

What Is The Real Gospel?

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The 'gospel' is claimed and proclaimed by every Christian tradition and denomination and most preachers will happily tell us it means 'good news'. Yet every denomination's gospel differs in one way or another, so a sincere enquirer might well be left wondering, "What is the real gospel?"

The Apostle Paul acknowledged there was another gospel, a false gospel, that really is no gospel at all. He knew the difference between grace and works, between salvation accomplished and applied freely by Jesus Christ to God's elect, and salvation offered conditionally as a possibility to everyone.

If salvation is accomplished and applied by Jesus Christ it is God alone who saves sinners and we must acknowledge His sovereignty in salvation. If our gospel offers the possibility of salvation the question must be asked, "What else needs to be done?" because to be saved we need to find out quickly and do it!

Furthermore, the gospel can only really be 'good news' if this missing part is something we are capable of doing. Otherwise, we are being presented with an offer beyond our ability to take. Religion, of course, has plenty of suggestions about what we must do and we find this 'something' to be generously elastic. It stretches from good works to a willing heart, from making a commitment to deciding for Christ, from living a good life in the world to dedicating our lives to God and separating completely from the world. Just find a gospel to suit your taste.

The trouble with this works-gospel, however, is that it does not match the gospel of the Bible; the gospel of Jesus Christ and His apostles. Christ's gospel tells us we have no ability to do anything towards our salvation because we are weak, helpless and opposed to God. In fact, to emphasize our complete inability, the Bible tells us we are spiritually 'dead' in our sin and Jesus told Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again" from above. It is why Paul describes all who are 'made alive' as new creations.

Here at New Focus Magazine we believe salvation to be all God's work; a sovereign act of mercy, freely and unconditionally gifted by grace with nothing at all required from a dead sinner. Preaching the gospel is preaching the doctrine of grace. Occasionally, we describe it in terms like

‘total depravity’, ‘unconditional election’, ‘limited atonement’, ‘irresistible grace’, and ‘perseverance of the saints’ but in the end it is just the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the gospel that actually saves and for that reason, above all else, it is good news.

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