**What is the Gospel?**

**1 Corinthians 15:3–4** - “I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures…”

**Isaiah 53:4–6** - “Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned — every one — to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

The gospel is that “Christ, the Son of God, died in our place—became our substitute—to pay the price for all our sins, and to accomplish perfect righteousness, and to endure and remove all of God’s wrath, and rise from the dead triumphant over death for our eternal life and joy in his presence—and all of this offered freely through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Romans 3:23–24** - “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus…”

“The gospel is the announcement that God has reconciled us to Himself by sending His Son Jesus to die as a substitute for our sins, and that all who repent and believe have eternal life in Him.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

**Romans 4:4–5** - “Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness…”

“God created humanity to worship and be in fellowship with Him. Yet humanity decided to worship self instead of God, which resulted in sin and idolatry. The fall undermined man’s fellowship with God, left all of creation broken, and resulted in both physical and spiritual death (Rom. 8:20-21; Rom. 5:12; Eph. 2:3; Ps. 51:5). The good news of the gospel is that in spite of all of creation being fallen, and man being dead in sin, God intervened based on His love and mercy. He did so by sending His son Jesus Christ to reconcile all things by taking on human flesh so that He could live for, die for, and be resurrected for those who are separated from God (Col. 1:20; Rom. 5:19; Rom. 6:1-10). Salvation is a free gift of God that is received through faith in Christ (Eph. 2:8).”[[3]](#footnote-3)

**Galatians 3:13–14** - “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us — for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree” — so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.”

“Religion says, I obey; therefore, I am accepted by God. The gospel says, I am accepted by God through Christ; therefore, I obey.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

**Philippians 2:6–8** - “Though he was in the form of God, [Jesus] did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

“First the bad news: God is your judge, and you have sinned against him. And then the gospel: but Jesus has died so that sinners may be forgiven of their sins if they will repent and believe in Him.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

“You see, King Jesus came…to bring sinners into (the kingdom) by dying in their place, and for their sin, taking their punishment on himself and securing forgiveness for them, making them righteous in God’s sight, and qualifying them to share in the inheritance of the kingdom (Col. 1:12).”[[6]](#footnote-6)

**Ephesians 2:4–5** - “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved…”

“God, through the perfect life, atoning death, and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, rescues all his people from the wrath of God into peace with God, with a promise of the full restoration of his created order forever – all to the praise of the glory of His grace.”[[7]](#footnote-7)

**Colossians 1:19–20** - “In [Jesus] all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.”

“In the gospel, Jesus takes our place, assumes our role, and carries it out. Thus, what God commanded, he also accomplished. This is grace. Trusting what God has done in Jesus makes the life God intended for his image bearers possible. God’s promises were that kingdom life would one day happen, but the gospel makes it happen right now. Therefore, the gospel is that Jesus is God with us, like us, and for us in order that we might live into the royal responsibility given to us in creation.”[[8]](#footnote-8)

**Colossians 2:13–14** - “You, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.”

“God created us for His glory (Isaiah 43:6-7). Every human should live for God’s glory (1 Corinthians 10:31). All of us have failed to glorify God as we should (Romans 3:23). All of us are subject to God’s just condemnation (Romans 6:23). God sent His only son Jesus to provide eternal life and eternal joy (1 Timothy 1:15). The benefits purchased by the death of Christ belong to those who repent and trust Him (Acts 3:19, 16:31; John 6:35).”[[9]](#footnote-9)

**Titus 3:4–7** - “When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

**The gospel is the greatest story ever told with four chapters.**

**Chapter 1 - Creation: The World We Were Made For**

The story begins, not with us, but with God. Deep down, we have a sense that this is true. We sense that we are important – that there is something dignified, majestic, and eternal about humanity. But we also know that we are not ultimate. Something (or Someone) greater than us exists.

The Bible tells us that this Someone is the one infinite, eternal, and unchanging God who created all things out of nothing (Genesis 1:1-31). This one God exists in three – persons Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). Because God is Triune in his being, he wasn’t motivated to create the world because he needed something – be it relationship, worship, or glory. Rather, he created out of the overflow of his perfection – love, goodness, and glory. God made human beings in his image (Genesis 1:27), which is what gives us our dignity and value. He also made us human, which means we are created beings, dependent on our Creator. We were made to worship, enjoy, love, and serve him, not ourselves.

In God’s original creation, everything was good. The world existed in perfect peace, stability, harmony, and wholeness.

**Chapter 2 - Fall: The Corruption of Everything**

God created us to worship, enjoy, love, and serve him. But rather than live under God’s authority, humanity turned away from God in sinful rebellion (Genesis 3:1-7; Isaiah 53:6). Our defection plunged the whole world into the darkness and chaos of sin. Though vestiges of good remain, the wholeness and harmony of God’s original creation is shattered.

As a result, all human beings are sinners by nature and by choice (Ephesians 2:1-3). We often excuse our sin by claiming that we’re “not that bad” – after all, we can always find someone worse than we are! But this evasion only reveals our shallow and superficial view of sin. Sin is not primarily an action; it’s a disposition. It’s our soul’s aversion to God. Sin I manifested in our pride, our selfishness, our independence, and our lack of love for God and others. Sometimes sin is very obvious and external; other times it’s hidden and internal. But “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

Sin brings two drastic consequences into our lives. First, sin enslaves us (Romans 6:17-18). When we turn from God, we turn to other things to find our life, our identity, our meaning, and our happiness. These things become substitute gods – what the Bible calls idols – and they soon enslave us, demanding our time, our energy, our loyalty, our money – everything we are and have. They begin to rule over our lives and hearts. This is why the Bible describes sin as something that “masters” us (Romans 6:14 NIV). Sin causes us to “serve created things rather than the Creator” (Romans 1:25 NIV).

Second, sin brings condemnation. We’re not just enslaved by our sin; we’re guilty because of it. We stand condemned before the Judge of heaven and earth. “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). We are under a death sentence for our cosmic treason against the holiness and justice of God. His righteous anger toward sin stands over us (Nahum 1:2; John 3:36).

**Chapter 3 - REDEMPTION: Jesus Comes to Saves Us**

Every good story has a hero. And the hero of the Gospel Story is Jesus. Humanity needs a Savior, a Redeemer, a Deliverer to free us from the bondage and condemnation of sin and to restore the world to its original good. This Rescuer must be truly human in order to pay the debt we owe to God. But he can’t be merely human because he must conquer sin. We need a Substitute – one who can live the life of obedience we’ve failed to live, and who can stand in our place to bear the punishment we deserve for our disobedience and sin.

This is why God sent Jesus into the world to be our substitute (1 John 4:14). The Bible teaches that Jesus was fully God – the second person of the Trinity – and also fully human. He was born to a human mother, lived a real flesh-and-blood existence, and died a brutal death on a Roman cross outside Jerusalem. Jesus lived a life of perfect obedience to God (Hebrews 4:15), making him the only person in history who did not deserve judgment. But on the cross, he took our place, dying for our sin. He received the condemnation and death we deserve so that, when we put our trust in him, we can receive the blessing and life he deserves (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Not only did Jesus die in our place, he rose from death, displaying his victory over sin, death, and Hell. His resurrection is a decisive event in history; the Bible calls it the “first fruits” – the initial evidence – of the cosmic renewal God is bringing (1 Corinthians 15:20-28). One of the greatest promises in the Bible is Revelation 21:5: “Behold, I am making all things new.” All that was lost, broken, and corrupted in the fall will ultimately be put right. Redemption doesn’t simply mean the salvation of individual souls; it means the restoring of the whole creation back to its original good.

**Chapter 4 - A NEW PEOPLE: The Story Continues**

So how do we become a part of the story? How do we experience God’s salvation personally and become agents of his redemption in the world? By faith or trust (Ephesians 2:8-9). What does that mean? We trust a taxi driver when we count on him to get us to our destination. We trust a doctor when we agree with her diagnosis and entrust ourselves to her care. And we trust in Jesus Christ when we admit our sin, receive his gracious forgiveness, and rest entirely in Jesus for our acceptance before God. Faith is like getting in the taxi. It’s like going under the surgeon’s knife. It’s a restful, whole-hearted commitment of the self to Jesus (Psalm 31:14-15). This is what it means to believe the gospel.

When we trust in Jesus, we are released from sin’s condemnation and from its bondage. We are free to say “no” to sin and “yes” to God. We are free to die to ourselves and live for Christ and his purposes. We are free to work for justice in the world. We are free to stop living for our own glory and start living for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). We are free to love God and others in the way we live…

God has promised that Jesus will return to finally judge sin and make all things new. Until then, he is gathering to himself a people “from every nation, tribe, people, and language” (Revelation 7:9 NIV). As part of that called-and-sent people, we have the privilege of joining him in his mission (Matthew 28:18-20) as individuals and as part of his spiritual family. By grace, we can enjoy God, live life for his glory, serve humanity, and make his gospel known to others through our words and actions.

This is the good news – the True Story – of the gospel.”[[10]](#footnote-10)

**Hebrews 2:14–17** - “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”

“Evangelion (what we call “the gospel”) is a Greek word, signifying good, merry, glad and joyful news, that makes a man’s heart glad and makes him sing, dance and leap for joy…The gospel is not law, demanding we pay our own way. The gospel is a welcome announcement, declaring that Jesus paid it all…The gospel is a message to be proclaimed and believed (Mark 1:14-15). It is the point of the whole Bible (Gal. 3:8). It comes from God above (Gal. 1:11-12). It is worthy of our utmost (Phil 1:27-30).”[[11]](#footnote-11)

**1 Peter 2:22–25** - “[Jesus] committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”

**Revelation 1:5-6** – “To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

1. John Piper. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. J.D. Greear. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Andrew Hopper. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Tim Keller. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Greg Gilbert. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Greg Gilbert. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Ray Ortlund. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Jim Thompson. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. John Piper. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Robert H. Thune and Will Walker. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ray Ortlund. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)