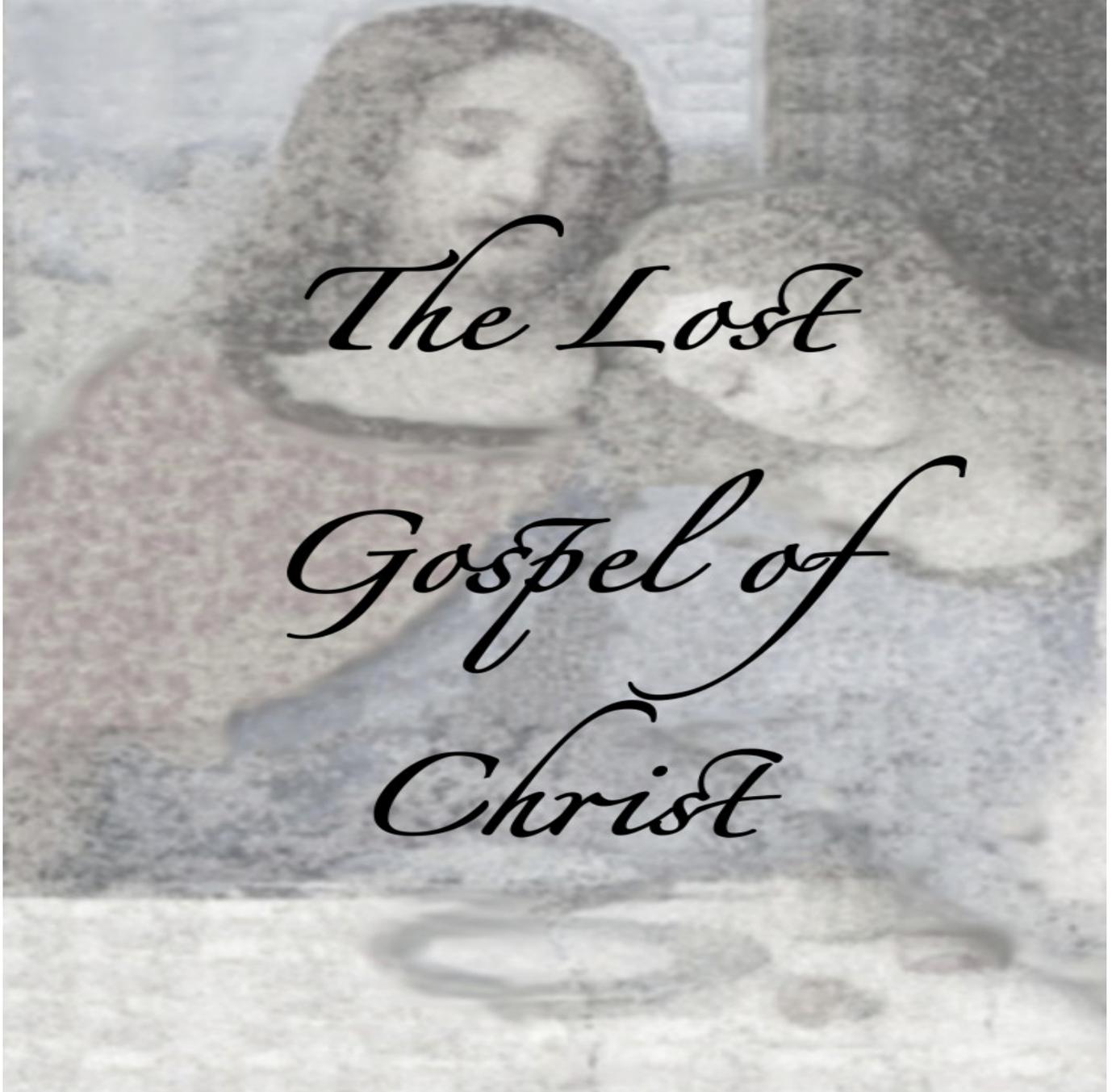


The Lost Gospel of Christ

Description



Whoever you are, you have most likely heard people talk about "the gospel," and perhaps, you talk about it yourself from time to time, or even very often. You probably have some sort of idea in your mind as to what it is. But then, you also realize that most who claim to believe in "the gospel" disagree with each other, and even fight amongst themselves, as to what it is; and at that, they all claim their beliefs are founded on the Bible. They all say they are followers of this person called "Jesus" but then they act nothing like

him.

So, if all these people know what they are talking about, their "gospel" seems pretty useless at best; or at worst, total wickedness and confusion.

Some know that the word "gospel" means "good news," but upon learning this, we are still left with the question, "What good news?" The various theologies of the world will tell you it is this or that, and give an explanation of how "Jesus died for your sins so that we don't have to keep Jewish laws anymore" or that "We all deserve to die (or receive everlasting punishment) because of Adam's sin, but Jesus died to take the punishment in our place. So, when you accept Jesus, God doesn't hold you accountable for your sins anymore; you are forgiven."

Is that really what it is all about? Does any of that make any sense? Does the Bible really say any of these things? Well, let's see what the Bible says:

"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation"
Romans 1:16

Here, Paul (the person who wrote most of the New Testament) actually tells us what the gospel is. He says, "it is the power of God unto salvation." Salvation is just another word for deliverance. So, to have salvation is to be delivered, liberated, rescued, emancipated, freed. But if you are freed, you are freed *from* something; if you are delivered, you are delivered *from something*.

When Christ was about to be born, his parents were told,

"call his name Jesus (meaning; salvation), for he will save his people *from their sins*."
Matthew 1:21

This was his whole purpose. That is what he came to do. In order to find out what the gospel is then, we really need to find out what it means for people to be saved *from their sins*. So, let's ask a couple of questions; first, what is sin?

"sin is the transgression of the law."
1 John 3:4

To "transgress" is to "violate a rule" or to "break a boundary." So, to transgress the law is to break the law. Now, what is the law? Since we are talking about the gospel *of Christ*, we should see what he had to say about it:

One time, Christ was asked which is the greatest commandment in the law. He said,

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."
This is the first and greatest commandment. The second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself." All the law and the prophets depend on these two commandments."
Matthew 22:36-40

All the laws, statutes, and judgments in the Old Testament can be summed up in this statement by Christ. This only makes sense too, because if you love someone you won't lie to them, steal from them, kill them, sleep with their spouse, or cheat on your spouse if you love him/her, and the list goes on.

Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law. • *Romans 13:10*

So, to be saved from sin means to be saved from breaking the law, and since the breaking of the law is only a lack of love, then that is what we are really saved from. And when we're saved from a lack of love, we are also saved from everything we might do which results from that lack of love.

The gospel isn't about God changing how he looks at you, it's about God changing YOU. This change is very real and very radical. It is not a half-way change to simply make you a "nicer person;" to be loving part of the time while still living selfishly part of the time. The way it is described in the Bible is as a death to who you currently are and taking on a new life as a new person. The new life we are supposed to take on is the life of Christ. Here is how Paul describes it:

I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me. So 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. • *Galatians 2:20*

Paul took Christ's words for him to "take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24) to heart. He gave up his whole life, all of "self," in order to live the life which Christ lived. He made Christ's death his own in order to make his life his own.

For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we will without a doubt be also united in the likeness of his resurrection. We know that our old self was crucified with him *to put an end to sin* in our bodies so that *from now on, we will no longer serve sin*. For one who has died is *freed from sin*. Now, if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death has no power over him. For when he died, he died once to sin, but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, consider yourselves to be *dead indeed to sin*, but alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore, *never* let sin rule your mortal body so that you obey its desires. *Never* offer any part of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness. Instead, offer yourselves to God as people who have been brought from death to life, and the parts of your body as instruments of righteousness to God. • *Romans 6:5-13*

Not just the way we think, but even all the parts of our bodies are to be instruments of righteousness; but what is righteousness? We are told:

All unrighteousness is sin. • *1 John 5:17*

If that is the case, then righteousness is "not sinning." David said,

"all your commandments are righteousness." • *Psalms 119:172*

So, sin is breaking the law, unrighteousness is sin, and righteousness is obeying the law. This all makes it very plain that the gospel is about being saved from sin; being changed so that we don't sin any more at all. Christ himself taught the same thing. He said,

Whoever commits sin is the servant of sin. • John 8:34

But he didn't leave it at that. He went on to talk about freedom from sin, and he made it clear that this is not some imaginary or fictitious freedom. He said,

If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. • John 8:36

So, this is the gospel; we can indeed be free from sin. We don't have to ever, even for a second, give into temptation or be unloving to anyone. We never have to lie again, or be angry with someone, or unkind in any way, even to our enemies.

Yes, I know, it sounds impossible, or at least if it is possible, it sounds like it would take a lot of work.

For you are saved by grace and through faith, and not of your own doing; it is a gift from God, and not the result of your own works. So, no one can boast. • Ephesians 2:8-9

Some might say, Could we really be saved in that way, as a free gift, without doing anything to earn it? The real question is, Could we be saved in any other way? The gospel assures us that we can't be freed from sin by any other means than a gift by saying,

For when you were the servants of sin, you were free from righteousness. • Romans 6:20

For all who rely on doing works of law are under a curse because it is written, Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all things that are written in the book of the law. • Galatians 3:10

Whoever keeps the whole law but offends in one point, he is guilty of breaking all of it. • James 2:10

In other words, if you haven't died to self and received the new sinless life of Christ, you do not have any righteous works to do, only unrighteousness. And how can you become righteous by doing unrighteousness? It doesn't make any sense, does it? This is only to say what Christ himself said:

! every good tree produces good fruit, but the bad tree produces bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot produce good fruit. • Matthew 7:17-18

So, if we have sinned (and all have sinned • Romans 3:23), we cannot, of ourselves, produce righteousness. All our so-called good works are tainted with selfishness and a lack of love. This is why Isaiah said,

â??We are all like one who is unclean, all our righteous deeds are like a menstrual cloth.â?• â??
Isaiah 64:6

Even Paul, the one who wrote some of these books weâ??ve been quoting, said that the entirety of his life before he died to self and became free from sin was worthless, even though he was very religious and even did the outward deeds of Godâ??s law. In describing how worthless and revolting his former life was, in light of the glory of the new life he had received, he even goes as far as to use a word which, in his day, was considered a profanity. He says,

â??Indeed, I consider all these things [the things of his old life] as loss in view of the far greater value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I experienced the loss of all things. Indeed, I consider them to be nothing but shit! That I might gain Christ.â?• â?? *Phillip-pians 3:8*

Yes, I know, it is shocking to see that sort of language in the Bible, but it lets you know how strongly Paul was trying to emphasize how worthless his life was before being saved from sin. So, whether you are a drunk, lying, back-stabbing, hypocrite, or a prim and proper, highly religious, Bible-studying, church-going devotee, or even a religious leader; if you havenâ??t died to self and received the sinless life of Christ as your own life, you are just as asleep, and just as â??dead in trespasses and sinsâ?• (Ephesians 2:1), and just as in need of deliverance from sin.

Do not be discouraged though! This is really the beauty of it. Why? Because Christ himself said,

â??Healthy people donâ??t need a doctor; those who are sick do. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.â?• â?? *Mark 2:17*

As long as you donâ??t convince yourself that youâ??re not sick, and thereby avoid going to the doctor, you can certainly be healed.

â??So,â?• you might say, â??if itâ??s that easy, and if itâ??s right there in the Bible, why are all these â??Christiansâ?? so confused and why are they so unloving and sinful?â?• Well, sadly, it is because the gospel has been lost. Most today, even among Bible students, simply donâ??t realize that the Bible teaches that we can be saved from sinning. â??Then,â?• you may say, â??how did that happen? Christ himself promised that his followers would be led into all truth. How did they get so far off track?â?•

It is true that Christ promised this. He said,

â??When the Spirit of Truth comes, She will guide you into all truth. She will not speak on Her own account. She will speak what She hears and will tell you about things to come.â?• â?? *John 16:13*

But, unfortunately, people have refused to listen to and follow her. Perhaps the three greatest evidences for this fact are (1) they donâ??t know the truth, (2) they donâ??t live righteous lives, and (3) they donâ??t know who the Spirit of Truth is.

One way of knowing that the last point is true is by observing the fact that nearly the whole world has forgotten that she is, in fact, a â??she.â?• To be clear, Christ spoke Aramaic, and in Aramaic, there is only

one way he could have said it, and that is, *“She will guide you into all truth.”*

You see, she is the one who is supposed to guide us, and she is the one who is supposed to give us that new sinless life of Christ. So, if we refuse her, we refuse the truth, and we refuse life itself (See *Matthew 12:31-32*). When Christ was talking about sending her to us, he said,

“I will not leave you to be orphans.” *John 14:18*

In order to not be orphans, we have to have a parent. How is the Holy Spirit supposed to be our parent? Christ, speaking to one of the rulers of the Jews in his day (a man named Nicodemus) said,

“Truly, truly, I tell you, unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus asked him, ‘How can a person be born when he has grown old? Can he go back into his mother’s womb a second time and be born?’ Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I tell you, unless someone is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Don’t be surprised when I tell you, ‘All of you must be born from above.’” *John 3:3-7*

Christ taught that the Spirit is to be as a mother to us, and that we are to become her children by being born again; by giving up our current life and accepting that new life; giving up our unrighteousness (sinfulness) and accepting righteousness (sinlessness); giving up a lack of love and accepting a life of love. The Spirit, *She* is the life-giver (*John 7:37-39*).

We are told that *“She is a tree of life”* (*Proverbs 3:18*) and she herself says, *“Whoever finds me finds life”* [and] *all who hate me love death”* (*Proverbs 8:35-36*).

If we only accept her, we will be made new and obtain freedom from all our sins. Indeed, we will become adopted into the Family of God. This is the Gospel.

Trent R. Wilde



The Branch

Copyright, April 3, 2014

Bridal Stride

Why don't you leave your band if you refuse to understand?

Don't you hear the voice calling?

Why stop there if you care for yourself or your children?

Listen now, Wisdom is not stalling!

And She cries, "Love! You are mine!"

and She's not alone, as She makes

Her Bridal Stride

You know that it's not done, it's just begun; restoration.

And They said that They will keep on speaking

Don't let sin have the win;

the reign of your heart. Give up and restart.

All that you must do is to ask Him

And She cries, "Love! You are mine!"

and She's not alone, as She makes

Her Bridal Stride

Don't let time fade away

with decisions unmade; don't let fear be un-frayed.

Please don't let those hollow chains bind you

Love's eye drops at your thoughts

of indifference, your stoney-heart fence

Let the Gods of creation transform you

And She cries, "Come! to the Supper!"

and She's not alone, She has with her

Her Mother

When will you hear Her?

When will you revere Her?

When will you draw near Her?

When will you hear Her?

When will you revere Her?

When will you draw near Her?