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[“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ – it is the power of God to the salvation of all who believe”](#)

We are embarking on a major new series this morning that will take us through the summer months, and because it is quite a journey we will be taking together I thought it would be a good idea to start with the end in mind, and take time to introduce the subject properly.

We are going to spend the next few months answering the question ‘what is the gospel?’ Now, you may think that this is a bit strange, as it is likely that most people in this Baptist church have heard the gospel and responded to it, so are we preaching to the converted? Why is it important to spend so much time going over something basic?

Well, to answer that I would start by making the distinction between what is basic, and what is fundamental – often when we think of a thing being basic, we think of it as something we will leave behind as we grow older and more sophisticated; but there are some things in life, which we never grow out of, and they are fundamental, or foundational to our well being and existence: little things like nutrition, cleanliness, breathing – just because they were important to you as a child, doesn’t mean you out grow them!

Furthermore, we live in a society which has an abundance of books, tapes and videos, supplemented by conferences, TV and radio, where we are bombarded by opinions, philosophies, and beliefs which flash past us so fast, that if we are not careful we are influenced by without discernment.

It is important to know the gospel in depth because there are false doctrines, religions and even people who will sound plausible and yet be mistaken, and if we do not know the truth, we can be taken in and led up the garden path. In Ephesians 4.14 Paul tells us that we should not be infants, tossed to and fro by the waves of our culture of blown here and there by every wind of doctrine and by the cunning and craftiness of men.

Paul also talks about 2 Cor 11.4 a 'different gospel' / Gal 1 'another gospel' / which is no good news at all: we need to be able to recognise truth and error.

To build our lives on false beliefs is like building our house on the sand, post-modern philosophies question whether it is even worth building a house, but we know that when the storms of life come, it is best to have a house built on rock – there we can find security, and if possible offer our friends and neighbours shelter too.

Jesus said 'you will know the truth and the truth will set you free' this series is intended to give us time to explore the truth of what God has done for us, and we will grow in understanding, confidence and gratitude, and find that we are living a broader and deeper life as a result.

So, a few introductory thoughts:

Gospel = good news; euangellion, a good message.

Just a few minutes with a concordance give us a clue what the **good news** is about:

Matt 24 the gospel of the **kingdom**

Mark 1.1 the good news about **Jesus**

Acts 20.24 gospel of the **grace of God**

Rom 1.1 Gospel of God

Rom 1.17 gospel of **righteousness by faith**

Rom 1.9 gospel of **God's Son**

1 Cor 9.13 gospel of Christ

2 Cor 4.4 gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God

Eph 1.13 gospel of **your salvation**

Eph 6.15 gospel of **peace**

Rev 14.6 **everlasting gospel**

The gospel is God's initiative and idea; **God always makes the first move**, even in Genesis the first words are 'in the beginning God' – before man even existed, God acted.

The good news is that the Bible does not show us mankind groping after an aloof and disinterested God, on the contrary, we see a God who reaches out to man;

- Romans 5 while we were dead in sin, powerless to save ourselves, living as enemies of God and lost in our rebellion, Christ died for us

The good news is that God has spoken and God has acted: He has spoken; his last and greatest word is Jesus, our call to worship was Heb 1.1-3 which says exactly that. God has acted; his noblest and greatest act was the redemption of the world through Jesus Christ.

God has spoken: he is a God who reveals himself, he wants to be known by his creation:

He has revealed himself

- generally in creation Psalm 19.1
- generally in human morality Rom 2
- specifically in the incarnation of Jesus 1 John 1.1-3
- specifically in his Word, the Bible John 20.31

God has acted:

- Jesus came into the world to save sinners 1 Timothy 1.15
- He came to seek and save the lost Luke 19.10

So, God has spoken: we must listen

God has acted: we must respond

What God has done for us is the basis for our response of faith – he always has the initiative.

What is in this series?

We will begin with a thorough examination of Jesus; his character, his claims, his death, resurrection and ascension. To understand the reason that Jesus needed to come and the implications of the gospel we will have to look at what the Bible says about sin, humanity, and what the consequences of sin are, before we can go on and see how Jesus' sacrifice has dealt with all the problems caused by sin. We will then spend time looking at the gospel promises of forgiveness, eternal life and the benefits of the gospel, and we will end with seeing how all

people are invited to respond to Christ personally in repentance and faith.

I know this is going to be a stimulating and enjoyable series for us, and know that doubts and misunderstandings will wither away as we discover the truth together.

But I must emphasise that this is not an academic exercise, Jesus in John 7.17 “If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God” makes it clear that our motives and willingness to apply the truth to our lives, is what allows the Holy Spirit to illuminate the truth to us.

Could I encourage you also to read Johns gospel over the next few weeks? If you could read two chapters a week, you would be finished before this series; ask God to speak to you and show you the truth about Jesus that will set you free.

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