

2. We need to recognize who we are in relation to God: We are hopelessly lost, rebellious, hell-deserving sinners who want God to be subject to us, our whims, our terms, our conditions, and our brand of religion. (Gen 6:5, Jer 17:9, Isa 53:6, Isa 59:1-4, Prov 13:19, Rom 1, Rom 3:10-12, Rom 3:23, Rom 9:20, Rom 10:3)

3. We need to recognize what God expects of us: God expects and deserves total obedience to all His commandments at all times, even though man, because of his sin nature, is incapable of faithful service to God. Man's corrupt spiritual condition does not free himself from responsibility to God. (Matt 5:48, James 2:10)

4. We need to recognize that we fall far short of what God expects of us: Even our greatest acts of kindness and charity are considered as filthy rags to God because our motives are tainted with sin until and unless God gives us a new heart and a new spirit. Even when we are saved, our motives for doing good things are not always pure. (Gen 6:5, Psa 58:3, Isa 64:6, Jer 17:9) In addition, even one sin can and will separate a person from God for all eternity. (Isa 59:1-8, James 2:10, Rev 21:8&27)

5. We need to recognize the consequences of not living up to God's expectations: Eternal damnation in hell is the punishment that God has prepared for those who die in their sins. Any punishment less severe than that would detract from the holiness of God. (Deut 32:22, 2Thes 1:7-9, Rev 14:11, Rev 20:15)

6. We need to recognize the only way of escape from the consequences of not living up to God's expectations: We need a supernatural scapegoat, who could meet God's requirements for sinlessness and who could at the same time pay the complete penalty that we owe for all of our sins, past, present and future. We need God Himself, in the person of Jesus Christ, to rescue us from hell and make us fit for heaven in a way that is beyond our capability to reform. (Gen 22:8, Isa 59:16, John 1:29, John 14:6, Acts 4:12)

7. We need to repent of our sins: We must cry out to God for mercy, imploring Him to enable us to stop sinning, realizing that we are incapable of changing without God's help. (Matt 4:17, Luke 13:3, Luke 18:10-14, Acts 2:38, Acts 17:30-31, Acts 26:20, 2Cor 7:10)

8. We need to believe on Christ: Throwing ourselves on the mercy of God, we must trust in Christ alone and the work HE ALREADY DID in subjecting Himself to the full fury of the terrible wrath of God when He suffered and died at Calvary. We need to believe that He was buried and on the third day He arose from the grave, claiming victory over death and proving that He is eternal God and proving that God the Father was completely satisfied with the work that Christ did on the behalf of sinners, that Christ's work was complete and all-sufficient payment for all the sins of all the people Jesus came to save. (Mark 16:16, John 3:18, John 8:24, Acts 16:31, Rom 19:9-10, 1Cor 15:19-20, Heb 10:12-14)

9. We need to become a new creature in Christ: Only God can make a person acceptable to Himself. Salvation is a transaction between a sinner and God. If God saves a sinner, He credits the sinner with the perfect righteousness of Christ (Php 3:9) and places all the sins of the sinner on Christ (Isa 53:4-5). God must put His Spirit in a person before they will ever be able to stand in His presence in heaven. In doing that, God imparts a new nature in the person and their attitude towards sin changes. God causes them to turn away from sin and to recognize Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord. This is a supernatural act of God that is not initiated by water baptism or by any other human effort. (Jonah 2:9, John 3:3, 2 Cor 5:17, Ezek 36:25-27)

Can we do any of the above things if we are spiritually dead? Absolutely not! God must enable us to do these things:

John 6:44 - "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day."

God is the One who gives us eye salve and opens our blind eyes to the truth of who God is and who we are and He does this by resurrecting our spiritually dead soul:

John 11:25 - "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: 26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"

God does it all when it comes to a person becoming saved:

Ezekiel 36:25 - "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. 26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."

SO HOW DOES THE GOSPEL TAKE EFFECT?

The Gospel takes effect as the Word of God is proclaimed to lost sinners and as the Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to convict sinners of their sinful condition.

Romans 10:17 - "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

John 16:7 - "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. 8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment"

God has chosen to use believers to get the Word of God out, to sow it in men's hearts:

Mark 4:15 - "And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts."

Once we have preached the Gospel to someone it is up to God to do what He wills with our seed sowing. Nevertheless, we are obligated to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers to water the seed that we sow and to pray to God to have mercy on the souls of men just as Moses interceded for Israel. When it is God's time to save someone, He will give them new life from above. He will put His Spirit in them.

What Gospel are YOU trusting in?

"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." [Galatians 1:8-9]

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What The Gospel Is And Is Not

Just what is the Gospel of Jesus Christ? That is the most important of all questions because upon it hinges the eternal destiny of our souls. If we do not OBEY that Gospel, we are damned for all eternity:

"... the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" [2Thess 1:7-9]

We cannot OBEY the Gospel of Jesus Christ if we do not even know what it is.

Many people, who may be genuine Christians, often do not have a proper understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They do not fully understand what it is that saves a soul or how it is that God performs His work of salvation in a person. Just like Apollos, they need to be instructed in the way of God more perfectly:

"And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ." [Acts 18:24-28]

WHAT THE GOSPEL IS NOT

A helpful way of understanding what the Gospel is, is to point out some common misconceptions about salvation. The true Gospel of Jesus Christ is none of the following, no matter how many people may be saying these things:

1. God has a wonderful plan for your life.
2. God loves the sinner but hates the sin.

3. You can be saved anytime you want just by accepting Christ.

4. Say some "sinner's prayer" and if you really mean it, you are saved.

5. Anyone who believes in God will get to heaven.

6. Anyone who is a good person will get to heaven.

7. Anyone who believes in Jesus and calls Jesus "Lord" is a Christian.

Let us look in more detail at these things that the Gospel is NOT:

Misconception #1: God has a wonderful plan for your life.

In truth, God has a plan for your life that you may not like in the least - especially if you are not among the elect...

Romans 9:22 - "What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:"

Romans 2:5-6 - "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; 6 Who will render to every man according to his deeds:"

Prov 29:1 - "He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

Misconception #2: God loves the sinner but hates the sin.

In truth, God hates the workers of iniquity AND their wicked works...

Psalms 5:5 - "The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity."

Psalms 11:5 - "The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth."

Prov 15:9 - "The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the LORD: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness."

Misconception #3: You can be saved anytime you want just by accepting Christ.

In truth, salvation is of the Lord (Jonah 2:9), not of man. God chooses whom He wills when He wills...

1Cor 15:8 - "And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time."

John 1:13 - "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Eph 1:4-5 - "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,"

We don't accept Christ and His rule in our lives until He first accepts us and converts our rebellious hearts:

Ephesians 1:5 - "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."

Misconception #4: Say some "sinner's prayer" and if you really mean it, you are saved.

In truth, God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy...

Romans 9:15,18 - "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. 18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."

Your motives for saying some prayer may be entirely selfish. You may have no desire whatsoever to repent and come under the Lordship of Christ - you may only be trying to avoid judgment without having to turn from your sins. In fact, since the human heart is so corrupt and so easily deceived, you may not even know what you are really saying or doing, for as the Bible says:

Jeremiah 17:9 - "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

Misconception #5: Anyone who believes in God will get to heaven.

In truth, you must believe in Jesus, the Jesus of the Bible, and Him alone...

Acts 4:12 - "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

John 14:6 - "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

John 14:9 - "Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?"

Acts 17:2-3 - "And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, 3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ."

Acts 2:36 - "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Col 1:13 - "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: 14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: 15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: 16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: 17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. 19 For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;"

Gal 1:8 - "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

Misconception #6: Anyone who is a good person will get to heaven.

In truth, no one is good in God's eyes...

Romans 3:10&23 - "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: ... 23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"

Isaiah 64:6 - "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

Isaiah 59:1-2 - Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: 2 But your iniquities have

separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear."

James 2:10 - "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."

Matt 5:48 - "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Misconception #7: Anyone who believes in Jesus and calls Jesus "Lord" is a Christian.

In truth, if God does not convert the person's heart, they are none of His...

Matt 7:21-23 - "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

James 2:19 - "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble."

When, and only when God converts a sinner, do they have a proper relationship to God and do they accurately understand who Christ is, especially as their Lord, as eternal God, who became their sin-bearer, their substitute and all-sufficient Saviour from the eternal wrath of an infinitely holy God.

SO HOW DOES GOD SAVE SOMEONE?

God saves people through the convicting power of the Holy Spirit and through preaching the Gospel (John 16:7-8, Rom 10:17). So we need to explain what the Gospel is or in other words, what the central message of the Bible is.

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

The Gospel or Good News of Jesus Christ is God's plan of salvation. However, God's plan of salvation can be summarized as follows:

1. We need to recognize who the one true God is: God is man's creator, and ruler and law giver. He values holiness and justice as much as love. His hatred towards sin is as great as his love for righteousness. (Psa 2:1-5, Psa 5:5-6, Psa 11:5-6, Prov 15:9)