



SATURATE

STUDY GUIDE

"Gospel" is an overused word in the Church today. It's come to mean everything in some circles, and nothing in others. But whether you're a follower of Jesus or not, and no matter how long you have been if you are, Jesus is at the heart of the gospel, and the gospel is at the heart of following Jesus.

THE WHOLE GOSPEL

The great apostle Paul wrote to the first-Century church at Corinth that he "delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). This is the gospel; it's the culmination of the great story of redemption God has been unfolding since before time began. Every one of us is a participant somewhere in his storyline of redemption.

Paul reminded the church in Rome of the confidence we can have in Jesus and his work. In Romans 1:16-17, he writes: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith.'"

On one hand, the gospel is "the power of God for salvation." Salvation from what? What do we need to be saved from? God wants to save us from the penalty of sin, salvation from what we've done; the power of sin, salvation for what we're called to do today; and the presence of sin, salvation for our future...

On the other hand, in saying "the righteous shall live by faith," Paul is saying, in essence, that the good news is that God has power to save everyone who walks by faith, believing God can save him or her. The good news is that God saves us as we trust in him and not in ourselves. And the means by which God does this, the righteousness that is revealed, is the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus applied to our lives by God's Spirit. Followers of Jesus must see all of life, our lives and others', through the lens of the gospel story. And to do so, we must understand the whole gospel. That is, the power of God for salvation through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, for the purpose of glorifying God and participating in his mission of saturation, by the power of the Holy Spirit to make disciples who make disciples. In a right understanding, the gospel has past, present, and future implications. This week, we're considering who Jesus is and all he has done, is doing, and will do for us.

JESUS DID IT BETTER: WE HAVE BEEN SAVED

In Romans 3:23, Paul tells us, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." To sin is to think, believe, or act in any way that is not like God or in submission to what God commands. We all have fallen short; every one of us has sinned. And "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23a). The result of our sin is damage to ourselves, brokenness in our relationships, destruction to the world around us, death to our physical bodies, and, ultimately, an eternal spiritual death, separation forever from a relationship with God, the giver and sustainer of life. Our rebellion, our sin, leads to brokenness...

“But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23b). God has made a way to give us something different from what we deserve. Since no natural human being ever has lived or ever will live a life perfectly glorifying to God, Jesus came and took on flesh as the God-man. Jesus became for humanity the true and better human, the true Son of Man and Son of God. He submitted himself perfectly to God the Father. He obeyed him in everything, doing only what God the Father told him to do. This perfect obedience, this perfect life, has been given to us. Jesus is the gift of God to humanity (John 3:16). This is good news!

By faith in Jesus, you and I are saved from the need to live a perfect life to gain God's approval. Paul says that our lives are now hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3). That means that if, by faith, you have trusted Jesus as the One who perfectly obeyed God on your behalf, God sees Jesus's performance as yours. He accepts you because of Jesus.

JESUS DOES IT BETTER: WE ARE BEING SAVED

The first-century church at Corinth had begun to question whether there was a bodily resurrection from the dead, whether people will be given new bodies to live in in a new world one day. This was huge! If people are not raised from the dead and given new bodies, then what happened with Jesus? Paul tells them our entire faith is futile if there is no resurrection (1 Cor. 15:12-19).

Paul confronted their wrong thinking by reminding them of the gospel: “Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve” (1 Cor. 15:1-5).

If we have faith in Jesus to save us, we have been saved and we are being saved.

Paul uses the language of being saved in describing what the gospel is still doing. Yes, the gospel is good news about a past event, Jesus lived and died in a definite time in history to forgive us of our sins. Yet the gospel is also good news about what God continues to do in us and through us. Jesus was raised from the dead on the third day. He is alive! He lives for us, and by his Spirit, he lives in us and works through us.

Most followers of Jesus believe that one day, we will be like him (1 John 3:2) and will live in a perfect world with him. But many forget that in the present, he comes into our lives by his Spirit to give us a glimpse, a foretaste, of the future so that we will live differently today. As we trust and depend on him to work in us, he enables us to live the new and better life now.

JESUS WILL MAKE IT BETTER: WE WILL BE SAVED

What you love most, you also fear losing the most. And whatever threatens what you love most controls you. We love God because he first loved us. He loved us by sending the Son to satisfy his just wrath against us for our sin. So we have no need to fear judgment coming against us for our sin. Perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:7-21).

First Peter 1:3-5 tells us that God “has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” Not only do we have no need to be afraid of future judgment if our faith is in Jesus, but we also have no need to fear loss. Our salvation is kept in heaven for us. Also, Jesus is presently at the right hand of God the Father, representing all those who have faith in him. He is securing us until the end. And he has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18).

The thing that matters most cannot be taken away from us, and nothing can happen to us to prevent us from inheriting it. Our relationship with God, our future salvation, and our hope to live eternally with Jesus on a new earth are already secured. If our faith is in Jesus to save us, we have been saved, we are being saved, and we will be saved.

Scripture also tells us that in the future, God will make all things new. All sin will be eradicated. All that is broken will be restored. Every person who belongs to Jesus will be healed. All relationships will be reconciled. We will enjoy a perfect world with Jesus at the center forever. It will be stunningly amazing! Jesus doesn't just hold and secure our future. He gives us a perfectly new one as well.

THE GOSPEL IS THE KEY

As we'll see throughout this study, believing these truths makes all the difference in the world. Everything else this week, and in the coming weeks, begins and ends with Jesus: who he is and all he does in the gospel. Without him, we're helpless and hopeless; we seek someone or something else to give us hope and joy; we rely on our power (or lack thereof) for faith and strength; we fear other things, which can then control our lives. Bottom line, you need to believe the gospel in order to step out and obey Jesus.

You need to believe he has saved you. You are forgiven and loved; there is no record of wrongs against you. You need to believe he is saving you. You can do all things through Christ who gives you strength. You need to believe he will save you. You have nothing to fear because your future is in his hands.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. Do you believe, or live as if, you have to perform well for God in order to receive his loving acceptance? Do you believe God loves you more when you obey and less when you disobey? If so, how can this be understood as disbelief in what Jesus has already done?
2. Do you believe, or live as if, your holiness is enabled by your own power and strength? Do you truly believe the Spirit of God is alive and living in you today, who alone has the ability to work in and through you? If not, how can this be understood as disbelief in what Jesus is currently doing?
3. Do you believe—or live as if—the future is unsure (even paralyzing)? Do you truly believe that eternity has been secured for you, by the death and resurrection of Jesus? If not, how can this be understood as disbelief in what Jesus has promised to do?
4. Think about the phrases “we have been saved,” “we are being saved,” and “we will be saved.” If all of these are true because of who Jesus is and what he's done, how should this impact our daily lives?