

Greek Word Studies:

Gospel (2098) (euaggelion from e^o = good + agga^ollo = proclaim, tell) is literally good news or glad tidings.

Spurgeon's Sermons on Gospel...

1 Timothy 1:15 The Glorious Gospel
 Proverbs 25:25 Good News
 Acts 13:49 Gospel Missions
 1 Corinthians 9:16 Preach the Gospel
 1 Thessalonians 1:5 Degrees of Power Attending the Gospel
 Philippians 1:27 The Gospel's Power in a Christian's Life
 2 Corinthians 2:15-16 The Two Effects of the Gospel
 2 Corinthians 5:20-21 The Heart Of The Gospel
 Lamentations 4:22 A Message From God For Thee
 Acts 20:21 Two Essential Things
 Proverbs 31:6-7 The Gospel Cordial
 Psalm 51:7 The Wordless Book

In secular Greek it originally referred to a reward for good news and later became the good news itself. The word euaggelion was commonly used in the first century as our words "good news" today. The idea then and now is something like this - "Have you any good news (euaggelion) for me today?" This was a common question in the ancient world.

Our English word Gospel is from the Old English or Saxon word g^odspell (g^od = good + spell = message) which is literally "good tale, message". When I was a young man Godspell was actually the name of a popular musical play (See description). I wonder if they really understood the meaning of this word which is the very foundation stone of Christianity.

In modern secular use Gospel has an interesting meaning of something accepted as infallible truth or as a guiding principle (e.g., such and such is "the Gospel truth"). This is not a bad Biblical definition either!

In ancient secular Greek as alluded to above, euaggelion described good news of any kind and prior to the writing of the New Testament, had no definite religious connotation in the ancient world until it was taken over by the "Cult of Caesar" which was the state religion and in which the emperor was worshipped as a god (see more discussion of this use below).

OUR MULTIFACETED GOSPEL

The writers of the New Testament adapted the term as God's message of salvation for lost sinners. Euaggelion is found in several combination phrases, each describing the Gospel like a multifaceted jewel in various terms from a different viewpoint (from the NASB, 1977):

the Gospel of the kingdom (Mt 4:23)

the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Mk 1:1) - it centers in Christ

the Gospel of God (Mk 1:14) - it originates with God and was not invented by man

the Gospel of the kingdom of God (Lk 16:16)

the Gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24-note),

the Gospel of His Son (Ro 1:9-note)

the Gospel of Christ (Ro 15:19-note)

the Gospel of the glory of Christ (2Co 4:4)

the Gospel of your salvation (Ep 1:13-note)

the Gospel of peace (Ep 6:15-note)

the Gospel of our Lord Jesus (2Th 1:8)

the glorious Gospel of the blessed God (1Ti 1:11)

In Ro 16:25, 26 (note) Paul called it "my Gospel" indicating that the special emphasis he gave the Gospel in his ministry.

For a rewarding study, study the preceding references in context making notation of the truth you observe about the Gospel (Download InstaVerse. to enable you to read the verse in your favorite version and in context... anywhere on the Web!) If you would like a special blessing, take an afternoon to go through all 76 uses of euaggelion in context making a list of what you learn about the Gospel. The Spirit of God will enlighten your heart and encourage your spirit in a very special way...and you'll want to share the "good news" with someone because of your "discoveries"!

Wiersbe comments that...

The Gospel is called "the Gospel of God" (Mark 1:14) because it comes from God and brings us to God. It is "the Gospel of the kingdom" (Mark 4:23, Mt 9:35, Mt 24:14, Lk 16:16) because faith in the Saviour brings you into His kingdom. It is the "Gospel of Jesus Christ" (Mark 1:1) because He is the heart of it; without His life, death, and resurrection, there would be no Good News. Paul called it "the Gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24) because there can be no salvation apart from grace (Eph. 2:8-9). There is only one Gospel (Gal. 1:1-9), and it centers in what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross (1 Cor. 15:1-11). (Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary - New Testament. 1989. Victor or Logos or Wordsearch)

Euaggelion - 76 times in 73v - Mt 4:23; 9:35; 24:14; 26:13; Mk 1:1, 14, 15; 8:35; 10:29; 13:10; 14:9; 16:15; Acts 15:7; 20:24; Ro 1:1, 9, 16; 2:16; 10:16; 11:28; 15:16, 19; 16:25; 1Co 4:15; 9:12, 14, 18, 23; 15:1; 2Co 2:12; 4:3, 4; 8:18; 9:13; 10:14; 11:4, 7; Gal 1:6, 7, 11; 2:2, 5, 7, 14; Ep 1:13; 3:6; 6:15, 19; Phil 1:5, 7, 12, 16, 27; 2:22; 4:3, 15; Col 1:5, 23; 1Th 1:5; 2:2, 4, 8, 9; 3:2; 2Th 1:8; 2:14; 1Ti 1:11; 2Ti 1:8, 10; 2:8; Philemon 1:13; 1Pe 4:17; Rev 14:6.

The only use of euaggelion in the Septuagint (LXX) is in Second Samuel...

when one told me, saying, 'Behold, Saul is dead,' and thought he was bringing good news (Lxx = euaggelion), I seized him and killed him in Ziklag, which was the reward I gave him for his news. (2 Samuel 4:10) (As an aside the verb form euaggelizo is found more often - here are the uses of the verb in the LXX - 1Sa 31:9; 2Sa 1:20; 4:10; 18:19f, 26, 31; 1Kings 1:42; 1Chr 10:9; Ps 40:9; 68:11; 96:2; Isa 40:9; 52:7; 60:6; 61:1; Jer 20:15; Joel 2:32; Nah 1:15)

A CONCISE DEFINITION OF THE GOSPEL

1 Now I make known to you [since it seems to have escaped you], brethren, the Gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain (does not teach that true believers are in danger of losing their salvation, but it is a warning against non-saving faith -- could be translated "unless your faith is worthless" -- holding fast was the result and evidence of genuine salvation). 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. (See notes 1Corinthians 15:1; 15:2; 15:3; 15:4; 15:5; 15:6; 15:7; 15:8)

Euaggelion was commonly used in the Greco-Roman culture as "a technical term for "news of victory." The messenger appears, raises his right hand in greeting and calls out with a loud voice: "rejoice -- we are victorious". By his appearance it is known already that he brings good news. His face shines, his spear is decked with laurel, his head is crowned, he swings a branch of palms, joy fills the city, euaggelia are offered, the temples are garlanded, an agon (race) is held, crowns are put on for the sacrifices and the one to whom the message is owed is honored with a wreath...[thus] euaggelion is closely linked with the thought of victory in battle. " (Theological Dictionary of the New Testament) This is a convicting definition - here a pagan messenger radiantly announces good news of an earthly victory. How much more radiant should we be who are the

bearers of the great news of Christ's eternal triumph over sin, Satan, and death!

Euaggelion was used in secular Greek chiefly in connection with oracles (i.e. the promise of some future event) and in the imperial cult that euaggelion acquires a religious meaning. In the latter sphere news of the "divine" ruler's birth, coming of age or enthronement and also his speeches, decrees and acts are glad tidings which bring long hoped-for fulfillment to the longings of the world for happiness and peace (albeit a counterfeit hope and peace). An instance of this is the decree of the Greeks of the province of Asia c. 9 B.C. marking the birthday of Augustus (23 September) the beginning of the civil year (this is worth reading as an example of thinking that has become darkened) --

"It is a day which we may justly count as equivalent to the beginning of everything" if not in itself and in its own nature, at any rate in the benefits it brings -- "inasmuch as it has restored the shape of everything that was failing and turning into misfortune, and has given a new look to the Universe at a time when it would gladly have welcomed destruction if Caesar had not been born to be the common blessing of all men...Whereas the Providence which has ordered the whole of our life, showing concern and zeal, has ordained the most perfect consummation for human life by giving to it Augustus, by filling him with virtue for doing the work of a benefactor among men, and by sending in him, as it were, a savior for us and those who come after us, to make war to cease, to create order everywhere...and whereas the birthday of the God [Augustus] was the beginning for the world of the glad tidings that have come to men through him...Paulus Fabius Maximus, the proconsul of the province . . . has devised a way of honoring Augustus hitherto unknown to the Greeks, which is, that the reckoning of time for the course of human life should begin with his birth" (compare our use of BC to AD because of the birth of Christ!) (E. Barker: From Alexander to Constantine: Passages and Documents Illustrating the History of Social and Political Ideas 336 B.C.-A.D. p337, 1956)

In contrast to the counterfeit Gospel, the human proclamation of the Gospel (euaggelion) does not merely herald a new era, but in fact actually brings it about because the euaggelion has within it the inherent power to germinate and generate salvation in those who hear it proclaimed. If this is true (and it is), then why are so many saints shy about speaking forth the good news of the greatest story ever told?!

The new testament evangelists appropriated euaggelion in reference to the good news of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. "Gospel" in fact was Paul's favorite term for his message and occurs nine times in Philippians (more proportionately than in any other letter). In the NT in Paul's letters the meaning of euaggelion narrows down to the specific sense of the "good news" that God has acted to save people from their sins and to reconcile them to Himself in or through Jesus Christ (cf Mt 1:21; 1Co 15:1, 2, 3; 2Co 5:19). For Paul, the Gospel is not merely good news in the sense of words spoken and heard, i.e. a good story, but is itself "the (inherent, dynamic) power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Ro 1:16, 17-note). The Gospel then possesses the inherent power to deliver (rescue and preserve) otherwise eternally lost sinners "from the domain (the power = right and the might) of darkness" and transfer them "to the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Col 1:11, 12, 13-note).

Paul reiterated the truth of the living, dynamic aspect of the Gospel in his epistle to the Colossians writing that because they were saved, the saints now had a

"hope laid up (reserved, laid away for preservation, waiting, in store) for (them) in heaven, of which (they) previously heard in the word of truth, the Gospel, which has come to you, just as in all the world also it (the Gospel) is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it (Gospel) has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it (Gospel) and understood the grace of God in truth just as you learned it (Gospel) from Epaphras...." (Col 1:5, 6, 7-see note Col 1:5, 6-7)

The Gospel is not a stagnant system of ethics but is the Word of Truth which is living, moving, growing, bearing fruit and spreading.

The Gospel possesses a divine energy that causes it to spread like a mustard seed growing into a tree (Mt 13:31,32).

The Gospel produces fruit both in the internal transformation of individuals, and also in the external growth of the church. The living Gospel is the power that transforms lives. As it does so, the witness of those transformed lives produces fruit, including new converts. So as the Gospel produces fruit in individual lives, its influence spreads.

Finally, note that although the Gospel reaches its consummation in the NT with the truth of the birth, death, burial, resurrection and soon, sure return of Jesus Christ, the Gospel was also proclaimed in the Old Testament.

Paul teaches us that

"the Scripture (in context the Old Testament), foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the Gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS SHALL BE BLESSED IN YOU." (Gal 3:8)
In other words, Old Testament saints were saved by faith in the Gospel, just as are NT saints. In fact even in the face of man's first sin, God promised the Gospel declaring to Satan "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He shall bruise you (Satan) on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel." (Ge 3:15) The salvation we enjoy today was promised by the prophets, though they did not fully understand all that they were preaching and writing (1Pe 1:10, 11, 12-note).

William Tyndale, Christian martyr in the 1500's said...

"Euaggelion (which we call Gospel) is a Greek word, and signifies good, merry, glad, and joyful tidings, that makes a mans heart glad, and makes him sing, dance, and leap for joy."

A. B. Simpson is reported to have said that the Gospel...

Tells rebellious men that God is reconciled, that justice is satisfied, that sin has been atoned for, that the judgment of the guilty may be revoked, the condemnation of the sinner canceled, the curse of the Law blotted out, the gates of hell closed, the portals of heaven opened wide, the power of sin subdued, the guilty conscience healed, the broken heart comforted, the sorrow and misery of the Fall undone. (10,000 Sermon Illustrations. Dallas: Biblical Studies Press)

Christ commands believers to share this Good News with the rest of the world. This Good News is Christ's life-giving message to a dying world

Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creation." (Mk 16:15)
FROM THE FIRST DAY UNTIL NOW: apo tes prots hemeras achri tou nun:

from the first day you heard about it. (CEV)

from the time it first came to you even until now (Weymouth)

from the time you first heard it until now (NLT)

for your fellowship (your sympathetic cooperation and contributions and partnership) in advancing the good news (the Gospel) (Amp)

Matthew Henry regarding the phrase "From the first day until now" comments that

those who sincerely receive and embrace the Gospel have fellowship in it from the very first day: a new-born Christian, if he is true-born, is interested in all the promises and privileges of the Gospel from the first day of his becoming such....It is a great comfort to ministers when those who begin well hold on and persevere.

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Five-Finger Prayers (Read: James 5:13-18) Pray for one another. --James 5:16

Prayer is a conversation with God, not a formula. Yet sometimes we might need to use a "method" to freshen up our prayer time. We can pray the Psalms or other Scriptures (such as The Lord's Prayer), or use the ACTS method (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication). I recently came across this "Five-Finger Prayer" to use as a guide when praying for others:

* When you fold your hands, the thumb is nearest you. So begin by praying for those closest to you--your loved ones (Php 1:3, 4, 5).

* The index finger is the pointer. Pray for those who teach--Bible teachers and preachers, and those who teach children (1Th 5:25-note).

* The next finger is the tallest. It reminds you to pray for those in authority over you--national and local leaders, and your supervisor at work (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

* The fourth finger is usually the weakest. Pray for those who are in trouble or who are suffering (James 5:13, 14, 15, 16).

* Then comes your little finger. It reminds you of your smallness in relation to God's greatness. Ask Him to supply your needs (Php 4:6, 19-see notes Pip 4:6; 19).

Whatever method you use, just talk with your Father. He wants to hear what's on your heart. --Anne Cetas (Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Our prayers ascend to heaven's throne
Regardless of the form we use;
Our Father always hears His own
Regardless of the words we choose. --D. De Haan

It's not the words we pray that matter, it's the condition of our heart.

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F B Meyer...

PRAYER AND INTERCESSION

Php 1:3-4

The Prayers of St. Paul. The Epistles of St. Paul are full of allusions to his prayers. We might almost call them his prayer-book. Let us verify that assertion by turning to the Epistles as they come on the pages of the Bible.

Ro. 1:9: "God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the Gospel of His Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my prayers making request," etc.

1Cor. 1:4: "I thank my God always concerning you, for the grace of God which was given you in Christ."

Eph. 1:16: "I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers."

Eph. 3:14: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father."

Col. 1:3: "We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you."

Col. 2:1: "I would have you know how greatly I strive for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh."

1Thess. 1:2: "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers."

2Thess. 1:11: "To which end we also pray always for you."

2Tim. 1:3: "I thank God,... how unceasing is my remembrance of thee."

Philemon 1:4: "I thank my God always, making mention of thee in my prayers."

These texts are sufficient to substantiate the assertion that the Epistles of St. Paul abound in allusions to his prayers on behalf of his converts; and just as our Lord Jesus Christ ever lives to intercede, so the true pastor, Sunday School teacher, or Christian friend, should day and night, without ceasing, remember the saved and unsaved of his charge in prayer.

Prayer: with Tears and with Joy. But there was a special liberty in the Apostle's prayer, for in Phil. 4:6 he says: "Always in every supplication of mine, making my supplication with joy." Those of us who know what it is to pray, are familiar with the alternations that come over the soul when it waits before God. There are some tracts and passages in our daily prayer-life which we tread with difficulty and tears. For those who seem so obdurate; for those who appear to have turned their backs determinedly upon God; for certain Churches that appear

hopelessly desolate and barren, we plead with strong crying and tears. We tread these acres of our prayer-life, with weeping, sowing seed destined to bear an abundance of harvest fruit.

There are other parts of our daily prayer-life that are illumined with joy. When we come to pray for a beloved child, for some kindred spirit, for some blessed work of God which enjoys the perpetual dew of His favour, then it is easy to pray, and we make our supplication and request with joy. We know exactly what St. Paul meant, when he said that there was a liberty, a freedom, a gladness in prayer which suffused his heart as he prayed for the Philippians.

Our Private Prayers. Nothing would be better for most of us than a great revival in our habits of private prayer. We cannot do as Luther, who was accustomed to say, "I have so much work to do to-day that I cannot get through it with less than three hours of prayer"; or as Bishop Andrewes, who regularly set apart five hours each day for private devotion; or as Law, the author of the *Serious Call*, who was accustomed, as the clock rang out each third hour, to turn to prolonged prayer, allocating to each occasion some special subject. Our habits of life, and perhaps our methods of thought, forbid our adopting anything quite so absorbing and prolonged; but that we should pray more, that we should labour in prayer as Epaphras did, that we should cultivate the art of prayer, is clear.

Cultivate the Habit. Habits of prayer need careful cultivation. The instinct and impulse are with us by the grace of the Holy Spirit, but we need to cultivate the gracious inward movements until they become solidified into an unbending practice.

As far as possible, we should set apart one period in each day for prayer, and there can be no question that the morning hour is best. When the body is fresh from sleep, and before the rush of daily thought, care, and activity invades the mind, ere we hold intercourse with our nearest and dearest, then the bells ring for matins, and it is wise to heed their call.

Give Him thy first thoughts
So shalt thou keep
Him company all day
And in Him sleep.

Use an Oratory. It is good, also to have an oratory. There should be, as far as possible, one room and one spot in the room, or one garden path, or a walk over the moor or beside the sea, where our seasons of private devotion are spent, and our prayers are wont to be made. The posture is a secondary matter. Many a heaven-moving prayer has been uttered whilst the feet have been plodding along the road, or the hands plying their toils, or when weakness has chained the body to the couch. Whilst Paul was floating for a night and a day in the deep, his soul was as much wrapt in the spirit of prayer as when he was in a trance in the temple.

A rich man, visited by his pastor, was in sore distress because when praying during the night he had not removed his nightcap. His scruples were, however, allayed by the wise and skilful reply, "Some people pray, as Christians mostly do, with their shoes on and their heads uncovered; others, like the Jews and Mohammedans, pray with their heads covered and their shoes off. Now, I daresay, my friend, when you prayed, you had not your shoes on?" "No, sir, I hadn't," was the eager answer, and the troubled soul was comforted. But it would have been better far if it had never been troubled. It is of real service to have the fixed closet, and the habitual attitude there; but it is a great mistake to magnify any of these accidents and circumstances as though they were essential.

Seek a Spirit of Prayer. The main point for each of us is to have a spirit of prayer, so that the exercise be not irksome and tedious, but that the spirit may spring to it with delight. We must not, however, wait for the high tide to rise before we launch forth on the voyage. If there is not deep water, we must make what use we can of the shallows. If we cannot step off to the big ship, we must make for it in the little boat which draws only a foot or two of water. If the gale is not blowing to fill our flagging sails, we must make what use we can of the light breezes that dimple the calm and lethargic ocean. Good is it when the soul leaps towards the prayer-hour, as a child to mother, or wife to husband; but failing this eager desire, let us pray because we ought, and because the supreme Lover of Souls will be disappointed if we do not appear at the trysting-place to keep our appointment.

The ways by which the sluggish soul can be incited to pray are various, and hints may be jotted down here which will be useful.

When the hour for prayer arrives, allow time for staying on the threshold of the temple, to remember how great

God is, how greatly He is to be praised, how great your needs are. Remember the distance between you and Him, and be sure that it is filled with love. Recall the promises that bid you to approach. Consider all the holy souls that have entered and are entering those same portals; and do not forget the many occasions in which the lowering skies have cleared, the dark clouds have parted, and weakness has become power during one brief spell of prayer.

A Still Greater Need. We specially need the aid of the Holy Spirit, who helps our infirmities in prayer. He kindled the spark of devotion at the first, and knows well how to fan it into a flame. It is good to confide in Him, to confess that you would but cannot pray, that your desires are languid and your love cool, that the lips which should be touched with fire are frost-bitten, that the wings which ought to have borne you to Heaven are clipped. He understands and loves to be appealed to, and will assuredly quicken the flagging soul until it shall mount up as on eagle wings, running without wearying, and walking without faintness. One look to the Spirit of Prayer will find Him in the heart. As our Teacher He begins to repeat the words of petition, which we lisp after Him. As our Comforter and Paraclete He stands beside us, showing us where to aim our petitions, and steadying our trembling hands. As the Spirit of Life, he makes us free from the law of sin and death.

Felt art Thou, and relieving tears
 Fall, nourishing our young resolves;
 Felt art Thou, and our icy fears
 The sunny smile of love dissolves.

Helps to Prayer. It is advisable to use the Bible specially, and afterwards some spirit-stirring book, be it memoir or spiritual treatise, to stir up the black hot coals and compel them to break into a heaven-ascending flame. The story of George Muller, of James Gilmour, or of David Brainerd, the writings of Samuel Rutherford, Andrew Murray and Frances Ridley Havergal, the poetry of Horatius Bonar and John Keble, are of perennial use in this direction.

Sometimes it will be the confession of recent backsliding and inconsistency, which have drawn a veil over the face of Christ; sometimes the overflowing of thanksgiving, as you count over your blessings, one by one; sometimes the urgency of need to intercede for some beloved friend or friends; but always, if you look for it, you may discover some wave of blessed helpfulness, which, flowing up on the shore of your life, will, as it recedes, afford you an opportunity of passing out with it from the high and dry stones to the bosom of the heaving ocean.

A Condition of Successful Prayer. One condition of successful prayer must never be forgotten. We must believe that God is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. The Father is the object of our prayer, through the mediation of our Lord Jesus, and by the aid of the Holy Spirit; but however we conceive of it, whether the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit, is the prominent object before our thought, we must believe that there is an eye that witnesses our poor endeavours, an ear that listens, a mind that can be impressed and affected by our requests. But further, we need a living faith which reckons on the faithfulness of God, and believes that it has already received its petitions, when they are founded on specific promises and evidently prompted by the Holy Spirit. When we pray, it is not enough merely to speak a long list of requests into the ear of God, it becomes us to wait after each one, and to receive by an appropriating act of the soul. It is as though we saw God take from the shelves of His storehouse the boon on which we had set our heart, label it with our name, and put it aside until the precise moment arrived in which He could bestow it on us without hurt. But whether it is in our hands or not is of small matter, because "we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him." Well may George Herbert sing:

"Oh, what an easy, quick access,
 My blessed Lord, art Thou! how suddenly
 May our requests Thine ear invade!
 To show that state dislikes not easiness.
 If I but lift mine eyes, my suit is made:
 Thou canst no more not hear, than Thou canst die.

"Since then these three wait on Thy throne,
 Ease, power, and love; I value prayer so,
 That, were I to leave all but one,
 Wealth, fame, endowments, virtues, all should go:
 I and dear prayer would together dwell,
 And quickly gain, for each inch lost, an ell."

(F. B. Meyer. The Epistle to the Philippians - A Devotional Commentary)