

The Basis of the Gospel

1 Corinthians 15: 3-4

As we begin the New Year, I felt compelled to preach a series that deals with the foundational element of our faith – the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I trust everyone understands the significance of the Gospel in relation to salvation in Christ. We must hear a clear presentation of the Gospel and respond by faith in order to receive salvation and have a personal relationship with Christ.

For some, such a series may seem unusual, and even unnecessary for those who have come to saving faith in Christ. However, I not only believe it is necessary; I am convinced it is imperative for the modern church. I fear that many believe the truth of the Gospel, having responded by faith unto salvation, but fail to realize its significance and relevance in our everyday lives as believers. We are people of the Gospel, and as such, we are called to live Gospel centered lives. Our comprehension of the Gospel, and commitment to it, should define who we are as believers. Take a moment to consider the thoughts of Dietrich Bonhoeffer from his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*: “Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock. Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: 'Ye were bought at a price', and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God.” A proper understanding and devotion to the Gospel is imperative for victorious Christian life.

As we begin the series, *A Gospel Centered Life*, I want to examine the [eternal truths](#) within the text as we consider: [The Basis of the Gospel](#). We must understand its foundation if we are to conform our lives to its doctrine. Notice:

I. The Foundational Truth – In our text verses Paul reveals the very foundation of the Gospel. In a few, short statements, he beautifully sums up the Gospel. While it is not complicated, we must understand each element involved to properly receive, respond, and live according to the Gospel. The first element of truth is:

A. The Identification (3) – [For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures](#). Paul emphatically declared that Christ died. Understandably, one must believe that Jesus Christ was and is the Son of the living God. He is

the central figure for all of time and humanity. His life upon the earth cannot be disputed. Biblical and historical records affirm without question that Jesus Christ lived and died upon the earth. For the Gospel to have any significance, leading to a complete transformation, one must believe that Jesus Christ was more than a man. You must see Him as more than a great teacher, prophet, or miracle worker. You must agree and believe by faith that Jesus Christ was and is the Son of God. If you reject the truth that Jesus was the Son of God, deity incarnate in flesh, then you have denied a foundational truth of the Gospel and will be unable to receive salvation. Many passages affirm this, and one of my favorites is from John's gospel. [John 1:1-2, 14 – In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. \[2\] The same was in the beginning with God. \[14\] And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, \(and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,\) full of grace and truth.](#)

B. The Crucifixion (3) – [For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.](#) Once you have accepted the fact that Jesus was the Son of God, come to earth as a man, you are ready to embrace the second truth of the Gospel – Jesus died upon the cross. Following a ministry of some three and half years, Jesus Christ was betrayed by one of His own, and sold for thirty pieces of silver. He was arrested, tried, and condemned to death upon a Roman cross. He lived a sinless life, never once disobeying His heavenly Father or having a need to repent of sin. He was condemned because of the hatred of sinful men. They denied that Jesus was in fact the Christ, and accused Him of blasphemy because of His claim of being the Son of God. Blasphemy was punishable by death. Since these believed Jesus was a blasphemer, they called for His immediate death on the cross. Jesus was crucified on the cross, where He willingly laid down His life. [Luke 23:33 – And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.](#) You cannot embrace the Gospel apart from the death of Christ upon the cross.

C. The Substitution (3) – [For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.](#) Following your acceptance of Christ's death upon the cross, you must embrace the reason for His death. Many will agree that Christ died upon the cross, but they refuse to accept the reason for His death. Jesus was God in flesh. He was the eternal God-Man. He was wholly God and wholly man. He lived a life without sin. Christ died on the cross, but He did not die because He had committed deeds worthy of death. Jesus died on the cross in our place. He died for our sin. Jesus Christ offered Himself the atoning sacrifice for sin. He embraced the death of the cross, and the righteous judgment of the Father so we could escape death and judgment. The Righteous died so the sinful could possess eternal life! He fully and eternally satisfied the righteous demands of God, fully atoning for our sin. Jesus died for you and me! [Rom.5:8 – But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ](#)

died for us. Heb.9:28 – So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. 1 Peter 2:24 – Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

D. The Burial (4) – *And that he was buried.* Paul affirms that Christ was buried following His sacrificial death upon the cross. One must embrace the borrowed tomb in order to receive the Gospel. The fact that Christ was buried affirms His death on the cross. Had Christ not died, sin would not have been atoned. Had sin not been atoned through His death, we would yet be in our sin and without hope before God. They removed the lifeless body of Christ from the cross and placed Him in a borrowed tomb. A stone was placed in front of the door, weighing several tons, and guards were ordered to watch the grave to ensure no one came to steal His body. There can be no doubt that Christ died upon the cross. He did not pass out and later revive as some speculate; Christ gave His life on the cross for our sin! *Mark 15:44-46 – And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead.* ^[45] *And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.* ^[46] *And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre.*

E. The Resurrection (4) – *And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.* Finally we come to the last, and arguably most vital truth of the Gospel – the resurrection. Jesus died upon the cross to atone for our sin and was buried. However, the grave could not hold Him. After three days within the tomb, Jesus came forth in triumphant, resurrection life. He conquered sin, death, and hell, gaining the victory for all who believe.

- It is impossible to overemphasize the importance of the resurrection. Granted, had Jesus not died, there would have been no atonement for sin. But, had He not risen again, the curse of death, the penalty for sin would not have been broken. Had Christ not risen, He would have been like all other men who came before Him. The plan of redemption for humanity was fulfilled as Christ rose, triumphant from the grave. Because He lives, we have the promise of life beyond the grave and eternal life with Him in heaven. You cannot embrace the Gospel and deny the resurrection! *1 Cor.15:17 – And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.* Rom.4:25 – *Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.*

II. A Providential Truth – Twice in these verses Paul said: *according to the scriptures.* We must understand that the events involved in the Gospel were no accident. Jesus did not die because the religious leadership among the Jews and the powers that be consented to His death. He died

according to the providential plan of God. Jesus came to earth with purpose – to die for our sin and rise again for our justification. While it saddens me to consider all that Jesus endured on my behalf, I rejoice in the cross of Christ. He willingly submitted to God's plan of redemption to save us from sin and reconcile us to God. The prophecies within the Scriptures were fulfilled through His sacrificial death and glorious resurrection!

III. A Transformational Truth (3) – **For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.** The statement reveals a transformational truth always associated with the Gospel. Consider:

A. The Reception – Paul shared what he had received. He publicly professed his belief in the Gospel, revealing he had personally received it by faith. He identified with the crucified and risen Savior. Paul knew Christ as his Lord.

- Once presented and understood, the Gospel demands a response. Such a response is personal in nature. I cannot receive the Gospel for you. I am secure in Christ, but my salvation through Him is non-transferable. As I received Christ by faith, my life was completely and eternally transformed. The old man of sin died and I was resurrected a new creation in Christ. One cannot receive the Gospel and remain as they were. The Gospel always brings transformation!

B. The Declaration – Having received salvation, Paul was compelled to share it with others. He did not keep the good news of the Gospel to himself. He delivered the message of the Gospel to all who would hear. Paul was faithful to proclaim the Gospel of Christ.

- As believers, being transformed by the power of the Gospel, we have an obligation to proclaim the good news to those who have yet to receive it. This is not optional; it is expected of everyone who has received salvation in Christ. We must be willing to share the good news with others! **Matt.28:19-20 – Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: [20] Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.** Acts 1:8 – **But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.**

Conclusion: You have heard a clear presentation of the Gospel. You are now responsible for what you have heard. If you are unsaved, respond in repentance and faith for salvation. If you are already saved, I pray the Gospel will be central in your life and you will share the good news!