

UNLIMITED

THE MAGAZINE

THE OPEN SECRET

The secret has been known for thousands of years, but largely ignored (page 12)



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'He saw no man but Jesus only.'

MATTHEW 17:8

Jesus Only

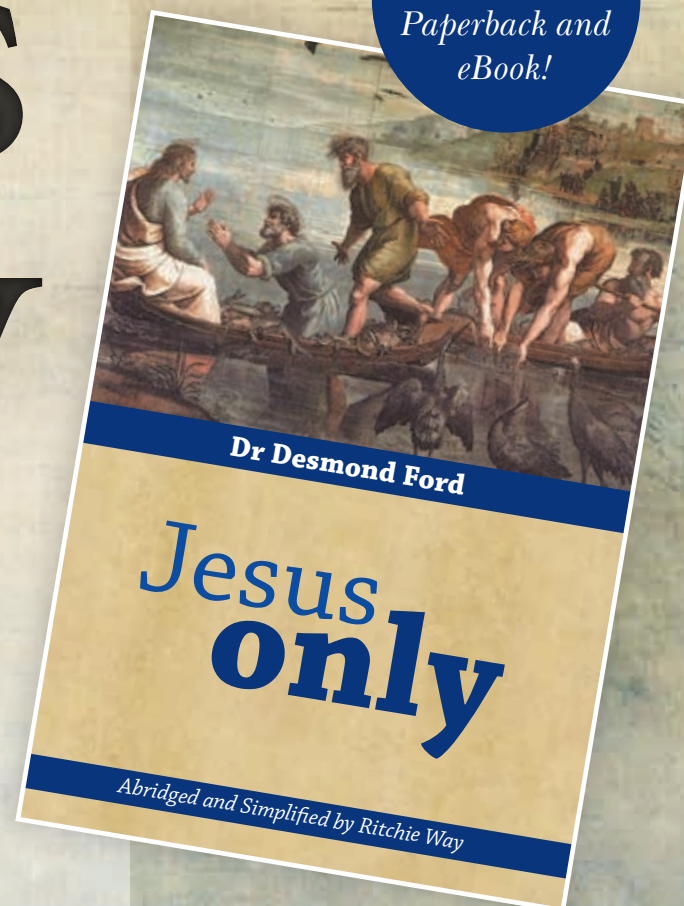
By Desmond Ford

Edited by Ritchie Way

This book is Christ-centred, Cross-centred, and gospel-centred. It focuses on the fulfilment of a promise that God made well over three thousand years ago. God promised that one day he would dwell with us and walk with us, and he would be our God and we would be his people. That promise was fulfilled in Jesus, who was 'God with us'. Jesus came to show us what God is like. He took our sins upon himself, and on the Cross he was judged and condemned for them so that we could be free of condemnation. That's what God is like.

Here in *Jesus Only*, there are gospel gems that you won't find anywhere else—gems that will inspire you to praise God for his great love and wisdom.

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GNU WORD SPREADS FAST.
Good News Unlimited

EDITORIAL

For seven years the Midianites oppressed Israel. 'Because the power of Midian was so oppressive, the Israelites prepared shelters for themselves in mountain clefts, caves and strongholds' (Jud. 6:2).

When the Hebrews cried out to the Lord for help, he appointed Gideon to lead an army of carefully chosen soldiers against the invaders. As you will imagine, Gideon was very nervous about this assignment because the odds against which his small army was pitched were astronomical. To encourage him, the Lord said to him and his servant, Purah, 'Go down to the Midianite camp and listen to what they are saying'.

Once there, Gideon and Purah heard the occupants talking in one of the tents. One man was telling another about a dream he had had the previous night in which a round loaf of barley bread came tumbling down the hillside with such force it struck and overturned the commander's tent. The other responded, 'That loaf can only represent Gideon the Israelite. God has given the Midianite camp into his hands'.

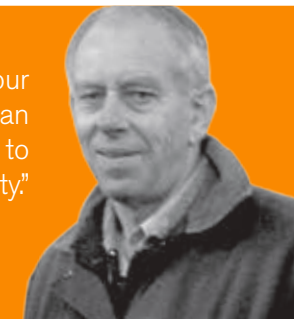
"When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he worshipped God" (Jud. 7:15).

We are in a similar situation in which the world rides roughshod over spiritual Israel, devouring the fruits of her labours and destroying the rest. God says, 'Enough!' The time has come to take the initiative and turn the tables. A small, dedicated army, armed with nothing more than the light of truth about Jesus and the trumpet call of the gospel, will conquer that hoard.

The Gideon's army of today is composed of groups like Good News Unlimited, that proclaim the gospel of God's free grace around the world using technology that can reach into every

But together, by pooling our financial resources, we can fulfil this gospel commission to the best of our ability."

Ritchie Way
Executive Editor



country. The good news we proclaim is unlimited in its ability to reach and to save people.

Dr Gonzalez and a team of dedicated and talented people are working on extending and improving our outreach. Jesus has commanded us to go into all the world and preach the good news to everyone, and we are able to do that magnificently with the Lord on our side. We have archived hundreds of Dr Ford's gospel messages in a modern format, and all we need now is the right equipment and means to get these messages into the homes of people living in great cities around the world, in the jungles of the Amazon and Borneo, in the deserts of Africa and Mongolia, in Communist and Muslim lands, inside the Arctic Circle, and into the citadels of consumerism and atheism. I can't go to all these places; neither can you. But together, by pooling our financial resources, we can fulfil this gospel commission to the best of our ability.

One thing we will never regret in eternity is what we have done for Jesus and the gospel. The souls saved through this ministry will be our 'treasure' in heaven. Unlike our earthly treasures that are very temporal, these heavenly treasures will be eternal. ▼

GOOD NEWS UNLIMITED IS PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY GOOD NEWS UNLIMITED, LTD.

Good News Unlimited

PO Box 6788
Tweed Heads South NSW 2486

Phone: **+61 (0) 7 5524 5040**
Executive Editor: **Pastor Ritchie Way**
Design & Layout: **eOne Design**
Proofreader: **Lionel Hartley**
Printer: **Dunham+Company**

The GNU catalogue is available online at
www.goodnewsunlimited.com

Desmond Ford can be seen live by going to
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You can watch or download recent broadcasts in HD also.

Mission Statement

Christians united in offering to all meaning and direction in their lives through a knowledge of God's reconciliation with humanity through his Son, Jesus Christ.

GNU CONTACT PERSONNEL

Orders, accounts & general enquiries:
Carolyn Wagemaker
+61 (0) 7 5524 5040
admin@goodnewsunlimited.com

Editorial enquiries:
Pastor Ritchie Way, Editor
+64 94822543
ritchiew@kiwilink.co.nz

Pastoral needs:
Dr Eliezer Gonzalez
eliezer@goodnewsunlimited.com

Pastor in retirement:
Ron Allen
carron.741@gmail.com

NZ GNU Office:
Fraser and Kylie Burling
+64 (0) 9818 1770
120B Rosier Road, Glen Eden
Waitakere, New Zealand 0602
socrates@internet.co.nz

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GNU is supported predominantly by donations from those who believe in its ministry. Gifts are tax deductible in Canada, New Zealand and the USA. Unsolicited manuscripts of interest to Christians of all denominations are welcome, but without guarantee of return. Under certain circumstances, payments may be made for manuscripts at the Editor's discretion. Please send typed manuscripts to the attention of the Executive Editor, Ritchie Way, by e-mail to admin@goodnewsunlimited.com or by post.

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If anyone would like to send donations or pay subscriptions etc online or by direct credit, the Good News Unlimited banking details are as follows:

Australia BSB: 062 683
Account: 10009112

New Zealand ASB Account: 12-3023-0378560-000

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The news of the day is all good! It's not a natural disaster. It's not a political scandal. The news of the day is that the blood of Jesus alone cleanses us from every sin, and that there is salvation through his name alone. The news of the day is that Jesus has died for our sins and has risen from the dead as our Saviour and Lord.

THE NEWS OF THE DAY

The second news item of the day is that we here at Good News Unlimited (GNU) are very excited about this. This news has transformed the lives of every one of us here at GNU – radically and totally! We aren't people who have it all together yet, but we are people with assurance, people with hope, and people with joy. Why? Because we have believed the news. We know that because of what Jesus did at Calvary, our sins are forgiven, and our status has changed from sinner to child of the King of the universe.

We here at GNU are so excited about this that we can't keep quiet about it. We can't keep it to ourselves. And so we want to share it with you, your family, your neighbours, your nation, your planet... with EVERYONE!

We don't care that Calvary happened some time ago. That is not important. The news is still as exhilarating and as needed now as it was then. It is as fresh as it was when, at sunrise, the women cried out to the disciples that Jesus was not where he was supposed to be—in his grave! It is as radical as when Doubting Thomas had to change his name as he fell on his knees before the risen Christ gasping, "My Lord and My God!"

“The fact that the goal of reaching the world with the gospel is a massive one is no obstacle to the Spirit of the Risen Lord.

There are Christian ministries that free slaves. There are Christian ministries that help victims of sexual abuse to find healing. There are Christian ministries that feed the hungry. They are all doing the work of the gospel. However Good News Unlimited has decided that its mission is to go all out to spread the word of the gospel to every person on earth.

You might be thinking, "That's inappropriately ambitious, isn't it?" or "Isn't that what churches are for?"

Are we being too ambitious? As Christians we believe the Word. And the Word says, 'Go and make disciples of all nations' (Matt. 28:19). No gospel ministry has the right to exist unless it believes and embraces this Word. We are determined to believe Jesus and to obey him.

The fact that we are small at the moment is no obstacle to the Spirit of the Risen Lord. The currency of the Spirit is not the realities of the present; the currency of the Spirit is the fulfilment of every word that God has spoken.

The fact that the goal of reaching the world with the gospel is a massive one is no obstacle to the Spirit of the Risen Lord. We have spent many, many hours planning, and many more hours praying. The Lord will open the way before us; he will provide! The truth is, he is already leading the way through miracle after miracle that we are both experiencing here, and hearing about, at GNU.

Good News Unlimited is not a church; we are an interdenominational Christian ministry. We uplift Christians everywhere who believe the gospel and who love Jesus Christ. Our supporters attend different churches and denominations, and we honour these choices; we believe that the Spirit of the Lord leads true Christians everywhere, and that the church universal is spread throughout the earth.

We also recognise that churches are often encumbered with traditions, institutions and practices, which means that their resources are divided among many things. Unfortunately that means the spreading of the gospel isn't always given first place. How many pastors would love to preach full-time to the unconverted, but how many of them actually do it?

Because we are a Christian gospel ministry, that's our primary focus. Good News Unlimited exists so that the Word can spread fast! We are determined to break down the barriers to the spreading of the gospel that tradition and history and organisations have established. For that reason, we don't have a creed. The Christian movement in its early centuries didn't have one either.

So from now on, Good News Unlimited will be about simplicity and speed. Reaching the world for Jesus isn't complicated. Our purpose is simple: to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ around the world urgently and effectively and to communicate it in ways that are easy to receive and understand.

In partnership with local churches and ministries,

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we are intentionally unencumbered by institutional processes that would limit the ability to reach lives, nor do we confuse the Word through barriers of heavy tradition and ritual.

Good News Unlimited presents the Word in its purest form so it's easily and quickly understood. We present the gospel just as it should be—without complication or confusion. And we do this so people can easily understand it and start living a life that's liberated and set free.

When Jesus returns, we here at Good News Unlimited want to be found wearied and worn out because we—you and us together—have done everything we could do to fulfill what Jesus said in Matthew 24:14.

We are seeking partnerships with Christian men and women everywhere who believe it is unacceptable that so many still need to hear and accept the gospel of Jesus Christ—Christians who are excited by the challenge of reaching the lost of this world in this generation.

We are not launching a church, we're not really even launching a ministry. We are launching a Spirit-led movement. We earnestly beg you, please pray for us. Right now.

▼ **ELIEZER GONZALEZ**

Senior Pastor, Good News Unlimited

From this magazine forward, we intend that every issue will focus on the gospel of God's free grace, made available to us through the sacrifice of Jesus, and received by faith.



LOOKING BACKWARD... AND FORWARD.

In early 1984, a small dining room table in suburban Melbourne was the scene for a meeting of half a dozen earnest men and women, drawn from the USA and various parts of Australia, to begin the incorporation of a Christian organisation, later to become known as Good News Unlimited.

The impetus for such an undertaking lay in an eruption of theological discovery within an established religious structure—not unlike the original gospel movement that grew out of the Jewish religion. The realisation that God had fulfilled all the ancient promises, removed sins forever, and brought in hope beyond death, filled them with inexpressible joy.

The GNU founders who met in Melbourne in early 1984 were captured by the same gladsome realisations. The first and overarching matter for discussion was how to structure a not-for-profit corporation for the sole purpose of advancing knowledge of the perfect and completed atonement accomplished by God in his Son Jesus at Calvary.

Good News Unlimited was born. It first occupied rooms in Hornsby, New South Wales. An office administrator moved in,

a pastoral director was appointed. After two years, headquarters were relocated to the Tweed District in Northern NSW. The company initially worked out of the garage of a private home, but eventually a property in South Tweed Heads was acquired, and this served as GNU's home till it was sold in 2012.

GNU has taught, preached and promoted 'righteousness' as God's free gift as a result of faith in his Son. The principle instruments for this task were a monthly magazine, monthly audio messages, public meetings and seminars, supply and distribution of books, pamphlets and articles. This missionary work has only been possible through the labours of a group of dedicated men and women, willing to serve for little or no material recompense.

In addition, hundreds of unknown and unrecognised souls—

“

This missionary work has only been possible through the labours of a group of dedicated men and women, willing to serve for little or no material recompense.

their own thirst slaked by Living Waters—gave repeatedly and sacrificially because they wanted to share their boon with others. This army of saints was and is the backbone of GNU. In the beginning, they looked to this tiny ministry to present and apply the gospel to them in ways that the ministry of their parent community could not or would not. Perhaps they viewed GNU as a necessary support for a movement that had temporarily lost its gospel identity; perhaps as a friendly but independent voice that could help get it back on track.

Three decades have come and gone. The generation that made GNU an instrument of God's grace is growing old and vanishing from the earth. If the ministry is to continue to communicate the message of Jesus effectively, it must now find a vision for itself that is not shaped by the thought patterns or parochial issues, which so exercised its pioneers. A doctrinal dispute within a sect ought not to define or limit gospel work.

It was natural for the first disciples to share the good news with their brothers and sisters in the synagogues. But it was soon obvious that Judaism was far too cramped a place for it. The gospel refuses to be contained within traditional norms. Like floodwaters it seeps, soaks, ebbs and overflows; ever finding new spaces, new receptacles, no matter their form or size. GNU has done its work well, but the time is well nigh for it to spill over its banks to seek new areas of parched earth to enliven.

▼ PASTOR RON ALLEN

A MESSAGE FROM ELENNE FORD

Des' daughter and a board member of Good News Unlimited.

We appreciate so much the way that you have prayed for us, volunteered, and given us your financial support. In these ways you have expressed your faith in Christ and shared it with others.

In addition to this, some friends also choose to include Good News Unlimited in their will in the form of a bequest. Doing so ensures that some of the wealth they leave behind contributes directly to the sharing of the good news of Jesus Christ with a dying world through the ministry and mission of Good News Unlimited – creating a legacy that affects lives far into the future.

My father and Gill have left a bequest to Good News Unlimited for the preaching of the gospel. In fact, after bequests to the family, most of their estate will be given to Good News Unlimited. I am also making provision for Good News Unlimited in my will, and I know that other board members are doing the same.

If you would like more information explaining how to include Good News Unlimited in your will, please contact Eliezer at GNU on 0413 473 043.

LEAVE A
Legacy
THAT
IMPACTS
PEOPLE
FOR
YEARS
TO COME

GOSPEL FELLOWSHIPS MANUAL

Part 1 of 3

The true manual on how to form and run a Gospel Fellowship is the Bible, the Word of God. The Bible, however, must speak to you in the context of your culture. While it is essential that you keep to the timeless principles of the Bible, your Fellowship must always be adapted to your culture, your circumstances, and the gifts that God has given you. What works in one culture will not work in another; what works for one age group will not work for another. But the Spirit of the risen Christ will always accompany you, blessing and empowering you when you share his gospel, following the principles of the early apostolic church.

The early church was based on small groups of believers everywhere, multiplying with enthusiasm and breaking through all kinds of barriers to bring hope to the people around them.

What is a Gospel Fellowship?

A Gospel Fellowship is a small group that meets together to share and to be encouraged in the gospel of Jesus Christ, following the simple model given in the New Testament.

What is the ideal Gospel Fellowship?

The New Testament model for a Gospel Fellowship is found in Acts 2:42, where we are told that the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the community [i.e. their fellowship], to their shared meals, and to prayer. The four elements mentioned in this verse form the nonnegotiable elements of every Gospel Fellowship:

When these four elements are present, then, *"The Lord add[s] daily to the community those who [are] being saved"* (Acts 2:47b).

Let's consider each of these four elements that result in successful Gospel Fellowships:

1. The Apostles' Teaching

In the earliest church, the teaching of the apostles consisted of retelling stories about Jesus – what he had done, and what he had said. Paul revealed what the focal point of all these stories was, when he wrote, "I



passed onto you as most important what I also received. Christ died for our sins in line with the scriptures, he was buried, and he rose on the third day in line with the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15: 3–4).

2. The Community

A Gospel Fellowship is about creating a real community with each other. This is a dynamic community that is continually reaching out in service beyond itself in everything that it does, by growing and reproducing. A community is a group of people who share and do things together in real life.



Firstly, you need to be friends. Usually this means you have some common interests with the others in your fellowship. These interests could be football, school, or recovering from addiction. All of these can be platforms for also sharing and doing things together spiritually. A Gospel Fellowship is not just about the spiritual stuff in isolation from your society; a Gospel Fellowship is always looking for new ways to build an authentic community.

3. Shared Meals

A Gospel Fellowship is always centred around a meal. It is clear from the New Testament that many of Jesus' greatest teaching moments were centred around meals. It is also clear that the early Christian groups ate together every time that they met.

Eating together in every culture says things like:

- ▼ We are family
- ▼ Let me share with you
- ▼ I accept you.

This is why eating together, including the symbols of the body and the blood of Jesus Christ, is such an important part of the biblical model for Christian community.

4. Prayer

When the early Christian believers retold what Jesus had done, they weren't sharing some irrelevant 'doctrine'. Jesus



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The early church was based on small groups of believers everywhere, multiplying with enthusiasm and breaking through all kinds of barriers to bring hope to the people around them.

was alive! They had come together to communicate with and to share the power of the risen Christ.

That is why, together with repeating stories about Jesus, prayer is so important. This is not prayer as a ritual, or prayer as a tradition, or prayer as an obligation, but direct communication with Jesus Christ.



Is it hard to set up and run your own Gospel Fellowship?

It is the Lord's doing. Is anything too hard for the Lord? (Gen. 18:14). It is not hard at all; it can be as easy as inviting a group of friends over to your home for a meal.

However, starting and running a Gospel Fellowship still needs to follow the principles outlined in this manual, otherwise it is easy to drift away from the New Testament model into other "church" models that people know from tradition. You have to stick to the plan!



A Gospel Fellowship is about creating a real community with each other. This is a dynamic community that is continually reaching out in service beyond itself in everything that it does, by growing and reproducing.



What is a Gospel Fellowship not?

1. It is not a denomination or a church in a traditional organisational sense.

A Gospel Fellowship is fully inter-denominational and welcomes people from all churches and denominations. Although a Gospel Fellowship is not a denomination or a church in a traditional sense, wherever it functions it is truly church in the New Testament sense.

2. It is not part of the Good News Unlimited 'organisation'.

A Gospel Fellowship is fully independent of Good News Unlimited and has no legal or organisational ties with it or with other Fellowships associated with Good News Unlimited. The only tie that unites us is the love of Jesus and the gospel, through the work of the Holy Spirit.

A Gospel Fellowship may choose its own name.

3. It is not a church 'service'.

Because a Gospel Fellowship is very different from a traditional church, it is not necessary to have all the elements of a traditional church "service" at each meeting. The purpose of a Gospel Fellowship is to be as close to the principles of the New Testament church as possible within a contemporary setting.

4. It is not defined by a creed.

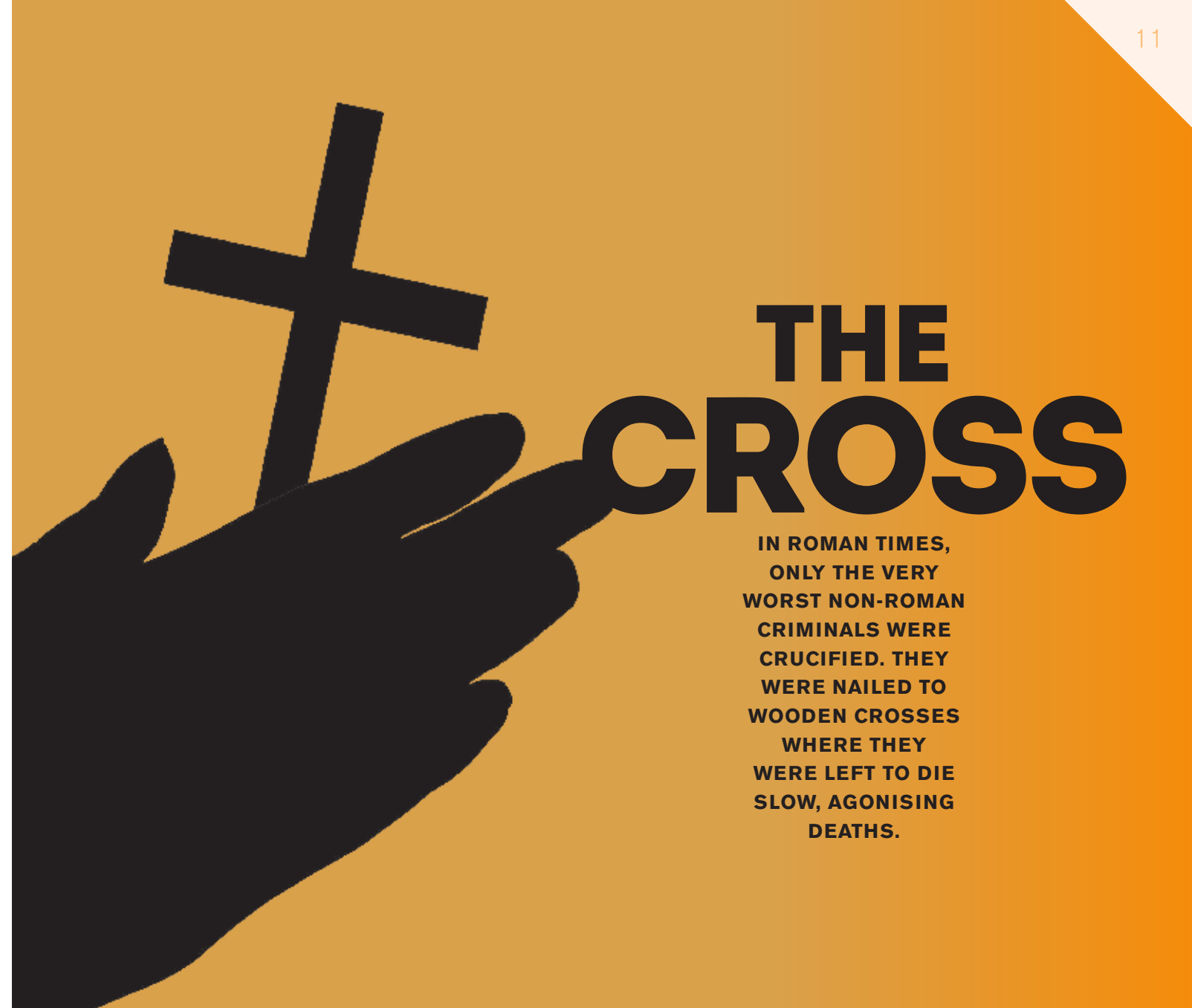
Although Good News Unlimited has a Statement of Belief, this is not a test of Christian fellowship, and is not binding on Gospel Fellowships.

5. It is not a theological forum.

Gospel Fellowships do not exist to debate theology, or for anyone to try to impose their theological frameworks on others. While some people may be inclined to do this, you must stick to the four essential elements from Acts 2:42. A Gospel Fellowship is not a place for arguing.

Your Gospel Fellowship is to be positive and affirming of other Christians. It is not to convert other Christians to your way of seeing things. Our mission is to share the gospel of Jesus, not to challenge other people's beliefs. ▼

Look for the second part of the Gospel Fellowships Manual in the next Good News Unlimited magazine. We also have versions of this manual available for African and Indian cultures.



THE CROSS

IN ROMAN TIMES, ONLY THE VERY WORST NON-ROMAN CRIMINALS WERE CRUCIFIED. THEY WERE NAILED TO WOODEN CROSSES WHERE THEY WERE LEFT TO DIE SLOW, AGONISING DEATHS.

So why, if Jesus had no sin (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 John 3:5), was he crucified? One of the two terrorists who were crucified with Jesus declared, "We are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong" (Luke 23:41). Even the centurion in charge of the crucifixion squad confessed: "Surely this was a righteous man" (Luke 23:47). So why was Jesus punished in this manner?

Six hundred years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah made an astonishing prophecy about Jesus and his sacrifice on the cross. He wrote:

"He took our suffering on him and felt our pain for us. We saw his suffering and thought God was punishing him. But he was wounded for the wrong we did; he was crushed for the evil we did. The punishment, which made us well, was given to him, and we are healed because of his wounds. We all have wandered away like sheep; each of us has gone his own way. But the Lord has put on him the punishment for all the evil we have done" (Isa. 53:3-6, NCV).

Instead of punishing us for our sins, Jesus took our punishment upon himself and paid the price for our sins on the Cross.

On the Cross he was judged and condemned for our sins so that everyone who puts their faith in him would be free of condemnation (Rom. 8:1).

On the Cross Jesus was cut off from God (Matt. 27:46), so that we could be united with God (Heb. 10:19-22).

On the Cross Jesus was robbed of hope so that you and I may have hope.

On the Cross Jesus was stripped naked so that you and I can be clothed in the garments of salvation (Isa. 61:10).

On the Cross Jesus was punished with death so that we could be rewarded with life (Rom. 6:23). "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). That's the essence of Easter.

▼ **RITCHIE WAY**
Executive Editor



WHEN GOD FORGAVE THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

One afternoon, around 2,000 years ago, God forgave the unpardonable sin – totally, freely, and unconditionally. How do I know? Because it happened when Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they’re doing” (Luke 23:34, CEB).

“They don’t know what they’re doing?” Really? You’ve got to be kidding!

The Son of God had walked among them – he had taught them the wisdom of the ages, and shown them the kindness of heaven; he had healed their diseases; he had even raised their dead. He had demonstrated his authority over nature and over devils time and time again. And now, on the cross, he gasps out the words, “They don’t know what they’re doing.”

Of course they did, as much as anyone who sins knows what they are doing. In these words we hear Christ’s heart of love in a way that transcends our human rational understanding. Those who crucified Jesus did not just commit some innocent mistake. Calvary was no ‘Oopsie!’

The crucifixion of Christ was all the more heinous a crime because these people had chosen to close their eyes to the truth. It was, as some like to call it, a ‘deliberate sin’ of the worst magnitude.

When they nailed the Son of God up on those rough timbers, they were committing the worst sin ever perpetrated by any human. If any sin could be called ‘unpardonable’, that was it. If that sin could be pardoned, then how much more every other sin?

A few weeks later, on the Day of Pentecost, the repentance and conversion of thousands of people who were responsible for the crucifixion of Christ (see Acts 2:23) proved that Jesus had forgiven even the most “unpardonable” sin. All those people had to do was to accept the gift that he had provided for them through his suffering.

So don’t come to me with all kinds of fancy biblical footwork over what the unpardonable sin is and how you may have committed it! In fact, the term ‘the unpardonable sin’ is not a phrase that appears in the Bible at all. We shouldn’t even have Bible studies and sermons and articles about concepts that aren’t biblical, unless it is to totally debunk them, as I am doing here.

Do you think that there could ever be a sin that Christ could not forgive? Could your sin ever be stronger than the blood of Christ? At the cross Christ defeated ALL sin; his love was undefeated! His victory over sin was total and absolute – he annihilated sin! And that’s why EVERY sin can be forgiven in his name, no matter how horrendous.

Do you think that there are exceptions to John 3:16? “For God

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If any sin could be called ‘unpardonable’, that was it. However, if that sin could be pardoned, then how much more every other sin?

so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16, NIV). Do you think that this verse is talking about a conditional love? No way! Here Jesus is showing us the infinite magnitude of the love of God, as measured by the infinite magnitude of his gift! “Whoever” means just that... whoever! Whoever believes in Jesus will ALWAYS receive the gift of eternal life – will always be forgiven.

Yes, Jesus certainly refers to a sin against the Holy Spirit that cannot be forgiven. You find it in Mark 3:22–30 and Matthew 12:31–32. So what is the work of the Holy Spirit? According to John 16:8–16 the work of the Holy Spirit is to convict us of sin and to lead us to Jesus. So what happens if you reject the work of the Spirit? The last thing you will do is to believe in Jesus Christ and ask him for forgiveness. For those people God can do nothing, not because there is no forgiveness available for them, but because they refuse to accept the gift.

The only sin that cannot be forgiven is the unrepented sin—the sin that you have not given to the Lamb of Calvary.

Have you ever been tempted to think that you are too sinful for God; that you are beyond the mercy of Christ!

Like you, I have done shameful things in my life. I have sinned against heaven and earth. Like you, when I was born, there was no holy halo around my head! Like you, I am a sinner, but I am a sinner whose sins have all been forgiven by the blood of Jesus.

Here is God’s final word on the matter: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9, NKJV).

You can take that to the bank – the one in heaven; it’s good for your eternal salvation.

I don’t know about how your life has gone, but do not let fear or doubt stop you from coming to Jesus. Do it now. If you want to, there’s nothing stopping you; Jesus made sure of that at Calvary, when he forgave the unpardonable sin.

▼ **ELIEZER GONZALEZ**

Senior Pastor, Good News Unlimited

THE OPEN SECRET

First FIRST

Christ gave us the key when he repeatedly used the word 'first' (see Matthew 6:33; 5:24; 7:5; 12:29; 17:27; 22:38 and 23:26). Those who put 'first' find joy, and they survive. Those who don't, do not.

Well, what is first? Wrong question. It should be, 'WHO is first?' Everybody knows the answer either consciously or unconsciously—God.

Gospel Central

God has given us an instruction book, and in the heart of the book we find the One who alone of all mankind never stained his life. He came to give us life more abundant, and he himself was its secret.

Central to Scripture is what Christians call the gospel. The word comes from the Bible itself and means 'good news'. Note that it is not 'good views'.

News is about something that has happened, something that has been done by another or others. Views are opinions, and opinions that may be false or true.

Consider the first proclamation by our Lord: Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:14-15, NASB).

Christ's Gospel First

Recall that in his first recorded sermon he admonished all to "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33, NASB).

So, when we link these passages, we are assured that the gospel is of first importance, and it alone admits us into the everlasting kingdom of God. Furthermore, it brings with it all things necessary for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3).

But just what is the gospel? Tyndale, to whom we owe the original text on which the King James Version is based, declared it to be 'the good, glad and merry tidings that makes the heart to sing and the feet to dance'. But we need more specifics.

Romans, The Gospel Book

Is there any part of the Bible that synthesises, concentrates

As each of us considers his or her world, certain facts stand out. It is a world of uncertainty, bewilderment, danger, pain, complexity, violence and risk, as well as a world of beauty, love, smiles, fun, music, flavours, colours and achievements. How can one find lasting joy in such an enigmatic world?

The secret has been known for thousands of years, but largely ignored. Yes, it is a world of griefs and graves, but there are multitudes of people who have found it to be a world of beauty and gladness.

and summarises the gospel? Yes, the first of the Epistles does so. Let us consider just two verses from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

Romans 5:18: As one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men.

Romans 8:1: There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Luther, the man God used to ignite the first gospel revival for centuries, was fond of saying that, while the Old Testament majored in law, it never forgot grace, whereas in the New Testament grace is pre-eminent without denigrating law.

The Word 'Faith'

Faith means reliance. It is a receiving of God's gifts, not an achieving. Faith is a channel, not a price we pay. It should never be confused with our emotions. The Bible never says we are

saved by our feelings. God's order is fact, faith, then feeling—never the reverse.

It was not the feelings of the Negro slaves in America that set them free. It was Lincoln's proclamation. Feelings are often liars. They are like the noisy children in a nursery, and only a person's will, activated by faith, can control them.

Romans 15:13 says that joy and peace are the result, not the precursors, of faith.

Law Versus Gospel

The law says, 'this do and you will live'. But the gospel says, 'live and you will do'.

The law says, 'pay me what you owe'. But the gospel states, 'I frankly forgive you all'.

The law says, 'the wages of sin is death'. But the gospel insists, 'the gift of God is eternal life'.

The law says, 'the soul that sins will die'. But the gospel says, 'whoever believes has everlasting life'.

The law says, 'make a new heart for yourself'. But the gospel cries out, 'a new heart will I give you'.

The law says, 'cursed is everyone that does not continue to do all the things written in the law'. But the gospel says rather, 'blessed is he whose sins are forgiven, whose transgression is covered'.

The law says, 'you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart'. But the gospel affirms, 'herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us'.

When the law was given at Sinai, 3,000 died in a matter of days. When the gospel was proclaimed at Pentecost, 3,000 people were given new life. 3,000 sermons on the law alone will not convert one person. One sermon on the gospel can convert 3,000.





The Gospel Elevates The Law

The gospel does not downgrade the law except as a way of salvation. The law is holy, infinite and eternal. But no one can obey the law without loving God, and no one loves God until convinced by the gospel that God loves him or her. Never forget Galatians 2:19.

The Cross Is Christ's Redeeming Act

Our salvation is possible because of the atoning sacrifice of God the Son. It is 'the redemption that is in Christ Jesus' that saves us.

2 Corinthians 5:14-21 enlarges this fact, and verse 14 further illuminates the good news. It tells us that when Christ died it was counted that we sinners died with our representative.

The New Testament is emphatic that we all died with Christ, were buried with Christ, rose with Christ and now, through God's grace, are viewed as seated in the heavenly places with Christ. When you understand this, then from an overflowing heart you can cry 'Hallelujah!'

The Good News Gospel

The gospel is the good news that what we could never do to reconcile God, he himself has accomplished (2 Cor. 5:14-21).

Christ's living and dying are mine, as though I had lived his life and died his death.

Gift, Not Demand

The gospel is not a demand that we become good in order to approach God. You and I do not need to be good to be saved, but we do need to be saved in order to become good.

God has come to us. He even beseeches us. See 2 Corinthians 5:20. What a marvel! The gospel is for the 'ungodly', for sinners of the darkest dye. He did not come to call the righteous.

'Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow. Though they are as red as crimson, they shall be like wool'. See all of Isaiah chapter 1 and particularly verse 18.

The gospel is about forgiveness for the past, present, and future. The believer's faults and failings are not reckoned to him or her. See Romans 4:8.

The gospel is about acceptance, now, this moment. It tells us that Judgement Day is over for us if we believe. It assures us that eternal life is ours now (John 5:24). We need not fear death—'to die is gain' (Phil. 1:21).

Sin Removed, Its Power Broken

The power of sin is never broken till the guilt of sin is removed. We do not have to achieve anything. Salvation is through receiving, not achieving.

There is no excuse for any sinner. God has made salvation so simple. Scripture says we need only to call upon God (Rom. 10:12). The promise is sealed and authenticated by God himself. Whoever calls on him will be saved.

May I endeavour to sum up the way of salvation in a way that anyone can understand? Two things we must clearly see—we have sinned and God has suffered. He suffered because there was no way we could earn forgiveness and eternal life. It had to be a gift but an infinitely expensive gift so that the law of God is not downgraded.

God did not wink at our sins. He exacted their penalty and paid it himself. How then should we live?

The Way, The Truth And The Life

Christ, and only Christ, is 'the way, the truth, and the life'. He is all and in all.

'Christ received is holiness begun; Christ cherished is holiness advancing; Christ counted upon as never absent would be holiness complete'.

He is not only the vine, he is the branches, the twigs and the leaves. When we identify ourselves with him by faith we are part of him, part of the vine.

Now we need not be anxious about anything. While without him we can do nothing, we can do all God wants us to do through Christ who strengthens us.

That Lord is declared in Jeremiah 23:6 to be 'the Lord our righteousness'. That is the gospel. It is wonderfully simple and simply wonderful.

Here is a beauty that outshines the sun, moon and stars. Rejoice in it this very hour!

▼ DR DESMOND FORD

LETTERS *from our readers*

GNU is a meeting of minds from a wide range of church affiliations and therefore opinions expressed in our articles may differ from that of our readers. Recognising that opinions can differ and we all have much to learn and unlearn, we encourage our readers to participate in this forum.



Punishment

Dear Ritchie,

I've been doing quite a bit of thinking about how we Christians should treat people who have broken the law: people like thieves, rapists and murderers, etc. Should they be punished severely to dissuade others from committing similar crimes, or should we take some other approach? I used to be of the opinion that punishment meted out by our judges was far too lenient, but lately, since more severe punishments have been introduced, I've been having a re-think on this issue because longer punishments are not solving the problem with the criminals themselves. It's keeping them out of circulation, which is good for the general public, but it's doing nothing to change their attitudes for the better. When they are released they're just as self-centred, violent and sex-crazed as before.

C.A.

Dear C.

There is a principle in Scripture to guide us in this matter, and it is this: Jesus was always solution-focused, not problem-focused. He offered his forgiveness to all, and never once refused it to anyone who wanted it. He did this because the offering and acceptance of forgiveness turns a person's life around, and this is what Jesus sought.

Jesus focused on each sinner's future, not on his/her past. His treatment of the woman caught in the act of adultery is an example of the way he viewed sinners. Although this woman deserved condemnation he said, "I do not condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin" (John 8: 2 – 11).

It should be our purpose to rehabilitate criminals rather than to exclude them from society for great periods of time. Like Jesus, we should focus on their future rather than on their past. Of course, where criminals are recidivists, who refuse to be rehabilitated, another approach would be necessary.



Jesus' Brothers

Hi Ritchie

I must have read, many times, that Jesus had brothers, but it wasn't until I read recently that his brother James became a devoted follower after he rose from the dead, that it sank in. In Matthew 13:55 Jesus' brothers are named as James, Joseph, Simon and Judas—obviously common names in Jesus' day. You point out that James became a follower of Jesus, but what about his other brothers? Is there any evidence anywhere that they too eventually accepted Jesus as the Messiah, because if they didn't wouldn't that undermine the fact that James became a believer?

R. S.

Dear R.

In his first letter to the Corinthians the apostle Paul makes an incidental remark that is pregnant with the kind of information you are seeking. There were some people in the church at Corinth who were criticising Paul for the way in which he supported himself while engaged in his missionary outreach. They did this because among the Greeks manual labour was looked down upon, and it was a scandal to them that Paul, in trying not to be a burden to the church, should be supporting himself by making tents. In his own defence Paul argues that he not only had the right to the support of the Corinthian church members, but that he and Barnabas also had "the right to take a believing wife along with [them], as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas."

It is evident from this passage that Jesus' brothers not only became believers in him, they also became active missionaries, proclaiming his resurrection to the gentiles.



Who is Righteous?

Dear Ritchie

I read in the Bible that the new earth will be "the home of righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:13), and "without holiness no-one will see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). The Bible is supposed to

be a book of hope, but what hope is there for us in these verses? Who can honestly claim they are righteous or holy?

W. R.

Dear W.

There are two types of righteousness or holiness. The first type is imputed, and the second imparted. The first is 100%, the second is never 100%, no matter how hard we try. Our title to eternal life depends solely on the first, but it's not possible to have the first without the second. And it is not possible to have the second without the first.

How do we receive the first type of righteousness, the righteousness that is imputed? Imputed righteousness is a gift - freely credited to our account. We receive this righteousness by receiving Jesus.

When we receive Jesus, he begins to live his righteousness through us, but because sin has damaged our characters, this second kind of righteousness is obstructed and stymied. Only when we receive new incorruptible bodies at the Second Coming will the righteousness that is imparted be unrestricted and undefiled.

Imputed righteousness is credited to our accounts when we exchange our sins for it. Jesus became "sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21).

Note that the righteousness that is given to us as a free gift is the "righteousness of God". In other words, there can be no righteousness greater than this kind. On what grounds do we receive such righteousness? "We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:10).

When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, Jesus says to us, as he said to the repentant felon on the cross, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). Paradise, heaven, eternal life, begins for us the very day we accept Jesus into our lives. It is at that point that "we cross over from death to life" (John 5:24). It is at that point that our new life begins.



Grape juice now or later

Dear Pastor Ritchie

I have a question about Jesus' statement in Matthew 26:29 where he said to his disciples at the Last Supper, "I will not drink of the fruit of this vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."

I understand that Jesus remained on earth for forty days between his resurrection from the dead and his ascension to heaven. My question is, did he drink "the fruit of the grape vine" during that time?

Dear W.

Yes, Jesus did eat and drink with his disciples during that time. Peter said that he and the other disciples "ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead" (Acts 10:41).

There are two questions that confront us as we seek an answer to your question. The first is, what did Jesus intend his disciples to understand by his statement? And the second, did Jesus really drink wine between his resurrection and ascension?

Firstly, Jesus was indicating that the Last Supper would be his last supper. It was the last meal he had before his crucifixion.

On the next day, however, while he was on the Cross he was offered "the fruit of the vine", which was "wine vinegar" (Luke 23:36). This symbolised the bitter cup that he chose to drink (Mark 14:36; John 18:11). When it was first offered to him he rejected it (Matt. 27:34), but the second time he received it and then cried out, "It is finished", and died (John 19:29-30). This indicates that he re-established the Father's kingdom on earth by his death.

Secondly, as it was customary for Jews to drink diluted wine with their meals, and as Jesus ate and drank with his disciples after his resurrection, it is highly likely that he drank the fruit of the grape vine with them. If he did, he would be signifying, in a way that they did not yet comprehend, that God's kingdom had been inaugurated on earth by his death and resurrection. It would not be consummated until his second coming, but it had been inaugurated. It was now a kingdom of grace, but then it would be a kingdom of glory.

SEMINARS

COORANBONG SEMINAR

Date:	3 May 2014
Theme:	The Book of Hebrews: The Gospel to the Legalists
Location:	Morisset Uniting Church 10 Stockton Street, Morisset 2264
10:00am	Dr Milton Hook Disengaging from the Shadows
11:00am	Dr Eliezer Gonzalez "The Mount Everest of the Book of Hebrews" - It's Not Where You Thought It Was
12 noon	Lunch - BYO
1:30pm	Dr Eliezer Gonzalez "Good News Unlimited - The Future is Now." This will be an exciting update on the latest news from GNU around the world, and how God is using us to take the gospel to the world. It will include a special video message from Des.

MELBOURNE SEMINAR

Date:	26 April 2014
Location:	Carey Baptist Grammar School Chapel 349 Barkers Road Kew 3101 (cnr. Danielle Street)
10:00am	Elenne Ford The Gospel Sweet Spot
11:00am	Dr Des Ford "The Miracle of Genesis"
12 noon	Lunch - BYO
1:30pm	Dr Des Ford "The Most Controversial Chapter in the Bible"

BRISBANE SEMINAR - To be announced.

FELLOWSHIPS

POTTSVILLE FELLOWSHIP

Fellowship meetings led by Pastor Ron Allen are held at 9:30 a.m. on the following Saturdays in 2014.

March 8, 22 | April 12, 26 | May 10, 24 | June 14, 28 | July 12, 26

Venue: Reef Room
Pottsville Beach Neighbourhood Centre
12 Elizabeth Street Pottsville Beach, NSW 2489

Contact: Ron Allen
Email: carron.741@gmail.com

GOOD NEWS FELLOWSHIP - Milton, Brisbane

GNU meetings are held every Saturday from 2:15pm to 4:00pm, at the auditorium behind the Royal Geographical Society of Queensland (RGSQ) building at 237 Milton Road, Brisbane.

People are invited to come earlier and bring their lunch, beginning at 12:30pm.

After lunch, our pastor, Eliezer Gonzalez, holds a Bible discussion and prayer, beginning at 1:15pm.

Our main presentation commences at 2:15pm.

**LOOK OUT FOR
THE NEXT ISSUE
OF THE GOOD
NEWS UNLIMITED
MAGAZINE!**

**Our next issue will take us to
some of the frontiers of the work
of gospel around the world.**

INTO ALL THE WORLD

A NEW DAY BEGINS



Eliezer Gonzalez
Senior Pastor, Good News Unlimited

Recently I was privileged to baptise a friend. Just before the baptism he told me that when he went under the water, he might take a while. That's always a concern for the one doing the baptising! But he explained that he was wearing a black T-shirt, and underneath it he had a white one. While he was under the water he wanted to take off the black and come up in the white T-shirt. As you can imagine it wasn't the most elegant baptism. But the symbolism was powerful!

We all love new things – new baby chickens, new love, new puppy dogs, and new opportunities.

Christianity is built on the bedrock of what was achieved at Calvary. Christianity is about holding on to that and letting go of everything else. Christianity is about recognising that everything else is worthless in the light of the Baby of Bethlehem, who is the Man of Calvary, and the Victor of the Open Tomb!

Some people define Christianity as being about conserving traditions, retaining outdated practices, and holding on to the beliefs and practices of the past. Quite simply, they are wrong. Try telling that to the earliest Christians in the years after the resurrection of our Lord! The faith of the earliest Christians was all about how the realities of the past had been totally blown apart by the achievements of the Lord who had walked this earth!

A new age had dawned upon this world because of the death and resurrection of the Son of God. Just read a few chapters of the book of Acts, or from the letters of Paul to catch a glimpse of the dynamic excitement that the TNT of the gospel caused in those earliest Christians. For them, the world was still trembling with his footsteps, and reverberating with the power of his resurrection. They knew without a shadow of a doubt that he had risen, because he worked with power in their midst!

The essence of the gospel is “newness”, and so we talk about the “new birth”. Christian living is also all about “newness”. Wherever you may be in your Christian walk, God is always calling you to something higher, something better, and something new. The essence of Christianity is “newness”.

When Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem – it was a new day.

When Jesus paid the price for sin at Calvary – it was a new day.

When he rose from the tomb in victory over death – it was a new day.

When you accepted Jesus as your personal Saviour – it was a new day.

And because Good News Unlimited is a gospel ministry, a new day has come for us as well.

New days are full of promise and opportunity; they are full of excitement and joy, in spite of the challenges that may lie ahead. And so it is for us as well.

Good things are meant to be shared. That's why we don't want to enjoy this new day in Christ all by ourselves. That's why we are inviting you to partner with us in spreading the Word.

It is just wonderful to wake up today and to know that we are all going to enjoy this new day together, as partners in the work of the gospel. You may be marvelling at what the Lord is doing already, but we will all be astonished at what he will do in the days ahead! Thank you for coming on this journey into God's new day with us; thank you for being part of Good News Unlimited!

Grace and Peace in Jesus!

▼ **ELIEZER GONZALEZ**

Senior Pastor, Good News Unlimited