



UNASHAMED

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For the Church,
the Bride for whom Christ
will soon return!

INTRODUCTION

What is the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

The shrill cries of a new-born pierced the stillness that swathed a silent night over 2000 years ago, and the world was never the same again. This was no ordinary child. His birth, though unassuming and uncelebrated, was destined to split the human timeline in two - into those who lived before and those who came after, as though all of human existence from either end of time turned to point back to this one child. This is no subtle nudge of indication. It is one gigantic sign. As the earth passed silently into that night, heaven rejoiced and the celebration overflowed into our realm and terrified a few shepherds who were tending their flock. “**Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord**”, the angel told them.¹ Now, it would be exceedingly foolish for any of us to assume that an event of such magnitude would not affect us. For all creation, including you, is subject to this babe born on Christmas day. How?

In the beginning, was God.² When we think of the beginning, most of us are naturally thinking about time. The first second to ever have ticked on this universe's clock. However, the beginning, in our context here, is not measured in time, but outside of it. For time itself finds its beginning in God, like humanity and all the rest of the created order. So, a better way to rephrase that would be to say that God was the beginning. Nothing existed before Him. He alone exists from eternity past to eternity future. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last. All the rest that are in the realm of the known and the unknown that humanity seeks and discovers, all of it has their beginnings in this God. So, you see, all are subject to Him.

What had remained a mystery for all those centuries was now revealed! Through Christ we now know more about God. There is One God, One Being, in three distinct persons - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We call Him, the Trinity. Each person in this Trinity is fully divine, but the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Spirit and the Spirit is not the Father. They are three and yet, they are One. Impossible? No, impossible is too weak a word. It fails before the might of this God. Nothing is impossible with Him.³ In 7 days, He created our world and everything in it. God created a good and perfect world, a world with no sin and no pain, a world of joy and pleasure, a world of peace and harmony. He created man and woman to rule over the earth and they were the most privileged of His creation, for they were created in His very own image - both Adam and Eve. This man and woman, the very first generation of all our ancestors, disobeyed God and broke the one command that God gave them and through their disobedience, caused brokenness to enter into the world. Sin gained a foothold in mankind, and all that was once beautiful was now filling with evil. Then, the inexplicable happened. It wasn't anger that prevailed in the moments that followed the fall of man, but mercy. Mercy that stayed the hand of God from wiping them out permanently. God, even though He warned Adam of the consequences before the fall, acted in mercy and banished him to work and toil on the earth till the day he died. Little did mankind know or imagine how He would restore us,

how He would remove our guilt. All that remained for humanity was to await that judgment of God where all men would perish under His wrath in the flames of His just and holy anger. Justice demands our lives, and we deserve to lose it, our sins against an eternal Holy God, deserving an eternal punishment.⁴

Through the shroud of this dark and hopeless destiny, the shepherds beheld the light of our salvation shine forth. Throughout history God spoke of this, of the hope for humanity, of the One who would come to save us from our sins, the Messiah. He came in human flesh, God incarnate, and He was called Jesus, the babe of Christmas. And thus, we have known 'grace' – unmerited favour shown to an undeserving people. O the depth of God's love that He has Himself come down to His own people to save them! In His display we do not see a painless love that stayed the hand of justice. His plan was not to overrule judgement, but to accomplish it by paying the cost. For in Him, unstoppable love and immovable righteousness meet, to uphold justice and love in equal, unquantifiable measure. Jesus died. God, the Son died and on His cross we see God's perfect justice, that should have fallen on us, fall on His only begotten Son, and we see God's perfect love in saving a people for Himself, those who believe in this Son.

If the story ended there, we would be, as believers, a people to be most pitied in the world, having put our hope for life in a person who lost it.⁵ Yes, Jesus died, but death could not keep Him, it's cords could not hold Him. On the third day, the Father raised Him up. On the third day, the Holy Spirit raised Him up. On the third day, He raised Himself up from the grave. The purpose of the Trinity always prevails. To this God who does all things for His glory, the lover of our souls, be glory and majesty and honour and praise forevermore!

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There is no fitter place to begin than with the greatest story ever told, the Gospel of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ. This tiny little book, if one can call it that, is an attempt to be unashamedly and unapologetically biblical. Out of a desire to not attempt to be excessively exhaustive, I've limited myself to 6 topics that, I find, warrant our immediate attention. I've even limited my thoughts to a page for each topic. Ideally, this would constitute no more than a single day's read, and if it gets you thinking and searching for more, then I shall rejoice in the knowledge that this book has served its intended purpose. My prayer and simple desire is that God would use this volume of *Unashamed* to kindle in your hearts a sincere intent and desire to conform to the word of God. Anything that brings about such an outcome is solely owing to the work of Christ, and everything else would announce the shortcomings of a poor author and are best ignored.

MUD PIES

Why we celebrate Christmas

“It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”

— C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory, and Other Addresses*

Christmas. The word carries several meanings these days. I agree with Lewis. We are half-hearted creatures that have turned a time of unfathomable and infinite joy and celebration into a season of shallow and limited joys that flutter away in the winds of the passing years. Christmas has become, for many of us, a season of making mud pies in this slum we call the world.

We live in an age where the truth is under attack. One where words are redefined to protect emotional comfort and the very meaning of life is answered a hundred different ways. Reality has become relative. However, the believing Christian can never lose sight of the reality of Christmas. For him, it is life. We have to turn to the Bible to understand what Christmas really stands for, and the only question that you really need to ask yourself is if this is the truth.

God is God and He is eternal, unchanging and sovereign. That means He is the beginning and the end of all things. He rules over all His creation and is never overcome, never defeated. He never changes and none can thwart His plans. On the other hand, we, the only creation privileged to be made after His own image, have disobeyed Him and sinned. We are like the vapour that disappears as fast as it appears, changed by every wind of doctrine and unable to add even an hour to our life on earth. The sin against an eternal God deserves an eternal judgment and as a consequence of sin that's rampant in all of humanity, we are all justly deserving of death. So, you see, life is merely a march into the flames of God's eternal justice ordained by His wrath. All that talk about Christmas being a season of giving and sharing, of stories of Mr. Scrooge, the Grinch and Santa are all mud pies. Agreed that these aren't necessarily sins in themselves. However, the truth is, they often end up being served up as distractions that keep us ignorant to the real celebration. Consequentially, we cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. What, then, is the real celebration?

That death was defeated so that we may be spared the wrath to come, that we may have eternal life. How? A baby was born. Not just any baby, but the Creator God Himself came down in human flesh to redeem His people. Who are His people? Those who would believe in His Name - Jesus Christ - repent of their sins and live for His glory. We celebrate Christmas because our Saviour was born, Christ the Lord. *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. - John 3:16*

SELFISM

Why the Gospel is not about you

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

— John 3:16

This is probably one of the most memorised verses in the Bible. Ever wondered why that is? Well, one reason is obvious - because God came down to save us from perishing. It's wonderful news. But at the heart of it, why are we drawn to this verse? Is it because we find our worth in God's willingness to sacrifice His own Son for our sake? Or is it because we find inexpressible wonder and delight in this baffling exchange where God sends His Son of infinite worth for people like us who are utterly unworthy? The two are very different roots that produce very different fruits. One is a man-centred view of the Gospel where man is the centre of all of God's purpose, while the other is a God-centred view of the Gospel where God is the centre of all His purpose.

The man-centred view goes something like this: God loves me so much that He came down to die on the cross for my sake. He offers me eternal life in Heaven with Him forever, if I believe in Him. If He went to such lengths to save me, then what is there that He wouldn't do for me. He would surely spare me pain, keep me from sickness and never let me fail. My dad would do the same for me if he could. So how much more, God the Father? I can succeed in everything I did as long as I had faith. I can reach my dreams and build my future and grow my life to any heights. I could live my better life now. All I had to do was to believe.

However, here's the problem. The teaching of the New Testament does not promise us a comfortable and painless life. It offers us a life of peace and hope amidst all of the pain and suffering. James asks us to consider it all joy when we encounter various trials (paraphrased).⁶ Paul, in [Acts 20:24](#) says, **“I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God”**. This is not a man-centred view. Believers mustn't see themselves as being the centre of God's purpose. Instead, they must see God's own glory as the centre of His purpose in their lives. The Bible says that the apostles left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the name when they were beaten.⁷ That's astounding!

The good news of the Gospel is not that Christians are worthy people. The good news is that no matter how unworthy we are, Christ is able to save. His love for us is not based on anything in us. It is truly unconditional, and in saving us who believe, it is His glory that is manifested, not ours. Yes, there's healing and there's deliverance from pain. Not because we deserve it but only if He wills it. We have nothing to boast about when His love for us is the means He has chosen to bring glory to His Name. God is the centre of our universe and never the other way around.

ASHAMED

Why the Gospel means everything to us

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

— Paul, Romans 1:16-17

I don't believe that any among us who claim to be Christian would consider ourselves ashamed of the Gospel. And that is true, at least to the extent of identifying ourselves as Christian. But being ashamed of the Gospel is not just denying such an identity. It can also be seen in our lives - the compromises we make in our values under social pressure, our turning away from necessary conflict, our lack in evangelism, church discipline, relationships and so on. Whenever we compromise the Gospel, it is because we are ashamed of it, because we do not know its power. The value and power we see in this Gospel that saves, is directly reflected by how clearly we understand what we are saved from.

The Bible tells us that God came down in human flesh and dwelt among His own creation, and yet they did not know Him. He came to His own people and yet they did not receive Him. **But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God (John 1:12).** Why did Jesus come? Why did we need saving? And, why could we not recognise Him? Such is the state of humanity that we not only cannot recognise the One who came to save us, we don't know that we need saving. We can't see our rebellion. You see, all of mankind is stricken with a disease, one that is so debilitating that death is the only cure. Sin. None can overcome it and there is no spiritual vaccine or ritual that can save an infected soul. And worst of all, we are all born infected. It causes us to live in constant hostility towards God and separates us from Him. We hide it in the facade of words such as higher rational thought, evidence, interpretation, meaning, love, tolerance etc, not knowing a dime's worth of what any of those words really mean. No amount of rational thought, evidence, interpretation, meaning, love or tolerance that is laid in front of a man is able to convince his deluded mind to believe in this child born on Christmas day. Sin blinds us to the reality and consequence of our disobedience. We are doomed for a destiny to perish in sin, under the eternal wrath of Almighty God. Though we were created good, our first father, Adam, sinned against God by disobeying Him and through his disobedience, brought upon His generations, death.

Believing in the existence of Christ is a historic fact but to believe in Christ as God incarnate and Saviour of our lives is a divine revelation.⁸ It is not that we don't have proof, the evidence is overwhelming, but only the Spirit of God can open our eyes to believe. Jesus is our God and He came to save us from our sin. This is the Gospel of Christ and it is the power for salvation to everyone who believes. Understanding the reality of God's justice, an eternal punishment for the wicked and the grace that has spared us who believe in Jesus through the gift of faith can never make us a people ashamed of the Gospel, ever.

FALSE SHEEP

Are we a Christian Look-a-Like

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

— Jesus, Matthew 7:21-23

Who is the spiritual man? How do we identify a man or a woman of God? Is it by how much they pray? Is it based on their relentless focus and passion about Christ and His purpose? Is it based on their preaching? Or even, their endurance of persecution, like a missionary in the field? No matter how many times the Bible warns us, we are still a poorly discerning crowd, at large. For us, a spiritual person is someone with a spiritual discipline higher than our own. Maybe they pray more than us or they preach better than us or they are being persecuted in a way that we can't imagine enduring. We somehow have defined spirituality on the basis of the flesh which seems inherently flawed. **"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:15).** Understand that there is a form of Christian look-a-like-ism that can fool you and it will be so even among the prophets and the teachers. Not only that, but this can also result in a dangerous, self-deceiving situation, where some of us may believe that we are the children of God because we have put on a 'cloak' of Christianity that is not real.

"You will know them by their fruits." How? Look at Matthew 7:21 again. If we identify Christians as those who call upon the name of the Lord, we see that many of such confessors will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Some of them may have even prophesied, cast out demons and done mighty works, all in the name of Jesus. If nothing else, we would see a person's ability to prophesy as a definite fruit of the Spirit, wouldn't we? Is it not proof that the one casting the demon out is a servant of God? Amazingly, no! None of these things are proof. They are all sheep's clothing that even wolves can wear.

Then, how can we know? How can we ever be sure? Look for the works of the law! We know clearly from the books of the New Testament that none are saved by meeting the requirements of the law. Yet, the law is altogether holy and righteous and good. No one is capable of keeping the law, no one but the One who did keep it for our sake, Christ our Lord. And now, those of us who believe in Him have the perfect obedience of Christ imputed on us, covering our ineligibility. So, we now stand blameless before God. And the Holy Spirit not only brings to effect this saving imputation of Christ, but He Himself now dwells in us so that we may now be continually sanctified and conformed to the image of Christ. Therefore, the true believer who is saved by the free gift of salvation in Christ's perfect work and obedience, will now inevitably end up growing in obedience to the law, not by their own strength but by the power of the Holy Spirit. These are the men and women of God, who grow in obedience to God's holy law.

TICKLED EARS

Why we need Sound Doctrine

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires.

— Paul, 2 Timothy 4:3

Doctrine divides, but love unites' - An oft-repeated modern day adage that has found popularity among many Christian communities. So many well meaning Christians nod their heads in approval to that statement. Love, after all, brings everyone together, while doctrine is simply a fancy word for nit-picking on unimportant issues that eventually result in discord, disagreement and division. 'Theology' is another word that's used synonymously with this understanding of doctrine. These are seen as a mere intellectual and literary pursuit devoid of the power of the Holy Spirit. Well, that's not true at all.

First things first, it is simply not true that love always unites. As much as love can cause unification, love can equally be responsible for division, and it must. For example, I love children and believe that they are a gift from the Lord, and so, I hate abortion. Thus, it is my love for children that divides me from those who approve of abortion. I love my country, and so I stand divided from those that want to harm it. Love does not always unite. The Bible says that God is love and His love divides. If heaven is the purest produce of God's love and affection, hell is the purest produce of His hatred. You see, if God is a God of love, then He must hate. Since He loves all that is good, He must hate all that is evil.

On the other hand, it is also not true that doctrine always divides. The word 'doctrine' by itself, simply means 'teaching'. How many of you will tell your children to go to school and love, instead of paying attention to the 'teaching' because it divides? No, in fact we advise them to learn and discern. And so, like any teaching, the teaching of the Bible brings about understanding - that is it's only direct result. Understanding can then unite, and also, quite naturally, divide. All that aside, the most important fact that is ignored here, is that love itself is one of the most important among Christian doctrine. So, to say that we don't need much doctrine is to say that we don't need much biblical teaching and that goes against everything Jesus, or the apostles, taught, and that included love itself, which is 'the most important commandment'.

Theology and Doctrine are not mere intellectual pursuits although many fall prey to such shallow understanding. It is knowing God, pursuing God for who He really is and what He really wants. Wouldn't you agree that that is the ultimate pursuit of all mankind? The Spirit of God is not in conflict with the word of God. The Bible was inspired by the Spirit Himself.⁹ A truly spiritual man draws closer to God only by the power of His Holy Spirit, only through the word of God. **For "faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." - Romans 10:17**

PROSPERITY GOSPEL

A false gospel

“ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

— Paul, Galatians 1:6-7

It is the age old question engraved onto the human soul. Are we meant to prosper? It is the default pursuit of all race of all times. Our striving has always been for a better life, and that, my friend, is not a sin. It is what sin has robbed us of. You see, when God created man, He did not create him and place him in a manger. He set him above all His other creations and gave him dominion over them. He created us in His own image. We were created prosperous. But before you say amen, what exactly was our prosperity? Health, wealth and success? Not health, since sickness and disease did not even exist for there to be a measure of prosperity in that regard. Not wealth, since Adam owned everything and no other man owned anything apart from him. You see, his prosperity was not in these things. His prosperity was his right standing before God, in blameless and holy fellowship with His Creator. His prosperity was his God. The moment you think about Adam's abundance and you think that his prosperity was in any other substance, remember that it is his very desire for such a thing that made him disobey God. In his sin, all of humanity was cut off and now we all mourn with groanings too deep for words, we and all creation with us to get back what we once lost, our true prosperity.

The health, wealth and prosperity gospel is not the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a false gospel and many are quickly deserting Him for this lie. There is nothing remotely defensible about it. The Bible is so clear in so many places in so many ways. It is not in order to sound pious that Jesus asked us not to store up riches on earth but in heaven.¹⁰ Whatever the argument, we simply cannot elude the very real struggles that Paul, and the other apostles and disciples, both during Jesus' time and down through the centuries, had to endure for the sake of the Gospel. Acts 5:41 tells us that the disciples walked away rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name, when they were beaten by the order of the Sanhedrin for preaching the Gospel. None of them, not even Jesus our Lord, lived on this earth in a manner that supports this false prosperity gospel. When a man told Jesus that he would follow Him anywhere, Jesus responded to him in **Luke 9:58** saying, **“The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”**

The proponents of this gospel would say that God is concerned with our whole being. I would agree with them. But the true wholeness of our being can never be on this earth. One day, He will come to take us home and there we will be whole again. So, does God want us to be unhealthy and poor? No, but that does not mean that His aim is that we be healthy and rich either. He wants to save us from our sin and sanctify us to be more like Christ. And if health and riches are a means to that end, He will do accordingly.¹¹ But if sickness and poverty are a means to that end, He will do accordingly.

Appendix :

1. Luke 2:10-11
2. Genesis 1:1 / John 1:1
3. Luke 1:37
4. Matthew 25:46
5. 1 Corinthians 15:17-19
6. James 1:2
7. Acts 5:40-41
8. John 6:44
9. 2 Timothy 3:16
10. Matthew 6:19-20
11. Romans 8:28

Recommended Further Reading :

Desiring God - John Piper

Knowing God - J.I Packer

50 reasons why Jesus came to die - John Piper

The Holiness of God - R.C Sproul

Taking God at His word - Kevin DeYoung

Systematic Theology - Wayne Grudem

The Treasury of David - Charles Spurgeon



6 TOPICS

1 GOSPEL

This tiny little book, if one can call it that, is the product of an attempt to be unashamedly and unapologetically biblical, about some pertinent issues in the church today. Out of a desire to not be excessively exhaustive, I've limited myself to 6 topics that, I find, warrant our immediate attention, and even limited my thoughts to a page for each topic. Ideally, it would constitute no more than a single day's read, and if it gets you thinking and searching for more, then I shall rejoice in the knowledge that this book has served its intended purpose. My simple desire and humble prayer is that God would use this volume of mud pies to kindle in your hearts a sincere intent and desire to conform to the word of God.

Redemption Hill Church is a reformed church in Trivandrum that held its first service in 2015. The release of this book is the church's effort to proclaim, unashamed, the Gospel of Jesus Christ as part of its Christmas celebration.

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