

What Is the Gospel?

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Many of those who consider themselves Christians would be hard pressed to give a definition of the gospel. Others who are under the “umbrella” can quickly recite the formula: the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That’s true, but it omits the fourth historical part of Paul’s description in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8.

Added to the other three, he cites the APPEARANCES of Jesus to many following his resurrection. His death was “for our sins.” That is, to pay sin’s penalty on our behalf. The burial is the proof that he truly died. His resurrection was proof that his death was not for anything he had done wrong, but for our sins. Having finished the work the Father had sent him to do, he was raised from the dead because as the Holy One, his Father would not allow his body to see corruption. As the burial proves He died, so the appearances provide the proof he was raised from the dead. So, rather than referring to the death, burial and resurrection, it would be more accurate to cite either the death, burial, resurrection and appearances or the death and resurrection of Jesus.

On another important point, the gospel message pertains both to his death as the basis for the forgiveness of all our sins AND as the basis for our walk in newness of life thereafter. He died FOR our sins and he died UNTO sin (Romans 6:1-10).

That means that his grace, the unmerited favor that God gives to us through Jesus, saves us from both the *penalty* of sin and the *power* of sin. One is instantaneous and complete. The other is progressive and constitutes our walk with him after trusting him as our Savior. We receive grace that both *forgives* and *enables*!

It’s inconceivable to think that God graciously paid for our sins and then just gave us a bunch of do’s and don’ts to do on our own to please him. But that, regrettably, is how many try to live their lives after they trust Christ. I like to think of that as trying to live the New Testament Christian life like an Old Testament saint! No divine enablement, just try your best and grind it out. It ignores the fact that God gave us his Spirit to work out his fruit in our lives. This fails to accept God’s grace fully.

As John Berridge wrote long ago:

This do and live, the law demands, but gives me neither feet nor hands.

A better word the gospel brings, it bids me fly and gives me wings! Romans 8:32

Now that’s GOOD NEWS for sure!!!

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