**Core Seminar**

**Evangelism**

**Class 3: The Gospel**

Welcome to the Evangelism C.S., Introduce yourself / co-teachers, Handout, Pray

* We’ll be jumping around to different passages – don’t feel obliged to try keep up
* We’ll have time for you to ask questions – remember to mention your name

**Opening illustration:**

**[WORD PICTURE]**

Greg Gilbert book – read from introduction, and give away book at end.

**Introduction**

This is the third of thirteen classes on evangelism. This class is intended to both equip you and exhort you to be active and intentional in taking the Gospel to the people God has placed around you.

*Recap of Last week*: we discussed the important topic of our role in evangelism. We discussed the fact that God is sovereign over salvation. Remember that when we say God is sovereign, we mean that he is in control of over all things. So, if God is in control over everything, including salvation, then that means we are freed up to be faithful to tell others the Good News; and their salvation does not finally hinge on how persuasive we are.

What did we say were some of the ways resting in God’s sovereignty helped us in evangelism?

1. God’s sovereignty teaches us to trust fully in His **power** to save sinners.
2. God’s sovereignty reminds us we should have no **fear** in evangelism.
3. God’s sovereignty **encourages** faithful evangelism, rather than excuse it.

We also discussed the fact that God’s sovereignty does not in any way remove our responsibility to be active, intentional, and persistent in sharing the Gospel. We summarized our biblical responsibility with three words. They were?

Pray, pursue and proclaim. We pray that God’s would save sinners. We pursue others in evangelism. And we proclaim the Gospel.

*In today’s session*, we’ll be talking about what our proclamation is. What is the Gospel of Jesus? The purpose of this class is to give us a clear understanding what God calls us to say to the lost people He has placed around us. I just told you that God’s sovereignty means that a persons’ acceptance or rejection is not finally dependent on how persuasive we are in telling it. That’s still true. But we also want to be faithful in being clear.

[WORD PICTURE]

Like when you go to a nice restaurant and order a lovely dinner…the waiter comes out with a jumbled mess of a plate…technically, the chef gave you what you wanted…but its not helpful at all.

The same could be said in how we present the Gospel. It could come out with all the details correct, but in a jumbled, almost incoherent mess, or it could be clear. No doubt, you’d prefer to be clear.

In other words, when we’re telling someone the Gospel, we want to try to leave that person with a better understanding, not more confused. They may leave with more questions. That’s fine. We want to at least give them the most important thing we can hold onto.

Take a moment to look at your handout and see how we plan to navigate our way through the class. First, we’ll…Second, we’ll…Third, we’ll…

\*\*\*\*ANY QUESTIONS?\*\*\*\*

1. **What does the Bible say About the Gospel?**

**Question:** Can anybody tell me what the word “gospel” mean? [take answers]

The word “gospel” literally means “good news.” Specifically, it is the good news of what God has done through His Son Jesus to save sinners.

There are plenty of things we here every day that would be considered good news. A newborn baby, a pay raise, a completed college degree, paying off your final mortgage payment on your home, a favorable diagnosis in the face of a health scare. All these examples can be considered good news, but the good news the bible presents is clearly different. It’s altogether on another level. How so?

1. The gospel has **power** to save sinners (Romans 1:16-17)

**16**For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. **17**For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

[WORD PICTURE]

To say the gospel has power means it is more than an inspiration message. That kind of message only inspires for a moment, because it has no power. It’s like an old race-car with a dead engine. You can take that race-car, give it a new lick of paint, stick on some shiny wheels, and pop some stickers on it to make it look like it goes really fast. But, it’s not going anywhere without a new engine to power it.

The gospel is powerful. So powerful, it grants salvation to those who believe it. The prophet Ezekiel (Ez 37) gives us a surreal picture of this power when, in his vision, he stands before a valley of dry, dead bones, and prophesies that God will raise up the dead bones, and clothe them with a body of flesh and breathe new life into them.

1. The gospel is not mere human **wisdom**. (1 Cor. 1:17)

[some translations: eloquent, wise…point being that the Gospel is not of human wisdom]

**17**For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

[WORD PICTURE]

What a great word picture there to help us. You can imagine a cross being picked up and poured out – all the vital contents are emptied out and you’re left with this hollowed-out shell, devoid of any power. If it was up to us to provide an alternative, out of our own wisdom, we’d try make the cross look pretty or attractive. But our version of the cross is no match to the wisdom of God.

The Apostle Paul, who wrote that verse we just heard, went on to say a couple lines later:

**22**For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, **23**but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, **24**but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. **25**For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”

1. There are **false** gospels in the world that result in death. (Gal. 1:6-12)

[marketing messages promising happiness, health / wealth, self-righteous messages]

**6**I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— **7**not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. **8**But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. **9**As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

This means the Gospel isn’t…

* You can do it if you put your mind to it. (self-righteous Gospel)
* I’m ok, you’re ok. (truth is relative, liberal Gospel)
* Jesus will make your life better. (healthy, wealthy, wise)
* Make the world a better place. (Feed, clothe, build, recycle)
1. The Gospel calls for a right **response**. (**Rom. 10:16**; cf. 2 Thess. 1:8; 1 Pt. 4:17)

[This means the gospel is not a suggestion or invitation. It is a command to be obeyed.]

**16**But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?”

[WORD PICTURE]

\*\*\*\*ANY QUESTIONS?\*\*\*\*

1. **What does the Bible say the Gospel Is?**

Is it that God will forgive your sins if you trust in Him?

Is it that God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life?

Is it that God promises to make us successful and happy?

These things all sound like good news. Before we look at the Scriptures, let’s try to summarize what we think the Gospel is in a sentence or two. What is the good news?

For those of you who were here last week, this was part of your homework. **[take answers]**

The clearest statement about the Gospel is found in 1 Corinthians 15. Turn with me if you have a bible.

**1** Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, **2** and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. **3**For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, **4**that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, **5**and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

In this passage we see the heart of what the Bible calls good news. There are several components in this passage, we will highlight three.

***First***, we see Christ **died** and **rose** from the dead. (v3-4)

***Second***, we see that Christ died for our **sins**. (v3)

***Third***, we see that we are saved if we **receive** and hold fast to the Gospel. (v1-2)[[1]](#footnote-1)

What makes the good news good is that God has promised that we can obtain the benefits of what Christ has done. The benefits we receive are manifold:

* Salvation
* Peace with God
* A relationship with our Heavenly Father
* Brothers and sisters in Christ
* An eternal, imperishable inheritance
* A future, glorified, sinless body
* The ability to overcome temptation to sin
* The guidance of the Holy Spirit
* Able to bear spiritual fruit
* Victory over death
* A renewed mind and conscience

To obtain these benefits, a response is required.

What is the response that God requires from sinners?

In our text it tells us that we receive the Gospel.

How do we receive it?

Do we earn it after doing a certain number of good deeds?

Do we simply acknowledge facts about God and Jesus and then go about our lives unchanged?

Maybe we need to add to what Jesus has already done for us? Kind of like he started the work, but we finish it off to make sure we get all the way into heaven?

So, how does the bible describe we should receive the Gospel?

Consider the following verses:

**Mark 1:15** “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

**Acts 2:37-38** **37**Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” **38**And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

**Acts 3:18-20** **18**But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. **19**Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, **20**that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus.”

1. **What Else Should We Say When We Share the Gospel?**

Who here has ever shared the Gospel with someone, and after your conversation, you felt like maybe you missed out on something crucial?

[WORD PICTURE]

I know I have. I remember going down and joining a team of street evangelism guys one night in the city. I was talking to a Hindu man, and he was full of quick responses. It kind of threw me off what I was trying to tell him, and I remember getting a terrible night’s sleep, because I kept replaying the conversation in my mind, seeing where I had forgotten to tell him a crucial part.

What we have talked about this morning is of the greatest importance.

The gospel is God’s message that raises souls from the dead. It is the power of God for salvation.

It is important however, when we talk with people about the Gospel that we do so in a way that will help them most easily understand it.

If we tell people “Jesus died for sins and rose from the grave” we have told them good news, but it lacks some details they need to make sense of the message. The hearer of the message may have good questions like “who is Jesus?” or “what are sins?” or “why did He die for sins?” or “what does it mean for me to receive this message?”

To help those we share with understand more clearly, we would like to suggest a four-part story. These four parts are: **God**, **Man**, **Jesus**, **Response**.

I’ve personally used this many times when evangelizing. One time it was really helpful was when I heard a knock at the door of my home, and found a Jehovah’s Witness wanting to talk to me about their supposed gospel.

On the surface of it, JW’s try hard not to sound very different to Christians. They won’t even say they’re JW’s. Knowing this, I go through God, Man, Christ, Response, and almost instantly the differences appear. “Oh no, Jesus sin’t eternal, he’s created…no, we don’t go to Hell…etc.”

**[WORD PICTURE]**

It’s like when you have a repair puncture on your bike wheel: You pump up the tube with air, and then run water over it to see where the bubbles come out.

Here, you’re running the water of God’s truth over a faulty gospel, and seeing where the errors pop up

**1.** The **God** who created the heavens and the earth made humanity to worship and fellowship with Him.

The fact that the God of the Bible is the God who created everything is very important. The Bible constantly exalts God as the true God because He is the creator in contrast to the false gods, who did not create, but are really created by man (Gen. 1:1; Is. 44:9-28; Jer. 10:10; Jn. 17:3; 1 Thess. 1:9; 1 Jn. 5:20).

Because God is creator, he has ‘rights’ to everything that exists (Ps. 24:1, 50:10-12). Just as a child owes respect and honor to his parents simply because they are his parents, in the same way, God’s creations owe him respect and worship because He gave them life. However, God did not create people to simply submit to Him and nothing else. God is a personal God who created humans not only to worship and serve Him, but also to fellowship with Him (1 Cor. 1:9; 1 Jn. 1:3).

**2. Man** has rebelled against God and become a slave to sin; as a result he stands under God's holy wrath and judgment.

One of the key issues in understanding salvation is answering the question “what am I saved from?” Oftentimes believers simply answer “I am saved from Hell.” This is certainly true, but it is not the whole truth. Mankind needs to be rescued from two primary things:

Enslavement to sin, and God’s wrath and eternal judgment

1. **Enslavement to Sin**

When Adam rebelled against God, he opened the world to sin which in turn resulted in death. (Rom 5:12-13). Because Adam chose to serve sin rather than God, God gave Adam, and consequently the rest of humanity, over to our own sinful lusts and desires to experience the corruption that sin brings (Rom 1:18-32). Since Adam, the Bible teaches that all mankind is enslaved to sin and unable to obey God (Rom 8:1-13, Eph 2:1-3). Because of our natural disposition to sin, every man and woman chooses freely to sin against the Lord and each other (Rom 3:9-18).

We don’t have to look far to see the sinful disposition of mankind. I see it in my own children. My seven and five-year old love each and mostly play well with each other. But I’m always hanging around close by, because I know that left to their own devices, they will start behaving selfishly and eventually get into a fight.

Similarly, I don’t know of a single country in world history that has been left untouched by corruption, theft, murder, racism or any other form of a crime. Why? Because it’s in our nature to sin, even though we are capable of doing wonderfully good things too.

1. **God’s Wrath and Eternal Judgment**

Because of mankind’s sin, God’s wrath now rests on all people (Rom. 1:18; Eph. 2:1-3). Because God is holy and just (Isa 6:1-5), He hates sin and is angry with those who rebel against Him (Dt. 9:28; Ps. 11:5; Is. 1:14; Hos. 9:15; Zech. 8:17). Because of His just anger against sin, God will not ultimately allow sin to go unpunished (Ex 34:6-7; Ezek 18:20; Rev. 20:11-15). In the present, God allows mankind to experience the consequences of their sin (Rom. 1:18-32), and at the final judgment will judge mankind according to his deeds and condemn the guilty to everlasting punishment in Hell. (Rom 2:1-16; Rev 20:11-15).

[WORD PICTURE]

Jonathan Edwards described God’s wrath as water in a dam. As your sins against God continue to increase, so the waters continue to rise. And the flood of God’s wrath is being held back by God himself, until a day when they are held back no more, and no one may stand against it.

If we stop here, then everything up to this point is bad news. In fact, it’s the worst news we could ever here. The God of the universe is against us in our sin and rebellion, and we have nowhere to hide…except for the refuge he provides.

\*\*\*\*ANY QUESTIONS?\*\*\*\*

**3. Jesus Christ**, the Son of God, died on the cross and was raised from the dead and now stands as the Lord who is able to save those who repent, and condemn those who rebel.

The Gospel and salvation (and the story of the Bible itself) find its high point in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because of God’s mercy and grace, He promised to make a way for humanity to be reconciled to Him (Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:18-19; Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:20-22). The Lord Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of God’s promises.

* Jesus became a man (Philip. 2:4-7),
* died on the cross in the place of sinners (Matt. 27:38-55; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; Isa. 53:6–12; John 11:50, 15:13; Rom. 5:17–19; 2 Cor. 5:14–15, 5:21; Gal. 3:13; Heb. 10:10, 10:12; 1 Peter 3:18),
* and then rose physically from the grave in victory over the powers of sin, Satan, and death (Matt. 16:21, 17:23, 20:19, 27:64, 28:1-10; Acts. 10:40; Rom. 1:4, 6:1-14; 1 Cor. 15:1-58).
* God the Father exalted Jesus to His right hand as Lord of heaven and earth (Acts. 2:36, 13:30-39; Heb. 1:1-14)
* to wait for the day when He will return to judge the living and the dead (2 Thess. 1:6-10; Rev. 19:11-15)
* and establish God’s kingdom upon the earth (1 Cor. 15:20-28; Rev. 20:1-4).

**4.** We must **respond** to the Gospel by *turning from our sin (repent) and believing in Jesus* as Lord and Savior to receive forgiveness of sins.

In this time before Jesus returns and judges the earth, God graciously offers salvation to those who will repent from their sin and believe in Jesus (Rom. 3:22; Acts 2:22-38, 17:30). To repent means to turn from one’s sin and rebellion to the Lord Jesus Christ in faith for forgiveness and salvation (Matt 3:2, 4:17, Lk 13:3, Acts 2:38, 3:19, 11:21, 14:15, 20:21, 26:18, 26:20; 1 Thess. 1:9; Jams 5:20, Rev 9:20). God does not desire or accept mere outward service, show, or religious ritual; instead He commands whole-hearted devotion and a life that denies themselves and follows after Christ (Matt. 16:24-28; Lk. 9:23-27).

This type of devotion to Christ is driven by faith. The author of Hebrews describes faith as “being sure of what we hope for, being convinced of what we do not see” (Heb. 11:1). It would be helpful here to mention that faith should never be confused with mere knowledge or agreement to some idea. Biblical faith implies trust and commitment to the person and work of Christ.[[2]](#footnote-2) So, we may say we believe that George Washington existed. That is a faith position, because he’s not alive now, but we trust to historical evidence. Biblical faith goes a step further. Not only does this type of faith say that Jesus exists, but it trusts in what he says about himself, what he has done, and what he says he will do.

When we repent of our sin and believe in Christ, God *forgives* our sins (Acts 13:38; Eph. 1:7; 1 Jn. 1:9). This means He cancels the debt of our sin against Himself and gives us His Holy Spirit to renew and transform our lives. This salvation is a gift of grace which we could never earn or deserve (Acts 15:11; Rom. 4:5, 11:5–6; Gal. 2–3; Eph. 2:1–10). This same grace empowers Christians to live a life that is pleasing to God and gives us sweet assurance[[3]](#footnote-3) that we are His (Acts 4:33, 6:8; 13:43; Rom. 3:24, 5:15, 12:16, 15:15; 1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 9:8, 12:9).

There we have it. God, Man, Christ, Response.

It’s a really simple and easy way to remember the Gospel. I was teaching it my daughter this week, and she found it helpful too. I hope its helpful for you.

\*\*\*\*ANY QUESTIONS?\*\*\*\*

**Homework**

Continue praying

Read through a copy of 2 ways to live

Write your personal testimony

How to share the Gospel in 60 seconds

1. **What does Perseverance in Faith Mean?**

The Bible clearly explains that to believe in Jesus does not mean a one-time decision with no other requirements. The call of the Gospel is not simply to believe for a moment, but to believe for a lifetime (Matt. 5:13, 24:31; Jn. 8:31, 15:6; Rom. 11:22; 1 Cor. 10:12, 15:1; Col. 1:22-23; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 2:12; Hebrews; 1 Jn. 2:19; Jude 20; Rev. 2-3, 14:12, 21:7). A Christian is a disciple (a follower) of Christ who perseveres in believing until he sees his Lord (Acts 11:26).

Today many people seem to have the idea that Christianity merely offers, some sort of “fire insurance.” Unfortunately, what people think Jesus desires is for us to pray the sinners prayer, check a box, walk an aisle, or come to church. This could not be further from the truth.

Jesus himself states that “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me, for whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it” (Mark 8:34-35). The call of the Gospel is to come to Jesus to be radically transformed into a new person (2 Cor 5:17). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Biblical faith is like the difference between believing in George Washington and believing in Jesus Christ. We believe in George Washington in that we consider it true that he was a real person and that he was the first President of the United States of America. However, believing in Jesus is more than simply believing that He existed. Faith in Jesus is a personal trust that He is who He said He was and that He will do what He said He will do. Belief in Jesus should transform the way we live our daily lives; belief in George Washington does not. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Assurance of salvation is a topic that has been hotly debated since the inception of the church. The question that surrounds assurance is “how can I know that I’m saved?” This is a legitimate question since the Bible teaches that there are people who think they know Christ but in reality do not (Matt 7:21-23). The Scriptures also plainly assert that there will be false brethren amidst the congregations of the faithful (Matt 13:24-30).

The ground of the believer’s assurance is Christ Himself. Christians have often become consumed with morbid introspection, worrying endlessly about whether they truly believe or not. The Scriptures do not exhort us to do this. Rather, the Scriptures exhort us to focus on Christ and trust in Him (2 Cor 11:3, Heb 12:1-2, 1 John 5:13). Assurance comes from this contemplation of Christ; from trusting Him to fulfill his promises of salvation and eternal life.

A word of warning: the Scriptures do not give assurance for having believed (past tense) at some earlier point in life. They do not give assurance for having performed some ceremonial observance (walking an aisle, signing a card, praying a prayer). The Scriptures give assurance to those who believe (present tense) in Christ. There is never a point in the Christian walk where a person can be assured of salvation regardless of whether or not he continues to believe in Christ. Christ is the source of salvation, and one must persevere in faith in Christ in order to receive that salvation.

The issue of assurance does not deal with the daily struggle to obey Jesus and have 100% faith. The Apostle Paul gives a strong warning when he says, “If we deny Him, He will also deny us” (2 Tim. 2:12). He then follows this sobering warning by saying, “If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim. 2:13). Though we may struggle and doubt and question our walk with the Lord, Jesus remains faithful. Denial of Jesus, however, does not bring assurance. Having assurance has to do with being with Jesus. As John says, “He who has the Son has life; He who does not have the Son does not have life” (1 Jn. 5:12). If you are with Jesus, then you have assurance of eternal life. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)