

The Good News Has Some “Bad” Parts

The word gospel means “good news,” and truly, it is the greatest news ever proclaimed to mankind! It tells us that God loves us, that Christ died for our sins, and that eternal life is available through Him (John 3:16; Romans 6:23). However, if we are honest, the good news also contains some things people don’t always want to hear.

The good news of the gospel begins with some hard truth as it tells us that our lives have been marred by sin. Before we can appreciate salvation, we must first understand our condition. The Scriptures teach us, “*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23). That’s not flattering. This “bad” detail removes any illusion that we are good enough on our own. The gospel forces us to face the reality that we are lost without Christ.

The gospel further declares the consequences of sin. The gospel doesn’t ignore judgement, it includes it. “*The wages of sin is death*” (Romans 6:23). That’s a sobering thought. Sin is not harmless. It separates us from God and carries eternal consequences. The good news only shines brightly when we understand just how serious the bad news really is.

The gospel also demands change. Many want salvation, but without any change in life. Jesus said, “*...but unless you repent you will all likewise perish*” (Luke 13:3). Repentance means change. It means turning away from sin and submitting to God’s will. That’s not always easy, and it’s often a part of the gospel that people resist.

Furthermore, the gospel requires obedience. The gospel is not just something to believe in, but it is something to obey. Paul spoke of those “*who do not obey the gospel*” facing judgment (2 Thessalonians 1:8). Obedience includes faith, repentance, confession, and baptism (Acts 2:38). This means surrendering our will to God’s authority.

Finally, the gospel calls for commitment. Jesus never promised that following Him would be easy. In fact, He taught that discipleship requires self-denial and sacrifice (Luke 9:23). The gospel is free, but it will cost you. Especially in the sense that your life is no longer your own.

The gospel is good news, not because it avoids the truth, but because it tells it. Yes, the gospel includes difficult truths. It humbles us, corrects us, and calls us to follow a perfect standard. None of those things are bad when we understand their purpose. What may seem like “bad” parts are the very things that make the good news so powerful. Without the diagnosis, we would never seek the cure. Without the warning, we would never appreciate the rescue.

- by Josh McCord

God and Man

Remember that God sees the whole picture. He sees all the past; He sees all the present; and He has the power to see all the future. He can see the end from the beginning, and He knows the destiny of every person and the solution to every problem. He loves us and is always available to us, but He will force neither Himself nor His will upon us. As long as we live, we are allowed to choose. He is concerned about our true welfare and happiness - here and hereafter. With Him on our side every thing will turn out well (Romans 8:28,31); but if He must be against us, nothing will turn out right.

- by Bill Crews

“In a Green Tree”

On the way to His crucifixion, Jesus asked a powerful question that actually delivered a striking warning: “*For if they do these things in a green tree, what will be done in the dry?*” (Luke 23:31). Consider the sobering context: Jesus was being led to the cross - an innocent man, the Son of God - while the people of His day (especially their religious leaders) largely ignored, rejected, or openly opposed Him. For the Jews, these were not the worst of times. The nation was not in utter ruin. Life was relatively stable. The temple still stood. Religious activity continued.

Yet, in these “green tree” conditions - times that should have been spiritually fruitful - the people failed to honor God.

Jesus’ point was clear: If such neglect and hardness of heart existed when conditions were favorable, what would happen when things became difficult? If they rejected righteousness in times of blessing, how would they respond in times of suffering, persecution, and judgment? History answered that question. Within a generation, Jerusalem fell (Luke 19:41-44). The “dry tree” days came, and the consequences were devastating.

There is certainly an application for us. In many ways we are living in “green tree” times. We have unprecedented access to God’s word (2 Timothy 3:16-17). We enjoy freedoms that allow us to worship without fear. Material blessings abound (James 1:17). Opportunities to serve are plentiful. And yet, how often do people neglect spiritual things? Attendance is viewed as optional. Prayer is sporadic. Bible study is minimal. Commitment is shallow.

If we struggle to be faithful now - when things are relatively easy - what will happen if persecution increases? What if hardship strikes? What if standing for truth brings harsh consequences? Will we suddenly become strong in the “dry tree” when we have been weak in the “green”? The Scriptures repeatedly warn us about this very danger. *“If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses?”* (Jeremiah 12:5).

What kind of faith are we building in these “green tree” days? Are we growing, deepening, and strengthening our commitment to God? Or are we coasting, assuming we’ll do better when it really matters?

Now is the time to be serious. Now is the time to be devoted. Now is the time to draw near to God (James 4:8). Because if we will not serve Him in the green tree... what will we do in the dry?

- by Greg Gwin