

Fundamentals, Study 20. The Gospel (Rom 1:18-32)

by BS Poh

o The gospel is the distinct message of salvation in Jesus Christ to be proclaimed to sinners.

1. God made a solemn agreement with Adam, the representative head of mankind, promising him eternal life for his obedience, and death for disobedience. That solemn agreement is known as the *covenant of works*. Since the covenant of works was broken by Adam, it can no longer give life. God instituted the *covenant of grace*, in which He mercifully promised a Saviour from among the seed (or descendants) of the woman to save the elect.¹ That very first promise was basically the gospel (or good news of salvation), by which sinners are to be saved. In due time, that Saviour was revealed to be the Lord Jesus Christ.² (1. Gen 3:15; 2. Rev 13:8; John 1:29.)

2. This promise - of Christ and the salvation which comes by Him - is revealed only by the word of God. That is why the word of God is known as *special revelation*. Whatever may be known about God from nature, the events in life, or human reasoning is known as *natural revelation*. Natural revelation does not show the way of salvation at all.³ It is therefore impossible for those who do not hear the gospel to be saved.⁴ (3. Rom 1:16-17; 4. Rom 10:14, 17.)

3. The gospel also includes instructions on the responses required of sinners for them to be saved, namely repentance and faith. It also includes the promises of God to sinners who repent, e.g. forgiveness, adoption, preservation, hope, and eternal life. The various aspects of the gospel have been revealed at different times to various nations and individuals solely according to the sovereign will and good pleasure of God.⁵ It was never given to them because they had deserved it in any way. No one is able to do any good to earn the right of hearing the gospel.⁶ Therefore, in all ages, the preaching of the gospel to individuals and nations, whether to a great extent or a limited extent, is in accordance to God's will alone. The church, however, has a responsibility to bring the gospel to others — in local outreach and wider church planting.⁷ (5. Psalm 147:20; Acts 16:7; 17:26; 6. Rom 1:18-32; 7. Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 13:1-3; 1 Cor. 11:1; 2 Cor. 10:15-16.)

4. Although the gospel is the only external means of revealing the way of salvation, something else is needed before men, who are spiritually dead, are actually saved.⁸ The Holy Spirit needs to do a powerful internal work of changing the whole person so that he is born again (i.e. spiritually changed and given eternal life).⁹ Salvation, therefore, comes about by the hearing of the gospel and the transforming work of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰ (8. Rom 10:17; 1 Pet 1:22-23; 9. John 3:3, 5-6; 1 Cor 2:14; 10. John 6:44; 2 Cor 4:4-6)

5. We must guard against three mistakes. *Firstly*, we must not confuse the gospel with "the whole counsel of God" (i.e. the totality of the Bible's teaching). The gospel is part of the whole counsel of God, but it is a recognisable part of it. In fact, it is the essence of the Bible's message.¹¹ We should concentrate on preaching the gospel to sinners on a regular basis until they are saved. Once saved, the whole counsel of God should be taught to them.¹² *Secondly*, we must guard against minimising the gospel to only a few points, just to get a quick decision from the hearer. One example of this is

the use of “The Four Spiritual Law” by the Campus Crusade for Christ. A few Bible truths presented out of the context of the whole counsel of God's word will be a truncated gospel. There will be little likelihood of conviction of sin and genuine conversion. Making a decision “to accept Jesus Christ” or uttering the so-called “sinner’s prayer” is not the same as repentance from sin with faith in Jesus Christ, wrought by the Holy Spirit.¹³ *Thirdly*, we must beware of *chronological preparationism*, in which is advocated that revelation history must be taught prior to the presentation of the message of “Jesus Christ and Him crucified”. This is different from the “preparationism” the Puritans were wrongly accused of when they preached the law together with the gospel.¹⁴ (11. Luke 24:44-47; 1 Cor 1:17-18; 2:2; Acts 18:4-8; 12. Matt 28: 19-20; Acts 20:21, 27; 13. Acts 2:37-40; 16:14; Gal 1:8-9; 14. Gal. 3:24-25)

= Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near (Isa. 55:6)!

Review Questions

1. Why can't the *covenant of works* give life now?
2. What did God promise after the *covenant of works* was broken?
3. Where may the gospel be found?
4. Why do some nations and individuals hear the gospel preached while others do not?
5. State the two things needed before a person can be saved.
6. State the first mistake we must avoid with regard to the gospel.
7. When do we concentrate on preaching the gospel, and when the whole counsel of God?
8. What second mistake must we avoid with regard to the gospel?
9. What may be the adverse consequence of this second mistake?
10. State and explain the third mistake we must avoid.

Assignment/Discussion

Based on Luke 24:44-47, we draw the conclusion that the gospel may be preached from any passage of Scripture. Discuss the validity of this conclusion, and what constitute “a passage of Scripture”.

Memory Passage (Matt 28:18-20)

18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

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