

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

You are going to die. The death rate is still 100%. If someone offered you a cure for death, would that be good news? In effect, that is what God offers to you in the *Gospel*, freedom from the bondage of death. Jesus Christ *has abolished death, and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel* (2 Timothy 1:10). The word *gospel* means *good news*. This one word summarizes the message of the Bible. God, through Jesus Christ, offers to you, freely, eternal life. Jesus said, *I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly* (John 10:10). But how do you enter into this life? How can you be certain that you have this life? These questions are answered in the Bible.

The Gospel, though simple to understand, does require a comprehension and acceptance of what the Bible teaches about God, man, and sin. Without this basic understanding, the gospel cannot be grasped, embraced or believed.

GOD

(Scripture: Genesis 1; Psalm 93, 103, 139; Isaiah 45; Jeremiah 10; 1 John 1:5)

We do not need to wonder or hypothesize about who God is or what God is like. He has revealed Himself in the Bible – His nature, character, works, and plan are all explained to us in His written Word. God is the Creator of all things. He is the true and living God, the one and only God who exists from all eternity in three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He is the Uncreated Being who is the ground of all being and all knowledge. He has intelligence, volition and emotion. He is all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-wise, transcending time and space. He is perfectly just, holy, and good. He is loving, merciful and gracious towards His creatures. He hates all that is evil with a perfect hatred and loves all that is good with a perfect love. He is infinitely higher than man in His nature, character, and thoughts. He does not answer to man nor does He owe man anything. He is utterly independent of His creation, yet He is intimately involved in the movement of every molecule. God is sovereign over His creation and brings about His purposes regardless of man's will or efforts. All things are for His glory. *For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen* (Rom. 11:36).

MAN

(Scripture: Genesis 1:26-30; 2:15-25)

Man was created by God and for God. God created man in His own image. He created man with the capacity to reason, choose, feel, communicate, build, and appreciate beauty. He created man for the purpose of ruling over all the living creatures on the earth. All of these characteristics of man are a revelation of what God is like. He also created man as male and female for the purpose of revealing and illustrating His love for and relationship to His people. Because man is made in the image of God, he is morally responsible before God. Since God is our Creator, we owe Him perfect allegiance. Every thought, desire, word and deed must be out of true devotion to Him and for His eternal glory. That is why Jesus said the greatest commandment is to *love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength* (Mark 12:30).

SIN

(Scripture: Genesis 3; Romans 3:23; 5:12; 6:23; Ephesian 2:1-3; 1 John 3:4)

We all know that we fall far short of our moral obligation to God. To show us our failure, God gave us the Law, including the Ten Commandments. The Law is

like a mirror showing us our moral corruption. Our moral failure is called sin. *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God* (Rom. 3:23). The Bible tells us that sin is not merely what we do or don't do, it includes every part of our being including our motives, desires, and emotions. We were born into this life spiritually dead to God, thinking only of our own desires and our own glory. We were born this way, because of the sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve. When we die, we shall stand before the perfectly righteous, holy, and all-knowing Judge and give an account for every word and deed (Matt. 12:36; Heb. 9:27). Because we are sinners, we are under the wrath of God and face, not only physical death, but also eternal death, complete separation from God and all His blessings, in Hell, described as the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:11-15; 21:8). But we can do nothing to change our condition. We cannot change our own hearts (Jer. 13:23) or do anything acceptable in God's sight. Even our 'good works' are like filthy rags before God (Is. 64:6).

CHRIST

(Scripture: John 1:1-18; Phil. 2:1-11; Col. 1:12-23; Heb. 1)

In view of man's helpless condition in sin, God in His love and mercy provided salvation with His own arm. That

provision is Christ. Christ is the only way of salvation because He is God's appointed way (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). Christ was sent by God to bring salvation (Gal. 4:4-5). He fulfilled many of the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament – prophecies regarding his lineage (Gen. 49:10; 2 Sam. 7:12; Matt. 1), the place of His birth (Micah 5:2; Luke 2:4-7), the time and circumstances of His triumphal entry (Daniel 9:25; Zech. 9:9; Luke 19:28-44), His crucifixion (Is. 53:4-10), resurrection (Ps. 16:10; Is. 53:10-12), and ascension (Ps. 110:1; Heb. 1:3), and many others. He will fulfill the remainder of the Messianic prophecies at His Second Coming. Christ is the Son of God (John 5:17-18). He is truly God, the second Person of the Trinity, existing from all eternity (John 1:1-2; 17:1-5). Jesus claimed to be God (John 8:58), proved He was God by His miracles, received worship (John 9:38), and was declared to be God by His Apostles (Col. 2:9). The eternal Son took on human flesh in time (John 1:14) and became the Son of Man in order to take upon Himself the sin of mankind (Rom. 8:3). He was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life (John 8:29, 46), and laid down His life at the cross for the sins of the world (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

ATONEMENT

(Scripture: Lev. 16:30; 17:11; Is. 53; Mark 10:45; Rom. 3:21-26; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:20-22; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Heb. 9:23-28; 1 John 2:2; Rev. 5:9)

Christ died for our sins (Rom. 5:8). That is the summary of the atonement. We deserve eternal damnation, eternal death, but God intervened in Christ, who took upon Himself the penalty due our sins, by dying on the Cross. His burial proved that He died. His resurrection from the dead, three days later, proved that God accepted His death as payment for our sins and demonstrated His victory over death on our behalf. Christ was our substitute, just as the sacrificial lamb, innocent and without blemish, was the substitute of the offerer in the Old Testament (a divine picture; cf. Is. 53). When Jesus died on the Cross He satisfied the just demands of the Law of God on our behalf, becoming a curse for us (Gal. 3:13; Col. 2:14). He appeased the wrath of God that burned against us (John 3:36; 1 John 2:2; cf. Num. 25:1-13). God imputed our sin to Christ, *as if* He had sinned. *He laid on Him the iniquity of us all* (Is. 53:6). And God imputed the righteousness of Christ to us, *as if* we had never sinned (2 Cor. 5:21). On the basis of this heavenly transaction, God declares us righteous. This is called *justification*. This justification is based wholly on the righteousness of Christ,

not on our works (Rom. 3:24-28; Gal. 2:16), and is received by faith (Rom. 5:1). If we believe on Christ, our sins are no longer imputed to us, they have been forgiven, washed away, removed from us forever (Ps. 32:1-2; 103:12; Col. 1:14). Therefore we have been reconciled to God and have peace with God through Christ (Col. 1:20-22). Only sin separates man from God (Is. 59:2), but in Christ we are brought near to God. Christ purchased us from the bondage of our sin and has made us His own (1 Pet. 1:18-19; 1 Cor. 6:20). We once were slaves to sin, but now we are slaves to righteousness in Christ (Rom. 6:19). We were once dead in sins and trespasses, but now we are alive in Christ (Eph. 2:1-10).

FAITH AND REPENTANCE

(Scripture: Is. 1:10-20; 55:1-7; Joel 2:13; Micah 6:7-8; Luke 3:8-14; John 3:1-21; 5:24; 6:47; Acts 2:37-41; 16:31; Rom. 10:9-13; Heb. 10:19-25; James 4:7-10; 1 John 5:10-13; Rev. 22:17)

In view of our sin and God's provision, what does the Lord require of us? He requires only one thing . . . faith in Christ. *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved* (Acts 16:31). Faith includes three elements: knowledge, belief, and trust. Our faith is based on the knowledge given to us in God's Word. When we come to

understand what God says about Himself, our condition, and His provision in Christ, we unreservedly believe that truth. We tremble at the Word of God and believe all it says about our need and God's provision. But intellectual assent to God's Word and conviction of sin is not enough, we must go on to trust in that Word. We take refuge in Christ and find rest for our souls (Nahum 1:7; Matt. 11:28-30). We rest in the promise that we have forgiveness through the atoning death of Christ our Savior. True faith includes repentance, which is a complete turning away from our sinful ways and thoughts (Is. 55:7). We turn around, as it were, and forsake our sins and seek to please God with our whole heart and life (Is. 1:10-20). We draw near to God through Christ with sincerity of heart, genuine faith, and assurance (Heb. 10:19-22). Faith that is not accompanied by repentance is not true faith (James 2:14-26). It is through faith and repentance that we are born again (John 3:1-21). In other words, this is how we are made spiritually alive and come into fellowship with God. This is eternal life (John 17:3). The new birth results in a new desire to learn and obey God's Word and a new hatred for that which is sinful and worldly.

ABIDING

(Scripture: Jn. 15; Rom. 6-8; Gal. 5; Eph. 4-6; Col. 3; Titus 2; James 1; 1 John)

When we repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, we receive a new heart (2 Cor. 5:17) with new desires. The Holy Spirit now indwells us and we are the temple of the living God (1 Cor. 6:19). The Holy Spirit is the one who sanctifies us (makes us holy), producing in us love, joy, and peace (Gal. 5:22-23). It is through the Holy Spirit that God assures us of salvation, enables us to understand the Bible, guides us, and keeps us. The Holy Spirit works in us through meditation on the Word of God and prayer. As we read the Bible, meditating on it and seeking to obey its commands, we receive comfort, strength, encouragement, conviction of sin, and wisdom. As we daily call upon the Lord for all that we need, He hears us and grants our requests according to His promises (John 15:7; Heb. 4:16). When we sin, we must confess before God and He is faithful to forgive us for Christ's sake (1 John 1:9). As we walk according to His Word we abide in Christ, and as we abide in Christ we receive assurance from the Holy Spirit (1 Jn. 2:28; Rom. 8:16). The very first things we should do as Christians are (1) be baptized (Acts 2:38); (2) testify to others of our salvation (Rom. 10:9-11); and (3) become a part of a local church where the Bible is taught (Heb. 10:25).