

# The Gospel



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## THE GOSPEL

The word "gospel" occurs 104 times in your Bible, all of which are in the New Testament. Three times it is in the possessive form. One time it is found in your King James Bible in italics, which means the thought is there in the verse, though the word is not explicitly given in the original text. One hundred times the word "gospel" is used with titles, details on how it is to be handled, identification factors and what it can accomplish in lives.

What many call the gospel is not producing an inward or outward change of life. The problem is that people have so watered-down the gospel to make it acceptable and in order to try to get more people to agree with it. They no longer have the gospel according to the Lord Jesus Christ as it is found in the Scriptures. It doesn't make much difference what we call the gospel or what some denomination or theologian believes it to be, the real issue is what the gospel is according to God.

The real gospel looses God's power in people's lives and brings about changes. The Bible says the problem we would face in the last days is that people will have a "form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." (II Tim. 3:5) People want to have a form of the gospel, but they deny that the gospel has the power to make a drunk live sober the rest of his life, or to convert a cursing man and give him a different way of talking, or to deliver a person who is a drug addict and let him live chemical-free the rest of his life. They deny the power of the gospel to accomplish great and mighty things in people's lives. I assure you that the gospel as given in the Scriptures has the power of God released through it into the lives of individuals.

## THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

Romans 1:16 says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Paul said that when it came to the gospel, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ..." Whatever his circumstances- in prison

or out, in front of a mob or in front of a church- he was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Neither should we be. We ought to always be prepared to speak about the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ because "...it is the power of God..." I think we underestimate the power of the gospel. We don't realize that the gospel is how God releases His power in the lives of individuals. We get to looking at some people and wonder if they could ever be saved - as if God didn't have enough power to release through the gospel to save people in various conditions. It is far more than the power of man or power of logic or intelligence. It is the power of God.

The first area that I want to emphasize about the power of the gospel is that it is the **POWER UNTO SALVATION**.. God has power in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is power in the Word and power in prayer. There is a power of the holy life, but here we are dealing with the power of God as it is released through the gospel in the matter of salvation. If there is no gospel, there will be no power and thus there will be no salvation. If we talk to people about their souls and leave the gospel out, there will be no power and they will never really be saved. They must have the gospel if there is ever to be the power of God loosed in their lives that they might be converted. It is very simple and basic, but we must always remember it. No gospel - no power - no conversions. Little gospel - little power - few conversions. Great gospel - great power - many conversions.

Paul said in I Corinthians 15:1,2 "...the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved..." In Ephesians 1:13 Paul talks about the "gospel of your salvation". Again, he is tying together the gospel and the matter of being saved. Ephesians 3:6,7 says that it is by the gospel that we are "partakers of his promise in Christ." It takes the gospel to open up the promise in Christ so that we can enter into that promised salvation. We can talk about doctrine and philosophies, but if there is no gospel, then there is no salvation. II Thessalonians 2:14 says, "Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

When we talk to a lost person we face a real problem because he is blinded by the god of this world. Such are dead in their trespasses and sins, and are in a helpless state because they are lost. But God has a means to call them out of their lost, blind, dead state. Remember when Jesus came to the graveside of Lazarus, had them open the tomb and then called in, "Lazarus, come forth."? (John 11:43) The gospel is the means by which God calls sinners that are as dead spiritually as Lazarus was physically. They are blind and as lost as lost can be, but by giving the gospel God is able to reach down through all the barriers of their lost condition and call them. The gospel will stir their heart, raise them, and they will be quickened in Christ Jesus. They will be drawn to the Saviour and can be saved. It overcomes their deadness in their sins, their blindness, and their lostness. No wonder Paul could say, "I am not ashamed of the gospel...it is the power of God..." It can do what no logic, illustration, argument, story or persuasion could ever do. It can call a lost sinner to a place where they come and enter into the glories of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the power of God unto salvation, isn't it?

Some of you will remember that day when the gospel stirred something in your heart that had never been stirred before and you started to become aware of spiritual needs. Don't be ashamed of that gospel. You ought to be thrilled with it. It is God's power to supernaturally bring people into the kingdom. In fact, I Corinthians 4:15b tells us, "...for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." That is, we are birthed into the kingdom through the gospel in Christ Jesus. In I Peter 1:23 we are told that, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Verse 25 says, "And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." In other words, the Scriptures that God uses to take the dead sinner, bring them and birth them into the family, call them to the Saviour, and to help them enter into salvation is the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, get a glimpse if you can of how much power God has that He looses through His gospel. If that could somehow sink into our souls, we would

be thrilled to tell them that God has power to deliver.

The power of the gospel goes even beyond the saving of sinners. I Corinthians 9:14 says, "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." The gospel has power not only unto salvation, but also to **PROVIDE FOR THE PREACHERS OF THE GOSPEL**. If the preacher doesn't have any gospel, then of course there will be no power and he ought to starve. If he has little gospel, then there will be little power and he ought to get just a little. Oftentimes that is what the problem is. They are preaching many other things and very little gospel. They have almost nothing in the way of real, changed lives and therefore they don't have any money.

I have heard this verse argued against a number of times. Some say there is not enough money, and there is no way it can work in certain countries because the people are too poor. I have been to some of those places and know of one of these poor countries where the believers had been told that they couldn't support their own pastors and churches and they would have to rely permanently on American money because of persecution and the whole economic state. But a few of those churches are now totally self-supporting. They have gotten hold of some Bible truths, put them into practice, and now they are able to support their pastors and pay all their own church expenses in that difficult situation. They can get money from God as well as Americans can.

The gospel produces such changes in a convert's life that finances are provided or produced from it. First of all, the heart is changed. Covetousness is gone where the gospel is preached. A person that stays covetous is a lost person according to I Corinthians 5. Stinginess and greed will be removed. Instead, he will have a heart filled with generosity. He will have great appreciation for the gospel and a love for the Lord and His work. He will learn how to be careful and frugal with the money that he has, instead of being wasteful. That in itself would be enough to show the power of the gospel and provide finances for the preaching of the gospel.

When a sinner is saved, his heart is changed and he has a whole new approach to his finances. There is money that is

available that wasn't before, for the sake of the gospel. There are certain sins that cease when people get saved. These may be expensive sins, such as adultery which can bring a man to a piece of bread according to the book of Proverbs. Gambling, drinking, smoking and drugs will be removed. He has been delivered from his addiction. Laziness will be changed. All these things devour funds. Now that money can be put into the gospel. That is why God ordained that they which preach the gospel live of the gospel. I hope that everybody that preaches no gospel starves to death and gets out of the business. God set it up that way.

There are many virtues that come into one's life when he gets saved. He learns about being consistent in his work. He becomes trustworthy. He learns about being dependable and will always be there when there is a job to be done. He will save his money and learn how to invest it so that he will have it when it is needed. He will learn how to work hard. He may get more education so he can work smarter and be more creative. He will be industrious on the job. He will have wisdom as he works. The gospel is not only the power of God unto salvation, but it is the power of God to change lives that will have the benefit of showing up financially.

The Lord has ordained that they that preach the gospel should live of it. If preachers would realize that the gospel they preach is what is going to produce the product that is going to support them, they might look at it differently. But if they think that they are going to get their support from some other source, then they are not concerned whether it really changes people's lives, because they can get along financially whether their gospel works or not. The gospel has the power of God in changing lives and producing income for those that preach it straight no matter the level of income in an area.

We ought to be careful that we don't interfere with what God has ordained. There are entire missions set up to contradict this verse. They believe that those that preach the gospel should live off money from other countries. They claim it is more efficient and have all kinds of human logic and reasoning, but they don't have Scripture for it. If we would get hold of what the gospel is and its power, we would

have confidence that it can support those that preach the gospel anywhere because of the products that it will produce. I am not opposed to supporting missionaries when you send them out, but if they are going to eventually settle down there, then their products ought to support them. If they are setting up a work to support someone else who will continue preaching, expanding it, and going on, that is a different matter. This idea of Christian foreign aide becomes a real question mark in the light of I Corinthians 9. God has ordained how this is to be done. Their argument would seem as if these preachers of the gospel are preaching such a gospel that it doesn't change lives to produce any income to support them. They want us to support that kind of gospel preacher? That doesn't make sense, does it?

A third area of the power of the gospel is found in Romans 15:29, "And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ." The gospel has power to BRING BLESSING into my life. You have read about Abraham blessing Isaac, and Isaac blessing Jacob, and then Jacob putting his blessing on Ephraim and Manasseh. We don't know much of people putting their blessing on other people. The matter of cursing people has become so common that it really doesn't seem to have much affect- just somebody's temper out of control.

But there is something to blessing. Jesus blessed the little children. Can you imagine if your parents had been able to take you to Jesus and had had Him lay hands on you? What might that have done for you- to have the blessing of the Lord Jesus pronounced on you? This verse says that the gospel has the power to put a blessing on you that is as sure and full and complete as if Jesus were to have put His hands on you and pronounced a blessing.

We that have been saved by the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ are a blessed people. It is not a partial blessing, but rather a full blessing. Remember when Esau came back after Jacob had stolen the blessing from his father Isaac and asked if there was anything left for him? There was almost nothing left and when Esau heard what it was, he was very upset. Jacob had gotten the full blessing. That is what we get.

God doesn't give us a partial blessing through the gospel, but He gives us a full blessing - something the world may never know. They may get very little other than side benefits, but we can live under the full blessing of the gospel of Christ, day by day. The gospel brings blessing into our lives that no man can take away.

Colossians 1:23 talks about the "hope of the gospel". Others hear about this gospel that blesses us with a hope, but we are enjoying that hope. We are enjoying the presence and promises of God because of the gospel. "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." (II Cor. 1:20) We walk in the light of the blessing, and with blessings all around us - spiritual blessings and often others besides.

When a community has many people turning to Jesus the whole community starts to feel the impact of the blessing of God in its midst. When the churches quit preaching the gospel, the blessing starts to leak out of that community and of course the corruption comes in. Do you wonder why things are bad in our nation? Because we have gotten rid of the gospel of the Lord Jesus and replaced it with a whole lot of religious decisionalism. That doesn't have the power to save, change lives, or to bless. God may remove the blessing from our nation if we don't have enough gospel to keep the blessing here. Don't be ashamed of that gospel - spread it! Your locality, community, state and perhaps our national blessing are tied to what we do with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What happened to Germany when they backed off from the gospel? It went downhill. What happened to England when they quit sending out the gospel and preaching it faithfully? It began a moral collapse. You can study it in history and see it happening again and again. Take a look in your own lifetime and see what has happened. We can maintain what is left and get the blessing back through the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A fourth area of the power of the gospel is found in Romans 16:25a, "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel..." We are ESTABLISHED by the



power of the gospel. We are settled and anchored in Jesus, and our goings are determined. We don't have to fear what winds of change may come in society or doctrine. The gospel has power to establish someone so that they will be grounded and settled in the truth and not beat back and forth.

In Galatians 2:3-14 it says that this gospel has such power that a person can live right whether they are under the influence of the circumcised (the Jewish), or the uncircumcised. They are able to live right in the most difficult situations, even when they run into problems as far as culture or friends. Some people say they would like to do right, but they just aren't able. The gospel will establish you so that you can do right instead of having to adjust to circumstances. Some people are fine when they are with church people on Sunday, but they are a different person come Monday at school, home, work or in the neighborhood. What happened? Is it the same person? I am not real sure, but the situation changed. IF they get a good dose of the gospel, they will be established and live consistently.

During revival time in the Hebrides Islands a man that was trying to build communism there jumped up in the middle of a meeting and said, "Prove to me there is a God." So the preacher told him to follow a young shepherd boy for a certain number of hours as he cared for his sheep out on the hills. Then the preacher asked the communist man to come back the next night and tell them whether he knew there was a God. The communist said, "Two hours today did it. I was watching him when he wasn't aware of it and I became convinced that there is a God." Who knows who is watching to find out whether you have a gospel that established you or whether you just adjust to the circumstances and don't have any reality to your life? How many people are turned off to the gospel of a lot of people because the gospel didn't establish them? People are looking for something that will settle them and give them something solid instead of being beat around, up and down, back and forth and never being established.

Another area of the gospel's power is found in II Timothy 1:9,10, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose

and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:" The gospel has power to BRING LIFE AND IMMORTALITY TO LIGHT. It takes the power of the gospel to help anybody understand what life is really all about. Most people don't live, they only exist or go through the motions. The gospel takes our life and makes us something other than just a vapor that passeth away. The gospel will give meaning to our existence on earth and will give purpose to living, so that, like Paul, we can say, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Phil. 1:21) The gospel also is the power of God to bring immortality to light. Immortality is something that the poets and the great writers of history have tried to get a handle on, but have handled so clumsily. The gospel puts the focus on eternity. When we leave this world, we will be incorruptible, immortal, with new bodies to rule and to reign with Jesus forever and ever. The gospel will make all eternity alive and understandable - maybe not in the fullest sense but in a sense that will satisfy the heart. It is the power of God to give purpose to life and understanding of eternity. What the philosophers have tried to understand and figure out, the gospel makes plain to any sinner who will repent of his sins and come to Jesus.

## TITLES OF THE GOSPEL

Out of the 100 times the word "gospel" is used in the New Testament, 52 times there is a name attached to the gospel that would help us identify some aspect or understanding of the gospel. There are a total of 27 different titles given to the gospel. That would be a complete study in and of itself, but I want to take these and group them into 7 different areas.

### #1 - GOSPEL OF CHRIST

The first grouping of titles which is the most frequently used has to do with the gospel of Christ. Mark 1:1 says, "The

beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;" In this verse it is called "the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God". Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God - come to provide a gospel or good news for us that we could be made right with God through the blood of the cross. The gospel of Mark begins to lay out, point by point, what is involved in this good news of Jesus coming to earth. It is not that there is a ticket to heaven or a plan that God has devised, but rather Jesus IS the good news and without Him we would have nothing.

Romans 1:16 says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Notice it is the gospel of Christ that is the power of God. The phrase - "gospel of Christ" occurs in the Scriptures ten times. In Romans 1:9 it is called the "gospel of His Son". In II Corinthians 2:12 it is called "Christ's gospel". In other words, it is His possession. The gospel is not only about Him, but it belongs to Him because it is of Him, not of man. We have no right to twist it, trim or adjust it, or water it down to make it acceptable to man. It is His possession and we need to be careful what we do with the gospel.

In II Thessalonians 1:8 it is called "the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ". His full name is laid out here. Notice there is Lordship involved in the gospel. Some would try to remove that. They would have to cut that verse right out of their Bible because it is called the "gospel of our LORD Jesus Christ" - not just the Lord Jesus Christ but OUR Lord Jesus Christ.

In II Corinthians 4:4 it is called the "glorious gospel of Christ". There is glory to the gospel being in Jesus. We need to understand and let it sink into our hearts that Jesus is the issue and focus of the gospel. He is the agent of the gospel that makes it operate. Leaving Jesus out or giving Him a secondary part is to get away from the gospel as it was given in the Scriptures. When Jesus is removed and we have a religious plan, philosophy, or some other idea presented to people, we no longer have the gospel. It is no wonder that we have shallow results. These people are professors but not possessors.

## #2 - GOSPEL OF GOD

Romans 1:1, "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God." Six times the term "gospel of God" is used and in I Timothy 1:11 it is called the "glorious gospel of the blessed God". It is not only the gospel of Christ, but it is also the gospel of God. This is not a different gospel, but rather to help us understand the nature of the gospel. In other words, the gospel is of diety-God-centered. You will never find in your Bible a term such as - the gospel of man, or the gospel of people, or the gospel of the sinner. You see the gospel is not only provided by Christ and God, but it is centered in God, not man.

One of the tragedies of our day is that when people begin to trim the gospel and redefine and re-explain it, they do it to please men. Even though the Bible says if they please men they would not be able to serve God, they still go on trying to have something that is man-centered. This is a false religion of humanism creeping into Christianity. The Father designed a plan of salvation before the world was made. The Father sent His own Son the Lord Jesus, so that it would not only be the gospel of God, but the gospel of Christ. He approved of what Jesus did on the cross. Isaiah said that He was satisfied. He is the One that activates it so that it can work actively in the soul of a sinner who will repent of his sins and come to Jesus in faith. These two general titles are telling us a little bit about the gospel. The gospel of Christ - focused in Jesus. The gospel of God - planned and controlled, owned and dominated by Him.

## #3 - GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Mark 1:14, "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God," Why is it called the gospel of the kingdom or the gospel of the kingdom of God? It is to help us understand that when we come to the gospel and respond to it, there is a king. You don't have a kingdom without a king. Because there is a king, you must submit to him. He is the KING OF KINGS, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Not only is there a king, but there are laws to live by. Jesus is our lawgiver. He said that we are to teach people to "observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you". (Matt. 28:20a) We are to know the laws of God's kingdom and live by them. We will be judged accordingly. He will be the judge of the "quick and the dead". (1 Peter 4:5) Isaiah 33:22 says, "For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us." We need to understand that when we come to the gospel and respond to it there is a submission to a king, acceptance of His laws to govern us, and He will judge us if we are to have any citizenship in this kingdom. The gospel is the means by which we can enter the kingdom of God, being born of the Holy Spirit. (John 3: )

We live in a day when there are many people that want to go to heaven without a king, without citizenship, without a law, only judging themselves. When they are faced with the claims of the gospel, they back off because they are not interested. It is possible for them to search around and find some kind of religious organization that calls themselves a church, that would have a gospel so watered-down that there would be no kingdom concept at all. But brethren, I want you to know that if you ever respond to the gospel of Christ, He will be king. You cannot enter in as a rebel but must enter as a citizen in good standing, in submission to the King, accepting His laws to govern your life, and glad that He is the judge instead of others. This is a definition of the Lordship of Christ.

The gospel makes a claim for God's Lordship in our lives and the necessity for us to submit. Don't deny Him His sovereignty or His kingdom, because it is the gospel of the kingdom of God. We must break and submit. Here is where the pleasure comes - in having such a gracious king, such wonderful laws, and such great ability to be able to live by them. The gospel produces a power in us that makes us capable of living by the laws of the kingdom rather than in disobedience. What a contrast there is between those that have entered into the gospel light and those that rejected the gospel of the kingdom!

#### #4 - THIS GOSPEL AND ANOTHER GOSPEL

In Mark 14:9 and Matthew 26:13 we find what is called "this gospel". It is a specific gospel. It has to be this gospel - specific, precise - the gospel that God expects and that He gave us. We must hold to it.

In II Corinthians 11:4 there is something called "another gospel". Several times in Galatians 1 it is called "other gospel". You see there are those that have another gospel or will run after some other gospel. That makes it different from "this gospel". You need to know whether the gospel that you have responded to is "this gospel" as recorded in the Bible or whether it is some "other gospel" or "another gospel" which will never save your soul. It has no power of God in it and doesn't bring forth a changed life. You don't enter gladly as a citizen under the kingship of Jesus. You don't recognize God as your sovereign and Jesus as your Lord. It is so important to know whether you have the gospel as defined in the Bible. God wants us to know these terms so that we can respond to them and say, "Yes, in my heart, I know it is all about Jesus." "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Phil. 2:13)

When I was young I would occasionally hear speakers that had been to some school and embraced rather curious ideas regarding the gospel. The view they tried to teach was that God had a whole box full of gospels - a different gospel for each age of time and that He had a whole variety of ways to save people, depending on when you lived. As if what Jesus did, in and of itself was not fully sufficient. They were very strong in this view that what Jesus preached of the gospel was not what Paul preached and that they were two totally different gospels, two totally different kinds of salvation and two totally different sets of requirements.

In Mark 1:1 we are told that it was "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God". In the last chapter of Mark He tells the disciples, "...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15) Jesus is saying that after He was gone we are to take the gospel He had been preaching and see that it is preached not only to the

Jews, but to the Gentiles and throughout the entire world - to every creature. Jesus didn't say to forget His gospel and come up with another gospel and preach that. He said to preach "the gospel".

The Apostle Paul said in Romans 1:16 , "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth..." Paul was preaching the same gospel that Jesus preached - the gospel of Christ. That is what had the power of God to save sinners out of their sins. Paul did not preach another gospel. He preached the same gospel that Christ preached and called it "the gospel of Christ". In I Corinthians Paul refers to what he preached as "the gospel of Christ". In II Corinthians he calls it "the gospel of Christ". In Galatians, he said that we need to be cautious because there are those that would try to pervert or change "the gospel of Christ". That is exactly what I heard when I was young. People took the gospel of Christ and tried to change it. But Paul wrote in Galatians that anyone who did that was under the curse of God. Again in the book of Philippians you will find the gospel called "the gospel of Christ". Paul writes in I Thessalonians about how he ministered in "the gospel of Christ". In II Thessalonians he ministered "the gospel of Christ". Paul consistently claimed that the gospel he preached was what Jesus preached. This idea of there being two different gospels, is not supported by the Scriptures. The "gospel of Christ" - is one that is consistent from the beginning of the time of Christ's ministry all the way through the entire ministry of the Apostle Paul.

#### #5 - AREAS ACCESSED BY THE GOSPEL

Acts 20:24 says, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." The "gospel of the grace of God" is found here. It is by the gospel that a person is able to access the unmerited favor of God. A person can have the benefits of all that Jesus accomplished and what He does in saving and sanctifying us, and one day glorifying us and taking us home to heaven

through the gospel. The grace of God will never be accessed except by the gospel.

In Romans 10:15 and Ephesians 6:15 we find the gospel called the "gospel of peace". There is a peace that the world has, but Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (John 14:27) The peace that Jesus gives comes through the gospel. So many people today are wanting to have peace with God, peace in their soul, peace with those around them, but they will not submit to the gospel and the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus they only get the peace of the world which doesn't last. It does not settle the heart and is only tied to circumstances. I assure you that the true gospel will bring peace within your soul.

In Ephesians 1:13 it is called the "gospel of your salvation". It takes the gospel to provide salvation. Again, I remind you of what Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation..." (Rom. 1:16) The gospel provides God's power to save a sinner from his sins, change him so that he desires to live holy and will make progress in holiness from that point forward.

#### #6 - TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL

Galatians 2:14, "But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" The gospel by nature is truth. There is no lie. It is all factual. You can stake eternity on it. The truth of the gospel, by its nature, will guide us in our daily walk. Peter was rebuked for not walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel. The gospel truth is not only going to give the truth by which you will be saved, but the truth by which you must live, if you will submit to it.

It is called the "word of the gospel" in Acts 15:7. The gospel comes to us in word by the Scriptures or the written Word of God. In I Peter 1:23 it says we are born again "not of



corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." Then later in verse 25 it says, "This is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." The word and the gospel go together. In Hebrews it talks about the gospel and the Word having to be mixed with faith if we are ever to have the benefits.

In Colossians 1:23 we find the "hope of the gospel". We don't just have to wish or desire for certain things from God, we can have a sure and steadfast hope because of the gospel.

In Ephesians 6:19 is the phrase the "mystery of the gospel". How is it a mystery? Those that have never entered into the gospel find it a mystery for they look at it from the outside. Many today do not understand the gospel of the Scriptures. It is so scrambled and mixed up, based on cliches and illustrations - based on their own desires and evaluation instead of being based on the Scriptures. The gospel is still a mystery to them. But by its nature there is a mystery to it because of what God does in the soul. God changes a person and makes them a new creature. "...Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (II Cor. 5:17b) It is a mystery. God can do this, but man cannot.

Another title of the gospel found in Revelation 14:6 is the "everlasting gospel". The gospel is not something that comes for a while, disappears, and is replaced by something else. It is an everlasting gospel. As a young man how strange those things sounded to my ears compared with what the Scriptures taught.

When Paul is defending the gospel of Christ in Galatians 3 and warning against perverting it, he mentions that this is the gospel that was preached unto Abraham before Jesus came and before the law was given. God doesn't have a time-limited or changeable gospel. He has one set of good news and it is that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. "...How that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures;" (I Cor, 15:3b-4)

God is so precise in His Word. He mentioned the gospel in Matthew, Mark and Luke and then on throughout the New

Testament. There followed a period of years when no further Scripture was written. Then the Holy Ghost had the Apostle John pick up the pen and record the inspired Scripture of the books of I, II, and III John. The word gospel is not used there. Then he writes the gospel of John and it is not mentioned once. When you come to the final book, Revelation, God says, "Now write the capstone - the final book after which I will put the end. I will say that nobody is to add or subtract hereafter." About two-thirds of the way through the book, the Holy Ghost says for John to put it down one more time. It is an everlasting gospel - never to be changed and lasting forever. God has accomplished His purposes and spelled it out so specifically. We can say "Hallelujah to the preciseness of the Holy Ghost in inspiring the Scriptures." Man never would have been so cautious and careful.

The gospel is called the "glorious gospel" in I Timothy 1:11. This gospel is good news that is glorious.

In Galatians 2:7 it is called the "gospel of the circumcision". In the same verse it is called the "gospel of the uncircumcision". You may wonder which it is. Both. It is the good news to the Jew AND good news to the Gentile. You may say Peter had the message for the Jews and Paul for the Gentiles. But where did Paul go every time he went into a town? He went to the synagogue to reach the Jews. Who was it that God sent to Cornelius, the Gentile? Peter. It was good news to both Jews and Gentiles in both men's ministries. It wasn't two separate messages. The nature of the gospel lets us know that it is for Jews and Gentiles, meeting the needs of both for salvation.

I Timothy 2:8 says, "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel:" Paul said, " I preach Christ's gospel, but I call it my gospel." He said that the gospel is not an abstract matter or philosophical principle, but rather it is a matter that must be personalized. Three times Paul called it "my gospel". He loved it and owned it. It controlled and dominated his life. I Thessalonians 1:5 says, "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were

among you for your sake." In this verse it is called "our gospel".

Can you say that it is your gospel? Or do you just say that this is the gospel at some church or the gospel that some preacher preaches? Let me take it a step further - can you say that it is our gospel? Have you joined with others in a similar gospel and become one with the saints rejoicing in the unity of the faith? This is our gospel that we will stand and defend.

### ACTIONS TOWARD THE GOSPEL

Of the 100 times that gospel is mentioned, in 76 or more of the passages there is a specific action to be taken towards the gospel. The gospel is not something that we just look at intellectually. It is not a matter of facts that are accepted in the mind, but rather it is something that requires a response. There are at least 26 specific actions given in the Scriptures that ought to be taken. We live in a day of Biblical ignorance and shallow religion and when you ask most people what should be done about the gospel, they say, "Believe it." That is true. We have picked up the cliché - "Only believe". That came out of a hymn and not out of your Bible. Any person that tries to reduce it to one action is saying that God commanded too much or He was just wasting time and terminology. I remind you that whenever there is a dispute between man and God, the Bible has the answer. "...Let God be true, but every man a liar;" (Rom. 3:4)

### PRESENTING THE GOSPEL

1 Thessalonians 2:9, "For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God." There are a number of ways that God spells out that we should present the gospel to other people. Over half of the time the gospel is mentioned in the New Testament - 53 to be exact - it has to do with our responsibility of presenting it to others. Of these 53 times, 44 of them have to do with **PREACHING** the gospel.

Preaching seems to be something that many churches

are down-playing. It used to be that the preaching of the Word of God and the gospel was a major part of Sunday services. Now there is more and more time given to announcements, activities, and music, while the preaching is becoming less and less. I have read that in the early days of our country, they would sing a number of hymns and psalms and then would have Scripture reading. Then they would stand for the morning prayer - which would last anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour. That is a long time for a prayer in the morning service, but it was to prepare them for the preaching of the Word. Then they sat down and had a minimum two hour message. I know of churches today where the instructions are that the pastor has fifteen minutes maximum for preaching. We have come a long way from preaching to communicating, sharing, inflating people's egos, etc. Let me remind you that God's emphasis with the gospel is that it is to be preached. "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16b)

1Thessalonians 2:2 gives another action of presenting the gospel. It says, "But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention." The matter of SPEAKING the gospel is mentioned again in verse 4. The gospel should not only be preached, but we should speak the gospel to people. The major emphasis is on preaching, but it isn't only preachers that deal with the gospel. Every believer ought to be speaking the gospel. If we can speak about the weather, politics, the economy, sports, and our hobbies, then we certainly ought to speak the good news of Jesus Christ to a lost and sinful world.

Acts 20:24 tells us that we are to TESTIFY the gospel. 1Corinthians 15:1 says we are to DECLARE the gospel. 1Thessalonians 2:8 adds, "So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us." We need to IMPART the gospel. We need to so preach and teach, speak, testify and declare the gospel that it is literally imparted to the sinner. What we have in our souls,

they can understand and become knowledgeable of. We must not quit until they have accepted it and it becomes part of their souls. In Ephesians 6:19 we are told to **MAKE KNOWN** the gospel. Romans 15:16 says we are to **MINISTER** the gospel. Mark 13:10 says to **PUBLISH** the gospel. We are given eight different ways to present the gospel to a lost and dying world.

To present the gospel is a major obligation for which God holds all of His children responsible. When was the last time you published, ministered, or made known the gospel? By preaching, speaking, testifying, or declaring did you impart the gospel from your heart to someone else's heart? I am not talking about prophecy, or some doctrinal discussion, but rather about the gospel - "that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:". (I Cor. 15:3b-4) If you haven't been presenting the gospel, then it is time that you repent and begin doing it.

#### **RESPONDING TO THE GOSPEL**

I Corinthians 15:1-4, "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:" The gospel is laid out here so we can understand that we have an obligation to respond to it.

Let me suggest several things God requires in response to the gospel. First, a person needs to be **HEARING** the word of the gospel according to Acts 15:7. If you don't hear the gospel you will not be able to respond to it. The question asked in Romans 10:14 is, "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?". There is the necessity of hearing the gospel. Hearing is more than just being around when it is spoken. It is having an open ear, an open heart and having a desire to lay hold on the truths, benefit from them,

and let the truths saturate our heart and soul. Unfortunately, there aren't a lot of people who hear when they are exposed to gospel preaching. Jesus said, "He that hath an ear, let him hear..." (Rev. 2:7) Many people do not have ears that are tuned to really hear what is being said. So many words and thoughts just pass by them, and truths don't sink in. Have you ever really heard the gospel talking to you or have you just learned a few intellectual facts about the gospel?

The second action that is required in response to the gospel is BELIEVING. Jesus stated in Mark 1:15b, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." A person is not prepared to deal with the gospel until they have Biblically repented. Repentance has always been the prerequisite for being able to respond to the gospel. That is why Jesus sat quietly in obscurity without any public ministry other than when He was in the temple at age 12, until John the Baptist had his ministry of preaching repentance. Until the forerunner came and prepared the way, people weren't ready for Jesus.

Hearing the gospel is not enough. A person must believe. But let me say quickly, that believing in and of itself is not enough. I Corinthians 15:2b says, "...unless ye have believed in vain...". It is possible for a person to believe and it not do them any good. It never changes their life. Simon the sorcerer also believed and yet Peter said, "Thy money perish with thee..." (Acts 8:20) He was a perishing man. He had neither part nor lot in the matter. He believed, but wasn't saved. In John 2 there were those that believed in Jesus, but Jesus didn't commit Himself unto them. Here is a group that believed, but they didn't have Jesus. Like Simon, they believed but had neither part nor lot in the matter of salvation.

Then there are those in I Corinthians that believed, but it was in vain. You will find that the devils believe and tremble. They are not saved by simply believing. In Acts 19:2 Paul asked a group, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" There was group that had believed, but hadn't been saved. They hadn't received the Holy Spirit. It is possible to believe, but not have Jesus, not receive the Holy Spirit, not have part or lot in the matter of salvation, have a vain belief and no more.

No one is going to be saved without believing, but believing in and of itself is not enough. This "only believe" philosophy is not Biblical when it comes to the gospel. It is necessary, but God says that there are many things to be done towards the gospel - not just one. Those who would preach just one are woefully ignorant of what the Bible teaches and are sowing great confusion.

Once we had a teenager who wanted to testify during a street meeting. He said that when he got saved nothing much happened. Well, that was true. Five years later he realized that he had never been saved. Nothing much HAD happened. A lot of people have believed, but have not believed unto the saving of their soul.

There is a need for RECEIVING the gospel. I Corinthians 15:1 says, "...which also ye have received...". It is not only necessary to hear it and believe it, but we must receive it. For example, I believe there are a lot of women, but I have only received one and that is my wife. There is a specific action taken - a taking to yourself, or uniting that is involved with receiving.

I remind you that John 1:12 says, "But as many as received Him..." (not accepted Him, not knew and agreed to the facts, but received Him) "...to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." There must be the act of receiving. The gospel is not some abstract doctrine to be learned but rather to be heard, believed and then received to ourselves.

The fourth action in responding to the gospel is OBEYING. Romans 10:16 says that "not all have obeyed the gospel". There are those that have not obeyed the gospel and are facing the judgment of God. "What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (I Peter 4:17) The gospel is something to be heard, believed, received and obeyed. It is to dominate and control our lives and we are to follow what it teaches us.

There is a fifth area mentioned in II Corinthians 9:13 and that is the matter of being in SUBJECTION to the gospel. That is bowing low before it, and recognizing its' authority in our life. The gospel is not something we just tack on and go

on living like before, but rather it dominates and controls. We must be in subjection to it. Like a wife to her husband and like the church to Christ. We are in absolute submission and under the gospel's authority, direction, and control.

Finally, **STANDING** in the gospel is part of our response. This is also mentioned in I Corinthians 15:1, "...wherein ye stand...". The gospel is something that we are to enter into and become so identified with that we not only stand **FOR** the gospel but **WITHIN** the gospel based on what Jesus has done. We have entered into it and it has become part of us.

### **ACTIONS WE ARE NOT TO TAKE**

In I Corinthians 9:12, Paul said that he did certain things so he would not **HINDER** the gospel. We need to take great steps to make sure that we would do nothing to hinder the cause of the gospel.

In Romans 1:16, Paul said that he was not **ASHAMED** of the gospel of Christ. We should never be ashamed and take steps to make sure that we aren't. In Galatians 1:7 it mentions those that would **PERVERT** the gospel. That means to twist, adjust, add to, or delete from the gospel. This action should never be taken. II Corinthians 4:3 talks about the gospel being **HIDDEN**. "If our gospel be hid..." This is what Satan would do. We don't want to hide our gospel from people, but rather get it in front of them so that they can be exposed to it. Colossians 1:23 speaks of being "**MOVED AWAY FROM THE HOPE OF THE GOSPEL**". Whether it be success, affliction, opportunity, wealth, popularity or whatever - nothing should be moving us away from the hope of the gospel.

### **ACTIONS OF LOYALTY TO THE GOSPEL**

In Romans 1:9 we are to **SERVE** the gospel. Philippians 4:3 says we are to **LABOR** in the gospel. We are to put our efforts and energies in the gospel. In Philippians 1:7&17 it says we are to **DEFEND** the gospel. If we are not ashamed of it we will stand for and defend it. We will not allow it to be ridiculed and pulled apart. We have to defend what is right and not allow people to strip or pervert the gospel. Phil. 1:12



says we will want to FURTHER the gospel. We will want our life to revolve around the furtherance of the gospel. Philippians 1:5 mentions the matter of a FELLOWSHIP in the gospel. In other words, God draws people together and they have a basis of fellowship not based on their class, educational level, job, background, or cultural background. Our fellowship is based on the gospel and our labors in the gospel.

II Timothy 1:8 says, "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;" There are certain afflictions that will come when you receive and stand in obedience to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. People will ridicule you, mock you, call you names, and separate you from their company. They will try to create situations to find out whether you have the real thing by offering temptations and making things hard. It has always been this way. Family may reject you and friends may deny you. This is being a PARTAKER of the afflictions of the gospel.

Many people are looking for a gospel that has no cross, no death or burial and has no blood in it. They would like a nice, sweet, religious experience that would solve all their problems and let them coast through life as if they were on a drug "high", not facing the realities of life. The gospel has afflictions to it and we are to be a partaker of those afflictions. Not afflictions from the wickedness of our flesh, but the afflictions of the gospel. We are to be a partaker to the degree that is according to the power of God. God's power is without limit, so without limit we ought to be willing to suffer whatever is necessary to take our stand by the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and suffer those afflictions.

One further action to be taken is that we ought to STRIVE together for the gospel as found in Philippians 1:27. Not striving against each other, but striving together for the gospel in order to see that the job gets done and the whole world hears the gospel.

## PERSON AND MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL

Who is the gospel about? What is the Person of the gospel? What is the message of the gospel? There are so many other areas that we could look at, but if we miss this, we miss everything. It is one thing to discuss the gospel, it is another to preach the gospel itself. In Romans 15:16 it is called the "gospel of God", and then in verse 19 the "gospel of Christ". Paul said that he had fully preached it. In other words, you could partially preach the gospel of Christ and I fear that is the very problem we face in many circles today. In Romans 15:20, Paul talked about the gospel going to those that had never known or heard Christ's name. In verse 29 it mentions the gospel of Christ being the fullness of blessing.

The gospel centers in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12b) And yet we are told here that this is the gospel by which ye are saved. It is not that there are two ways to be saved. Jesus and the gospel are inseparable because the gospel is about Jesus. Mark 1:1,2 says, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; As it is written in the prophets...". It has already been written in the Old Testament regarding the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's take a closer look at the word "gospel" because the world has secularized the term. They have applied it to things that are totally wrong. They have so abused the word that people don't seem to understand it anymore. The word "gospel" is presently spelled in six letters: G-O-S-P-E-L. That is not the original spelling of the word, but rather an abbreviated spelling of how the word used to be spelled centuries ago in the Old English. One letter has been dropped out and when this is explained maybe you will understand why the dropping of one letter has caused such confusion and loss of meaning. It used to be spelled: G-O-D-S-P-E-L. It has to do with God. Any use of the word "gospel" that leaves God out is not gospel at all. "Gospel" came from abbreviating two Old English words - "God", and "spel" which means story or history. In other words, "gospel" or "godspel" meant God's story, God's history or God's news. It then became known

sometime later as "good news", by putting an extra "o" in God. It went from God to good because there is none good but One, which is God. Good used to mean "God-like". Now do you understand how our English language has been badly damaged and as a result we have trouble understanding some things in the Bible?

This is God's story, not man's or some religion's story. We need to see it from His viewpoint so that we can access the benefits that God has given us.

In I Corinthians 15:3b-4 we have the gospel or God's good news story of Jesus given to us in seed form. It says, "...how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:" Let me break it down into three elements because it all has to do with Jesus and His work.

1. It is how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.
2. It is how that He was buried.
3. It is how He rose again the third day according to the scriptures.

Jesus did it all. The story is not what we do, but what He did.

The beginning of the gospel is recorded in the prophets and in Mark we see God finally began to have the gospel put into action. People believed it before it was accomplished. Galatians tells us of those like Abraham that believed hundreds and hundreds of years before Jesus actually came. We can believe centuries AFTER Christ came and accomplished His work. I am glad that we aren't required to live in the same time frame when it occurred. Time is not the issue to God.

Christ died on a cross. We need to understand how He was beaten and what He suffered. We need to understand that He went to the cross and died as our substitute because we deserved to die. "The wages of sin is death..." (Rom. 6:23), but He became our substitute for us. He was our sacrifice as He hung there on the cross. He is the One that satisfied the Father.

Then I would point out that not only did Christ die, but it is essential that we understand that Christ died for OUR sins. It

took the blood of Jesus to pay for our sins. Hebrews 9:22b says, "...without the shedding of blood is no remission...". We need to understand that the life is in the blood. Salvation from sin has always required a blood sacrifice. You can't preach the gospel and deny the blood.

He died as a burnt offering. That was necessary to care for sins. He died to be our atonement as is recorded in the Old Testament. He was offered up as a sin offering. The Passover pictured how God would pass over us when the blood is applied.

It was our SINS He died for. We need to have the law preached so we know what sin is and what Christ died for. We live in a day that is lawless. Without the law, there is no knowledge of sin. Christ didn't die just so that He could provide us a nice eternity in Heaven. Christ died for our sins.

If we don't know what our sins were, then we have no benefit of the gospel. I remember speaking with a woman who was wanting assurance of her salvation. I asked her what she had been saved from and she didn't really know. Finally, she said that she had been saved from her sins and when I asked her to name some of them she told me that she had never done anything wrong. Then I told her that Jesus didn't die for her. She was really upset. But Jesus didn't die for the sinless, Christ died for the sinner. If you haven't named your sins, owned your sins, faced them and repented of them, Christ didn't die for you. That is part of the gospel. A gospel that leaves our sins out makes the death of Christ empty and meaningless.

He died "according to the scriptures". I remind you that when I Corinthians was written hardly any of the New Testament had yet been penned. Mostly, they just had the Old Testament scriptures. Yet, according to the scriptures, Christ died for our sins as is eloquently pictured throughout the Old Testament. You can see that particularly in Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53.

The second element was that He was buried. This follows the types of the Old Testament and showed that they had respect for the body of Jesus. Aren't you glad that they didn't cremate the body of Jesus? They buried it lovingly in the

tomb. The enemy might have brutalized, beaten, stabbed and nailed his body, but they gently laid it in a tomb with the upmost respect. He may have been dead, but they were caring for His last remains.

He was buried as a sacrifice. He had to suffer and pay the ultimate price, even the sufferings of Hell for us. He was to be a burnt offering according to Abraham. He descended into Hell, but the promise of David was that God would not leave His soul in Hell but would raise Him up.

That brings us to the third part. He rose again. Just as Jonah came up out of the whale and just as Isaac was allowed to rise up from the altar, He was the One who was to see His seed. He was the Messiah to one day rule this world, so He rose from the dead. He did it on the third day because there was to be no corruption. He was following the steps like Jonah was in the belly of the whale 3 days and 3 nights, so must the Son of man be in the belly of the earth. He did it according to the Scriptures, as taught in the Old Testament and pictured in the Feast of First Fruits.

#### WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO STAND IN THE GOSPEL?

Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20) Do you know what it is to be crucified with Christ, to stand in the death of Christ and to recognize that the blood He shed was shed for you? That blood was put on your account, was sprinkled on you that you might be clean. What Christ did according to the Scriptures for your sins He did in reality and you may have the benefit.

Do you know how to stand in His burial where He was separated from the world? His body was still in the world, but He had to descend into Hell and ascend to operate in the Spirit and not just in the physical. Did you ever get buried and separated from the world or did you just walk on in the world and stay in your sins? If you remained a part of the world, the gospel is meaningless in your life no matter how many facts you have learned.

Finally, there is the issue of standing in the resurrection. He rose again on the other side of being separated from the world. He rose in victory and in newness of life. So we rise with a new life and are new creatures in Christ Jesus. "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (II Cor. 5:17b) We have a resurrection life that works in us. The power of God worketh in us "to will and to do of his good pleasure". (Phil. 2:13b) We are able to have victory over the world, temptation, and over sin in our life because we have entered into the gospel that includes a resurrected life instead of the worldly life that we had before we ever came to the gospel.

The gospel also has practical implications. Jesus said that the story of Mary anointing Him with oil would be told wherever the gospel is preached. You may wonder what her anointing Him with oil has to do with the gospel. Jesus said that that oil was set aside for His burial. She put it on Him before He ever died. She had faith in the death of Christ and had saved her money and bought the oil to prepare for His burial before He ever died. She knew He was going to die and that faith produced works in her life. Her faith wasn't dead, but rather a living faith. You may wonder why she didn't anoint Him with the oil when He was buried. Because she knew that He wasn't going to be buried very long. She knew that it may be a feast day or the Sabbath and she would be able to go to the tomb. It was at the time of the Passover and by the time they had finished with the sabbath events involved in the feast and the normal sabbath time, He was already resurrected. She believed in His death and was prepared for what would happen afterwards. She believed in His burial, and in His resurrection and realized if the anointing was to be done she would have to do it early. What a lesson for us - that we get to things early rather than too late.

Mary laid down an example of understanding the gospel before it occurred. Certainly, it ought to drive us to some practical actions now that we know it has occurred. This is not just some theory or Bible doctrine. This is something that will affect our life and our behavior. Even if a Judas might scoff at us, we should go ahead and do what the Bible

teaches.

### THE BURDEN OF THE GOSPEL

Philippians 1:12-19, "But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,".

It is not enough to have a right gospel and know the details of it, if it doesn't stir our hearts to a fiery zeal to do something about it. Look at the last part of verse 12, "...the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;". Think about the phrase - "furtherance of the gospel" - and let it sink into your soul. Paul said that he looked at the events that occurred in his life and analyzed them - not on how they felt or on how they made his life go along, but rather, whether there was progress in the gospel. Did something that occurred further the gospel or deter the furtherance of the gospel? That is how he evaluated it.

We are so man-centered that we evaluate things that happen by how it affects us and those around us rather than how it affects the furtherance of the gospel. When a person gets a raise, do they say, "Hallelujah! That means that will be that much more money that I can give for the furtherance of the gospel!?" When they get a promotion do they say, "This gives me greater opportunities to witness and influence people for the furtherance of the gospel.?" When they lose their job do they say, "Hallelujah! God will have to give me

another job and that will be another whole field of people to minister to?"

Do we evaluate everything in terms of the furtherance of the gospel? Do we look at our nation's policy with Red China in terms of the red, white and blue or whether there is some way for the furtherance of the gospel through what is happening? Do we analyze the falling of the Iron Curtain in terms of free elections or free distribution of the Scriptures and the proclamation of the gospel? What is the basis on which we evaluate the events in our lives? If the neighbors that we have witnessed to and have seen saved move away, do we grieve over loss of fellowship or thrill that God is sending someone else our way? We may be able to pray and witness to them for the furtherance of the gospel.

Paul had been busy starting churches, teaching the saints, training the leaders, ordaining elders in the churches and getting them established when, all of a sudden, he is arrested and thrown in jail. He says, "Hallelujah! It is for the furtherance of the gospel. I would rather rot in jail for the furtherance of the gospel than freely preach and see it hindered." He said, "Putting me in jail lets a lot of other people feel free to preach." How many of you would want to preach within ten miles of where Paul was preaching? Those who had been reluctant to preach before Paul was put in prison, were now preaching. And Paul was getting to preach to a whole new crowd in the prison! They couldn't walk out on him. In fact, he was getting the gospel into the palace and they wouldn't have heard him when he was out on the street.

Do we know how to recognize that when we get sick it might be for the furtherance of the gospel? I can remember my dad falling and breaking his leg while we were in upstate New York. They took him to the hospital. Fortunately, there were some believers that loaned my family their house because they were going on vacation. We couldn't have afforded a motel to be near him. He had a doctor in the hospital that he didn't know because we lived hundreds and hundreds of miles from there. He had to cancel preaching in a Bible conference because he was in the hospital. During that time, he saw a doctor saved, and two nurses who



became burdened to dedicate their lives to go to the mission field. He believed that it was for the furtherance of the gospel that he had broken his leg.

I wonder whether we can evaluate things from a proper perspective. Or is the gospel something that we just place back in the past and think about it when we come to church? Is it that it is just a nice thing our church will stand for the right gospel and sad that the others don't? Do we think we will just hold the fort, but not march forward with the gospel and challenge the gates of hell over it?

Jesus said, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." (Matt. 16:25) Are we ready to lose our lives for Jesus' sake and for the sake of the gospel? Drug addicts will risk their lives for drugs. Drunks risk it to get boozed up. Would we be willing to lay down our life if we knew that it would advance the gospel? You may have to give up father and mother, brother and sister, houses and lands for Christ's sake and the gospel's. What can we say that we have done for the gospel's sake - for its' progress and furtherance in this wicked world?

During World War I, Sargeant York was asked if he was afraid with so many Germans out there and hardly anybody with him. He said he wasn't afraid, but rather that it looked target rich to him. With others backing off on the gospel, it is getting target rich. The competition that didn't really stand right is identifying themselves by chasing something far less than the gospel and they are going to be out of the way. Then it will be opened up for those that have something supernatural that changes lives. We are going to have greater opportunities in the future if we will just seize them for the furtherance of the gospel. God is starting to sort things back out again and when it happens, those that are right will have opportunities laid before them because the confusion will begin to disappear. Are we ready for another leap forward in furtherance of the gospel or are we in a retreat mode? We need to face it. The gospel is to be furthered whatever it costs. We ought to have a constant burden for its' furtherance.

## SERVING IN THE GOSPEL

Philippians 2:19-22, "But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel." We need to learn how to SERVE and labor in the gospel. In I Thessalonians 3:2 Timothy is called a "fellowlabourer in the gospel" with Paul. Paul said that Timothy was one that would naturally care for their spiritual needs. He didn't do it as a job or a profession. Some think if they have a title then they will serve, otherwise they will sit. Not Timothy. He naturally cared for people's souls and was the kind of person to be put into that kind of opportunity. It was his nature to help others spiritually and assist them.

We need to realize that the gospel is a realm in which to serve. A lot of people serve in the military of their country. They serve in the peace-keeping or police forces. They may serve in the medical profession. When are we going to wake up and realize that the gospel is also an area in which to serve? It requires servants that are dedicated to the gospel and who will become such saints that they will naturally care for the spiritual needs of others. Philippians 4:3a says, "And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel,..." It is a matter of pouring yourself into it, laboring, being fellowlabourers, working together in the gospel. If there is going to be any furtherance of the gospel, we are going to have to put some sweat and toil, hard work and labor into it until it becomes our nature. We must serve and serve whether anybody notices or not. Let me carry it one step further.

Romans 1:9 says, "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;" We are a three part being - spirit, soul, and body according to I Thessalonians 5. We need to know how to have a body capable of serving

God. It is the temple of God. It should be kept holy and pure. We need to be able to present our bodies "holy, acceptable unto God". (Rom. 12:1) That is our reasonable service. Many people are ruining their bodies as far as certain areas of usefulness to God and will be limited as to how they can serve God because of what they have allowed to go on in the past in their body. What they have sowed they are going to have to reap.

I have a daughter that played ball in college, but decided not to play in her Senior year. It was at least insinuated that if she would at least play what she could that year, she would get in that college's sports hall of fame. The reason she didn't play was because she had a knee that was giving her trouble and she needed to preserve that knee for all the walking that would be needed on a mission field. She knew the need of having a body that would be able to serve God rather than jeopardizing it for a little temporary glory.

Then there is the soul part of us. Do we know how to get our souls fit? Do we know how to get our minds fit to glorify God for the furtherance of the gospel? Do we fill them with what is necessary or with trash and nothingness? Do we train them so that they can do the jobs that are necessary for the future?

Brethren, I believe we are facing a crisis in fundamentalism. We don't have the Bible translators we need. Most of the Bible translation work done in this world is done by people that aren't fit to teach in a Sunday School in our churches. One esteemed translator who had done a translation for an Indian group came in from where he had been giving devotions to the group in a South American country. He told us the sum and substance of his devotional. He said that when he did the translation, they only had one word for salt and it was the same word for sugar. So where the passage said, "Have salt in yourself..." he had used that word. For the devotional, since they didn't know whether that word meant salt or sugar, he had spoken on having sweetness in your soul. He knew that it said, "Have salt in yourself..." - but he gave his devotional as if it had been "Have sugar in yourself..." - because they wouldn't have

of God and he was the translator!

Most of the Bible translation being done today in other countries is to try to move towards the quality of Good News for Modern Man or maybe the Living Bible. Why? Because fundamentalists have not studied hard enough to be qualified for the translation work. We have nothing of which I am aware in America or Canada. There is a group in Britain with a limited operation due to finances. They are able to help missionaries do proper Bible translation IF the missionary has right convictions. We, as fundamentalists, don't have people to translate good literature into the languages. There aren't those that have disciplined and trained their minds in order to be prepared to take a position as a professor. I would hate to try to set up a liberal arts Bible college and find professors with proper training who would have right convictions. I don't know where you would go to find them.

We have failed to get people that would train their minds and have a right heart to do the job. For some reason, we are not ready to serve God in our bodies and we are not ready to further the gospel with our minds or personalities. Fifty good translators would not scratch the surface of what needs to be done. As far as I know there is no one in the world today with any ability at all that has analyzed what the best versions in given languages of the Bible are and which ones need to be revised in order to be accurate. As far as I am aware, we have no one capable of this job at this point, and no one willing to take it on as a task. There have been a few groups that said they have accomplished this, but when asked on what basis they made their choices, the response is enough to scare you to death. One of them claimed that they were strong King James people, but they were printing a Bible that called the Holy Spirit the holy spook! That wasn't necessary in Spanish. There were things even worse than that. They claimed it was right, because they didn't have anybody that knew any better. Fortunately, I was able to list 10 or 15 major problems with that translation and they said they'd never print it again. Do you begin to understand the problem?

There are those that will hold to the King James Version here and use Good News for Modern Man in Spanish in

Argentina, even when they have better Bibles - not perfect or totally accurate yet, but far better. They do this because it is easier for them to read. The same argument that they argue against here in the States, they accept in another language.

Pastors, what are you doing to raise young people and guide them to the point where they will want to serve God, and serve the gospel instead of serving their wallet? They say they want to get a job where they can make a lot of money and live comfortably. Are we laying that out for them? We ought to be far above those that have no convictions instead of running far behind.

Do you know how to serve in the spirit? Do you even know how to worship, pray, meditate or listen in the spirit? Or is the spiritual life just a nice term we tack on? In Romans 1:9 it says, "...whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son...". That is why Paul could do what we don't do. He served not just in body and soul, but also in his spirit, and he got a job done. His speech was not with enticing words of man's wisdom. His appearance was such that people were turned off by it. But because he operated in the spirit, he got great things done. I think it took him two and a half years one place to start a church, and that was the longest he stayed anywhere. He knew some things that we ought to learn.

## SEPARATED

Romans 1:1, "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,". Paul was SEPARATED unto the gospel of God or set aside for gospel proclamation. I Thessalonians 2:4 says that he was "put in trust with the gospel". God entrusted the gospel to believers. He didn't give it to angels, to the lost, or to schools. He gave it to individual believers that He separated for the gospel.

In Acts 16, Paul didn't know what he was to do next. Finally, in verse 10 they became assured that he had been called to preach the gospel to Macedonia - to a specific group. The Holy Ghost takes those that have been separated, and entrusted with the gospel, and tells them what group they are to minister to at any given point of time. I Corinthians 9:16b says, "...woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" Galatians

2:7 shows that the gospel message was sent to specific groups. The gospel was sent to the circumcision, the Jewish, as well as to the uncircumcision. When I am witness to a Jewish person I speak a little different than when I speak to a Gentile. With a Jewish person I use Old Testament scriptures, but when witnessing to a Gentile I use the New Testament. It is not a different gospel, but I wonder whether we know how to deal with different groups.

Do we know whether God is separating us to deal with a particular group? Do we know how to minister to them according to their needs? Do we know how to be separated so that we can minister specifically or do we just shotgun all over the place hoping to hit someone with a little birdshot? You don't get a deer with birdshot. You must hit it just right. We need to apply that in this matter of the gospel.

## STRIVING

Romans 15:15-20, "Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost. I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:"

Paul says when he preached that he didn't go easy, he poured himself out. He STRIVED to preach the gospel. He pushed himself and risked himself. It cost him. He was willing to be hurt in order to get the gospel out.

Brethren, we need to learn to strive together to get the gospel out instead of striving against one another all the time. We need to strive to preach the gospel and expand where

Jesus is known. We shouldn't be satisfied with what has been done. In fact, we ought to be embarrassed that no more has been accomplished. We need that old fire and zeal back in our bones, pressing on while we have the opportunity.

Not too long ago God allowed me to cross paths with an orthodox Jewish man. He assured me that if the word were given today to build the temple in Jerusalem, within one year the temple would be completed and the sacrifices started. He said everything is ready, they only wait for the word to start. Further, he said if the word is given to start the sacrifices before the temple is built, it could start today or tomorrow. Everything is ready to start up the old Levitical sacrificial system. Brethren, we don't need signs, we need to tune our ears for the sound. It may be closer than we realize. We don't have to wait for them to figure out who the priests are, or for them to find altars, put their robes together, find their incense and make their holy oil. They have it waiting, ready for the word to start. He said that they have already started sacrifices in some of the synagogues around the world on a limited basis. We ought to be striving in these last days and pushing ourselves for the furtherance of the gospel. God may give us another generation or two. He can hold off His return if He chooses. We might see more than we ever thought we would see before we go out of here.

I want to put a burden on you to evaluate everything in your life - what you own, your time, your health and physical strength, what mental abilities God has gifted you with or that can be developed, and the spiritual abilities that can be developed in you. Dedicate it all to the furtherance of the gospel. If we use whatever chances we have then we can go out saying that we have been successful. And then we can hear, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." (Matt. 25:21)

II Corinthians 10:15-16, "Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labours; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly, To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand." Paul says that he wanted to

strive to preach the gospel where Christ wasn't named. The burden of his heart was to reach the unreached.

Did you know that the Bible teaches that one time the world had all been reached? It is stated twice: in Romans 1 and Colossians 1. The gospel was preached to every creature, just like it said should be done in Mark 16. It was done before Paul's ministry was over. A lot of mission boards want to tell the story their way because they raise a lot of money that way. It has already been accomplished but needs to be re-done.

More and more of America is going to have to be reached again too. There are communities that knew revival workings in the mid-1800's that have not had the gospel for over a century in upstate New York. There are Baptist churches closed down all across upstate New York.

We must move forward to the regions beyond, going into all the world and not just financing those that are there. "Go ye into all the world" was the command of Jesus - not send your money into all the world.

Mark 13:10 says, "the gospel must first be published among all the nations." Mark 14:9 says, "...Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world..." We need to make sure that the gospel is so complete that we even tell about Mary anointing Jesus for His burial before He was ever crucified. Jesus said that wherever the gospel is preached this also would be told. We have the gospel so trimmed down that people wouldn't even think that they would need to mention Mary when telling about the gospel. Our modern concepts of efficiency in America have overtaken us to the point that we have cut the gospel down to where it is unrecognizable.

Each believer has been called and trusted with the gospel. Out of this group God separates some to bear those tidings. Everyone has the opportunity to reach some and to co-labor with others, so that together we can reach all. We must learn to strive to further the message and the cause. We need to produce some eligible ambassadors capable of going.

There is a phrase that I only understand a little - "Many



be called but few chosen." (Matt. 20:16b) I strongly suspect that there are a lot of people that have been called to minister but never qualified, never prepared themselves, never became useful enough that God could choose to put them in a place of need. They are called but not chosen. They think that call is all they need, but there is the matter of qualifying to be used.

Did God call Paul on the Damascus Road? Yes, but He didn't choose to put him anywhere to start serving right away, did He? He put Paul on the back side of the desert to train him up and put him under Barnabas down with the believers in Jerusalem. Then He let Paul start "getting his feet wet" in the church in Antioch of Assyria before He ever sent him out. You thought that he had been called to go to the Gentiles. He had - but he wasn't ready to go. It takes more than a call. One of our problems is we have many called, but they have not been chosen because they are just not able to do it. We need to do all we can to help those who will, to be capable of going.

We need to have a zeal in sending people out. It ought to hurt us when there is nobody to send. It ought to thrill us when the opportunity comes. I wonder if we know how to gather funds for the furtherance of the gospel. Do we have a zeal in that direction? Do we count it a privilege? Do we pray hard and give much? Do we supply all that we can so that they can get the message out and count it a privilege if we should be allowed to go? Or are we only concerned about having the right gospel and being glad that we are right and others are wrong? The burden of my heart is for the furtherance of the gospel.