

WHAT THE GOSPEL IS FOR

- I. Scripture shows that "gospel" means "glad tidings" or "good news."
ISA 61:1 c/w LUK 4:18-19; ISA 52:7 c/w ROM 10:15.
- A. The word "tidings" in **ISA 61:1** and **ISA 52:7** is from the Hebrew "basar" (SRN #1319), which means "to bear news, bear tidings, publish, preach, show forth."
 - B. Therefore the gospel is the glad tidings or good news of something. It is the declaration of some fact or event that should be a cause for rejoicing. It is not the thing itself.
 - C. The substance of the gospel/glad tidings/good news is that Jesus Christ died and rose again for sinners. **1CO 15:1-4; ACT 13:32-39.**
- II. The gospel is of the spirit of God; it is spiritual by virtue of its Author.
2CO 3:8; 1CO 2:10-13.
- A. The natural man/unregenerate man cannot receive the gospel.
JOH 8:43-44, 47; 1CO 1:18; 2:14.
 - B. A problem: if the gospel is a message that unregenerate man must receive in order to become regenerate/born again to spiritual life, and unregenerate man cannot receive it, how could any be regenerated/born again?
 - C. Either the Holy Spirit erred or lied in what He inspired to be recorded in **JOH 8:43-44, 47; 1CO 1:18; 2:14** (et.al.) or common assumptions about the purpose of the gospel are wrong.
 - D. If the gospel is not for regenerating the unregenerate, what is it for?
- III. Let us suppose (as many affirm) that belief of the gospel before one's death is a *necessary* condition for eternal life.
- A. If this is true then everyone who does not believe the gospel is eternally lost.
 - B. If there is no chance for eternal life for those who *do not* believe the gospel, this would also condemn those who *cannot* believe the gospel, including infants, heathen, multitudes before Christ's first advent, the mentally handicapped, etc.
 - 1. Some affirm that these are "special cases" or "exceptions" who can be saved unto eternal life by means other than belief of the gospel.
 - 2. If there is some other way to acquire eternal life, then belief of the gospel is NOT the *necessary* condition for eternal life.
 - C. Clearly, those that have not heard the gospel are dependent upon those who already have it. **ROM 10:14.**
 - 1. If, therefore, belief of the gospel is *necessary* for acquiring eternal life and since believing the gospel depends upon someone who already believes it, then that believer has the power of eternal life and death in his hand. But see **JOH 17:2; MAT 10:28.**

2. If, however, God eternally saves *some* with whom the gospel was not shared on the basis of what they do or know about Him without the gospel, then the gospel is (again) NOT a *necessary* condition for eternal life.
 3. If God out of mercy saves *all* with whom the gospel was not shared, then the gospel should NOT be shared, lest any reject it. In this case, *no news is good news!*
- D. Some affirm that all infants are without sin and therefore automatically go to glory if they die. But consider:
1. Death is the result of sin. **ROM 6:23.**
 2. If infants are sinless and go to heaven when they die, how can Christ lay claim to being the only sinless human? **REV 5:3-5.**
 3. If infants have no sin, they do not need the Savior's blood to cover their sins. Christ thus did not die for babies.
 - a. Christ's blood justifies (exculpates, declares one free of the guilt and penalty of sin) sinners. **ROM 5:9.**
 - b. All who are glorified were also justified (**ROM 8:29-30**), which demands that all the glorified must have been sinners.
 4. If infants have no sin, they are not spiritually dead and do not need to be born again (as in **EPH 2:1**). But none can enter the eternal kingdom who have not been born again. **JOH 3:5-7.**
 5. All of Adam's posterity are by nature under the condemnation of sin, even infants. **ROM 3:23; 5:12; 9:10-13; PSA 51:5.**
 6. Any perished infant who ends up in heaven does so on the basis of redemption through something other than belief of the gospel.
- E. Thus, the gospel is either a *necessary* ingredient for the acquisition of the new birth and eternal life or it *is not*. There is no middle ground.

IV. The eternal salvation of sinners is not based upon their works.

ROM 4:6; 9:11; 11:6; 2TI 1:9; TIT 3:5.

- A. Work is "something that is or was done; what a person does or did." (OED)
- B. Believing is clearly something that one *does*. **MAT 23:23; ACT 16:30-31.**
- C. The sinner's belief is therefore a work! **JOH 6:28-29; HEB 4:3, 6, 11.**
- D. If words have any meaning at all, belief of the gospel cannot be the means unto the new birth and eternal life. The gospel must have another purpose.

V. If a person believes the gospel, he is already born of God and in possession of eternal life! **JOH 5:24; ACT 13:39, 48; 1JO 5:1.**

VI. Scripture even sets forth examples of people who possess eternal life in spite of the gospel. They include:

- A. some who never heard the gospel. **REV 5:9; 7:9; ROM 2:13-15.**

- B. some who were invested of the Spirit within BEFORE they could respond to the gospel. **GAL 1:15; LUK 1:15, 44.**
- C. some who disobeyed the gospel.
1CO 10:1-6 c/w JOH 6:54-56; HEB 3:15-4:2.
- D. some who were/are enemies of the gospel. **ROM 11:25-29.**

VII. So what is the gospel for if it is not a means to the new birth and eternal life?

VIII. There is salvation which is dependent upon a positive response to the gospel, as many texts demonstrate. **ROM 10:8-15; ACT 2:38-40; 3:19; 1CO 9:22.**

- A. As already proven, the gospel cannot be the means for a sinner dead in trespasses and sins to acquire eternal salvation.
 - 1. Eternal salvation is according to God's election and grace which is entirely His choice and work through Jesus Christ without consideration of man's work or will.
1PE 1:2 c/w ROM 9:11-16; EPH 1:3-7.
 - 2. So what salvation does come through belief of the gospel?
- B. Scripture shows that there is salvation for God's elect that is supplemental to the eternal salvation that God gave them freely by His election of grace. **2TI 2:10; HEB 6:9; JOH 10:10; 1TI 4:10.**
- C. Rather than bringing life and immortality to a dead reprobate sinner who cannot receive it, the gospel manifests life and immortality secured by Christ's work for His elect. **2TI 1:9-10.**
- D. The gospel is given for the benefit of God's elect whom He has regenerated and given eternal life that they might know Him and His will and so be aroused to faith, righteous conduct and also spiritual growth. **JOH 21:15-17; 1PE 2:1-2; EPH 4:11-14.**
 - 1. The gospel is good news to those whose hearts have been changed by grace so as to receive it.
 - 2. The gospel is NOT good news to those whose hearts are still in a natural state, hardened by sin. **2CO 2:15-16.**
 - 3. The gospel is therefore a divider of men, separating sheep from goats, calling God's people out of dark error. **LUK 12:51-53; REV 18:4.**
- E. The gospel can save God's people *from*:
 - 1. trying to establish their own righteousness. **ROM 10:1-3.**
 - 2. ignorance and deception. **EPH 4:11-14; JOH 8:32.**
 - 3. the power of Satan and sin. **ACT 26:18 c/w EPH 5:8.**
 - 4. a corrupt culture and its judgment. **ACT 2:40.**
 - 5. chastening. **LUK 12:47-48.**
- F. The gospel can save God's people *to*:
 - 1. assurance of eternal life (consisting of election, the new birth and justification). **1JO 5:1, 13; ACT 13:48; GAL 3:11; 1TH 1:4-6.**

2. fellowship with like believers and Jesus Christ.
ACT 2:38-42 c/w 1JO 1:3.
3. fullness of joy. **1JO 1:4.**
4. obedience. **ROM 16:25-26.**
5. victorious Christian living. **1JO 5:4-5.**
6. acceptable religion. **1CO 10:20 c/w ROM 15:16; JOH 4:24.**

IX. Consider some texts which seem to favor the idea that the gospel quickens the dead sinner.

A. **1PE 1:23.**

1. The Scriptures cannot regenerate.
2. Jesus is incorruptible. **ACT 13:35.**
3. Scripture is corruptible. **2CO 2:17.**
4. Jesus lives forever. **REV 1:18.**
5. Jesus abides forever. **JOH 12:34.**
6. Jesus is God's seed. **GAL 3:16; 1JO 3:9.**
7. The phrase "word of God" does not only refer to the gospel.
HEB 11:3; 2PE 3:5.
8. Jesus is the Word of God. **REV 19:13.**
9. The word preached by the gospel is different by virtue of "this" (v.25).
10. Jesus Christ, not Scripture, quickens by His personal utterance.
JOH 5:21, 25.

B. **JAM 1:18.**

1. It is God's will that regenerates here.
2. Regeneration here is God's creative act.
3. Creation is accomplished by the personal utterance of God.
GEN 1:3; HEB 11:3.
4. Jesus is the Word. **JOH 1:14.**
5. Jesus is the Truth. **JOH 14:6.**
6. John calls Him the Word of Life. **1JO 1:1.**
7. Jesus Christ, not Scripture, quickens by His personal utterance.
JOH 5:21, 25.

C. **EPH 5:26.**

1. Jesus Christ is the active Person here. **JOH 5:25.**
2. "Washing" is the Spirit's action. **TIT 3:5.**
3. "Water" is the Spirit's symbol. **JOH 7:39.**
4. Jesus Christ directs the Spirit by His voice, as seen elsewhere.
JOB 26:13 c/w PSA 33:6; JOH 20:22.
5. Jesus cleanses by His voice. **JOH 15:3; MAR 1:41-42.**
6. Jesus Christ, not Scripture, quickens by His personal utterance.
JOH 5:21, 25.

D. **1CO 4:15.**

1. Paul did not regenerate them. **JOH 1:13; MAT 23:9.**
2. In context, Paul is speaking analogically. **v.14.**
3. He is comparing their gospel teachers.
4. Paul was their first gospel teacher, responsible for their initial conversion. They were his work, not others. **1CO 9:1.**
5. Reference is here being made to the Corinthians being begotten to Paul's ways which were in Christ. **vs.16-17.**
6. When the Galatians strayed from his gospel, Paul had to "re-beget" them to it. **GAL 4:19.**
7. Jesus Christ, not Scripture, quickens by His personal utterance. **JOH 5:21, 25.**

E. ROM 1:16.

1. Jesus Christ is the power of God in salvation. **1CO 1:24; JOH 17:2.**
2. The word "gospel" means "glad tidings" or "good news."
LUK 4:18 c/w ISA 61:1.
3. The good news is the announcement that Jesus Christ has power to save.
4. The gospel or "glad tidings" does not bring life and immortality. It declares Jesus Christ, Who "ONLY hath immortality" (**1TI 6:16**), and has power to give it to all that the Father gave Him. **JOH 17:2.**
5. The gospel brings life and immortality TO LIGHT. **2TI 1:10.**
6. Jesus Christ, not Scripture, quickens by His personal utterance. **JOH 5:21, 25.**

X. Conclusion.

- A. The gospel is not nor can be an instrument to regenerate the unregenerate.
- B. The gospel is God's instrument to locate, educate, stimulate and separate the regenerate.