

THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the good news of salvation which God accomplishes for the sinner from first to last. Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, resulting in the glory to God alone. Truly “salvation is of the LORD.” The Scriptures reveal the gospel as follows.

God is the infinitely sovereign, eternally existing, and unspeakably holy One who is worthy of all praise, honor, and adoration from His creatures. The Scriptures reveal that God is holy (Isa 6:3) and that nothing impure can come into His perfect presence (Hab 1:13). He is just, perfect, pure, holy, spotless, beautiful, loving, gracious, merciful and glorious and God demands that those who dwell in His presence be clothed with perfection.

The problem is that no man has ever—nor will he ever—attained to this kind of perfection. When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden all of humanity fell with them (Rom 5:12). Consequently, every human being who has ever been born into the world has inherited a radically depraved nature whereby he enters the world as a spiritually dead sinner. This sin nature, then, thrusts the individual into a life of rebellion, disorder, disobedience, and idolatry against the Sovereign God who created him. Herein lies the predicament. God is infinitely holy and demands perfection of His creatures. Man is infinitely *unholy* and infinitely *unworthy* of God’s love. How, then, can this holy God be reconciled with sinful man? Is there anything man can do? Is there anything God can do? If so, *how* is this accomplished?

The *only* solution to the problem was initiated by the sovereign and gracious plan of God when He sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, into the world as a fully human man. Born of a virgin so that he would not inherit the sin nature from his parents, he was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the land of Israel in the 1st century A.D. He lived a life of total obedience to his earthly parents and, most importantly, a life of absolute obedience and submission to his heavenly Father in *all things*. He lived a perfect life having committed no sin in thought, word, or deed. He was impeccable in every way, shape, or form. He withstood the fiercest temptations from Satan during the darkest hours of his life. Yet he was sinless—absolutely perfect. And it was for this reason that He could claim that He was the Son of God. He was the Messiah offered to Israel and He was God come in the flesh. Though Jesus continued to show Himself undeniably as God by means of His miracles, He was rejected by those for whom He came. The Jews crucified Him by the hands of the godless Romans.

Jesus died a death He didn’t deserve to die. He actually accomplished salvation for His people (Heb 7:25; John 19:30). He died *in the place of sinners*. He gave His life as a “ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). On Calvary’s cross, God the Father unleashed His furious wrath upon His Son for those three hours of darkness on the cross. Jesus bore the wrath in full for those who would be saved. All of the wrath the Father directed toward believers was poured out on Christ in full on the cross. Christ drank the cup of the Father’s divine fury to the dregs in Jerusalem that Passover afternoon.

The means by which the death of Christ is attributed to sinners is by faith alone (Eph 2:8-9; Phil 3:9). Salvation is not by works but it is only by God’s matchless and infinite grace. When the sinner puts his faith in Jesus Christ and His substitutionary work on the cross, knowing that *he* should be the one on that cross instead of Jesus, the Father forgives him and adopts him as His son. Thus, there is a transaction that takes place—a divine substitution, if you will. On the cross, Christ bore the full weight of the sinner’s sin so that the sinner may receive the full merit of Christ’s righteousness which is received by faith alone in Christ.

At the moment of faith and repentance, the believing sinner is justified and brought into reconciliation with the Almighty and infinitely Holy God who is able to look on the sinner because of the perfection that Christ achieved in which the sinner is now clothed. This forgiveness results in a life of obedience and faith (Eph 2:10). The life of the Christian is marked by “following Christ” (Matt 9:9; John 10:27). That Jesus is LORD over the sinner’s life now dominates everything he does, thinks, and says (1 Cor 12:3). The life will be marked by an increasing zeal for holiness and a diminishing presence of sinful activity (though the sin nature will inevitably remain until the final day of salvation—glorification).