



Kingdom of Dreams

Dream a New Dream about the Gospel

Sinners Transformed for Joy by the Humble Crucified Christ

A man once recounted, *I realized that when I hit rock bottom that the bottom was solid.* This reveals wisdom and a great truth for us to consider. What is the rock bottom of our lives? Jesus taught his followers that if they were wise they would hear his words and do them—and thus build their lives on a rock (See Matthew 7:24-27). In considering “the gospel” our prayer is that our joy, our hopes, our lives are built on what is not flimsy and weak. But rather, our lives, in their many ups and downs would be lived from a “bottom“ that is solid, yes even built upon the rock. From here, we may find a foundation for our lives; from here one can hope and dream Kingdom Dreams. So we must begin with good news for it is of first importance. Gospel being more than a word—a new dream of our understanding of what God has done for us in Christ.

Of First Importance

Read together 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Paul told the Christians in an ancient town called Corinth that he was delivering to them as of first importance that which he received. He was passing to them the gospel. What does he tell us about the content of the gospel message?

- Christ died “for sins” according to the Scriptures - here it is very important that we convey the idea of substitutionary atonement.

Substitutionary Atonement—The view that speaks of sin as the breaking of God’s law, for which the penalty is death. Hence on the cross Christ suffered the death penalty in the sinner’s place and so appeased the wrath of God.

Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms, Page 90. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999

In the Old Testament—A great place to see the predication of Christ as the suffering servant for our sins is Isaiah 53 — Isaiah prophesied about 740–700 B.C.

- He was buried and raised from the dead according to the Scriptures

The gospel is the message of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, the Son of God. We want to continue to look at some of how we experience God and the good news of the gospel.



Face to Face with God

For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:6 (ESV)

Many of our forebears in the faith spoke of living life *Coram Deo*, before the face of God. The Scriptures teach us that the gospel is seen in a face. Yet what is it like to see God face to face? The nature of God is multifaceted and we want first to look at one aspect of his nature — that God is holy and just, highly intolerant towards sin. When people see God they know this, they sense it in their souls.

Seeing God Face to Face

Look together at how different people, in both the Old and New Testaments, reacted to seeing our God. What do you think these people experienced and why?

Isaiah 6:5—And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”

Habakkuk 3:2 — O Lord, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O Lord, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.

Peter, in Luke 5:8 – But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”

John, in Revelation 1:17, 18 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, “Fear not, I am the first and the last, 18 and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys.

The Scriptures teach us that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God... Romans 3:23 (ESV). When God first reveals himself to a person, a measure of our uncleanness, brokenness, unworthiness, yes sinfulness becomes known.

Why We Need to be Sinners

What are some results in the lives human beings who do not think they do anything wrong, that they are not sinners?

Pride, Arrogance, Self-Righteous Religion, People that boast about themselves, We can think we are the good guys and others are the bad guys.

Additionally, if we do not see our own sin, we cannot understand the good news of what God has done for people in Christ.

Every person, therefore, on coming to the knowledge of himself, is not only urged to seek God, but is also led as by the hand to find him.

John Calvin—*The Institutes of the Christian Religion*
Book I—Chapter 1—The Knowledge of God and our ourselves mutually connected.



Good News...Understanding the First Importance

The great Lion Aslan in CS Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia is crafted to reflect something of the character of God. Ferocious and fearful, **BUT** also good and kind.

But God — A friend once said "Thank God for **BUTS** in the Bible" And when we know our sin we must say "God is holy and just and will not tolerate sin, **BUT GOD** is also infinitely gracious and merciful towards us in Christ.

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

¹And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴**But God**, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, **made us alive together with Christ**—by grace you have been saved— ⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Look at **Ephesians 2:8,9** again, this time reading verse 10 as well. Which of the following is taught by the Scriptures?

Our good works or actions plus my faith will make me right with God

OR

Faith in Christ and nothing else makes me right with God which then leads to good works or actions

The good news of the gospel is that God himself, in the person of Jesus Christ, died a brutal death on a cross to take the punishment we deserved so that we might be forgiven and brought face to face with a holy and loving God.

Taste and See...



When someone hears the gospel and responds to God's call, a change takes place in the soul. Ephesians 2 above tells us that we are "made alive" with Christ. Jesus described this as the *new birth* or being *born again* (See John 3). This is the work of God to save his people. His wrath towards sin is satisfied by Jesus' death on the cross and all who believe receive full pardon from God. This good news is therefore the **sweetest** news ever heard, and the God who once may have seemed fearful, is now the Christians dearest friend and Father of the believer.

"Taste and see that the Lord is good!" (Psalm 34:8). There is a knowledge that only comes through tasting. Five seconds of honey on the tongue will show you more sweetness than ten hours of lectures about the sweetness of honey. "Taste and see that the Lord is good." Until God gives you a taste of his goodness all the theology in the world will not give you a knowledge of his goodness that changes your heart and saves your soul.

John Piper, *Job: Reversal in Suffering*, Available at www.desiringgod.org



Avoiding Two Extremes

There are two extremes I am praying we will avoid as we walk together.

The extreme of self-righteous legalism

What are the results of legalism on people? What are the results of trying to *make people good*, including your self, without the work of Christ?

By legalism we mean seeing our faith as rules we must do in order for God to accept us. If we just focus on our morality, or the morality of others, we will be broken, tired and sick of trying to please God in the flesh. **God's grace:** Stress God's unconditional mercy and grace to offer and give pardon to his sheep. Live in grace, our lives are made holy by grace, we don't condemn ourselves in light of his grace. Stress this as much as you need for the group to get it.

Remember Romans 3:20 *For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.* A good quote by John Owen the 17th century English Theologian — Unless a man be a true believer, and grafted into Christ, he can never mortify (put to death) a single sin.

The extreme of aimless, blasé religion with no passion, no love for Jesus and the gospel

This extreme will lead somewhat into our *Dream of the Death of Dead Religion*. But we will just say that many have no taste for the gospel yet stay in habitual religious activities. The gospel not only calls us to Christ so that we are saved and reconciled to God, it also require for us to be on mission with God in the world to share this great news with others. So that others might taste and see that the Lord is good and receive full and joyful pardon from God. This extreme can also lead some to think that people do not *need* Jesus and do not *need* forgiveness from a holy God. This is a terrible error.

Parting Shots

Suggested Reading

God is the Gospel by John Piper

How Can I be Sure I am Christian by Donald Whitney

Article, *The Gospel*—Mars Hill Church Web Site

[http://lite.marshillchurch.org/site/who we are/what we believe/the gospel/](http://lite.marshillchurch.org/site/who_we_are/what_we_believe/the_gospel/)

Scripture Memory

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 2:8-10 (ESV)

The Intersection of Truth and Life

Each week we will wrestle with the intersection of God's truth with our lives and how we might respond? Here are a few questions for this week:

- Does the gospel seem like good news *to you*?
- Is your faith in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins?
- Which of the two extremes have you wrestled with? Have you fallen into legalism or a dead response to the good news?
- Are you harder on yourself than God is? Receive his grace and do not put a burden back on yourself that he no longer holds against you. Live free! There is no condemnation for those in Christ (Romans 8:1).

