

All That I Was*Horatius Bonar (1808–1889)*

All that I was, my sin, my guilt,
 My death, was all my own;
 All that I am, I owe to Thee,
 My gracious God, alone.

The evil of my former state
 Was mine, and only mine;
 The good in which I now rejoice
 Is Thine, and only Thine.

The darkness of my former state,
 The bondage, all was mine;
 The light of life, in which I walk,
 The liberty, is Thine.

Thy grace first made me feel my sin,
 It taught me to believe;
 Then, in believing, peace I found,
 And now I live, I live.

All that I am, even here on earth,
 All that I hope to be
 When Jesus comes and glory dawns,
 I owe it, Lord, to Thee.

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ*In the Nick of Time***A Response to Criticisms: The Gospel***Kevin T. Bauder*

What is the gospel? It is more than simply the plan of salvation, but what more? This question deserves both a negative and a positive answer.

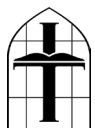
Negatively, the gospel is not the whole Christian faith. To say that all the teachings and practices of Christianity are related to the gospel is not to say that they are the gospel. Furthermore, the gospel does not consist in attempting to reproduce the conditions of the kingdom of God during the present age. Some people have mistaken “kingdom activity” such as educating the unlearned, feeding the hungry, and healing the sick for the gospel. Admirable as these activities may be, though, they are not the gospel.

Ultimately, only the Bible has the right to define the gospel. If we intend to ask the Bible what the gospel is, then we are responsible to look for an answer in the right place. What is the right place? It must be a text (or more than one) that clearly intends to define the gospel. Such a text is available in 1 Corinthians 15.

Paul opens this passage by stating that he intends to make known (the term is *gnorizo*) the gospel. In other words, he intends to tell his readers what the gospel is. 1 Corinthians 15 is an exercise in extended definition. What makes this exercise particularly interesting is that Paul’s readers already know and believe the plan of salvation—Paul says as much. In spite of this knowledge, however, they are on the verge of accepting a teaching that will implicitly deny the gospel. To thwart this possibility, Paul attempts to make the content of the gospel clear.

Paul’s definition of the gospel focuses first upon events. The gospel is “good news,” and news is always about something that has happened. Philosophical and theological systems do not offer news. Theories of morality or personal improvement do not offer news. Only events are news. The gospel centers upon happenings that occurred in space and time.

These events are two in number: Christ died, and Christ arose from the dead. Paul uses words like *died* and *rose* in their normal significance. When Christ died, His bodily functions ceased to operate, just as in all human deaths. His body became a corpse. When Christ arose, that same body



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received life again. On the Bible's terms, neither ongoing memories about the deceased nor the ongoing life of the soul constitute a resurrection. Jesus came out of the tomb in the same body that was laid to rest there. He was dead, and now He was alive.

In case someone is inclined to question whether these events really occurred, Paul offers evidences. These evidences are the second element of the gospel. The evidence for the death of Christ is the burial—a term that encompasses more than simple interment, including all the efforts to certify the death of Jesus and to prepare His body for burial. The evidence for the resurrection consists of eyewitnesses, over five hundred of them, drawn from various times and places.

So the gospel consists, first, of events, and second, of evidences. By themselves, however, the events are entirely without value. The evidences can establish that the events occurred, but what of it? Why should anyone care?

Consider the death of Christ. That He really died is beyond question. It is also trivial. People have been dying since the first humans, Adam and Eve. Thus far, only two individuals (Enoch and Elijah) have escaped death. Millions of people died before Christ ever became incarnate. Billions of people have died since then. What does it matter that Christ died?

Paul, however, does not simply say that Christ died. He asserts that Christ died *for our sins*, and those extra words provide all the necessary significance. They tell us why the death of Christ mattered, and why it matters still. These words provide an explanation of the death of Christ that sets it apart from all other deaths. No one else has ever died like Christ died. He alone died for our sins.

Likewise, Paul provides an explanation of the resurrection of Jesus. Without this explanation, the resurrection would be a scientifically remarkable event, but its significance might be misconstrued (as it has been, for example, by Pinchas Lapide in *The Resurrection of Jesus: A Jewish Perspective*). Paul heads off misunderstanding by offering an extended discussion of the resurrection throughout the remainder of 1 Corinthians 15.

Like the events and the evidences, the explanations are essential to the gospel. To deny the events is to deny the gospel. To dispute the evidences is to dispute the gospel. To reject the explanations is to reject the gospel.

To be sure, the plan of salvation is bound up with these events, evidences, and explanations, but it is not identical with them. For example, a presentation of the plan of salvation might not include all of the evidences that are essential to the gospel. It might not include a full exposition of Paul's explanation of the resurrection. A sinner could hear such a presentation, believe it, and be saved, all while remaining ignorant of some gospel content.

Furthermore, even the events, evidences, and explanations do not exhaust the gospel. For the explanations to work, the gospel has to rest upon a foundation of doctrinal assumptions. Without these assumptions it would crumble. In other words, the gospel implies more than it overtly states, and these implications are part of the gospel as well. It is to these implications that we shall turn in the next *In the Nick of Time*.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
