



"Man is very much like a barrel of apples. The apples that are seen on top are his reputation, but the apples that are down below represent his character."

—Fulton Sheen

17-Aug-01

The True Gospel (Part 3)

New Testament writers use the word "gospel" a hundred times altogether, mostly generically ("[the gospel](#)" or "this gospel," etc.). Thirty-six times they describe it with various modifiers, such as "of Christ" or its equivalent (14x), "of [God](#)" (9x), "of the Kingdom" (4x), "my [Paul's]" (3x), "of [peace](#)" (2x), "of the [grace](#) of God" (1x), "of the glory of Christ" (1x), "of your [salvation](#)" (1x), and "everlasting" (1x). It appears 15 times in the Gospels, six times in Acts, 74 times in Paul's epistles, four times in I Peter, and once in Revelation.

This range of usage indicates what it is but only partially. Further, no single verse in the Bible spells it out exactly. The closest God's Word comes to a "definition verse" is [Romans 1:16](#): "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes. . . ." This means that the gospel is the means or the vehicle that God uses to save us as long as we live by faith.

We cannot let the idea of "power" slide by without comment. From this Greek word, *dunamis*, English derives the words "dynamite," "dynamo," and "dynamic"—allof which convey an idea of stored energy that is waiting for the cue to burst into action, sometimes explosively! The gospel [Jesus Christ](#) preached contains a dynamic message that is primed to propel a believer to eternal life!

Notice, however, that the gospel is not universal in its application. [John 6:44](#) says that the Father calls specific people to the choice of accepting Christ's gospel. In [Romans](#)

[1:16](#), Paul makes this same distinction in the phrase "everyone who believes." The gospel will not save even those who profess Christ if they do not believe. As Christ's disciples, we must believe what He teaches us (compare [John 6:28-29](#), 63).

What is belief? Jesus answers in [Matthew 7:21](#): "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the [kingdom of heaven](#), but he who does the will of My Father in heaven." Paul says in [Romans 16:25-26](#): "Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since [the world](#) began but now has been made manifest . . . for obedience to the [faith](#). . . ." He also writes in [Hebrews 5:9](#): "And having been perfected, [Christ] became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." Simply put, belief is not just agreement with Christ, but also doing what He says. If a person truly believes Christ, he will live like Him. (Faith, belief, obedience and doing God's will are all intricately related concepts.)

This is why Paul continues as he does in [Romans 1:17](#): "For in it [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'" The gospel teaches us what righteousness—rightdoing—is. God reveals it to us by faith so that we can be faithful ourselves. Succinctly, the gospel instructs us in doing or living what is right, godly and faithful. As he puts it in [II Corinthians 5:7](#), "We walk by faith, not by sight."

From this, we can see that the gospel is far more than "believe in name of Jesus, and you shall be saved" (an oversimplification of [Acts 4:12](#)). Next time, we will consider how Jesus Christ Himself described His message.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Faith \(Part 3\)](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

John Ritenbaugh, using examples of Abraham and Moses, indicates that faith, far from being blind, is based on analyzing, calculating, and comparing, adding up from evidence in God's Word, our own experience, and our calling by God's Holy Spirit. When our minds are opened by God, we become instantaneously double-minded, able to see both spiritually through faith and carnally through our senses. Like Abraham and Moses, we must make a choice to turn our back on carnal pleasures and embrace the yet unseen

CGG Weekly: The True Gospel (Part 3) (17-Aug-01)

spiritual alternative, overcoming our doubts and fears, rather than emulate Lot, who having a knowledge of the truth, nevertheless, carnally speaking wanted to have his cake and eat it too. One of the reasons God may have decided to work His purpose by faith was that it seems the best way of discovering a person's character.

From the Archives: Featured Article

Power

by David C. Grabbe

The concept of *power* brings many different ideas to mind, any and all of which may certainly be valid. David Grabbe, however, concentrates on the 'little strength' of the church of the Philadelphians, suggesting that Christ commends them for being 'faithful in little' and will reward them with much.

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