

A FAITHFUL GOSPEL

How should we understand what the gospel is?



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Synopsis

The gospel is *at least* the promise that in Jesus Christ, and particularly in his death and resurrection, God has acted decisively to repair all the damage done to the world by human sin and failure. It's also *more than* that, the gospel message needs filling out. For example, how God's plan for salvation unfolds throughout the scriptures. The 'more than' gospel is vital, however, when time is short; The 'at least' is useful and if that definition of the gospel is correct, there are two consequences.

Firstly, we should be focused on the promise of the forgiveness of sins in the atoning death of the Lord Jesus. The overcoming of the ravages of sin is at the heart of the good news and it is at the centre of what God sent Jesus to do. We have to insist that forgiveness is at the centre of the gospel. Any attempts to re-tell the gospel which ignore the fundamental problem of human sinfulness are inadequate.

Secondly, at the same time we need to acknowledge the promise of the gospel is much wider – is much more expansive – than merely the forgiveness for personal guilt. The effect of the Fall extends far beyond that; it extends to everything. However, the gospel is big enough to be the answer to all of that.

This means that our accounts of the gospel must be more expansive. We have to talk about the reversing of all the curses in Genesis. We have to talk about God's salvation coming to the whole creation and how in the first fruits of the Spirit, God is anticipating all these things through the work of the kingdom, through the life of the Church.

One consequence of this is that in our gospel presentations we are at liberty to start with whatever genuine need or rightly directed desire we find in whichever person we're talking to, because in Jesus God has acted to fulfil every genuine need and to meet every rightly directed desire. From that point we can lead them on into the whole counsel of God.

Questions

for small groups

- 1) What would you say is the focus of the gospel we present? In your opinion is that focus too narrow?
- 2) Think of some of the people close to you. What would be the most appropriate starting point when it comes to talking about the gospel to them?
- 3) Do you think we live in a sinless society? What are our experiences of talking to people about sin, guilt and forgiveness?

for leadership teams

- 1) What is the 'at least' gospel preached by our church? Do we spend enough time filling this out? If not, what more needs to be done?
- 2) What effects of the Fall do we focus on? How can we ensure that we preach, and practise, a more expansive gospel?
- 3) Steve Holmes talks about how God's salvation comes to the whole of creation through the first fruits of the Spirit and the Church's role in this. What does this look like in practice and how are we as a church doing?

Confidence
in the Gospel

As part of the Evangelical Alliance's *Confidence in the Gospel* initiative we are hosting a series of five national consultations to wrestle with significant and timely issues relating to the gospel.

To ensure that as many people as possible can engage with this programme, the talks are being filmed and made available online.

Why not watch some of the videos, and use the questions provided, to explore these vital subjects with your small group or leadership team?

For more information, videos and resources visit eauk.org/confidence