

Defining Characteristics of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

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Titus 2:14 provides a concise statement of the biblical gospel. What defines the biblical gospel? What are essential elements of what God has done for sinners? It is all by grace (Titus 2:11) and it is a work of God that secures the blood-bought believers till glory (Titus 2:13). But in this brief paragraph, Paul includes a glorious phrase describing what the gospel is: Titus 2:14.

The Greek text (2:14): ὃς ἑδωκεν ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν [translated: “It was He who gave Himself in our place.”]

This brief statement comprises of only five words in Greek. It’s simple, short, pithy, memorable, and profound! From this brief phrase, we can see 5 defining characteristics of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

1. Singularity — ὃς

The relative pronoun “Who”—or, in my translation above, “It was He who”—refers back to our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ in verse 13b. This gospel phrase speaks solely of Jesus Christ and His work. This is a singular relative pronoun. There is no joint effort in this phrase. There is no conjoining of labor, works, merits, or deeds. This is the working of one. It is a monergistic salvation: the *working of one*, namely, Jesus Christ.

2. Sacrifice — ἑδωκεν

The text reads that Jesus gave himself. This is the very definition of the very ‘love of man’ (Titus 3:4) that God has for sinners. True love is a giving love. True love is sacrifice. To love as God loves is to love by giving. And to love by giving is to give unconditionally regardless of how it is received or regardless of how they reciprocate. Christ’s love for sinners compelled Him to give Himself for them—for their salvation, for their deliverance, for their soul’s well-being. Behold the wonder and beauty of Christ’s love! Such is the nature of Christ’s sacrificial love!

3. Selflessness — ἑαυτὸν

Christ came to the earth to save sinners. To accomplish this, He gave Himself up for His people. Christ did not give the blood of a mere lamb or a bull. He did not merely give a sum of money to purchase mankind. He gave Himself. The necessary blood that God required was perfect blood; and Christ had it. He alone could offer it. And He offered Himself on the cross for sinners. It was a selfless act. It was profoundly selfless and unfathomably humble. He selflessly considered others as more important than Himself and took the Father’s wrath humbly and fully.

4. Substitution — ὑπὲρ

If there is one word that sums up the entire gospel message, this it is. Christ gave Himself up *in the place of* (ὑπὲρ) or *in the stead of* sinners. The gospel consists of the great exchange. God treated Christ as if He lived our sinful lives and Christ really bore the full curse of God *for us*. In exchange, the father’s wrath is appeased toward us since Christ drank it in full, and believers receive His spotless righteousness and, as a result, the eternal favor and protecting love of Almighty God. Christ gave Himself for our sins (Gal 1:4). Christ loved His church and gave Himself up *for her*, for *her* wellbeing, for *her eternal benefit*, for *her* joy!

5. Security/specification — ἡμῶν

The text says that Jesus gave Himself in the place of *us*, that is, those whom He redeemed from every lawless deed and those whom He purified for Himself, and those whom He owns as His own possession, and those who zealously pursue good works (Titus 2:14b). Christ gave Himself *in the stead of* His own. He died for His elect. He died for the particular few whom the Father foreknew and those whom the Father predestined. All for whom Christ died will be saved. Christ did not die for any of those who enter hell eternally. His atonement is a sufficient and secure and a specific work. He really secured their salvation and specifically atoned for His own. The glory of the atonement rests in the confidence that all for whom Christ died will in fact be saved. All whom He purchased will make it to heaven! What security for His sheep! What glory Christ receives! What an actual, redeeming, perfect atonement He made!