

PathLights

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path"
Psalm 119:104*

July 24, 2016

Good News

by Frank Himmel

The word *gospel* means good news. What term could better describe the information conveyed by what the Bible calls the gospel? Consider the use of this term in the book of Acts.

Good News About God

Paul referred to "the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God" (20:24). The good news is that God is gracious, not merely just. Justice demands that sinners be punished, and because all sin, all of us would be facing divine wrath. The gospel, however, reveals God's grace. It tells us that He has made possible a means of forgiveness for us, enabling us to escape the consequences of our sins.

Good News About Jesus

Peter said, "... God made a choice that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe" (15:7). And what was Peter's "word of the gospel"? It was that although Jesus was crucified, God raised Him from the dead (10:39-40), and that whoever believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins (10:43). You see, Jesus' crucifixion was planned by God (2:23). It was foretold by God's Old Testament prophets (3:18). It was the atonement for our sins, the divine solution that enables God to be just and still

forgive our sins (Romans 3:24-26). When was someone's death ever such good news?!

Good News About the Kingdom

Philip went to Samaria "preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" (8:12). The good news is that the resurrected Jesus ascended to heaven and sat down at God's right hand, reigning over God's people (2:33-36). Old Testament prophecies regarding Jesus' kingdom were not postponed, as some suggest. Peter affirmed, "And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days" (3:24). The good news is that God fulfilled His promises and prophecies (3:25-26; 12:32-22). Jesus reigns now!



Good News for Us

All this adds up to one thing: good news for us. We can have forgiveness of sins in Jesus! We can be in His kingdom! How? We have already seen that it is through belief in Jesus (10:43). When believers asked Peter what they should do, he answered, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (2:38a). That parallels Luke's summary of the Samaritans: "But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike" (8:12). Likewise, the remainder of Peter's instruction in Acts 10 was that "he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" (v. 48). Do you believe in Jesus? Have you been baptized in His name for the forgiveness of sins? ■

Sincerity

by Frank Himmel

Sincere. The word means genuine, real, heartfelt; free of deceit, hypocrisy, or falseness.

Sincerity is vital in our relationship with God. Paul wrote, “But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (1 Timothy 1:5). He prayed that the Philippians would “be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ” (Philippians 1:10). Hebrews 10:22 urges us to “draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith.” God disdains hypocrisy and half-heartedness.



Is it possible to overrate sincerity? As unlikely as it might seem, the answer is yes. Here is how. Some place such a premium on sincerity that they view it as *the* key to being right with God. Their thinking is that as long as one is sincere in his convictions and efforts to serve God, God will accept his service. This exalted view of the value of sincerity may be sincerely held, but that does not make it true.

Saul of Tarsus was a sincere man, a godly man. He was “educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God” (Acts 22:3). “I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more

extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions” (Philippians 1:14). He had strong, heartfelt convictions, and he lived by them.

Among Saul’s convictions, he viewed Jesus as an imposter. In his own words...

So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities (Acts 26:9-11).

While Saul’s sincerity and zeal were commendable, it did not change the fact that both his convictions and his conduct were wrong – wrong to the point of making him the “chief of sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15, KJV).

God had mercy on Saul and gave him an opportunity to learn the truth. To Saul’s credit, when he was confronted with the truth, he did not stubbornly hold on to long-held views and prejudices. He immediately abandoned them and started living and preaching the truth as fervently, as sincerely, as he had previously embraced error.

Sincerity is critical. We cannot please God without it. But sincerity is no substitute for truth. One who is sincerely wrong is still wrong. “The truth will make you free” (John 8:32). ■

Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday Morning	Sunday Evening	Wednesday Evening
GREETER	Josh Baucom	TBD	Greg Winget
SONG LEADER	Brian Wilson	Gary Hagler	Ian Brown
OPENING PRAYER	Adam Gibson	TBD	
LORD’S SUPPER			
BREAD	Steven Turner	Steven Turner	
CUP	John Baucom	John Baucom	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Albert Lee Harrison		
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Singing	Carlos Garcia
CLOSING PRAYER	David Gray	TBD	Hunter Lee