

The Gospel

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[0 : 0 0] I'd invite you to turn back with me to the reading that we had in the Gospel by Mark, looking there in chapter 1 and at verse 1. We'll be looking at some other verses throughout the scriptures but we'll take this as our text this morning. Mark chapter 1 and verse 1.

The beginning of the Gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And I want us to concentrate on this word, Gospel. There are a few words in the Bible which Christians use over and over again. They trip off our tongues but without us perhaps stopping to think seriously about what they really mean. I think of the word bless as one of these. We ask God to bless us and we say that we bless God for different things. And yet if we stop to think of what do I mean when I say bless, perhaps we have some difficulty in expressing that. Another word is grace. We use grace all the time but I wonder if we stop to think the substance and meaning of that wonderful word. And I think that the word Gospel falls into the same category. We use it in a quite a wide variety of ways. The

Bible itself does this. For example, someone asked me what I was going to preach on today and I said the Gospel. Well they might not think that was a big deal because we hope that every preacher who comes to preach, preaches the Gospel and we use the word in quite a variety of ways. We speak about the first four books in the New Testament as Gospels and as I've said the Bible itself uses the word in a whole variety of settings. So I want us to look at some of these settings this morning as we think about the Gospel. The word Gospel itself and the other words in the language family as we often speak about a word having a family in the language family it has come to mean for us quite simply the good news. Before it's settled on that meaning it sometimes just meant to proclaim something or even to mean the person who came with the news whether the news was good or bad. And you get glimpses of this in the Old Testament in the Psalm 40 for example and in Psalm 96 where it means to proclaim news from God in these instances it was good news that the people were that the Psalmist was proclaiming. And you find it again in the book of Isaiah in Isaiah chapter 40 where in verse 9 of that book we read this you who bring good tidings that is Gospel you who bring and there it refers to the person bringing the good news to you who bring good news to Zion go up on a high mountain you who bring good tidings Gospel again to Jerusalem lift up your voice with a shout and then again in Isaiah chapter 52 and there at verse 7 we read how beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news who proclaim peace who bring good tidings who proclaim salvation they had combined the person bringing the good news and the good news itself but these were just some flashes in the Old Testament it's in the New Testament that we find the Gospel word coming into its own as it were and it's used more than 70 times in the New Testament and we find it especially in the letters of Paul because outside the New Testament in the Greek language the word was not used very often at all it didn't figure much in a secular setting it became

peculiarly a Christian word and as I said it occurs more than 70 times in the New Testament to show just how much a Christian word it was but there is one very little interesting use of the word in secular terms where and I can quote this referring to the birthday of the Emperor Augustus it was said that it was the beginning of good news that is gospel the beginning of good news for the world now compare that with the first verse of Mark's gospel where Mark says the beginning of the gospel the good news about Jesus Christ Augustus was the Roman Emperor at the time of Jesus birth and the people were made to consider him a god there have been many fake gods throughout history what then do we find the Bible telling us about the meaning of the gospel I would like to look at some of the characteristics of this word first of all and then to look at the substance of what it's telling us and the first thing to notice is that the gospel in Bible terms is the gospel of

God we find this in Mark chapter 1 itself if you look down at verse 14 in this chapter after John was put in prison Jesus went into Galilee proclaiming the good news that is the gospel of God and in Thessalonians in first Thessalonians in chapter 2 with reference to God Paul writes that he had told the people his that is God's gospel and he reiterates that twice in the few verses later on and that's very important I think for our whole understanding of the character of God as well as the great work of salvation because you see some people think that the God of the Old Testament was somehow different from God in the New Testament but when Jesus came proclaiming the gospel of God he was proclaiming the gospel that comes from God as the people understood him in the Old Testament for there is but one God and this one God has good news for us and it started being proclaimed not just with Jesus but throughout the whole of scripture and this good news didn't just happen it was sent by God revealed supremely by Jesus Christ this is a special message and it's a message that comes from the heart of God this we'll see a little later on from the heart of God who cares for us loves us and wants the very best for us that is the God he is the God who has loved the world may use a very popular word nowadays he loved the world in an awesomely unique way it's the gospel of God and the second thing that the Bible tells us about the gospel is that it is the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God that is what our text is telling us it's the gospel of

[11 : 27] Jesus Christ in the sense that it's about Jesus it's telling us about Jesus Christ but it's also the gospel of Jesus Christ because it was brought to us by Jesus Christ and it's also the gospel of Jesus Christ in the sense that it was embodied in the person of Jesus himself he is the good news three times in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians the apostle mentions this and in one particularly beautiful description he speaks about the light of the gospel of the glory of God the gospel the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God Jesus embodied the good news it's the gospel of Jesus Christ and a third thing to notice is that it is the gospel for all people it is for everyone in the sense that it makes no distinction on the basis of race or color it is one gospel for all people for all people have been created by God made in the image of God and have fallen in sin and they need what the gospel proclaims to us and that is why this gospel has got to be proclaimed to everyone throughout all the world that is what Jesus said to his disciples that they should go into all the world because all the world needs to hear the good news and if people not only hear the good news but accept the good news then there are glorious consequences for them it is life eternal and if people don't accept the good news there are consequences as well they remain shut off from God and without hope in this world or for the world to come so the good news God's good news revealed by Jesus and relevant for all of us so what is the gospel then let's look for a little while at the substance of it and it is first of all the gospel of truth I was speaking to someone the other day when the church was open with the Christian Heritage Center someone whose faith in Christ had been badly shaken because during the week she had been speaking to a person who claimed to be a Christian but who

didn't accept certain key facts in the Bible didn't believe Adam and Eve didn't believe certain of the miracles and the virgin birth of Christ and so on all he said was he believed that Jesus was Lord and the person to whom he said this had say her faith badly shaken she said because she had never met anyone who claimed to be a Christian and who could speak like that we can't come to the Bible picking and choosing bits we like and throwing away the bits that don't suit us because the gospel as the whole of scripture the gospel is the gospel of truth in Galatians in chapter 2 and in verse 5 and again in verse 14 when Paul is speaking about people like the man who didn't like everything that the Bible says Paul says we did not give in to them for a moment so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you and again in the same chapter and at verse 14 he says when I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel Paul argued against what they were saying now in these verses Paul is drawing a very clear distinction between the truth of the gospel and the words of false teachers who had infiltrated the Galatian church we must remember that God never dupes us into believing false things God will never tell you anything that is untrue or that is irrelevant or that is harmful to you he tells you only the truth because God's character is at stake Christ's character is at stake in the things that he makes known to us God tells the truth about himself and he tells the truth about ourselves he's the great realist about you and about me and we need to listen to him so the gospel the good news comes to us through the God who is truth itself and this gospel in the second place is the gospel of salvation Paul said to his people by this gospel you are saved you see as we are without the gospel there is only bad news bad news telling us that we are lost cut off from God

and full of sin that's how the Bible the realistic picture giving to us that's how the Bible describes us but the gospel has come to change all that it has come to change us and that dramatically from being lost and cut off from God we become through the gospel his very own children sons and daughters of the living God and all of that brings us hope for the future and peace two words that are always associated with the gospel and all of that brings us to the reality of a life in God's near presence when we die it has a future aspect that is wonderful the Bible speaks of Jesus Christ who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel salvation the gospel of salvation that's the best news that ever was and thirdly this gospel gathers us around the cross salvation is only good news because of the terrible things that happened at and on the cross of Jesus Christ it is there that God dealt with our sin it is there that Christ bore the penalty for that sin by being forsaken and to use Paul's frightening words he was made sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God and friends no one is a

Christian unless and until he or she comes to the cross and has sin dealt with there I think there's no better way of describing this than the picture given us in that old classic the pilgrims progress where the pilgrim weighed down with a sense of a sin like a huge heavy burden strapped on his back that he could not get rid of anywhere else until he climbed the hill Calvary and stood before the cross and when he stood before the cross he found that his burden was loose the straps were loose and the burden the truly heavy burden of his sin rolled away into the empty tomb of Christ and he felt release and free and he began to sing less cross less rather be the man who they was put to death for me his sin was gone he was free in Christ and he found new life in him. Mardu I think there's someone wanting out and so she's come back in again maybe tell Mardu you see also that the cross itself is so necessary but that is not the end of the story for we find forcibly that the cross that the gospel rather is the gospel of the resurrection the good news of the resurrection Jesus died but Jesus rose again and this is the new life the risen Christ the new life that he actually shares with us that's what Paul writes in 2nd

Timothy in chapter 2 and verse 8 he shares this life with those who come to trust him the hymn writer puts it this way if Christ had not been truly raised his church would live alive his name should never more be praised his words deserve to die but now our great redeemer lives through him we are restored his word endures his church revives in Christ our risen Lord it's the gospel of the resurrection and if we are Christians we are people of the resurrection we have the good news it should liberate our lives from all the morbid thoughts we might have of being lost and forever cut off from God we should be free but you know the gospel the gospel needs to be believed and that is the last point I wish to make Jesus went into Galilee proclaiming the good news of God the time has come he said the kingdom of God is near repent and believe the gospel I don't just mean that we have to give a casual intellectual ascent but we have to believe in the sense that with repentance our faith our believing becomes part of us we assimilate the good news into our hearts so that it becomes part of our life of thinking a new way of life a Christ way of life a gospel as Paul says in a very telling phrase in 1st Thessalonians 1 15 it is the gospel of deep conviction and it's this gospel that allows us then to share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ

[28 : 02] Paul delighted to tell that the glory of God and the glory of Christ and the light of that glory shines in us and then it will shine from us as we go on day by day believing in Christ because unbelievers cannot see that light quite literally they don't see the light but when you become a Christian you've seen the light the light of the glory of Christ who is the image of God but when and it only comes through repentance and laying our sin at the feet of Jesus so friends let me ask you have you come to Christ because the gospel is really the son of everything that

God has done for us and if we could encapsulate it in just one verse this gospel about Jesus Christ the son of God it's in that great verse which I'm sure nearly all of us know John 3 in verse 16 for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that was whoever believes in him should not perish but should have everlasting life the sum of everything that God has done for us and sinful people do you know the gospel in your own experience I trust that you will seek God and remember that word whosoever seeks him believes shall have everlasting life

Amen let's pray together we thank you our dear Lord for the gospel and pray that each one of us here will believe the gospel and follow Christ for his name's sake Amen