



JOURNEY BASICS: GOSPEL

WHAT DOES PLUM CREEK BELIEVE ABOUT THE GOSPEL?

The only means of salvation is Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12 & John 14:6). He died on the cross to pay the penalty of our sins (I Peter 2:24). He offers each of us a pardon for our sins (Hebrews 9:26) and wants us to become children of God (John 1:12).

When we put our faith in Christ, it triggers a spiritual chain reaction. We become the Temple of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 6:19). Our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life (Rev. 3:5). We become citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20-21).

We are given eternal life (John 3:16). We are adopted and become children of God (Gal. 4:4-7). Our sins are forgiven and forgotten (Heb. 8:12). We are credited with the righteousness of Christ (Rom. 4:4-5). We are born again (John 3:3). God takes ownership of us (I Cor. 6:20). We receive an eternal inheritance (Eph. 1:13-14 & I Pet. 1:3-5).

The evidence of salvation is two-fold. The internal evidence is the direct witness of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:16). The external evidence is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23). We become a new creation (II Cor. 5:17) and are transformed into the image of Christ (II Cor. 3:18).

-From PCCC Statement of Faith

DEFEATER BELIEF

"Most people seem to believe that they are not really "sinners", that they are not as bad as some other people. Hell is not real. Their good deeds will outweigh their bad. Also, a loving God would never allow people to go to hell! Somehow all people will be saved in the end if they believe in something (or someone)."

A Brief Response

On the surface, this sounds good. The only problem with these beliefs is that none of them are true- they are all unbiblical! Reality check! The Gospel of Jesus Christ presupposes these two truths:

God designed us to know him, to trust him, and to enter the Trinitarian communion.

Conversely that a hideous, spiritually genetic disease has infected the entire human race—a sickness deliberately chosen by each of us.

The gospel assumes the lostness of every person as sinners both in act and attitude, existing in a state of separation from God, "the Lord Chief Justice," the moral Absolute of all existence. The doctrine of salvation has to do with God providing a way to deal with man's lost and sinful state in a way that would not violate His holiness and justice.

THE GOSPEL

*"Most evangelicals can lead someone to Christ...but very few can state the Gospel succinctly."
- Former Christianity Today senior editor Kent Hughes.*

Properly, the Gospel of our Salvation is not only about Jesus Christ, it is about the entire Trinity. The Father reconciles the world to himself, the Spirit convicts of sin, the rightness of the Gospel, and he leads to saving faith. As every other work of God, salvation involves each member of the Godhead—even in the sorrow and pain of the cross. Yet Scripture is clear that within the Godhead, the Son is primary in that which secures our redemption. As we learned in Journey basics 4: Messiah, Jesus Christ is not only the eternal Son of God incarnate, he is also forever the perfect man, filled with the Spirit and in obedience to God the Father. Let's start by looking at three key terms: Gospel, Grace, and Salvation.

What is the Gospel?

The Gospel is known as the 'good news'. The Greek word for the Gospel, euangelion, occurs 77 times in the New Testament. Read I Thessalonians 3:6. In this passage euangelion literally translates to "bring or announce good news".

Read Mathew 4:23 (also see Mark 1:1,14-15): it is the message of general Divine Salvation and the Kingdom of God.

Read Romans 1:16-17 (also see I Corinthians 15:1-4; Ephesians 1:13): it is the message of redeeming grace, that through faith in Jesus Christ God's Son one is forgiven of sin and reconciled to God.

*This is the message one needs to believe to be made right with God and delivered from eternal divine wrath; we are "saved" through belief in its truth. The **Gospel** can be defined as: the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who died in sinful man's place to make us right with God; and of Christ's kingdom by which he will rule all things.*

Journal: Imagine a non-believing friend has emailed asking you to explain what the Good News is. Write out your reply. What similarities and/or differences exist between your answer and the definition given above?

What is Grace?

"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age," Titus 2:11-12

Read John 1:14-17. In the New Testament grace is God's generous favor in Jesus Christ, particularly toward all who believe. In Pauline theology, the concept of grace is especially developed as God's benevolent disposition and action through the Son and the Spirit toward humankind, for our salvation; this comes to us utterly undeservedly, as free gift made ours through faith (also see Ephesians 1:6-7; 2:5-9; Romans 5:2,15,17; 6:1,14-15; II Timothy 1:9).

We can define **grace** as: the unconditional love of God freely given to one who does not deserve it. God's grace is extended to sinful humanity in providing salvation and forgiveness through Jesus Christ that is not deserved, and withholding judgment that is deserved.

Journal: Take a moment to contemplate God's grace in your life. What has He given that you do not deserve? Write a prayer of thanksgiving to God

What is Salvation?

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19:10)

The term salvation translates the Greek words *soteria* and *soterion* as the act or effect of saving, healing or redeeming, especially from the power and effects of sin. The Greek verb *sozo* occurs 109 times in the New Testament and carries the meaning of the gracious work of God that liberates from sin and brings one life and wellbeing.

Journal: the New Testament refers to the Son as Savior 16 times. But does the Bible apply the term Savior to another? Read Luke 1:47, I Timothy 1:1, and Titus 1:3. What does this teach us about the persons of the Trinity?

What do you mean when you say you are 'saved'? The New Testament speaks of three aspects of our salvation: past, present and future.

Past. Read II Timothy 1:8-9. Paul uses salvation in the sense that at the moment of faith, once for all, the sinner is pardoned and inhabited by the Holy Spirit. The act of "getting saved" delivers from judgment and leads to the following two aspects.

Present. Philippians 2:12-13. In this sense, salvation related terms denote the ongoing experience of the believer's liberation from the power and effects of sin, reflecting the victory of Christ and the full salvation to come. The phrase the salvation of the soul denotes a present, "existential" deliverance from the old life to the new in Christ.

Future. Read I Peter 1:5. We anticipate complete liberation from the effects of sin when glorified with Christ.

Salvation in the New Testament describes past, present, and future deliverance from sin and its effects (including damnation), but it also denotes a present, ongoing reality, based upon what God did once for all when we "believe" in Jesus Christ.

Journal: Read Philippians 2:12-13. Understanding that our salvation is past, present, and future, how might you explain this verse to a new believer who thinks that Paul is telling us to earn our salvation through works (past event)?

What did Christ do on the cross?

"The cross, therefore, is not an exhibition that all is well, but the proof that all is not well, and the place where God in pure grace and mercy deals with sin in a manner commensurate with His own holiness and justice."- Philip Edgcumbe Hughes.

The **cross** stands as the greatest historical symbol of Christian faith and the Gospel message. From church steeples, to priests' staves, to adolescent T-shirts, to rock star pendants, the cross is sometimes exalted, sometimes shown powerful (exorcism), other times culturally anathematized, sometimes sodomized (Satanists). But the cross is the symbol of what God did for us through Jesus Christ's death at Calvary. What follows is an exploration of what Christ did for every Christian believer at the cross—in great part, what is immediately ours as a free gift at the very moment of faith in the Son. These are the main themes of the Gospel: Substitution, Redemption, Propitiation, Reconciliation, and Justification.

Substitution: Christ died in the place of sinners

Although many resist the idea of Christ dying in our place, and although there are multiple ways of understanding the significance of Calvary, the concept of substitution appears central in Scripture (both OT and NT). What is substitution's significance? (Romans 5:6-8)

- The punishment of sin is removed by Christ's dying in my stead, satisfying the justice of God.
- The righteousness of Christ is **imputed** (God's crediting Christ's righteousness to our account) to the believer, as God's substitute to secure our right standing.

"Because Jesus Christ is both God and man, his death on the cross has infinite value for all who believe."

- Francis A. Schaeffer

Redemption: the act of paying the price

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law; he himself paid the price to free sinners from the power, consequences, and condemnation of sin. The significance of Redemption (Mark 10:45):

- Christ, the only human being free of slavery, pays the ransom price for our sin by his blood. (Hebrews 9:15 and II Peter 2:1).
- He removes us from slavery securing our freedom. (Mathew 20:28 and Galatians 3:13).
- Now we belong to the Lord; he is our new master; we "are bought with a price," (I Corinthians 6:20).

Propitiation: satisfying God's wrath

*We speak a great deal about the love of God, but God's wrath against sin speaks equally powerfully as to his true nature—to which the Book of Revelation is an extraordinary testimony. Divine purity, perfection, and holiness, is the backdrop upon which God's love is revealed (I John 2:2). **Propitiation** is generally understood as "the satisfaction of God's holy wrath against sin through the blood [death] of Christ", the "turning away of God's wrath" through cleansing of sin. Propitiation indicates an actual meeting (fulfilling) of the wrath of God; and this satisfaction of righteousness is not only that of God the Father, it is that of the entire Holy Trinity.*

Reconciliation: making peace with God

Reconciliation is to make peace, trade enmity for friendship. The Bible clearly states that God was at enmity with the world. Christ's death satisfies God so he may extend grace toward mankind (II Corinthians 5:18-21). Persons may now respond to God. Being accepted by God, believers are ambassadors of reconciliation. One's state of enmity with God due to sin is changed to peace and friendship with God through the death of Christ.

Justification: made right with God

***Justification** is "the act of declaring someone righteous." Just as our sin has been imputed to Christ, so his righteousness is imputed to us through the simple act of faith (Galatians 2:16). Such justification is past, complete, juridical, and not innate to us (also see Titus 3:7: "having been justified by faith"). Yet the person who receives the free gift of righteousness is called a "saint," a "holy one." Our faith should be demonstrated by "being made righteous," shown by good works. It is God's work in and through us that function to demonstrate the free gift he has given. What must I do to be saved? (Acts 16:30)*

There are three paths that many people take in hopes of securing a right relationship with God, only ONE of which is sufficient:

- The Path of Morality. Some people believe that if you strive to be a good person that God will take your morality into account and accept you on the basis of your own, personal righteousness. The idea is that God has a scale, and on it He weighs your good deeds (morality) and your bad deeds. If your good deeds outweigh your bad deeds, He will accept you. The Bible completely removes this arrogant notion and hopeless option for us. We cannot earn God's acceptance by our moral performance. At the heart of this is pride, thinking that our morality is enough to impress God and that somehow God owes us for our moral excellence. Read Romans 3:19.

Journal: What does the Law (the 10 commandments) reveal about our morality?

- The Path of Religious Piety. Some people believe that if you are religious and perform religious deeds or demonstrate religious devotion that your piety commends you to God. Jesus confronted the religious and pious elite of his day for thinking that their piety and religion earned them God's acceptance. The prophet Isaiah said that every person's righteousness is like a filthy garment before God and that all people are unclean no matter how religious they might think they are (Isaiah 64:6). Our religious piety could never commend us to God; it can only condemn us before God, because it is insufficient and reveals our sinful arrogance and "God-games" (to use Eugene Peterson's famous phrase). Read Luke 18:9.

Journal: In your own words, describe the failing of the religious man. Where do you see signs of the 'religious man' surfacing in your life?

The biggest problem with the paths of morality and religious piety is that they make the cross unnecessary! Oh, imagine this horror... this biggest, cosmic scandal ... the Father giving His Son ... the Son laying down His life ... for nothing?!? "I do not nullify the grace of God, for if justification were through the Law, then Christ died for no purpose." (Galatians 2:21)

- **The Path of the Gospel.** The third path is the path of the Gospel. The Gospel is the "Good News" that we can be made right with God neither by our religion nor by our morality, but because of Who Jesus Christ is and What He has done for us. (Romans 3:25b & verse 28). We are made right with God when we believe that Jesus shed his blood, sacrificing His life for us...*We are made right with God through faith and not by obeying the law!* We don't gain a right standing with God by what we do for God, but through trusting in what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. We must acknowledge that we are sinners, who have failed to trust and treasure God above everything else and that we are in desperate need of forgiveness. We must look to Jesus Christ for that forgiveness and surrender ourselves to Him completely – with all of our life, for all of our life. When we do that, we are both declared not guilty and righteous, credited with the very righteousness of Jesus Christ, and brought into a relationship with God, in which we can know Him and enjoy Him in this life and for all eternity. Not only that, but His Spirit comes to live inside of us, working in us to renew our lives and working through us to renew this world.

"Preach the Gospel to yourself every day." - Jerry Bridges, The Discipline of Grace

If you are not a Christian, pray this day for God's mercy to save you. Turn to God and believe in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. If you are already a Christian, remember this: that the Gospel is first of all a treasure of the Church for the Church. So love the Gospel and live the Gospel before your God and your fellow Christians, knowing that a fallen, hurting, and lost world watches on. This is the "witness of the worshipping community". Do not put the Gospel on a shelf as a trophy. Nor leave the Gospel in the past as nostalgic memory. Rather, wear the Gospel every day as a garment, putting it also deep within your heart and mind in the ever-present of today.

THE BIG IDEAS

1. All people are in need of God's saving work- no one can save himself.
2. The Gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who died in sinful man's place to make us right with God; and of Christ's kingdom by which he will rule all things.
3. Salvation is a past, present, and future reality in the life of every believer.

Special Terms

Gospel	<i>is the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who died in sinful man's place to make us right with God; and of Christ's kingdom by which he will rule all things</i>
Salvation	<i>describes past, present, and future deliverance from sin and its effects</i>
Grace	<i>is the unconditional love of God freely given to one who does not deserve it.</i>
Imputed	<i>(Imputation) when we say that God imputes Christ's righteousness to us it means that God thinks of Christ's righteousness as belonging to us</i>
Substitution	<i>Christ died as a substitute in the place of sinners</i>
Redemption	<i>is the act of Christ paying the price for our sin</i>
Propitiation	<i>is the satisfying God's wrath</i>
Reconciliation	<i>is making peace with God</i>
Justification	<i>is being declared legally and positionally right with God</i>

Additional Study

Further Study: *Getting the Gospel Right, RC Sproul*

Advanced Study: *Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem*

Sources: Bible Doctrine Survey, BTCP; The Ryrie Study Bible; Essentials, R.C. Sproul; Survey of Bible Doctrine: God, Biblical Studies Press; Systematic Theology, W. Grudem;

What is the Gospel (_____)?

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, _____ in sinful man's place to make us _____ with God.

What must I do to be made right with God?

Two-fold answer:

1. _____ – to change one's mind about God
2. _____ – to place one's complete trust in God

What are the results of Christ's death for me?

See p. 4