

THE GOSPEL EVERYDAY

By Tullian Tchividjian

I once assumed the gospel was simply what non-Christians must believe in order to be saved, while afterward we advance to deeper theological waters. But I've come to realize that "the gospel isn't the first step in a stairway of truths, but more like the hub in a wheel of truth." In other words, once God rescues sinners, his plan isn't to steer them beyond the gospel, but to move them more deeply into it. All good theology, in fact, is an exposition of the gospel.

In his letter to the Christians of Colossae, the apostle Paul portrays the gospel as the instrument of all continued growth and spiritual progress, even after a believer's conversion.

"All over the world," he writes, "this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth" ([Col. 1:6](#)). He means that the gospel is not only growing wider in the world but it's also growing deeper in Christians.

After meditating on Paul's words, a friend told me that all our problems in life stem from our failure to apply the gospel. This means I can't really move forward unless I learn more thoroughly the gospel's content and how to apply it to all of life. Real change does not and cannot come independently of the gospel. God intends his Good News in Christ to mold and shape us at every point and in every way. It increasingly defines the way we think, feel, and live.

Martin Luther often employed the phrase *simul justus et peccator*—"simultaneously justified and sinful." He understood that while he'd already been saved from sin's penalty, he was in daily need of salvation from sin's power. And since the gospel is the "power of God for salvation," he knew that even for the most saintly of saints, the gospel is wholly relevant and vitally necessary. This means heralded preachers need the gospel just as much as hardened pagans.

In his book *The Gospel for Real Life*, Jerry Bridges picks up on this theme—that Christians need the gospel just as much as non-Christians—by explaining how the spiritual poverty in so much of our Christian experience is the result of an inadequate understanding of the gospel's depths. The answer isn't to try harder in the Christian life but to comprehend more fully and clearly Christ's finished work for sinners and then to live in more vital awareness of that grace day by day. The main problem in the Christian life, in other words, is not that we don't try hard enough to be good. It's that we haven't accepted the deep implications of the gospel and applied its powerful reality to all parts of our life.

As I see it, there are two challenges for preachers, those of us called to announce this good news. First is to help people understand theologically that the gospel doesn't just ignite the Christian life but it's also the fuel that keeps Christians going and growing every day. The second challenge, which is much harder for me than the first, is to help people understand how this works functionally.

I address the second challenge by regularly asking myself questions like this one: Since Jesus secured my pardon and absorbed the Father's wrath on my behalf so that "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus," how does that impact my longing for approval, my tendency to be controlling, and my fear of the unknown?

Where exactly am I experiencing agitation... impatience... unease... anxiety? Why is it there? What's that really all about? I try to identify where my restlessness is rooted—because that's where a confrontation with the gospel is needed. Whatever deficiency lies at the deepest root of our restlessness—no matter how big or small, whether it's life-gripping or comparatively trivial—the missing component is something very specific which Christ has already secured for restless sinners like you and me. To put it simply, how does the finished work of Christ satisfy my deepest daily needs so that I can experience the liberating power of the gospel every day and in every way?