

Wednesday, 31st March 2021



THE CANDLESTICK

I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth (Rom. 1:16)

The most important message we possess is the Gospel. If we exchange it, or if we neglect it, we do so at our peril. While it is not fashionable for a great majority, nevertheless, as Peter told the people in Jerusalem, Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

By this definition, the Gospel begins and ends with God. It is not a man-made construction which elevates human beings and dethrones God, for that is no Gospel at all. Augustine wrote, “If you believe what you like in the gospel, and reject what you don’t like, it is not the Gospel you believe, but yourself”.

It is not an ‘out-of-place’ question to consider, therefore, so let’s ask it, “What is the Gospel?” Does it need to be updated for the 21st century? Are we holding on to an old-fashioned belief which has no place in the modern world?

The world has many religions, but it has only one Gospel which is the glorious declaration God loved this fallen world so much, He went to the extreme lengths to provide salvation through His eternal Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Consequently, the Gospel is not a plan by which *we* reach up to God, but it is *God’s* plan whereby He reached down to us. Derek Thomas explains, “The Gospel is not ‘God loves us’, but ‘God loves us at the cost of His Son’”.

The Gospel is the good news Christ died for us. Rom. 3:23 reminds us we have all sinned for we have all fallen short of God’s standards of holiness. Sin is a condition we are born with (Ps. 51:5), - we do not develop into sinners, but we are created in sin. It is such a pitiful and hopeless condition because there is none righteous (Rom. 3:10), there is none capable of understanding how far

sin has removed us from God, and consequently, there is nothing in and of ourselves which would even remotely consider seeking after God (Rom. 3:11). Such a condition is tantamount to being ‘dead’! ... Our senses, therefore, would not naturally respond to the Gospel because anything which is dead does not respond to anything! J.C. Ryle explains, “The man who does not glory in the Gospel can surely know little of the plague of sin that is within him”.

Outside of Christ, there is no Gospel, no good news ... but for a sinner to be saved the reality of their sin and its eternal punishment must sincerely be acknowledged, and then they must turn in repentance to God, pleading for His forgiveness. Without this foundational transformation, no Gospel is legitimate.

The person and work of the Lord Jesus are indispensable elements of the Gospel, as He declared, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me (Jn. 14:6). ... “Only by grace can we enter, only by grace can we stand, not by our human endeavours, but by the blood of the Lamb”. ... “One way God says to get to Heaven, *Jesus* is the only way!”

Jesus lived the sinless life we could never live (I Peter 2:22), and He is the only one who could die a ‘substitutionary’ death, - dying in my place, - to save me. Death is the penalty God demands for sin, but Jesus never sinned ... And yet, He took upon Himself all my sins and all your sins, and He paid the infinite and full punishment which would have been ours to have suffered in the eternal punishment of Hell. Our Saviour went to the cross and died there to pay the debt we owe to God for our transgressions ... and we are covered by what He did for us at Calvary for we are now the children of God, - His purchased and prized possession. ... “O ’twas love, ’twas wondrous love, the love of God to me; it brought my Saviour from above, to die on Calvary”.

And the proof Jesus saves is He rose from the dead for “death could not keep its prey!” He defeated sin, death, Hell, and the devil for only He Who created life can raise the dead. He alone can remove the sting which is death, and the victory which belonged to the grave (Rom. 7:24,25) ... “He only could unlock

the gate of Heaven and let us in” ... thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (I Cor. 15:57).

Salvation is all of God for it is by His free and sovereign grace, through faith, we are saved. It is not of works for it is nothing of anything we can initiate. It is solely God’s gift to those who will receive it (Eph. 2:8,9), by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved (Acts 16:31).

To those who say we must update and modify and modernise the Gospel ... we answer, *No*, for the God Who designed the Gospel never changes, and His requirement for entrance into Heaven remains the same, God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us ... by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:8,17).

Such is the Gospel we confidently proclaim, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth (Rom. 1:16).

“We have an unchanging gospel, which is not today green grass and tomorrow dry hay; but always the abiding truth of the immutable Jehovah.”
(C.H. Spurgeon)

On Sunday morning we plan to meet in the church ‘sanctuary’ at 11 am, and we shall observe the necessary precautions. Since this will be the first meeting coming out of the ‘lockdown’, please make every effort to be with us.

This will be the final edition of *The Candlestick*. I hope you have found it helpful. Altogether there have been twenty-eight editions ... and it has been read and shared by believers and fellowships in various parts of the world.

Continue to pray for our meagre efforts, trusting “Little is much when God is in it”.

’Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus,
And to take Him at His word;
Just to rest upon His promise,
And to know, Thus says the Lord!

O how sweet to trust in Jesus,
Just to trust His cleansing blood;
And in simple faith to plunge me
’Neath the healing, cleansing flood!

Yes, ’tis sweet to trust in Jesus,
Just from sin and self to cease;
Just from Jesus simply taking
Life and rest, and joy and peace.

I’m so glad I learned to trust Thee,
Precious Jesus, Saviour, friend;
And I know that Thou art with me,
Wilt be with me to the end.

*Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him!
How I’ve proved Him o’er and o’er;
Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus!
O for grace to trust Him more!*