

PAUL WASHER THE

G O S P E L

An Introduction OF
to the Good News

J E S U S

C H R I S T

The gospel is good news because it is not about what we have done or can do, but what God has done and will do on behalf of His people.

My hope and prayer for you is this:

“May the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

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The central message of Christianity is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The word *gospel* means “good news.” Christianity offers the best news of all time! Indeed, it offers the only solution to our most pressing crises. No educational program, political party, or psychological therapy is able to address the deepest problem of the human race. Though human wisdom has brought many temporary benefits to us, history has revealed how bankrupt we are to address the profound guilt and pervasive corruption under which our world groans.

The gospel reveals that God has come and won the victory for us. It is good news precisely because it is not about what we have done or can do, but what God has done and

will do on behalf of His people. The gospel declares divine intervention into a hopeless world.

The gospel announces the good news of the coming of Jesus Christ. Approximately two thousand years ago, during the height of the Roman Empire, God sent His Son into human history in order to save people of every nation from their sins and misery. Christ was conceived by the Spirit of God in the womb of a virgin and was born Jesus of Nazareth, the God-man.

Jesus came to bear the sins of fallen men and women and to offer His life as a sacrifice in our place. His death satisfied the demands of God's justice against sinners and made it possible for a just God to pardon them. His resurrection three days later testified that He is the Son of God and that God accepted His death as full payment for our sin. Now, all people may be fully forgiven, reconciled to God, and receive eternal life through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Through this great work of salvation, God has revealed to us who He is.

The Character of God

To understand the gospel, we must understand something about God. God is not an impersonal force or energy all around us, but the personal Creator and Lord of all (Genesis 1). The Bible teaches us that the only true God exists as

a Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:16–17; 28:19). They are three distinct persons who are distinguishable from one another, and yet they are one being, not three (John 10:30–33). They share the one divine essence with the same divine qualities. Because of these qualities, which make God uniquely Himself, the Lord requires a sacrifice for sin if sinners are to be saved. To see the need for Christ’s death, therefore, we must know more about the character of this triune God.

GOD IS LOVE

The Bible teaches us that God is love (1 John 4:8) and His love moves Him to freely and selflessly give Himself to others for their benefit or good. It is important to understand that God’s love is much more than an attitude, an emotion, or something that He does. Instead, love is an attribute of God—His very being or nature. God not only loves; He *is* love. He is the essence of what love is, and all true love flows from Him as its ultimate source. Other words that are often associated with the love of God are benevolence, mercy, grace, and patience. Regardless of what we may think or even hear, the unwavering testimony of the Bible is that God is love.

He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

(1 John 4:8)

The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. (Psalm 103:8; see also Exodus 34:6; Psalms 86:15; 145:8)

Therefore the LORD will wait, that He may be gracious to you; and therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. (Isaiah 30:18)

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. (James 1:17)

GOD IS HOLY

The Bible teaches us that God is holy (Isaiah 6:3). The word communicates the idea of being “separated,” “marked off,” or “placed apart.” With regard to God, it has two important meanings. First, it means that God is above all His creation and is totally distinct from every created being. Regardless of their splendor, all other beings on earth and in heaven are mere creatures. God alone is God—separate, transcendent, and incomparable. Second, the holiness of God means that He is above, or separated from, the moral corruption of His creation and from all that is profane and sinful. God cannot sin, cannot take pleasure in sin, and cannot have fellowship with sin.

And one cried to another and said:
"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
The whole earth is full of His glory!" (Isaiah 6:3)

God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. (1 John 1:5)

You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness. (Habbakuk 1:13)

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. (James 1:13)

For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with You. (Psalm 5:4)

GOD IS RIGHTEOUS

The word *righteous* tells us of the moral excellence of God. According to the Bible, God is an absolutely righteous being and always acts in a way that is perfectly consistent with who He is. There is nothing wrong or incorrect about God's nature or His works. He will never be or do anything that would justify any accusation of wrongdoing against Him. His works, decrees, and judgments are absolutely perfect.

For the LORD is righteous,
He loves righteousness;
His countenance beholds the upright. (Psalm 11:7)

He is the Rock, His work is perfect;
For all His ways are justice,
A God of truth and without injustice;
Righteous and upright is He. (Deuteronomy 32:4)

The righteousness of God describes not only His character but also His relationship to His creation, especially to humanity. According to the Bible, God has revealed His will to all people through His creation (Romans 1:20, 32) and through their consciences (Romans 2:14–16). He has most clearly revealed Himself by His Word, the Bible (Psalm 19:7–11). He will judge every person according to the standard that has been revealed to them. There will come a day in which God will judge everyone according to the strictest standards of justice and fairness, rewarding the good that is done and punishing the evil.

But the LORD shall endure forever;
He has prepared His throne for judgment.
He shall judge the world in righteousness,
And He shall administer judgment for the peoples in uprightness.
(Psalm 9:7–8)

For God will bring every work into judgment,
Including every secret thing,
Whether good or evil. (Ecclesiastes 12:14; see also Proverbs 5:21;
15:3; Hebrews 4:13)

I, the LORD, search the heart,
I test the mind,
Even to give every man according to his ways,
According to the fruit of his doings.
(Jeremiah 17:10; see also Hebrews 9:27)

We must always recognize that God's judgment of man is not unwarranted or cruel, but is a consequence of His righteous character and a necessary part of His government. A God who would refuse to judge wickedness would not be loving, good, or righteous. A creation where wickedness was not restrained and judged would soon self-destruct.

Have you met this God? It is one thing to talk about God, but quite another to encounter His glory in the Bible. Where God is truly known, all mankind becomes as nothing. The least glimpse of His holiness humbles us and threatens to undo us. Even in our original, pristine condition when God first made us, we were mere images and servants, and He was almighty God. Yet we have fallen far lower because of our sin against Him.

The Character of Humanity

To grasp and appreciate the gospel, we must understand not only something about the character of God but also something about our character. What the Bible has to say about us is not flattering or pleasant, but it is accurate.

HUMANITY IS MORALLY CORRUPT

Before he fell into sin, man in his original state was noble, but man's present condition is desperate. The Bible teaches us that although humankind was created good (Genesis 1:26, 31), all humans have fallen into spiritual death (Ephesians 2:1). We are by nature morally corrupt, inclined toward evil, and hostile toward the righteous God.

Truly, this only I have found:
That God made man upright,
But they have sought out many schemes. (Ecclesiastes 7:29)

The heart is deceitful above all things,
And desperately wicked;
Who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9)

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries,
fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. (Matthew 15:19)

But we are all like an unclean thing,
And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags;

We all fade as a leaf,
And our iniquities, like the wind,
Have taken us away. (Isaiah 64:6)

The carnal mind is enmity [hatred] against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. (Romans 8:7)

The Bible verses that you have just read may offend you; their indictment of humanity, however, is attested on every page of history. Furthermore, if you are honest with yourself, you will admit that the truth of these verses is also confirmed by your thoughts, words, and deeds, which continually break the holy law of God's Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17; see Matthew 5:21-48).

GUILTY AND CONDEMNED

The Bible teaches us that our inward moral corruption leads us to commit acts against the righteous standard of a holy, just, and loving God. All of us, without exception, are sinners both by nature and by the deeds that we have committed. All of us stand guilty and without excuse before God.

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)

There is no one who does not sin. (1 Kings 8:46)

As it is written:

“There is none righteous, no, not one;

There is none who understands;

There is none who seeks after God.

They have all turned aside;

They have together become unprofitable;

There is none who does good, no, not one.”

(Romans 3:10–12)

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. (Romans 3:19)

If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?

(Psalm 130:3)

Examine yourself. Are you a sinner? This is not a question of whether you make some mistakes. Nor is it a matter of simply acknowledging that you have done a few wrong things. Do you recognize that you have a sinful heart and a record of breaking God’s laws? Don’t make excuses. Don’t pretend that you are basically a good person. If you do, then Jesus has nothing for you, for He came for sinners. However, if you acknowledge your sin with grief, then God’s wisdom has solved your great problem in the most remarkable way.

The Great Dilemma

It is comforting to know that God is holy and righteous. It would be terrifying if the omnipotent Ruler of the universe were evil. To the thinking man, however, the absolute goodness of God is also disturbing. If God is good, what will He do with those of us who are not? What will a good and righteous God do with human beings who are self-centered, inclined to evil, and disobedient? If the Judge of all the earth deals with us on the basis of justice, shouldn't He condemn us all?

These questions lead us to the greatest of all religious and philosophical dilemmas: How can God be just, yet pardon those who should justly be condemned? How can God be holy, yet befriend those who are evil? Anyone who justifies the wicked "is an abomination to the LORD" (Proverbs 17:15). How, then, can the Lord justify sinners like us and still be just (Romans 3:26)?

God's Answer to Our Dilemma

If God acts according to His justice, then the sinner must be condemned. If God pardons the sinner, then His justice is compromised. The answer to this greatest of all dilemmas can be found only in the gospel. In justice, God condemned humanity and demanded complete satisfaction for our crimes against Him. In love, God took

humanity upon Himself, bore our sin, suffered the penalty we deserved, and died in our place. The same God whose justice demanded satisfaction for our sin made satisfaction by offering Himself in our place. This is what makes the gospel truly good news!

JESUS CHRIST, OUR SUBSTITUTE

According to the Bible, the Father's love for us moved Him to give His Son as a sacrifice for our sins, and the Son's love for us moved Him to offer Himself willingly for us.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:8-10)

Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends." (John 15:13)

THE CROSS

Upon the cross, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, offered Himself as a sacrifice for His people's sin. Most historians

consider the cross to be the cruelest mechanism of torture that mankind has ever devised. This cruelty serves to illustrate two important realities.

First, this cruelty illustrates the greatness of our hostility toward God. God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, and the world so hated God that it subjected Him to the worst form of torture and death.

Second, it illustrates the greatness of our sin against God. Our crimes against God were so deplorable and the penalties against us so severe that they could be paid for only through the indescribable suffering and death of the Son of God.

The physical suffering and death that Christ endured on the cross were absolutely necessary. We must understand, however, that His suffering involved more than just the cruelty of evil men. On the cross Christ suffered the judgment of God. God's justice demanded satisfaction for our sins, and His wrath was kindled against us. To satisfy God's justice and appease His wrath, it was necessary that Christ suffer the judgment we deserved. Thus, He bore our sin, became a curse in our place, was abandoned by God, and suffered the full measure of God's wrath against us.

Christ bore our sin. On the cross, our sins were imputed to Christ. That means God placed our sins on Christ's

account and considered them His. Consequently, Christ was declared guilty before the judgment throne of God and was treated as the guilty party.

All we like sheep have gone astray;
We have turned, every one, to his own way;
And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:6)

For [God] has made [Christ] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.
(2 Corinthians 5:21)

Christ suffered our curse. To be cursed of God is to become an object of His displeasure and condemnation. All of us were under God's curse because of our sin. To save us from the curse, Christ became a curse for us and suffered the judgment of God in our place. He redeemed us, which means that He paid the price to satisfy divine justice in order that all who believe in Him are set free.

For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."
(Galatians 3:10)

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”). (Galatians 3:13)

Christ was forsaken by God in our place. One of the most terrifying results of our sin is alienation from God—to be shut out of His favorable presence and communion.

But your iniquities have separated you from your God;
And your sins have hidden His face from you,
So that He will not hear. (Isaiah 59:2)

To save us from such eternal separation, Christ bore our sins on Calvary and was forsaken by God in our place.

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46)

Christ suffered the wrath of God for us. The Bible teaches us that God is angry with man because of his unrelenting evil, although this is an unpopular truth. Psalm 7:11 declares, “God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day.”

God’s anger is not an uncontrollable, irrational, or selfish emotion but a result of His holiness, righteousness,

and love for all that is good. God hates sin and comes with terrible and often violent wrath against it. If man is an object of God's wrath, it is because he has chosen to challenge God's sovereignty, violate His will, and give himself to evil.

Since all men are guilty of sin, they deserve God's wrath. In love, however, Christ took the cup of God's wrath that we deserve and drank down every drop until it was completely depleted and the justice of God against us was fully satisfied.

For thus says the LORD God of Israel to me: "Take this wine cup of fury from My hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send you, to drink it." (Jeremiah 25:15)

He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.... Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done." (Matthew 26:39, 42)

Surely He has borne our griefs
And carried our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten by God, and afflicted.
But He was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;

The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,
And by His stripes we are healed. (Isaiah 53:4–5)

Christ died in our place. One of the greatest proofs of the judgment of God against our unrighteousness is physical death—the separation of the soul from the body. From the time of Adam until the present, all people are faced with the terrible and undeniable reality that they will die (Romans 5:12). The Bible teaches us that death was not an original or natural part of creation. Instead, it is a judgment of God upon people because of their sin. In order to save us from the power of death, it was necessary that Christ die in our place.

The wages of sin is death. (Romans 6:23)

And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, “Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’” Having said this, He breathed His last. (Luke 23:46)

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit. (1 Peter 3:18)

Christ did not die as a mere martyr, but as the Redeemer of sinful humanity. Before He breathed His last breath, He declared, “It is finished!” (John 19:30). When He said this,

He meant that through His suffering and death, He made full payment for the sins of those who believe in Him.

Do you believe that Christ died for sinners? If you do not, then why are you resisting the word of the God who cannot lie? If you do believe it, then how has this great truth affected you? Do you remain indifferent to the crucified Lord? Or worse, do you use the cross of Christ as an excuse to live a wicked, immoral life? If Christ's death has truly come home to your heart, then you will no longer be able to live for yourself but will be inwardly compelled to live for the One who died and rose again for you. Once God opens your eyes to see His wisdom and power in the cross, you will never be the same again but will follow the risen Christ.

THE RESURRECTION

It is the testimony of the Bible that Christ not only died for the sins of His people but that He was raised from the dead on the third day. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is foundational to Christianity. If Christ was not raised, then the gospel is a myth and our faith is useless (1 Corinthians 15:14). But since Christ's resurrection is a historical fact, it validates everything that He both claimed to be and to do on our behalf.

believers, and abstaining from the sinful things of this world lest they contaminate us (2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1).

SERVICE IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

The Bible teaches us that every believer is part of a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9). Each of us has been given spiritual gifts (abilities) that are to be used for the building up of the local church (Romans 12:4–8; 1 Corinthians 12:4–7). We should not merely join a biblical church; we must serve in the church according to our abilities. The ministry in the church is not confined to the pastors or elders. The pastors are to equip all the members in the church for the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:11–12).

SERVICE IN EVANGELISM AND MISSIONS

It is the will of God that the gospel of Jesus Christ be preached to all nations and to every person under heaven (Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47). Christ's command has been called the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20), and each Christian is to be committed to this task according to his or her gifts. This also includes caring for Christians who are persecuted for the faith, helping those who suffer need, and doing works of charity for those who do not believe (Matthew 25:31–46; Galatians 6:10; Hebrews 13:3, 16; James 1:27).

The Gospel of Jesus Christ

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