

Hey, how are you doing?

Happy Easter!

I've got some good news for you.

NEW SLIDE

Laugh/look

NEW SLIDE

Sorry.

I've got some good news for you.

I got this news from Paul, and you know he heard it from the top.

You know Paul...

NEW SLIDE

You must have seen Paul's letter to the church in Rome.

You know he begins that letter by introducing himself: as Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ, chosen by God to be an apostle – which means messenger – and sent out to preach God's Good News.

You see Paul refers to HIS Good News. That is God.

The Good News Paul preached wasn't Paul's news it was God's news.

Paul was God's ambassador, sent to tell us God's Good News.

NEW SLIDE

Paul spoke about the Good News he preached in another letter. This translation uses the word "gospel", which means good news. I use the words interchangeably. So if I say gospel, think good news.

Here, Paul promises that the Good News he preached had not been made up by any man.

Nor did Paul receive it from any man, nor was he taught it.

Rather, Paul received the Good News by revelation from Jesus Christ.

So, the Good News I got from Paul and want to tell you today: is God's news, received direct from Jesus.

NEW SLIDE

Paul thinks this news is crucial!

He told the Ephesians he served this news.

The Galatian church had managed to confuse the gospel. When Paul heard this he wrote to them to set things straight. And he didn't mince his words.

Paul prayed that anyone, even himself or an angel from heaven, who preaches a gospel different to the one he preached when he was in Galatia may be eternally condemned.

The good news I got from Paul, is some seriously important news, from God.

NEW SLIDE

And this is it: For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance:

Again, Paul makes clear that he received this news and had passed it on as a matter of first importance. And look at the line above, he says, if you don't hold on to this news, you have believed in vain.

LETS READ TOGETHER

that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also.

The Good News, is:

that Christ died for our sins, in accordance with the scriptures and was buried. And that, on the third day, he rose again, according to the scriptures, and appeared to Peter, the twelve, 500 brothers at once, James, the apostles and finally Paul.

Just as God had promised long before, through his prophets, Christ came and died for our sins and then rose, on the third day.

NEW SLIDE

We remembered Jesus's suffering and his death on the cross on Good Friday. We even call the day Good because of it.

But why is it good that Jesus died?

Is it good when a man dies?

What about a man of love and healing, who never hurt anyone? Is it good when he dies?

If this picture was realistic, there would outcry in the house today. Jesus had been beaten and humiliated to the point of death. He was nailed to the cross naked and bloody. A Roman crucifixion is said to be the most barbaric kind of death.

Isn't it odd to call a day good because a righteous man suffers a horrendous death.

NEW SLIDE

He was buried in a tomb.

And three days later, he rose again!

Though he was dead he took up his life again.

This is certainly better news than the cross.

But why is it good news for us?

NEW SLIDE

READ

Praise be to God because, in Christ, God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing.

Not some blessings, not many blessings, every blessing, in Christ.

The Cross of Christ is like a diamond. The blessings of the Cross like the many beautiful sides of a diamond. If you want to explore this diamond more you can do it in here [BIBLE] or join our next Alpha course. Today, I want us to remember three sides of the diamond.

NEW SLIDE

Here is the first:

LETS READ TOGETHER

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

Before the creation of the world, God chose us to be holy and blameless in his sight.

Does that sound right?

Should God see us as holy and blameless?

NEW SLIDE

"The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse."

What may be known about God has been plain since the beginning.

Since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and his divine nature—have been clearly seen.

God's qualities can be understood from what has been made, so men are without excuse.

God has not been hiding. He made the universe to display his power and his divine nature. And he didn't hide the universe, he put it in it.

But despite living in God's display cabinet, we have not sought God.

We have no excuse

NEW SLIDE

Worse still, we have preferred ourselves to God.

We have sought our good, before God's or the good of others. We have satisfied our desires, and rejected God's. We have shut our eyes to what is plain about God and thought nothing of getting to know him.

We have not feared to make ourselves god, over him.

All of us have lived like this at one time. By our nature we were objects of God's righteous anger.

As we refused to open our eyes to what is plain about God and turn from our own way, we stored up wrath against ourselves for the day of God's wrath.

... for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil...

But look [TITLE] scripture declares we are holy and blameless in his sight!

HOW IS THIS?

NEW SLIDE

In the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed. A righteousness from God, not from us. *Thank God!*

This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. All mankind has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God for which were made. And, by God's grace, all mankind are freely justified through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

We are freely justified through the redemption that came through the suffering of Jesus.

NEW SLIDE

Remember Paul's passage on our blessings.

"In [Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding."

Our sins are forgiven, his blood redeems us from our corrupt and evil ways.

Indeed, as Isaiah says, we are healed by his wounds.

NEW SLIDE

God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.

God sacrificed his own Son to atone for our wrong doings. One perfect sacrifice to atone for all the sins of those who believe in him. We are not suddenly holy and blameless when we believe. But, though faith in his blood, we become holy and blameless in his sight.

We receive this gift of God's righteousness through faith.

Do you remember *Abraham* and his near sacrifice of Isaac?

God promised Abraham he would have more descendants than the stars in the sky and all nations would be blessed through his seed. Abraham believed God even though he was nearly a hundred and his wife was barren. When Abraham finally had a son, to test him, God asked him to kill his son. Still Abraham believed God's promise.

Scripture declares "Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness". It is the same for all who believe. Abraham is the father of all who believe.

Neither we nor Abraham are righteous. We do not deserve God's favour. But God loves us and he is rich in grace. And so, he offers his favour to all who accept it with faith. Whomever believes is credited with righteousness by God.

All, of our spiritual blessings, flow from our justification through faith. See here, since we been justified through faith, we have peace with God, access by faith, rejoicing, hope and love poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Whatismore, since his blood has justified us, how much more shall he save us from God's coming wrath!

But I digress, I said I would cover 3 aspects of the good news. If you are interested in peace, joy, hope and love we will be running further sessions on the cross at 7 pm, every night for the rest of the year! *Well, we could.*

Or you could come on Alpha. **NEW SLIDE**

The second blessing of the cross I want to focus on is love.

LETS READ TOGETHER

In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ.

We were not lovely and we did not love God. But God loved us. God knew we would not love him, he knew we would rebel against him and reject his ways. Still, he chose to adopt us as his sons, through Christ.

The number one message of the Cross is that God loves us.

NEW SLIDE

LETS READ JOHN's WORDS

God is love. God showed us his love by sending his Son to die for us, that we might live through him.

This is love: though we did not love God, he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to atone for our failure to love him. Oh, amazing grace.

This is not worldly love, which depends on being loved back.

How many of us love those who hate us, enough to die for them?

God demonstrated his love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

NEW SLIDE

In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ.

You have heard of those who are "born again". Well the truth is that we must be born again to enter the kingdom of God. When we believe, we are a new creation.

We enjoy a second birth in the spirit, as sons of God. So through faith we become children of God.

And if we are God's children then we are heirs of God and brothers and co-heirs of Christ.

We are heirs to the glory of God. How great is this honour and glory? This is the extent of God's love for us.

And our hope of glory does not disappoint us. For we have a guarantee of our inheritance. When we believe God marks us with a seal, his Holy Spirit. Who a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance.

And through this spirit, God's love is poured into our hearts and we are transformed into his likeness, with ever increasing glory.

Our God, who is rich in mercy, has made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in our transgressions

And he has seated us with Christ in glory. So, that he may show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in us.

NEW SLIDE

LETS READ TOGETHER

The third beauty of the Cross is that it spelt VICTORY for God's plan for the World.

A secret plan centred on Christ, designed long ago with pleasure and with love. A plan foretold by God's prophets and completed in accordance with the scriptures they wrote. A plan explained to Paul and God's other apostles.

God's plan was that, at just the right time, he would bring everything together under the authority of Christ.

Our creator is almighty. He need not and cannot have his universe in rebellion against him. He could destroy us in an instant but that was not his plan. His plan was to restore the proper order. To bring those who had gone astray back to himself and bring everything, in heaven and on earth, under one head.

He planned to do this through his son and, at the perfect time, he sent son on his mission to his World.

You may remember that as he died on the cross Jesus declared "It is finished!". Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. Mission accomplished.

NEW SLIDE

READ

Christ must reign for it is part of God's plan.

Jesus went to the cross because it was God's plan. On the cross he accomplished all he was sent to do. But the plan is not finished. Jesus' kingdom exists wherever he reigns in a human heart. And he reigns to save and protect us.

At the right time, he will return in glory and all his people will be raised with him. Our perishable earthly bodies will be transformed into heavenly bodies that will never die. The Scriptures declare that death [will be] swallowed up in victory.

Then the last enemy will be destroyed. Death will be no more. And then the end will come and Jesus will turn his kingdom over to God the Father. So the Father, will be utterly supreme over everything, everywhere.

By his resurrection Jesus declared, with power, that he has authority over all things, even death. He claimed victory over the last enemy of God's plan and showed the World that God's plan will succeed.

God's news is good because it news of victory and success for God's plan, and news of our victory over sin and death.

NEW SLIDE

Because of Christ, we are no longer just Welsh, Nigerian, French, Swedish, Zimbawean, Italian, South African, Chinese, Taiwanese etc. Christ has made us members of God's household.

God has made us one and is building us together to be a holy temple, where the Lord lives by his spirit, built on the foundations of the prophets and apostles, with **Christ Jesus as our chief cornerstone**.

READ SECOND SCRIPTURE

God's intent was to show the wisdom of his plan through us. He had planned it, foretold it, achieved it and revealed it. Now, it is.

The Greek word for manifold is polipoikolous, which means many-coloured, it was used to describe Joseph's coat.

We may not understand God's plan but we can see its many-coloured wisdom in the healed lives among us and the unity God is bringing to our diversity.

NEW SLIDE

So is the cross good news?

IT IS THE BEST!

Because of the Cross, we are:

- 1 holy and blameless in God's sight;
- 2 adopted in love as God's sons forever; and
- 3 sharer's in God's victory.

Indeed, we have every spiritual blessing!

NEW SLIDE

God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

These are the words of Jesus. Jesus declared that whoever believed in him would not perish but have eternal life.

He did not say, Julio and Dan, he did not say the beautiful women of the Philippines, he did not say, the British.

Whoever believes shall share in the good news of the Cross.

Do you know how the bible ends?

NEW SLIDE

God has put many invitations in his bible.

The bible ends with this one, in words Jesus sent us by angel.

I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.

The Spirit of Christ and the bride – that is the church - say, "Come!"

Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

If you are thirsty come and take the free gift of life Jesus won for you on the Cross.

NEW SLIDE

Because of the Cross we have every spiritual blessing. These blessings were won with great cost.

But the gift is simply received.

To begin a relationship with God:

We must first say **sorry** – this is repentance, turning away from the things we know are wrong and saying sorry.

Secondly, we must **thank** Jesus for dying for us – this is faith, thankfully accepting Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

Thirdly, we must say **please**: please come and fill me with your Spirit – for a relationship with God is a gift to be received and is not forced on anyone.

It is simple to understand, just: sorry, thank you and please.

There is a prayer like this in the back to these red pamphlets, called “Why Jesus?”.

So, if you want, you can pray this prayer later. However, you may want to begin your relationship with God right now. We want to help you by praying this prayer of sorry, thank you and please.

So, it would be great if, just for a moment, everyone could close their eyes or bow their heads - just to give that person who would like to pray the opportunity to do so in a dignified fashion.

Jesus is here, he is risen from the dead, he's alive, you can speak to right now. Just echo this prayer silently in your heart:

Lord Jesus Christ,

I am **sorry** for the things in my life that have been wrong.
(If anything specific comes to mind, then ask his forgiveness.)

I now turn away from everything I know is wrong.

Thank you that you died for me on the cross. I now receive your forgiveness.

I trust you with my life. And I ask you **please** to come and to fill me with your Spirit, to be with me for ever.

Thank you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.