

What is the Gospel?

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 NASB)

God's primary goal is to reach others. What's the method that we use to do this? Witnessing. Witnessing to what? The Gospel. Paul said that the Gospel is the power of God for salvation. O.K. then, what is the Gospel? If like, most people, you said "good news", you really haven't given an answer only a definition. Think about it. It's not an easy question to answer, is it? That's because when we use words often enough, we think we know the meaning when actually we don't. We just know how to use them in the right context.

Why did Jesus come the first time? Isaiah 59:2 says that our sins have made a separation between us and our God. Because of that separation, man is disqualified from the purposes of God. He is incapable of being summed up in Christ (see *The Purpose of the Father* lesson). Jesus came to shed His blood to cover man's sin—to make atonement. He died on the cross to pay the penalty of man's sin and He rose from the dead that he might be Lord or Head of all.

In Roman 14:7-9 we have a summation of the Gospel—Jesus died, rose, revived, and became Lord. In 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 Paul defines this process as the Gospel. This was the Gospel that he delivered. This is the Gospel that is the power of God. This is how we reach others—by declaring the Gospel.

Paul says that he is delivering the Gospel that he had received. We have to first receive the Gospel before we can minister the Gospel. What did he say was the Gospel?

1. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures
2. And that He was buried
3. And that He rose again according to the Scriptures.

And, according to Romans 14:7-9, He did this in order to be Lord of both the dead and living. If we are going to reach others with the power of God, we have to reach them with this declaration of the Gospel for *it is the power of God for salvation*.

We have all heard manipulative, watered-down presentations to get us "saved." For example: "If you died tomorrow, do you know where you will spend eternity?" Did Jesus ever say anything like that to anyone? I can't find it if He did!

We use fear tactics—get your fire insurance policy. Sign here and you have a contract with God that will take care of you when you die. We act just like insurance salesmen. We are not addressing the issues of living; instead, we focus on the issues of dying. No wonder the cults do so well.

We are not being effective because we are not proclaiming the Gospel—the power of God! Our sins have made a separation between us and our God. We are strangers, aliens, outcasts from the household of God—lonely, guilty, and in despair. But, Jesus has made a way to deal with these things and bring us back into the household of God. This is the beginning point of the Gospel. And people, deep in their hearts, know its true! We declare the Gospel—the Holy Spirit convicts (John 16:7-9). We have to leave room for the Holy Spirit to do His work.

Instead, we play mind games with them. Try to talk them into the Kingdom. If you can be talked in, you can also be talked out. I learned this in sales, if someone can be talked into buying, he can be talked out. It is called buyer's remorse. It is true in evangelism also. The enemy is right there with his friends to convince him of buyer's remorse—it was a bad idea.

What does it take to get them into the Kingdom? Conviction. Repentance. New birth. It takes more than talk—it takes the work of the Holy Spirit. Through the words of the Gospel the Holy Spirit stirs the lost parts of their hearts bringing them to a place of receptivity. The only way into the family of God is to be born into it. The only way that this can happen is through the Holy Spirit.

A mental assent to the truth of the Gospel is not the new birth. Neither is believing in God. In James we are told that the Devils believe in God and tremble at His name. A mental acknowledgement of the Truth is no more than the Devils do!

We are talking about a work that must be done deep in the heart of a person and can only be done by the Holy Spirit. Our ministry is one of preparing the way. It is the ministry of John the Baptist and of Elijah. We are preparing the way of the Lord through the Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 5:15 says that we should know no one after the flesh or by the natural mind but instead we should know people by the spirit. That includes the heathen, the unbeliever, the backslider, etc. We now must look at people in the light of God's purpose, which can only be done by the Spirit. We must adjust our viewpoint to that of the Father to be effective.

Our God has a paternal nature. He is Father. His desire is for a family. His purpose involves bringing many sons to glory. When we minister from God's viewpoint, we don't minister as a Judge bringing judgment on criminals but rather as a father to a prodigal son. We need to reveal the Father heart of God to the lost.

In the scriptures in 2 Corinthians Chapter 5:15-20 we have revealed four new things that we need to minister effectively.

1. A new perspective—we must see people from the Father's point of view.
2. A new relationship to God—all things are of God. We frequently quote Romans 8:28 and claim that all things are working together for our good. The problem is that we relate the things of God to MY good. We are maturing when we can see that "all things are of God". Paul said in Philippians 1:12 that the things that had happened to him (they didn't

appear to be good things) had fallen out rather to the furtherance of the Gospel. We need to remember God's primary purpose is not our good but the furtherance of His purpose.

3. A new profession—Christ's ambassadors. This is the occupation that we must fulfill. An ambassador has the ability to speak on behalf of his government. We speak on behalf of the government of God.
4. A new yardstick—we measure with a new ruler. God has reconciled us and given us a ministry of reconciliation.

The provision of reconciliation is the blood of Jesus.

The method of reconciliation is the cross of Jesus.

The results of reconciliation is the life of Jesus.

We can't get to the life until we have been through the blood and the cross. We can't lead others to life until we take them through the blood and the cross.