

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

David Halbrook

The gospel is composed of real facts of history. Paul preached these facts, such as the resurrection of Jesus (1 Cor. 15:1-11). But the gospel is not limited to a record of historical events. In Acts 2:23, 36 preaching the gospel included telling others of their sins. Peter had sinned before and would sin again, but did that mean he had no right to warn others of their sin? No. The fact of personal guilt and sin is a vital part of the gospel.

In Acts 2:38-39, in preaching the gospel, Peter told all who would listen that God offered forgiveness (which includes His love, mercy, and grace). The gospel includes all the promises of God, not just the facts.

Scripture also teaches that we must “obey the gospel” (Rom. 10:16; 2 Thess. 1:8). In Acts 2, the gospel taught sinners the necessity of believing the facts of Jesus, repenting of all sins, and being baptized to receive God’s promises (v38-39). Then, they learned more facts, promises, and instructions (v42; Mt. 28:19).

If you are not learning these facts (both historical and personal), promises, and instructions you are not hearing the original gospel.

-- *Editor’s Note:* Some people you know, know some of the facts of the gospel. Others know some of the promises of the gospel. Even fewer know the basic instructions of the gospel. Out of all those people, do you know at least one person who would read our article in the *Arkansas Weekly*? Tell them about it and then personally talk to them about this subject. If you don’t, who will?

We assemble each Sunday at 10AM, 10:45AM, 5PM & Wednesday at 7PM

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The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*

Church of Christ--Quail Valley

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WE DIDN'T MEET WEDNESDAY NIGHT

David Halbrook

Due to some details of the work being done to the building, we did not assemble Wednesday night. This provides an opportunity to think about the reasons why we ever assemble on Wednesday evenings.

Since the gospel went into all the world, Christians have assembled on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; Rev. 1:10). No congregation may choose otherwise and please God. They may choose how many times to assemble that day since God did not reveal a specific number of times to meet, but they must meet.

Congregations also may choose whether and how often to meet otherwise. In Acts 2:46, the church assembled daily. Though no doubt sickness, work, etc. hindered some, disinterest or stronger interests in entertainment or exercise would indicate sights set on things below, not above (Col. 3:1-3). This practice did not continue in all churches, or even in Jerusalem, for we find occasions where the church was called together, showing they were not assembling each day (Acts 14:27; 21:22).

So, whether or not a church will assemble on a day other than Sunday, is a matter for each congregation to decide. I cannot make this decision for the congregation and neither can you. Half of the church cannot decide something for the rest of the church. OUR decisions involve US thus OUR commitments commit US. We must ask and decide how often we will commit to consider, assemble with, and exhort one another (Heb. 10:24-25). We have to decide, how often this flock needs to be fed publicly (Acts 20:20, 28). These are congregational decisions, meaning each part is involved in the decision and commitment.

Now, how will we ever reach a single decision having dozens of individual opinions and preferences? That which is impossible with man is possible with God. Each of us must *look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others* (Phil. 2:1-4). This includes considering the needs of those who are learning the

milk of the word for the first time, developing teachers, pastors, and evangelists, and warning all (Heb. 5:12-14; Eph. 4:11-12; Acts 20:31). We have to make the decision of how often we will meet based on the needs of this congregation.

In making a group-decision, *all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."* (1 Pet. 5:5). This tests my humility and my bond with this local church. Do I care for these people to the degree that I am willing to set aside my preferences and opinions? No group can work together when individuals decide only to act consistent with their own opinions. Imagine the family chaos that would result if wives only participated in the family when they agreed with their husband's decision. Thus, congregational decisions require us to *be submissive to one another*.

Now, if we all submit to each other, how will any decision be made? There are three other areas of submission in the local church. First, qualified bishops lead and the rest are to *obey those who rule over you, and be submissive* (Heb. 13:17). Second, 1 Peter 5:5 says, *you younger people submit to your elders*. "Elders" in this verse is in contrast to "younger," so "elder" here simply means "older" (as in 1 Tim. 5:1). This is done in physical families (children submit to parents), and spiritual families should function likewise. The third area of submission is of women to men. *I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve* (1 Tim. 2:12-13). So, in the local church, qualified overseers lead, the younger submit to the older, and women submit to men. Thus, we submit to each other in group-related decisions.

Working together means that we each participate in some way. During decisions, every individual can pray, stay informed, and offer sincere suggestions. Those who lead need to listen to and consider those they lead. Husbands who cherish their wives, consider her input in decisions which affect her, as did the apostles in Acts 6:3 when they told the congregation to seek out seven men. When the congregation did that the apostles made the decision to approve them (v6). We too can work together this way.

The decisions of elders are the decisions of the church, as if the entire church had the same idea. In the absence of elders, the decisions of the men are the church's decisions. This congregation could someday decide to meet every other Friday or on the last Tuesday of the month, in addition to Sunday. Would that be in the best interest of the growth of this church? We must be developing men who know how to answer this and similar questions. And we must currently consider and submit to one another, doing our share causing the growth of the body (Eph. 4:16). Do you do your share? What is your share this Wednesday night when the church plans to assemble?

"WHAT THE SEAT CAN ENDURE"

Connie Adams, Brooks, KY

Every now and then we are treated to the wisdom that "the mind can only absorb what the seat can endure." This is offered to prompt preachers to be brief. I do not favor repetitious sermons, or rambling discourses without apparent design. Every speaker needs to build a rapport with his audience and be alert to signs of weariness or loss of interest. Every speaker cannot hold an audience for long periods of time. But it needs to be said that the seat can endure whatever the mind wills. Whatever occupies the mind will determine very often what the seat can endure. That is what enables people to sit for hours to drive to a vacation spot or to see relatives long missed. That is what empowers us to stay strapped in a seat on a jet plane across the country, or half way around the world. That is what caused me to sit for 7 hours in a school taught by a physical therapist a few weeks after back surgery, with only five minutes stretch every hour. That is what causes people to sit through baseball double-headers and football games. The mind wills it and the seat endures it. The saying is catchy and usually draws a laugh, but it is the reverse of the truth. Let's get it straight — "The seat can endure what the mind wills it to endure." Now, that's more like it.

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Editor's Note: Our brother Connie Adams understands the limitations of a perishing outward man which houses a renewed inward man (2 Cor. 4:16). I include his brief admonition due to our new pews. Your time and money provided them—for what purpose? They are intended to increase your ability to focus on what we do here. Air conditioning minimizes the distraction and exhaustion of extreme heat making it easier for us to stay focused for longer periods of time, if that is what we are trying to do (though, would you endure the inconvenience of heat in order to worship God?). Having seats, instead of standing, does the same. Having pads on the seats does the same. Now the question is---will we use them for this purpose or will we use them as a place to more comfortably nap, text, and think about ballgames during worship? By worship we boldly *enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus and draw near to God* (Heb. 10:19, 23). This does not happen by entering the building but by approaching Him in spirit. If these pews extend the time our perishing bodies can stay fresh as our spirit is renewed, then this has been a worthwhile process. The kingdom has not been improved by new, prettier seats. This church has not been improved for it is not made of pews but of saved souls needing to be renewed (Rom. 12:2). May these seats aid us in being inwardly uncomfortable until we sit with Him on His throne (Rev. 3:21).