

# THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

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## The Perfection of Ketchup

Joshua Riggins

Malcolm Gladwell wrote in an article entitled “The Ketchup Conundrum,” “What was true about a yellow condiment that went on hot dogs was not true about a tomato condiment that went on hamburgers... I guess ketchup is ketchup” (*What the Dog Saw*, p. 50). The article details why ketchup lacks several varieties like mustard. Instead, one kind of ketchup and one ketchup maker outstrips all the others, Heinz. This brand alone has formulated ketchup to meet all our taste buds’ senses. They call this high amplitude. It all blends in a beautiful masterpiece. Nothing else can come close to matching it, and nothing can be added to it to make it any better.

As I read through this lighthearted article, it brought to mind the Bible. Certainly, the Bible doesn’t speak of amplitude, or ketchup, or anything of the sort. However, much like ketchup, the Bible is a complete masterpiece, needing no additions. There is no other book that can match its truth. There is no other book that can provide us with a more complete picture of salvation, God, sin, hope, love, joy, peace, or evil.

**Galatians 1:8** says, “*But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.*” Why was Paul so concerned that the gospel did not come from any other source, even an angel from heaven? If we were to receive a gospel from such a reputable, powerful source, we would tend to want to believe it. It is our nature to update things as we go along. We look for someone's most recent picture to get the most accurate picture. When a judge considers a case, he usually decides on the newest statutes. However, Paul profoundly puts forward the fact that no updates are needed. The Bible is perfect and complete.

Paul similarly states in **2 Timothy 3:16-17**, “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man*

*of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*” No additional scriptures would make us any more complete. No additions to the ketchup formula will make it any more like ketchup. It is complete. The scriptures are the whole Word of God, and we cannot be made any more complete than through their instructions.

Jesus proclaims a definitive statement regarding himself, “*Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word he shall never*

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*We may spend hours scrolling social media, an hour reading our favorite book, and a few hours watching the television, but we struggle to find time to feast on the Word of God. How terrible to end our life and hear Christ say as he did to the Pharisees, “Have you never read in the Scriptures...”*

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*see death” (John 8:51).* No other Word can offer authentic, unending life. Other books can offer enlightenment or vague and often false promises of an extension of our earthly life. They cannot provide the pure and perfect. Only one, the Christ and the Word, could proclaim that, through faith in Him, we would never see death.

John tells us that not all accepted the Word. “*He came to his own, and his own did not receive him*” (**John 1:11**). In part, they didn’t receive him because they neglected to understand and appreciate the Word of God. In **Matthew 21**, Jesus spoke to the chief priests and Pharisees, saying,

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*Have you never read in the Scriptures: "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes"? Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it (verses 42-43).*

We are that blessed people who were given that kingdom through belief in His Word. (see **1 Peter 2:4-10**) A precious, perfect, whole, authoritative, and life-giving Word presented to us by the mercy of God so that we might look more and more like the perfect son of God for which God designed us. His Word needs no other element blended in to bring us joy (**1 John 1:4**), define for us love (**Ephesians 5:1-2**), equip us to destroy false ideas (**Ephesians 6:17**), and nourish us to godliness leading to life (**1 Timothy 4:6-8**). As the psalmist so aptly states, "I rejoice in your word as one who finds great treasure" (**Psalms 119:162**).

Our world is filled with an overabundance of media, just as many knockoffs don't quite have the correct formula for ketchup. If we're not careful, our utilization will give the impression that each is just as worthy as another. We may spend hours scrolling social media, an hour reading our favorite book, and a few hours watching the television, but we struggle to find time to feast on the Word of God. How terrible to end our life and hear Christ say as he did to the Pharisees, "Have you never read in the Scriptures..." Therefore, let us prioritize and relish the Word of God!

~ 401 Douglas Dr, Bloomfield, IN 47424  
jgriggins@gmail.com

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*Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; For they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, Because I keep Your precepts. I have restrained my feet from every evil way, That I may keep Your word. I have not departed from Your judgments, For You Yourself have taught me. How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way. Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path (Psalm 119:97-105).*

## "Go and Sin No More"

Louis Garbi

Thus, Jesus spoke to a woman caught in the act of adultery. Her accusers wanted to corner Jesus with this woman who had been so accused. This is recorded in **John 8:1-11**.

Through His ministry, Jesus put the leadership of Israel on notice concerning the righteous mercy of God and their own unrighteousness. Consider these previous events from the **book of John**:

- Jesus drove the money changers and sellers of livestock from the temple (**2:13-17**).
- He taught that God did not send His Son to condemn but to save (**3:17**).
- A Samaritan woman was given hope (**4:6-29**).
- A man was healed on the Sabbath (**5:1-16**).
- The leadership of Israel was criticized for scratching each other's backs while rejecting the truth (**5:36-47**).

It appears they sought to expose Jesus for His light touch regarding sinners and seeming inconsistency to the Law: "Now Moses, in the law commanded us that such should be stoned (see **Leviticus 20:10**). But what do You say?" Jesus remained silent, "as though He did not hear," writing with his finger on the ground. They continued to press Him. Jesus "raised Himself up and said to them, 'He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.' And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground." Here they came, making a big spectacle, and Jesus treated it as insignificant. There was no outrage or lengthy speech. He just put words on the ground with His finger. Their foolishness was exposed.

This account is very attractive. All have sinned. And the idea of sinners condemning sinners... well, it is encouraging to see this attitude put in its place. These men weren't faithful to God, even according to the Law. The fact they did not produce the woman's accomplice, contrary to the Law, strongly suggests he was one of their own. They departed, beginning with the oldest, convicted of guilt.

When Jesus said, "Go and sin no more," it was one of the many examples where Jesus prepared people for the covenant He would soon bring in. "Go and sin no more," expressed God's

desire to save the lost. Redemption from sin came in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Though the seal of redemption had not yet been applied, this woman was being prepared for salvation. "Go and sin no more" came from "God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did" (**Romans 4:17**). Jesus' words pointed to the fulfillment of God's promise, "And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (**Genesis 12:3**). The apostle Peter revealed the reality of this blessing, "God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities" (**Acts 3:26**). Jesus came to free us from the bonds of our guilt, a Savior for lost humanity.

A cloud sometimes covers our hearts. The blessing of redemption can seem veiled behind these words: "sin no more." Ah, the forgiveness we can gladly accept. But "sin no more," how can this be? Two elements of God's grace come to mind:

- Through grace, we can receive strength to go and sin no more.
- We have an Advocate as we learn to apply this standard.

A sample from Romans, chapters six through eight teaches what it means to go and sin no more:

*Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace* (**Romans 6:12-14**).

According to these words, strength is committed to "not let sin reign." Through Jesus, the things which once enslaved us, are now under our control. This is exemplified when Paul wrote, "God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (**Galatians 6:14**). In other words, he was able to crucify the impulses of his flesh, to subdue them and kill them. The other part is that he was bound to be in the world bearing the burden of the love of God, crucified to the world. There is a real prospect for change in one's life through Jesus. What hope! The liar, drunkard, thief, fornicator, adulterer, homosexual, proud, and unyielding can be forgiven and given the capacity to maintain innocence.

Yet, we are but children and must grow in grace. John wrote,

*My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not*

*sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world* (**1 John 2:1-2**).

Jesus taught about forgiving our brother seventy times seven (see **Matthew 18:21-22**). If God expects this of us, how much more can He do this for His children? For those of us who struggle with sin after being converted, there is assurance that God is willing for our Advocate to stand on our behalf seventy times seven. He stands for the sake of our forgiveness and growth. There is light at the end of the tunnel, and victory is assured, if we will but confess and repent of our sins. "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**).

"Go and sin no more" speaks of the power of God to forgive. Also, it speaks of His power to give us life. Within this new life is the power to sin no more. "Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, 'I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life'" (**John 8:12**).

~ 124 Locust St., Barnett, MO 65011-1004  
~ garbi14@gmail.com

## Glory to God!

The church in **Fayette, MO** gladly received **Tec** and **Sheila Chapman** as members of the congregation on May 12.

On May 19, the church in **Excelsior Springs, MO** warmly welcomed **Mike** and **Candy Donahue** as members of the congregation.

The church in **Pleasant Hill, IA** praised God with the heavenly chorus when **Leah Anguiano** was baptized for the remission of sins.

## Blessed Are the Dead

**Norman Dell Riekens**, 88, of **Corydon, IA** passed away on May 6 at his home. He was born in **Clear Lake, IA** on March 25, 1936. After he graduated, he joined the National Guard.

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*kvcoc.org.*

Norman worked as a Plant Manager for Shivver's and then went on to be the Supervisor of Maintenance for East Penn/Voltmaster, where he retired. He also owned a sewing machine repair shop in Corydon for many years. Norman was a long-time Wayne County Hospital board member and a faithful member of the **Chariton, IA, Church of Christ**. He enjoyed hunting, fishing, carpentry, and spending time with his friends and family. Norman is survived by his daughter, **Kathy (Don) Mackey**; son-in-law, **Dr. Marvin Lynn Faulkner**; four grandchildren; and seven great-grandchildren. Norm was preceded in death by his wife **Mary Jo**; daughter, **Tammi Faulkner**; and grandchildren, **Andrew Dennis** and **Taylor Faulkner**.

**Barbara Grantham**, 97, of Fremont, CA went to be with Jesus on May 25. Her husband of 74 years, **Kenneth Grantham**, was at her side. Sister Barbara was a faithful member of the church in **San Jose, CA**. The family welcomes cards of sympathy for those who know this wonderful couple:

**Kenneth Grantham, 35490 Mission Blvd., Fremont, CA, 94536**

## *Special Meetings*

The church in **Kirkville, MO** plans a "Soul Winners Workshop" for July 20. Elder **Dan Green** shares this announcement:

*This is personal evangelism training like nothing you've experienced. We'll talk about why we're not winning the lost, how we can do a better job, the right attitude and approach of a soul winner, how to initiate a gospel discussion with someone, and a detailed "A to Z" method of sharing the gospel with them one-on-one. This will happen on July 20 from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm. You can contact Dan Green @ [dgreen67@gmail.com](mailto:dgreen67@gmail.com) for more info. You can also find info on the church website*

## **2024 Meetings**

July 1-5.....Midwest Bible Campout, Eminence, MO  
July 20.....Family VBS, Old Lamine, rural Blackwater, MO  
July 20.....Evangelism Workshop, Kirksville, MO  
July 20-26.....Murray Road, Lee's Summit, MO  
August 25.....White Oak, rural Ethel, MO  
August 31-September 1.....Pleasant Hill, IA  
September 29.....Braymer, MO  
October 4-6.....Fall Campout, Unionville, MO

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**Wade Stanley, 18078 State Highway 149, Unionville, MO  
63565 [wadestanley@gmail.com](mailto:wadestanley@gmail.com)**

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