of Noah how he was chosen as a remnant of the faithful; the faithfulness of Noah (Heb. 11:7) and what he did while awaiting the flood (analogy of how we are to keep working in faith until the return of Jesus); the expression of God's grace in that choice; how the flood waters represent judgment of sin, covering over or burying sin and the sinful as well as "lifting up" Noah and the ark on the flood waters above the sinful world; and how the ark itself pictures protection & salvation surrounding us (likening to Jesus as an "ark" placing us in his Kingdom to carry us through the flood of sin in this current age).

Looking at the summary of the Gospel message as presented by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:3 and onward, we see a pattern:

1) We are sinners in need of salvation, subject to God's righteous judgment (v3)

2) Jesus, the promised Messiah, died and paid for our sins, washing us clean (v3)

3) Jesus was buried in the grave (v4)

4) Jesus rose from the dead on the third day, as prophesied (v4)

5) Resurrection from the dead points us to a new beginning, culminating in a new body in glory, thus defeating death (v52-54), and a new beginning in eternity with the gift of immortality.

Looking at the pattern of the story of the days of Noah leading up to and through the flood, we can see that this pattern is a Gospel of Salvation pattern, parallel to the apostle Paul's presentation of the Gospel.

1) The fall of mankind into sin (Genesis 3), culminating in the complete corruption of mankind and the whole earth (Genesis 6), requiring God's righteous judgment.

2) The earth was washed clean in the flood, destroying the sinful and depraved corruption that filled the earth and hearts of mankind.

3) Sin, depravity, and death were buried under the flood waters, a type of Jesus taking on Himself the penalty for our sin and depravity and burying our sins in His grave for us.

4) The ark as specified in detail to Noah by God, being a type of salvation in the Messiah, was lifted up on the cleansing flood waters, thus Noah and his family were rescued (a type of resurrection) above the destruction and death below the waters. The ark is also like a coffin, Noah being buried in it during the flood, yet being released from the coffin when God opened the door to let him out. As Paul explains in Romans 6:4a, "We were buried therefore with Him [Christ] by baptism into death..."

5) The ark rested on the mountains of Ararat, thus starting a new beginning for mankind, a type of the resurrection of Jesus, and the new life we have in Christ, into eternity, Paul explaining in Romans 6:4b, "...Just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."

The apostle Peter explains the salvational meaning of the events of Noah's life in this way in 1 Peter 3:18-22, "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him."

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Noah, Flood, Judgment & Grace

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Peter is explaining that the account of Noah and his family coming through the flood is a type that points to the victory secured on our behalf by the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, who alone has the power to accomplish this. In the flood account, God shows not only His righteous judgment of evil spirits, persons, and behavior, but also His merciful saving grace. Baptism of believers (as they come through the water of baptism) declares this Gospel of salvation in Jesus, hearkening back to the physical salvation of mankind in the preservation of Noah and his family. Peter is pointing out that we struggle against our own sin & death which Jesus conquered by His resurrection, this baptism representing our "...appeal to God for a good conscience..." and also that God must judge "spirits in prison," which Peter clarifies in 2 Peter 2:4-9 where he explains, "For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly...then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment..." This is a wonderful encouragement to us because as Peter wrote, "...the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials..."

The apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 6:2, "For He says: 'In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.' Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." In Luke 13:24-25, Jesus says, "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door. For

many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able. After the master of the house gets up and shuts the door, you will stand outside knocking and saying, 'Lord, open the door for us.' But he will reply, 'I do not know where you are from.'" Jesus IS the door to the ark of salvation, as He says in John 10:9, "I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture." All who entered the ark that God directed Noah to build were saved. Enter the ark of salvation now through Jesus, all aboard, no delay, because there will come a time when God will seal up the door that no more may enter.

-Joe Council

The Gospel in Marriage

I was raised as a child/youth with the belief that to be a Christian meant you didn't disobey God and followed His commandments (Old and New Testament). I was taught through movies and shows that a perfect marriage and relationship was attainable. So, when we got married, I had a skewed view of how to treat my husband and how a marriage should be. I expected him to be perfect. I didn't look at my own flaws. I even acted like I was my husband's convictor, showing him the law.

I remember one day specifically. I know it was close, if not past, our 10 years of marriage mark. I was standing at the kitchen sink crying and angry because, "Why couldn't I get him to bend to what I want? What I think is best for his life. Why won't he listen?" At that point I then realized my selfishness, my anger, and my sinful desire to be my husband's convicting spirit here on earth instead of letting the Holy Spirit lead and convict. I remembered everything Christ had done for me on the cross and how Christ

had shown so much grace to me. Why didn't I show that same grace to my husband? I was good at pointing out my husband's sin but didn't look at my own sinful heart, including my controlling inclinations. After asking God's forgiveness, I started seeing my husband through a whole new, clearer lens. I started seeing him as God's creation, though not perfect, which helped me to see others through the lens of God's creation as well. God helped me to remember, "all we like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way" (Isaiah 53:6) and "but, God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses made us alive together in Christ — by grace you [we] have been saved." (Ephesians 2:4-5) I started to see him not just as my husband, but my brother in Christ, the God-given head of our family.

Because Christ showed me such grace and mercy when He died on the cross for my sins, I can now show my husband grace. There are certainly days that are harder, and my husband and I recognize those times. For example, after a long day at work, when we are nervous about something or a new task is before us, those are the tiring times that we recognize more grace is needed. In fact, as I write this, we had a tiring day at work and did not have the best attitude but we recognized it and were able to show grace to each other.

I want to watch my speech with my husband and with others. I am still a work in progress. God's word is the key to keeping me grounded in truth. "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer." (Psalm 19:14) "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." (Ephesians 4:32)

-Joy Parker

The Gospel According to Skunks

Did you ever wish you had a better testimony? Comedian Tim Hawkins once asked that question as part of his stand-up comedy act. Tim said, "Did you ever listen to a guy on stage at church give his testimony and you think, 'Man, he has an awesome testimony. I have a horrible one. I wish I was addicted to crack...'"

To be clear, he was making a joke when he said the last part. He is a stand-up comedian after all. However, the truth is that many people think of similar things. I hope no one wishes that they were formerly addicted to crack, but a lot of people think their testimony isn't good enough. This can be particularly true if you are someone who always tried to do the right thing and has lived a "good" life by human standards. Maybe you really tried to obey your parents, you didn't go out and party like other people you know, you always kept your language clean, and perhaps you even grew up in church. What really changed in your life when you decided to believe and follow in the Gospel of Jesus?

...Well... actually... everything.

People tend to view the world through a lens of good and bad, and we put people and their actions into one of those categories. However, what qualifies as good or bad depends upon who you ask. It's an ever-changing scale, and people are really good at making sure their scale puts them on the good side of the line. What we must remember is that the Gospel of Jesus isn't about making bad people good, or good people even better. The Gospel of Jesus is about making dead people live.

We recently had skunks burrow under our house and make a home there. If you've never had that experience, pray that you don't. There's nothing like hearing a skunk spray the side of your house at 1 am.

Your whole body tenses as you brace for the smell of skunk to waft in and completely saturate your house... again. In the same way that the smell of a Christmas tree in your home brings warmth and joy to your heart, the smell of skunk in your living room brings out a much darker side. It will make otherwise kind and gentle people say things like, "I'm going to kill that skunk, and then I'm going to shoot it, shoot it again, and then shoot it one more time."

Obviously shooting a dead skunk doesn't make it more dead, but it's hard to think clearly when your senses are being bombarded with the aromatic incarnation of agony and despair. A skunk that's dead with ten holes is just as dead as a skunk with one hole. The point of the story is that no matter how many sins you have committed, and we have all sinned, we are all spiritually dead. Some people aren't more dead than others, because being more dead isn't even a thing. There are no degrees to dead. One sin in our life is enough to condemn us forever before an infinite God. The Gospel of Jesus is the only thing that can make a dead person live.

The next time you're thinking about your testimony, remember that it's not a story of how a "bad" person became "good." No, it's about how a dead person now lives, and that's a story worth telling!

-Todd Dablemont

IV. Salvation

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

A. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace. Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour.

B. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.

C. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

D. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

Study the following scriptures:

Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9,28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3ff.; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18,29-39; 10:9-10,13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22; 3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8,14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5.

-Baptist Faith & Message 2000