

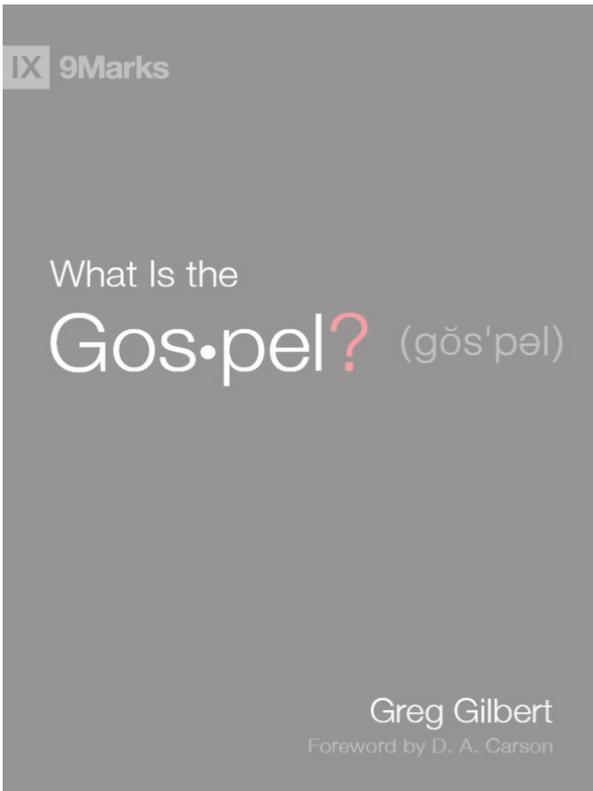


CHRISTIAN BOOK REVIEW 1

GBC EQUIPPING HOUR | SEPTEMBER 29, 2019

***What is the Gospel?* by Greg Gilbert**

PURPOSE: The purpose of a Christian book review is not to distract our attention from the Scriptures but rather it is to gain discernment and (hopefully) edification in seeing how a given author draws right conclusions about how God's Word speaks.



I. **About the Author, Greg Gilbert**

- A. **Background:** Graduated Master of Divinity, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (undergraduate in Yale); has been senior pastor at Third Avenue Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky since 2010 -the same year his work *What Is the Gospel?* was published; other works: *James: A 12-Week Study*, *Who Is Jesus?*, and co-author (with Kevin DeYoung) of *What Is the Mission of the Church?*
- B. **Interesting Tidbits:** Raised by Christian parents; professed faith at age 9. Served on staff with 9-marks ministries. *What is the Gospel?* has reportedly sold 300,000 copies.

II. **Why Write on Such a Basic Question (What is the Gospel)?**

- A. **Too Many Wrong Answers from “Reliable” Sources:** When this question was posed online by 9marks.org many learned teachers came back with wrong answers along the lines of “the Gospel is (simply).. The Kingdom is coming!, environmental renewal, healing from victimhood, social justice, or finally, a narrative/prophesy to be awed at by the world but not really one requiring a personal individual response by you per se.”
- B. **Too Wide vs. Too Narrow of Biblical Lens Used:** On the wide side it has been said that everything is the Gospel from Genesis to Revelation. But left alone that does not say enough. On the narrow side, some will say that it is “Jesus is Lord;” but if the other part about the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 10:9) is left out it leaves people still in their unsaved state.
- C. **Maintaining That Gospel Edginess:** Two main words that Greg Gilbert highlights, “rebels” and “reliance,” are the very words our unbelieving world would most like to avoid. It’s not enough to say we have some sin issues; nor is it enough to say we need to respect God’s Word. In our sin the Bible calls us “children of wrath” (Eph. 2:3). In our conversion we must place all of our dependence on Jesus’ awful execution paying for our awful sins (Lk. 23:42). This is the gospel.

III. **The Gospel in Four Parts**

(excerpts from <https://www.crossway.org/tracts/what-is-the-gospel-3599/>)

- A. **God the Righteous Creator:** The first thing to know about the good news of Jesus is that “in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). Everything starts from that point,

so if you get that point wrong then everything else that follows will be wrong. Because God created everything—including us—he has the right to tell us how to live. You have to understand that in order to understand the good news about Jesus.

How would you describe God's character? Loving and good? Compassionate and forgiving? All true. God describes himself as "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in love and faithfulness...forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." Then God adds, "but who will by no means clear the guilty" (Exodus 34:6-7). That explodes about 90 percent of what people today think they know about God. This loving God does not leave the guilty unpunished. To understand just how glorious and life-giving the gospel of Jesus Christ is, we have to understand that God is also holy and righteous. He is determined never to ignore or tolerate sin. Including ours!

- B. Man the Sinner: When God created the first human beings—Adam and Eve, he intended for them to live under his righteous rule in perfect joy—obeying him and living in fellowship with him. When Adam disobeyed God, though, and ate the one fruit that God had told him not to eat, that fellowship with God was broken. Moreover, Adam and Eve had declared rebellion against God. They were denying his authority over their lives.

It's not just Adam and Eve who are guilty of sin. The Bible says "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...none is righteous, no, not one" (Romans. 3:23,10). Yet, we often think of our sins as not much more than violations of some heavenly traffic law. So we wonder why God gets so upset about them. But sin is much more than that. It's the rejection of God himself and his right to exercise authority over those to whom he gives life.

Once you understand sin in that light, you begin to understand why "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). That's not just physical death, but spiritual death, a forceful separating of our sinful, rebellious selves from the presence of God forever. The Bible teaches that the final destiny for unbelieving sinners is eternal, active judgment in a place called "hell."

This is the Bible's sobering verdict: "It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). Every one of us will be held accountable to God. The Bible warns that "whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God" (John 3:18).

But...

- C. Jesus Christ the Savior: The word “Christ” means “anointed one,” referring to anointing a king with oil when he is crowned. So, when we say “Jesus Christ,” we’re saying that Jesus is a King!

When Jesus began his public ministry, he told the people, “The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the good news!” Centuries before God had promised that he would come as a great King to rescue his people from their sins. And here was Jesus saying, “The kingdom of God is here...now! I am that great King!”

Eventually Jesus’ followers realized that his mission was to bring sinful people into that kingdom. Jesus came to die in their place, to take the punishment they deserved for their rebellion against God. As Jesus died on a cross, the awful weight of all our sins fell on his shoulders. The sentence of death God had pronounced against rebellious sinners struck. And Jesus died. For you and me!

But the story doesn’t end there. Jesus the Crucified is no longer dead. The Bible tells us that he rose from the grave. He is not just King Jesus the Crucified, but King Jesus the Crucified and Resurrected! Jesus’ rising from the grave was God’s way of saying, “What Jesus claimed about who he is and what he came to do is true!”

- D. Response-Faith and Repentance: What does God expect us to do with the information that Jesus died in our place so we can be saved from God’s righteous wrath against our sins? He expects us to respond with repentance and faith.

To repent of our sins means to turn away from our rebellion against God. Repentance doesn’t mean we’ll bring an immediate end to our sinning. It does mean, though, that we’ll never again live at peace with our sins. Not only that, but we also turn to God in faith. Faith is reliance. It’s a promise-founded trust in the risen Jesus to save you from your sins. “God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned...he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree...the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God” (John 3:17, 18; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18).

If God is ever to count us righteous, he’ll have to do it on the basis of someone else’s record, someone who’s qualified to stand in as our substitute. And that’s what happens when a person is saved by Jesus: All our sins are credited to Jesus who took the punishment for them, and the perfect righteousness of Jesus is then credited to us when we place our trust in what he has done for us! That’s what faith means—to rely on Jesus, to trust in him alone to stand in our place and win a righteous verdict from God! [appeal to believe closes this section].