

## What is a Gospel?

Don't get confused by my title question. I'm not asking what is "the" gospel. That is, I'm not asking us to define the nature of the saving message of Jesus Christ. I'm actually asking us to back up and ask why "gospel" is the word that was used to describe this saving message of Jesus. Like most "religious" words (consider baptism, church, preacher, redemption, and salvation), "gospel" didn't start as a religious word. It was co-opted by Biblical writers. Then, because of Christianity's dominance in the west, the religious use became the dominant one.

The word translated "gospel" literally means "good news." However, this term wasn't simply any old good news. The ancients wouldn't have necessarily used this term to describe getting a job or an inheritance or married. This term, during the time of the New Testament, was used mainly to describe the good news of victory. Put yourself in the shoes of these ancients, and imagine you heard of marauding armies heading to your city. Your king gathers his army and marches out to stop the enemy. Whether you are part of the army or sitting at home waiting to hear the news, you long for victory. Then one day a herald is sent from the king and he declares: "VICTORY!!!! We've won. There is peace. We've nothing to fear. The advancing enemy has been stopped, decimated, and sent running back to its homeland." That is a gospel. Those newspaper announcements on May 8, 1945 (VE Day) and September 2, 1945 (VJ Day) were gospels. Think of the joy and rejoicing from military and civilian alike. VICTORY!!!! What greater message.

That is what A gospel is. And that is what THE gospel is. Our King came forth as an Army of One and took our advancing enemy head on. By His death on the cross, He secured the victory. And that message is proclaimed to any and all. We no longer have to linger in our concentration camps of sin. We can walk as free men and women. That is our gospel. And the fact is, we must constantly be reminded of it or Satan will lure us back into the bondage of sin.

Consider Paul's explanation of the gospel in Romans 5:6-10: "For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life" (ESV).

And then again in Romans 8:31-39: "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn?...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Let us rejoice and praise the Lord for this great gospel of victory!