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♥ *The Biblical Gospel Defined* ♥

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The preaching of the Gospel is the proclamation of Christ and His redeeming work to save sinners. The Gospel has been diluted by some evangelical churches and shamefully left undefined by others. We offer this brief pamphlet in earnest prayer to clearly define the Biblical Gospel, to identify the “heart aspects” or central truths of the Gospel, to clarify for whom Christ died, to show forth that sinners are solely reconciled to God by the death of Christ, and to urge all men to heartily embrace by faith what Christ has done to save sinners.

The Gospel Defined

The word “*Gospel*” signifies “*good news.*” The Gospel encompasses all that is related to the person, life, and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Gospel is truly good news to sinners who are spiritually awakened and understand their condition of being dead in trespasses and sins and justly condemned under the holy wrath of their Creator (Ephesians 2:1; John 3:36).

The Central “Heart” Truths Of The Gospel

The central, primary truths of the Gospel are the death and resurrection of Christ. Although the Gospel embraces all that is related to Jesus Christ, its primary focus is the death and resurrection of Christ. These two aspects of Christ’s life and work comprise **THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL.**

*“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** and that He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once”* (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). The indisputable proof of the death of Christ was His burial (Matthew 12:39-40). The indisputable proof of His resurrection was His bodily appearance to well over 500 witnesses (Acts 1:3). The Apostle Paul in Romans 4:25 manifests the two principle aspects of the Gospel: **“...Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”**

For Whom Did Christ Die?

Jesus Christ had to die both for His Father's sake, as well as for the sake of sinners. By His death, Christ had to appease the wrath of the eternally holy God and perfectly satisfy His righteousness. For God to remain just in the redemption of unjust men, it was absolutely necessary that Christ die (Acts 17:3). By Christ's death, God was enabled to legitimately forgive the repentant and believing sinner of all his offenses without becoming unrighteous Himself. In this sense, Christ died for God the Father.

Also, Christ died to redeem sinners from their iniquities and transgressions. Sin alienates man from God. As the prophet Isaiah proclaimed: "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you" (Isaiah 59:2). For this reason, sinners are estranged from God and need to be reconciled unto Him. As they are unable to reconcile themselves unto God, Jesus Christ in His mercy and grace came to pay sin's wages by His death and remove sin once for all. By His death, Christ reconciled all believers unto their Creator. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many... hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Hebrews 9:26,28).

It is of utmost importance that you embrace the redemptive work of Christ as your only hope of eternal life. You must believe and receive the true, saving Gospel of Christ with your whole heart. It is urgent that you study these principle truths of the Gospel until they are written on your heart by the Holy Spirit of God, and they have become the conviction, delight, and confidence of your soul.

Sinners Reconciled To God By The Death Of Jesus Christ



AT THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL, WE FIND THAT JESUS CHRIST PROVIDED THE ONLY ACCEPTABLE SACRIFICE.

The Lord Jesus Christ was the only acceptable sacrifice, for He alone was without sin and blemish. God required a perfect sacrifice; therefore, He Himself would have to be made a sacrifice to redeem sinners. For this reason, God became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ and was made in our likeness.

The prophet Isaiah declared that Christ did ***“no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth”*** (Isaiah 53:9). The book of Hebrews states that Christ was ***“in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin”*** (Hebrews 4:15). Later, the same writer penned: ***“For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens”*** (Hebrews 7:26). Peter the apostle proclaimed: ***“Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth”*** (1 Peter 2:22). And the Apostle John added: ***“And ye know that He was manifest to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin”*** (1 John 3:5). Christ alone was perfect and uniquely qualified to be a sacrifice in the sinner’s place.



AT THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL, WE FIND THAT JESUS CHRIST WAS A VOLUNTARY SACRIFICE.

Without being obligated to do so, God gave His Son voluntarily. Likewise, Christ offered Himself freely on the cross of Calvary.

These voluntary sacrifices highlight two very important things: ***the free grace of God and His love***. God’s free grace is His giving willingly and unconditionally that which the recipient is unworthy to receive. God would have been completely just to have retained His lovingkindness and mercy and given sinners the just recompense of their evil and rebellion against Him. As God told Moses: ***“I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy”*** (Exodus 33:19). The fact that God voluntarily gave His only begotten Son as a sacrifice exemplifies that He is a God of free grace (1 John 4:10). The willingness of Christ to offer His body in utter humiliation on the cruel cross to redeem vile men who are worthy of eternal punishment is also a convincing testimony that salvation is entirely of divine grace and not according to human merit (John 1:13; 2 Timothy 1:9).

The voluntary sacrifice of the Father and Son also emphasizes the love of God. Of His own free will, Christ offered Himself as a bloody sacrifice. Of His own volition, Christ subjected Himself to all of the vilest acts of wicked men and, at the same time, to the holy and fierce wrath of God on the cross. Jesus said, ***“I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep”*** (John 10:11). ***“Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again”*** (John 10:17). ***“No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again”*** (John 10:18).

As the most indisputable proof of true love, Christ voluntarily laid down His life for His sheep on the cross of Calvary (John 15:13; 1 John 3:16).



AT THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL, WE FIND THAT JESUS CHRIST WAS A SUBSTITUTIONARY SACRIFICE.

Christ's sacrificial death was made in the place of a particular people. He was the substitute for a definite people. Jesus Christ did not die generally for an undetermined people, but rather He died particularly for a people chosen by God. The particular and substitutionary sacrifice of Christ is prophetically revealed in the ministry of the Old Testament high priest. Every year on the Day of Atonement, the high priest shed the blood of the animal sacrifice and entered into the Holy of Holies to apply the blood in representation of the people of Israel to symbolically atone for their sins.

The substitutionary nature of the intercessory ministry of Christ is clearly seen when we understand for whom the high priest was fulfilling his priestly duties (the high priest symbolized the Lord Jesus Christ who would be our eternal Great High Priest and who would make one, permanent sacrifice by sacrificing Himself according to Hebrews 9:24-28).

The high priest was commanded by God to wear an ephod. The ephod was a holy garment used exclusively by the high priest in the performing of his tabernacle service. On the shoulders of the ephod were two epaulets that contained an onyx stone engraved with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel--six names on one epaulet, and six names on the other (Exodus 28:6-12). Furthermore, the ephod had a breastplate which was made of twelve precious stones. Each individual stone bore the engraving of one of the names of the twelve tribes of Israel (Exodus 28:15-21).

These specific names testified that the high priest was fulfilling his priestly duties substitutionally on behalf of those whose names were engraved in the onyx stones on his shoulders and on the breastplate close to his heart. The mediatory work of the high priest was not general in nature, but rather particular, namely on behalf of the people of Israel. The high priest performed his labors, not for whomever he desired, but only for those whom God determined. The all-wise God not only chose the high priest, but also chose for whom the expiatory* sacrifice would be offered every year on the Day of Atonement. The beneficiaries of the bloody sacrifice were determined by God.

**Expiation is atonement for a crime; the act of making satisfaction for an offense by which the guilt is done away, and the obligation of the offended person to punish the crime is cancelled.*

Likewise, the Lord Jesus Christ performed His intercessory and redemptive work on the cross of Calvary. His substitutionary work was for a particular people determined beforehand by God the Father. We must remember that Jesus Christ did not come to do His own will, but the will of His Father. Jesus Christ did not die capriciously for those of His own choosing, but rather He died for the ones whom the Father had chosen to be the beneficiaries of His redemptive work.

Moreover, the substitutionary nature of the sacrifice offered by the high priest on the Day of Atonement displayed clearly its particular nature. The Israelites presented two rams on the Day of Atonement. One ram would die substitutionally to prophetically declare the expiatory aspect of the future death of Christ. The other ram, also called the scapegoat, represented the second aspect of the future redemptive work of Christ, which would be the removal of sin forever from the presence of God. According to Leviticus 16:16-34, both the expiatory sacrifice of the first ram and the liberation of the second one in the desert were substitutionary. They were offered for *“the uncleanness of the children of Israel”* (16:16,19), for *“all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins”* (16:21), *“for the people”* (16:24), *“for you....and all your sins before the Lord”* (16:30), *“for all the people of the congregation”* (16:33), and *“for the children of Israel”* (16:34).

The sacrificed ram and the liberated scapegoat on the Day of Atonement were not offered for the world of the Gentiles; rather, they were offered particularly for the people of Israel--for particular sins, for particular transgressions, for particular iniquities, and for particular uncleanness.

In the same fashion, the death of Christ and His redemptive sacrifice on the cross were not made for everyone, but rather for a particular and definite people. Christ died substitutionally for all who would truly believe in Him (John 3:16). Christ died substitutionally for all who would come to Him (John 6:37-39). Christ died substitutionally for all of His sheep (John 10:11,14-15). Christ died substitutionally for His people (Matthew 1:21; Isaiah 53:6,8,11-12). Christ died substitutionally for His brethren (Hebrews 2:9-12,17). Christ died substitutionally for all those that the Father gave to Him in the covenant of grace from eternity past (Hebrews 2:13-17; John 10:27-29, 17:2). Once for all by the sacrifice of Himself, Christ paid for and put away all the sins of all His people in all the world throughout all time (Hebrews 10:10-14, 9:11-12,28, 7:23-28).



AT THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL, WE FIND THAT JESUS CHRIST WAS A SIN-BEARING SACRIFICE.

The satisfaction of the infinite holiness and righteousness of God required that all the sins of God's chosen people be atoned for and punished. Therefore, it was necessary that Christ take their sins in His body on the cross (1 Peter 2:24). On the cross, God the Father laid upon Christ all the sins of all the people for whom He died (Isaiah 53:6,8). Every sin had to be addressed. Every sin had to be atoned for. Every sin had to be punished. Every sin had to be judged. God could not overlook even one sin of the people whom He would save.

Consequently, on that old rugged cross, God imputed to His Son all the sins of His people. Every wicked thought, all idolatrous and false worship of God, every heinous and blasphemous word, all self-glorifying and diabolical motives, every sinister plan, and all their rebellious and depraved acts were laid on Christ. The Bible declares that Christ was made sin for His people (2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 8:3). Without any sin or guilt, Christ took upon Himself our griefs. He bore our sins and sorrows. He was wounded and bruised; yea, He was chastised for our transgressions (Isaiah 53:4-5). Christ was the sin-bearer for His people on the cross of Calvary.



AT THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL, WE FIND THAT JESUS CHRIST WAS A PENAL SACRIFICE.

Having borne the sin of His people, it was absolutely necessary that divine judgment be poured out, fall upon, and crush Christ on the cross. The salvation of sinners demanded that the wages of sin be fully paid.

What are the wages of sin? The only Biblical answer is death (Galatians 3:10; Romans 6:23; Ezekiel 18:4,20; Deuteronomy 27:26). Every sin, whether it be flagrant or insignificant in the eyes of man, must be paid for and punished by death. ***“The wages of sin is death”*** (Romans 6:23). ***“The soul that sinneth, it shall die”*** (Ezekiel 18:4). For this reason, Christ had to suffer and die (Luke 24:46). The redemption of sinners required that Christ die in their place. Christ had to make a payment to ransom His people. Christ had to satisfy the required penal punishment that was demanded by the law of God (Galatians 4:4-5).

God made Jesus Christ a propitiation* for our sins (Romans 3:25; 1 John 4:10). As a propitiation, Christ was a sacrifice provided and punished by

**Propitiation is the act of appeasing wrath and conciliating the favor of an offended person. By His death on the cross, Jesus Christ was the sacrifice which appeased the wrath of God directed against our sin and reconciled true believers to His heavenly Father.*

God. Christ's death placated divine justice against sinners. The Father poured out upon His Son His anger, fury, judgment, and holy wrath. Christ suffered what we justly deserved to suffer.

Christ was made a curse for His people on the cross (Galatians 3:13). After the incredible weight of sin was placed upon Him, God the Father judged His Son for their heinous and abominable sins. His anguish and distress was so great that He verbally cried out from the cross, "***My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?***" (Mark 15:34). Christ was made a penal sacrifice to satisfy the perfect righteousness of God and, at the same time, to atone for the sins of His people.



AT THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL, WE FIND THAT JESUS CHRIST WAS AN EFFECTUAL SACRIFICE. The

sacrifice of Christ was effectual. By this we mean that Christ accomplished definitively and without fail all that His Father desired. Christ successfully finished the work that the Father gave Him to do (John 17:4). Jesus declared from the cross: "***It is finished***" (John 19:30)! He single-handedly obtained salvation once for all for those who trust in Him (Hebrews 1:3, 9:12).

It is through Christ's finished work that men are saved. The inspired expressions of the New Testament declare that salvation is a finished work accomplished on the cross of Calvary. The believer is reconciled to God by the death of His Son (Romans 5:10; Ephesians 2:14-16). Christ made peace through His shed blood on the cross for those that trust in Him (Colossians 1:20). Christ delivered the believer from the fear and bondage of death by His death on the cross (Hebrews 2:14-15). Christ delivered all those who confide wholly in Him from this present evil world by giving Himself for their sins (Galatians 1:4). The believer's sins were put away once for all by His sacrifice (Hebrews 9:26,28). True believers were bought with the price of His shed blood on Calvary's cross (1 Corinthians 6:20).

The efficacy of the death of Christ is seen in the very words of the Redeemer: "**All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day**" (John 6:37-39). "***And***

*I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand” (John 10:28-29). *“While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name: those that Thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost”* (John 17:12).*

The efficacy of Christ's death is His perfect fulfillment of His Father's will on the cross. Having redeemed by His sufferings all those that the Father gave Him, Christ will enjoy the full reward of His agonizing death (Isaiah 53:11-12). Every one for whom Christ died and whose sins were atoned for on the cross will ultimately be quickened by the Holy Spirit and converted through repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21).



AT THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL, WE FIND THAT JESUS CHRIST WAS AN APPROVED SACRIFICE. Was

Christ's sacrifice accepted by God the Father? Was God satisfied with the bloody and seemingly impotent death of His Son at the hands of cruel and wicked men? Were all the conditions and demands of God's righteousness fully met by His death on the cross? The unequivocal and emphatic answer is an affirmative **“YES!”**

How can we be so completely sure and confident that God was wholly satisfied with Christ's sacrifice? Is it not true that many people doubted regarding the person of Christ, His mission, and His plan of redemption? However, on the third day after His death (being the first day of the week), God the Father gave a clear, plain, and public approbation of His total acceptance of what Christ did on the cross. God approved Christ's sacrifice by resurrecting Him from among the dead so that He would never be subject to death anymore. The empty tomb was proof sufficient that His sacrifice was approved!

The New Testament saints clearly understood the glorious reality of God's approbation of the death of His Son. The apostles and first century churches taught that those who are in the resurrected Christ by faith are equally accepted before God and granted full, eternal privileges in His presence (Acts 2:22-36, 3:13-15; 1 Peter 2:21; Romans 6:4,9).

Christ was declared to be the approved sacrifice, not only by His resurrection from the dead, but also by His ascension to heaven to sit down at the right hand of God the Father (Isaiah 52:13). His work was complete, successful, and finished!

Christ and His Gospel Must Be Embraced By Faith Alone

Jesus Christ is the only pleasing and divinely-provided sacrifice for the salvation of sinners. If you do not come to God by way of Christ and His Gospel, you will never enter into heaven. God is completely pleased with Christ's work. Our works are totally worthless before Him (Isaiah 64:6). If you place your confidence in anything other than Christ's finished, redemptive work, you will be lost and condemned forever.

My friend, God will accept you only in Jesus Christ. You must come to Him with a Holy Spirit-wrought conviction of your own sinfulness and unworthiness before God. You must recognize that you are worthy of eternal punishment. You must be convinced of your utter inability to remedy your condition before God. God, through His Word, must reveal these things to you and work in you, or you will be lost. You must look to Christ. By faith in His Word, you must cast yourself upon Christ. You must depend upon His mercy and grace. You must turn from your sins in your heart and all of your vain confidences. You must embrace Christ as your sin-bearer and your substitute on Calvary's cross. You must believe on the crucified and resurrected Lord Jesus Christ as your sole hope, your sole confidence, your sole righteousness, and your only acceptance with God. The sure promise of God is that he who comes to Christ by faith alone shall "in no wise be cast out" (John 6:37).

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The Gospel is NOT:

- Inviting Christ into your heart.
- God helping them that help themselves.
- Asking Christ to be your personal Saviour.
- Giving your heart to Christ.
- Making a personal decision for Christ.
- Repeating the sinner's prayer.
- Beseeching God to forgive your sins.
- Offering to God your life or anything else.
- Walking a church aisle after an evangelistic message.
- Raising your hand in response to a preacher's invitation.
- Submitting to water baptism to wash away your sins.
- Speaking in tongues as proof of being filled with the Spirit.
- Receiving the healing of the physical body.
- Calling upon the name of the Lord.
- Being baptized in the Holy Spirit.
- Keeping the ten commandments.
- Sanctifying the Sabbath day.
- Uniting with an evangelical church or organization.
- Reading and studying the Word of God.

If you are trusting in any one of these things to be right with God or to go to heaven, your confidence is misdirected. Do not be deceived! You need to be saved, believing the true Gospel of God.