

# Shaped by the Gospel

## Day 1 of 5 • This day's reading

- Luke 18:9-14
- Luke 18:18-23

Devotional

### **Gospel Shapes Our Life**

How does one know their life is shaped by the gospel? What does it look like? The essence of the gospel is not following some rules. Rather the gospel is the power of God for our salvation and transformation. It changes our life radically. Every aspect of our life begins to be shaped by the gospel. How do we know whether we are shaped by a religious moralistic way or truly transformed by the gospel?

In a religious moralistic grid, one assumes the following:

- a. God justifies those with good behaviour and condemns those with bad behaviour.
- b. If you are a good person, then you will do well in life.
- c. If you are doing well in life, then you must be a good person.

We see these underlying assumptions in the prayer of the Pharisee. He compares himself to the tax collector and feels superior and justified because of his own good record. We also notice a similar assumption when the young ruler approaches Jesus and gives details of his moral record. Religious moralistic worldview looks at the world as good versus bad and focuses on external behaviour and not the heart.

A gospel shaped life on the other hand has a growing awareness of God and self. God is holy, set apart, glorious, blameless and righteous. When the gospel shapes your life, you have a growing understanding of who God really is. It does not mean God is becoming more holy but your own understanding of his holy character grows more and more.

As your awareness of God's holiness grows, your awareness of your own sin grows. You realise how sin is not just in external disobedience or breaking of laws but it runs deep into my heart. It does not mean as you grow in Christ, you sin more. But as you grow in Christ, your awareness of your sin increases.

As your awareness of God's holiness and your own sin increases, there is a growing appreciation for Jesus and the cross. Who will

bridge the gap between God's holiness and my sin? This gap is infinitely large and there is no way we can do anything about it, unless God has done something for us.

A life shaped by the gospel has a deep awareness of the gospel, a growing appreciation for the gospel, a sense of awe and delight over what Christ has done on the cross, a posture of being broken and humble over our sin and a confidence and security in Christ.

Is the gospel shaping your life? Do you see tendencies of religious, moralistic views that influence your behaviour? Is your heart moved by what Jesus has done on your behalf?

## Day 2 of 5 • This day's reading

- Colossians 3:1-14

Devotional

### **Gospel Shapes Our Heart**

What does a heart shaped by the gospel look like? How does one know if the gospel is active in his heart? What are signs of gospel renewal in an ongoing basis?

A gospel shaped heart has a consistent pattern of repentance and believing the gospel. We never stop needing to repent and believe the gospel. Repentance and faith are like two pistons in the engine of heart transformation.

The passage in Colossians 3 uses strong language when it comes to dealing with sin and calls us to seek God. It is basically talking about repentance and faith.

How do we repent? In our culture we repent only when we get caught or when we do something really bad. It is seen as a duty and often it is from a selfish motive to feel better. Gospel shaped repentance is a lifestyle. It results in joy and a deeper appreciation for Jesus.

We repent, not just of external and observable sins, but we repent of our sin under our observable sins. We repent of our heart idols such as comfort, approval, control and power. These heart idols are often behind our emotions and motivations in life. We recognise that any sin we commit is first breaking God's command to worship him alone. Our hearts run to find comfort and significance in things other than God.

What do we believe? If repentance is one side of the coin, the other side is faith. Repentance begins the cycle of gospel renewal. Faith completes it. Sin is fundamentally unbelief in the goodness and character of God. And we are called to turn from our sin and look to the gospel for our identity, approval and significance.

You are now raised with Christ to a place of honour and glory. You are God's chosen, loved and cherished. This is who you are in Christ. And this is possible because you are hidden in Christ, his righteousness, his death and his resurrection.

You don't have to hide in shame or downplay sin. The gospel gives you the confidence to be honest about your sin and brokenness and to believe in the gracious sacrificial gift of Jesus for you.

## Day 3 of 5 • This day's reading

- 1 Peter 2:9-10
- Romans 12:3-8
- Matthew 5:14-16

Devotional

### **Gospel Shapes Our Community**

How do we know if the gospel is shaping the way we live in community with others?

A gospel shaped community is characterised by one faith. We enjoy being in community with others who are also repenting and believing the gospel. Our posture toward community is not based on personal performance or feelings of superiority but it is based on humility and understanding our own brokenness and our need for Jesus.

A gospel shaped community is also characterised by living as one body. We are one family in Christ. We have one Father, one Saviour, one Lord and Master and one Spirit. When we are shaped by the gospel, our posture toward community is not to keep receiving or being a spectator. Rather, we move toward community to build others up, encourage, serve and care for them. When we are in community, we don't let others carry their burdens alone. We are not indifferent to their pain. We support

others by coming alongside them. It also means that we don't carry our burdens alone but we allow others into our lives and receive help and encouragement from them.

And lastly, a gospel shaped community is characterised by one purpose. We are on mission with others. We have one purpose, which is to glorify Jesus with all that we have. This purpose changes how we view our resources, time, money and talents. We move from a self-centered life to a life that is defined by the purposes of God in partnership with his people.

What is your view of gospel community? Do you move toward others with joy, humility and honesty?

## Day 4 of 5 • This day's reading

- Hebrews 4:1-13

Devotional

### **Gospel Shapes Our Rest**

There is a profound connection between our work and rest and there is deeper significance between our work and lack of rest. God did not rest on the seventh day because he was tired. Rather, God was giving us a model, setting a rhythm for our life and work.

Our lack of rest shows who our real master is. When we don't believe God's word to provide for us, care for us, to reward us and satisfy us, we seek other things for significance and security. Who or what we worship radically shapes how we work. When we cannot get into a rhythm of work and rest, it reveals that we are slaves to cultural expectations, materialism, success, expectations and approval of people.

If lack of Sabbath rest is a sign of being a slave, then practicing Sabbath rest is a sign of being free. And the gospel sets us free.

Sabbath rest is not just taking a break from work. It means to rest from the work you have done, enjoy the result of your work and



recalibrate your heart back to God who you ultimately worship. Sabbath rest is not just physical rest but it is a deep inner rest for our heart, soul and mind.

When I practice Sabbath rest from an understanding of the gospel, then I don't look for work to provide significance and security. I look to Jesus who approves me because of his perfect work on the cross. Such an understanding of the gospel helps you to enjoy work and the benefits of your work without having to exploit and abuse others.

When we think about Sabbath rest, we are not talking about being inactive the whole day or wasting time watching our favourite shows; those are signs of deeper heart issues as well. A biblical understanding of Sabbath rest involves not just recreation and inactivity, but it also involves worshiping God, reading and meditating on God's word. It involves doing work that you don't do during your workweek like serving others or taking up a hobby. Spending time with family is also part of this rest, though it is not the focus. Keeping a healthy balance of all these and practicing the discipline of rest over a period of time gives us emotional and spiritual health.

The goal of Sabbath rest is not just physical rest and recreation. The goal is to enjoy God, knowing that He is our rest, and realizing the benefits and freedom that the gospel brings to us.

## Day 5 of 5 • This day's reading

- John 17:4-5
- John 17:10
- John 17:13-19

Devotional

### **Gospel Shapes Our Mission**

We are all on a mission. A life without a mission is meaningless. Oftentimes we seek meaning by being on mission like the rest of this world in our pursuits for success, money, fame, position and status.

Jesus came to earth on a specific mission: to glorify the Father. Jesus sends us on a specific mission into this world.

What shapes our mission? How do I know if the gospel is transforming my mission in life?

Our mission is tied to what we glory. The things we glory in determine how we spend our time, money, resources and who we spend it with. If we glory in position, comfort, success, then it shapes our motivations in life. It shapes our choices and priorities. It rules over us.

Oftentimes we live for our own glory. We want to be great, comfortable and significant. There is nothing inherently wrong with these but if they become our ultimate goals, then they control our lives and make us slaves.

The gospel shapes our mission by making us glory in Christ. He is our chief ambition. He is the one we pursue with all our heart. We realise nothing in this world satisfies us and even if it does, it is temporal and fleeting. When I understand that Jesus came on a mission to rescue me and deliver me so I can be accepted and eternally forgiven, when I understand that my value and identity is in Christ who loves me lavishly, then what I pursue and how I pursue it, changes.

The result of a gospel shaped mission is joy and the response to God's call of mission is obedience. How can you allow God to shape your mission? Look at the glory of Christ. Look at the beauty of the gospel. The gospel heals our hearts from vain pursuits and makes us people who are on mission with Jesus in renewal of this world.