

**"GOSPEL – THE POWER OF GOD AND ITS CONTENT" BY  
PROF. UNIV. DR. HANS KLEIN**

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**Abstract.** This article by Prof. Dr. Hans Klein, "Gospel – the Power of God and Its Content," offers a comprehensive theological examination of the concept of the Gospel as articulated by the Apostle Paul. Klein traces the historical and linguistic evolution of the term "gospel" (euangelion), highlighting its transformation from a secular expression of "good news" to the singular Christian message of salvation through Jesus Christ. The article analyzes Paul's insistence on the uniqueness and exclusivity of the Gospel, rooted in the death and resurrection of Christ, and explores the dynamic, transformative power of the Gospel as both a divine force and a revealed tradition. Klein discusses the inseparability of the cross and resurrection, the ethical implications for believers, and the ongoing relevance of the Gospel as a living force that must not be reduced to mere doctrine. The study concludes that the Gospel, according to Paul, is the unalterable and unifying message of God's salvation, demanding faith, obedience, and continual proclamation for the transformation of individuals and communities.

**Keywords:** Gospel, Paul, salvation, Jesus Christ, divine power, New Testament.

I chose this article, entitled "Gospel – the Power of God and Its Content," written by Hans Klein and published in 2008 in the Romanian language. Romanian is neither his native language nor mine, yet he still prophetically captures the essence of the Gospel. I remember his wise contributions with gratitude and warmth whenever I participated in a theological debate. Let us now examine his vision of the Gospel – the power of God – and explore its content.

Hans Klein starts by tracing the word "gospel" (Greek: euangelion), showing how it originally meant "good news" or even a reward for such news in ancient Greek literature. In pre-Christian usage, especially during the Roman Empire, the word could refer to significant imperial events, like the birth or enthronement of an emperor, but it did not carry the profound religious meaning it would later acquire. In the Old Testament's Greek translation (the Septuagint), the noun itself is rarely used with religious significance, though the verb form occasionally is. It is within the earliest Christian communities that "Gospel" takes on its singular, transformative meaning: not just any good news, but the unique, divine message of salvation

through Jesus Christ. Paul, among the first Christian writers, never uses it in the plural – emphasizing its uniqueness and non-repeatability.

Klein explains how Paul often uses phrases like “the Gospel of God” or “the Gospel of Christ.” “The Gospel of God” refers to the message that originates with God, while “the Gospel of Christ” centres on the person and work of Jesus. Both designations, however, have Christ as their focal point. Paul’s writings make it clear that the gospel is not merely a collection of teachings or traditions. Instead, it is a living, divine force – “the power of God for salvation” (Romans 1:16) – that fundamentally transforms those who receive it in faith. This transformation is not just intellectual but existential and experiential. It is not philosophy, but an encounter with God’s saving power.

Paul further insists that the Gospel is singular and exclusive: there is only one true Gospel. Any attempt to preach a different Gospel – no matter the source – is condemned (Galatians 1:8–9). The Gospel is received and accepted through faith, and even faith itself is portrayed as a result of the Gospel’s inherent power. Paul’s message is not about human wisdom or eloquence but is rooted in the historical reality of Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection. The proclamation of the Gospel is non-coercive, always inviting a free and voluntary response. Those who accept it are transformed, united with other believers, and drawn into fellowship; those who reject it remain outside the saving sphere of its power. This dynamic, Klein notes, reveals both God’s initiative and human responsibility – a recurring tension in Paul’s theology.

Klein describes how Paul’s identification with the Gospel is so complete that he often refers to it as “my Gospel” or “our Gospel.” Paul insists that the Gospel is trustworthy and reliable, independent of the messenger’s circumstances or plans. For example, when Paul is criticized for changing his travel plans, he reassures the Corinthians that the Gospel’s promises are unwavering and consistent, rooted in God’s unchanging “yes” (2 Corinthians 1:17–20). The gospel, as Klein shows, is a message that does not force itself upon anyone – but instead waits for the free decision of the hearer. Paul’s ministry, then, is both a proclamation and a personal embodiment of this message.

The Gospel’s power, Klein emphasizes, is not simply a matter of words or persuasive speech; it is a force that brings about radical change. In 1 Corinthians 1:18, Paul contrasts two responses to the Gospel: for those who are perishing, it seems like foolishness, but for those being saved, it is the very power of God. This division is not arbitrary but reveals the mystery of divine election and the seriousness of human response. The Gospel brings salvation to those who open themselves in faith, but its rejection leads to “hardening” – a spiritual resistance that leaves one outside salvation. The Gospel, therefore, is both a dividing and unifying force, distinguishing those who are “called” from those who are not.

Central to the Gospel’s content, Klein points out, is the dual reality of Jesus’s death and resurrection. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul summarizes his Gospel as the message he received and passed on: “that Christ died for our sins according to

the Scriptures, that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” This formula is foundational and non-negotiable for Paul: the true Gospel can never be separated from the realities of the cross and the empty tomb. The resurrection, in particular, validates the saving significance of Jesus’s death, and together they secure forgiveness and the promise of eternal life. The Gospel is thus both soteriological (dealing with salvation) and eschatological (pointing to the ultimate fulfilment of God’s promises).

Klein addresses the question of whether the Gospel can be reduced to a doctrine or teaching. Paul is clear that he did not receive his Gospel from any human source, nor did he learn it as a mere tradition; he received it through direct revelation from Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11–12). While the Gospel can be formulated as doctrine and taught, it must never lose its character as a living, transformative power. The danger, Klein warns, is that the Gospel may become a set of beliefs or a tradition, disconnected from the dynamic, life-changing force it was meant to be. For preaching to be faithful, it must keep the Gospel alive as “the power of God for salvation,” not just as an abstract system of thought.

Klein further elaborates the inseparability of the cross and resurrection. Paul insists that both must be held together: the resurrection gives meaning to the cross, and the cross is necessary for the resurrection to signify victory over sin and death. Without resurrection, the cross would be a defeat, and without the cross, the resurrection would lack soteriological content. In Romans 4:25, Paul explains that Jesus “was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised for our justification.” The Gospel, then, is not just about forgiveness but about new life and hope, rooted in God’s faithfulness to His promises in the Old Testament.

Klein also notes that Paul sometimes emphasizes only one aspect of salvation (either the cross or the resurrection), depending on his audience or the theological point he is making. Yet, for Paul, both elements are always connected: forgiveness through Christ’s atoning death, and the promise of ultimate salvation through His resurrection. This dual focus is reflected in Paul’s summary statements (such as “Jesus died and rose again,” 1 Thessalonians 4:14) and in his catechetical formulas, which were intended to be memorized, taught, and passed on as the core of Christian faith.

The ethical implications of the gospel are also significant in Klein’s analysis. Accepting the Gospel is not merely intellectual assent, but an entrance into a new life characterized by faith, love, and obedience to Christ as Lord. The Gospel calls believers to submit to Jesus’s lordship and to live out that faith in concrete actions. This call is rooted in the fulfilment of Old Testament promises and shapes the Christian community as a people marked by forgiveness, unity, and love.

Klein concludes by reflecting on the ongoing power of the Gospel. It is not just a message about past events, but a present reality that continues to change hearts, unite believers, and bring salvation. The Gospel becomes tradition and can be taught as doctrine, but it must always be interpreted as the living “power of God

for salvation.” Only in this way can it remain effective, continually transforming individuals and communities as it did in the early Church. If the Gospel loses its dynamic character and becomes a static teaching, it risks becoming ineffective, unable to bring about the change for which it was intended.

In summary, Hans Klein argues that the Gospel, as presented by Paul, is the singular, exclusive, and unalterable message of God’s salvation in Christ – rooted in His death and resurrection, revealed in Scripture, calling for faith and obedience, and manifesting the power to save and transform lives. It is both a tradition to be passed on and a living force to be experienced anew in every generation.

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