

The Gospel in Life

David Flatt

As Christians, our lives are to be oriented according to the Gospel. For example, Paul to the church at Philippi, “Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel” (Phil. 1:27).

Our very existence is to be reshaped by the Gospel. The Gospel is to be the lens through which we see the world. It is to be fully integrated into everything about us. However, this is not typically the case. As Christians, we struggle to bring our lives into harmony with the Gospel.

Western culture has separated daily life from the Gospel. This has not happened all at once, but incrementally over time. The more Western culture has developed educationally, technologically, and scientifically, the more distance has been put between the Gospel and daily life. For example, farmers once relied on God to provide a good harvest. Now, they can predict weather patterns, genetically modify crops, and use GPS to plant their fields. Also, new Artificial Intelligence technology can read scans to detect cancer in patients better than doctors.

As we progress, we rely more and more on our progress. But, if you want God, you can go to church on Sunday. As one theologian described it, God has become like grandpa who lives upstairs in our house. We can go visit him when we want to talk, but real life is going on downstairs. Grandpa is part of the family, but not part of day to day life.

Earlier in his letter to the Philippians, Paul wrote, “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:27). For Paul, there was no distance between the Gospel and his daily existence. He had fully incorporated the Gospel into his worldview. The Gospel deeply impacted him personally. The Gospel affected how he viewed people, institutions, and problems.

For some Christians, the Gospel is something they obeyed in the past. They look at the Gospel as something that happened to them in the past but has little present effect on them. Others have separated the Gospel from their daily life. They do the Gospel on Sunday. They do not live the Gospel. Let’s see how the Gospel can more fully and deeply change our lives.

How the Gospel Changes Everything

1. The Gospel relieves burdens. The Gospel relieves burdens due to what the Gospel actually is. Unfortunately, the Gospel is often viewed as good advice or a wise set of rules to govern life. While this may not be the intention, this mistaken understanding of the Gospel vainly attempts to change our lives through our works.

The Gospel is good news. The Gospel is about what God has done to rescue us from the eternal consequences of our sins. We are sinners. We have distorted minds and warped hearts. We cannot even live up to our own standards. We need God to come to our rescue.

In an absolutely hopeless condition, God sent Jesus to save the human family. By the cross of the Messiah, He absorbed the wrath of God and offered mercy to us. God destroyed sin and death. These are the reasons why the Gospel is good news. By the cross of Jesus, God lifted the life-crushing burden of sin from us.

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins (Rom. 3:21-25).

2. The Gospel is God's grace to be received by faith. The good news of the Gospel is grace. God rescuing us from the oppression of sin through Jesus is His gift to us. This must overwhelm us. This must bring us to our knees in humility, while simultaneously lifting us to a new way of living.

Another reason why some Christians do not fully incorporate the Gospel into their lives is because of a misperception of the cross. Yes, God has done the work of saving us from eternal death. He has lifted the burden. But, this does not mean we can continue to live in sin. After Paul describes the good news of the Gospel in Romans chapter three, he then writes, "It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26).

When God's grace is received through faith, we will begin to make changes in our lives. When God's grace overwhelms us, we will realize that we cannot return to a life of sin. God gave too much for us to ungratefully return to sin. When Paul writes about being raised from the waters of baptism, he describes how we are to use our very being as instruments of God's righteousness in the world (Rom. 6). This is the full consequence of integrating the Gospel into life.

3. Integrating the Gospel into life. New life is just that: new. Each day we are to be learning how to more fully live the Gospel. This process requires thought, time, and change. Notice the following ways the Gospel can be integrated more fully into our lives.

First, the Gospel helps us cope with temptation. If we look at sin the way the Gospel looks at sin, we will grow in our hatred of sin. We will recognize what our sin cost our Savior. Second, consider marriage. The Gospel is to change the way husbands treat their wives. The Gospel is about self-giving love. Yes, husbands are to be faithful to their wives, but love in marriage must go deeper than just restricting us from adultery. Husbands are to cherish their wives in the same self-giving way as Christ died for the Church. In other words, husbands are to love their wives according to the Gospel.

Third, the Gospel is to affect how parents interact with their children. Sometimes as fathers, we are not as attentive to our children as the Gospel would teach. A preacher once said, instead of focusing on climbing the corporate ladder at work, maybe we need to crawl around on the floor with our children. After all, the Gospel is about the Son of God lowering Himself to our level (Phil. 2:5-11). Can you think of other ways the Gospel could be integrated into your life?

Conclusion

The Gospel is not just something to do on Sundays. The Gospel is not just something to use when we are in trouble. The Gospel is to be lived every day. This is how God's image is restored in us and we become the light of the world. The Gospel is to be lived in the hopes of God finishing its work in us to His eternal glory.

"I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."

Philippians 1:6