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Theology of the Gospel

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Preface

What Is “Theology of the Gospel”?

Though the Bible is a large and imposing book, its message is actually very clear and straightforward. The main characters are introduced early and are easily identifiable. The plotline is revealed in the opening pages and can be traced through to the end without aberration. So why do Christ-followers have such a difficult time answering the question, “What is the Bible about?”

Theology of the Gospel (TOG) is intended to guide the reader to discover the “big picture” of the Bible. We call that main theme “the gospel” – the singular message of good news from God to mankind. Once understood, the individual parts of the story find their rightful place. And more, TOG intends to embolden Christ-followers to engage a waiting world with this incredible message of hope.

So dig in, reader. You’ve never studied a more important topic. May this launch you into a lifetime journey of growing in your understanding of and passion for the gospel!

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INTRODUCTION

“I watched in dismay as a friend attempted to explain his faith to an unbeliever. As he jumped back and forth from Old Testament to New Testament he used a multitude of verses, but never explained clearly how to become a Christian. Since then I have made a commitment that whatever I do in evangelism, I will never be fuzzy or unclear. I don’t have the right to take a simple message and make it difficult.”¹

Why Is It Important to Study the Gospel?

The gospel is the primary message of the Bible.

(Romans 1:1-6, 1:16-17, 16:25-27)

Studying the gospel helps us understand the main storyline of the Bible.

Echoes of the Bible’s main storyline can be found in many nonbiblical stories. You might say God wrote His plotline into the souls of humanity so we would recognize it and be drawn to it.

1. Peace, harmony, and life-as-it-should-be is disrupted suddenly and catastrophically. (Genesis 1-3)

¹Randy Raysbrook, “One-Verse Evangelism,” *Discipleship Journal* 34 (1986): 28.

2. The plot thickens and grows in intensity until the protagonist is forced to reckon with the calamity. This is the apex of the story, often accompanied by significant conflict and ultimate, heroic victory. (Genesis 4-Revelations 20)
3. Peace, harmony, and life-as-it-should-be is reestablished due to the heroism of the protagonist. (Revelations 21-22)

The gospel is to be the catalyst for living by faith.

(Philippians 1:27)

Christ-followers are to continually rehearse the gospel as a means of security and fruitfulness. (2 Peter 1:3-15)

The gospel is the message that Christ-followers are to take to the ends of the earth. (Romans 10:14-17)

Why Do Christians Often Fail to Evangelize as They Know They Should?

Fear

Insecurity

FOR NEXT TIME

READING

Read Genesis 1-3 a minimum of three times. Use a different translation each time if possible. Note what this passage tells you about God and about mankind.

SURVEY

Survey three people. Come prepared to share your observations with the class next week.

QUIZ

There will be a quiz next week to check your completion of the assignments listed above.

GENESIS 1-3

Read through Genesis 1-3 a minimum of three times. Use a different translation each time if possible. Record your observations below.

What does this text tell me about God?

What does this text tell me about mankind?

SURVEY

Survey three people.

Do you believe in God?
If yes, describe God. If no, why?

PERSON

1

PERSON

2

PERSON

3

GOD

Loving Creator, Supreme Authority, Final Judge

How does God begin His revelation to mankind (the Bible)?

For what purpose did God create mankind?

Not primarily for _____ .

To _____ His image, promoting His glory, (Genesis 1:27-28)

to _____ over creation, (Genesis 1:26)

to _____ creation, (Genesis 1:28) and

to _____ . (Genesis 2:5, 15)

Why such strong language in Genesis 1:26-28?

Adam was to be the _____ over God's creation.

A _____ of a country, province, or colony, ruling as the _____ of a sovereign or king.

How did Adam display his rule in the garden?

What particular groups or even religious movements are offended by the notion of mankind's dominion over creation and his higher status over creation?

① Loving Creator

In Genesis 1-2, how does God reveal Himself as more than simply an All-Powerful Creator, but as a Loving Creator?

Why do people resist the conclusion that God has, in fact, created them? What does God's position as Creator imply?

Psalm 100:3

"Know that the Lord is God. It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, the sheep of His pasture."

2 Supreme Authority

The Bible begins with the theme of God as Loving Creator, but implicit in this is His role as Supreme Authority. Do you see this relationship in the following verses?

Genesis 2:16

Genesis 3:14

Based on Genesis 1-3, how do we see God's Supreme Authority naturally flowing from Him as Loving Creator?

○ DON'T MISS THIS

The Scripture makes the necessary connection between God as our Loving Creator and as Supreme Authority. It is inherent in His being and foundational to the gospel message.

③ Final Judge

The Bible introduces us to God as the Loving Creator. As such, He holds Supreme Authority, and before the opening narrative we see God executing His authority as Final Judge as He pronounces the curses of Genesis 3.

Judgment on the _____

Judgment on the _____

Judgment on the _____

Yet there is _____ ...

FOR NEXT TIME

READING

Read Romans 1:18-3:20 a minimum of three times. Use a different translation each time if possible. Note what this passage tells you about God and about mankind.

MEMORIZATION

Ephesians 2:8-10 - We will work on memorizing these verses over the next two weeks.

SURVEY

Survey three people. Come prepared to share your observations with the class next week.

QUIZ

There will be a quiz next week to check your completion of the assignments listed above.

ROMANS 1:18-3:20

Read through Romans 1:18-3:20 a minimum of three times. Use a different translation each time if possible. Record your observations below.

What does this text tell me about God?

What does this text tell me about mankind?

SURVEY

Survey three people.

On a scale of one to ten, one being completely evil and ten being completely good, how would you rate people in general?

Is there such a thing as “sin”? If so, what is it?

PERSON 1

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

PERSON 2

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

PERSON 3

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

MANKIND

Willfully Ignorant, Passionately Rebellious, Condemned to Death

Based on Romans 1:18-3:20, we could summarize what is said about the sinfulness of mankind in three key ways.

1 Mankind Is _____

ROMANS 1:19 What may be known about God is evident among them

ROMANS 1:20 His invisible attributes...have been clearly seen... being understood

ROMANS 1:21 For though they knew God

ROMANS 1:32 Although they know full well God's just sentence

Psalm 19:1-2

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky proclaims the work of His hands. Day after day they pour out speech; night after night they communicate knowledge...

○ DON'T MISS THIS

No one is born an atheist. Atheism is a conscious choice, a reversal. Mankind is not helplessly ignorant or even neutral, but willfully ignorant.

2 Mankind Is _____

Mankind's sin in Genesis 1-3 demonstrates a remarkable parallel to Romans 1. God lovingly provided all things for mankind and made Himself and His rule very clear through His goodness and power displayed in creation.

Yet with this overwhelming evidence, what does mankind do according to Romans 1:18-3:30?

How does God respond to this rebellion in Romans 1:24, 26 and 28?

How does Ephesians 4:17-19 further explain this truth about mankind?

3 Mankind Is _____

What is the consequence of mankind's rebellion according to Romans 1?

What was Adam told would be the consequence of his rebellion?

Genesis 2:17

...but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die.

Notice the necessary correlations in our study so far:

God	Mankind
LOVING CREATOR	WILLFULLY IGNORANT
SUPREME AUTHORITY	PASSIONATELY REBELLIOUS
FINAL JUDGE	CONDEMNED TO DEATH

Based on the interaction between mankind and God in Romans 1:18-23, in one sentence we could define sin as...

My _____ of the knowledge of God and His _____ over me as my _____ as evidenced by my _____ ignorance of Him and my _____ rebellion against His commands.

Another Way to Be Lost: The Self-Righteous, Religious Person

Romans 2:1-5

Therefore, any one of you who judges is without excuse. For when you judge another, you condemn yourself, since you, the judge, do the same things. We know that God's judgment on those who do such things is based on the truth. Do you really think — anyone of you who judges those who do such things yet do the same — that you will escape God's judgment? Or do you despise the riches of His kindness, restraint, and patience, not recognizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance? But because of your hardness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath, when God's righteous judgment is revealed.

What reasons does he give for saying they are “without excuse”?

What is God's response to their hypocrisy?

What is the end of those who continue in this sin?

Romans 10:1-4

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God concerning them is for their salvation! I can testify about them that they have zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. Because they disregarded the righteousness from God and attempted to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves to God's righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

What four descriptions does Paul give of the Religious Person in Romans 10:1-4?

What is the main problem the Religious Person faces?

What would the Religious Person look like in our own day?

TWO WAYS TO BE LOST

“Nearly everyone defines sin as breaking a list of rules. Jesus, though, shows us that a man who has violated nothing on the list of moral misbehaviors can be every bit as spiritually lost as the most profligate, immoral person. Why? Because sin is not just breaking the rules, it is putting yourself in the place of God as Savior, Lord, and Judge... There are two ways to be your own Savior and Lord. One is breaking all the moral laws and setting your own course, and one is by keeping all the moral laws and being very, very good.”¹

FOR NEXT TIME

- READING**
Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-28 a minimum of three times. Use a different translation each time if possible. Then answer the questions on the Reading Assignment page.
- MEMORIZATION**
Ephesians 2:8-10 - Be prepared to write this verse out word-for-word on next week's quiz.
- SURVEY**
Survey three people. Come prepared to share your observations with the class next week.
- QUIZ**
There will be a quiz next week to check your completion of the assignments listed above and see how well you have listened in class.

¹Tim Keller, *The Prodigal God*. (New York: Penguin Group, 2011), 43.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-28

*Read through 1 Corinthians 15:1-28 a minimum of three times.
Use a different translation each time if possible.
After completing the reading, answer the questions below.*

Based on this passage, what is the gospel?

According to this passage, why did Jesus have to die?

What “proofs” or “evidences” does this passage offer to prove that Jesus has been raised from the dead?

Why is the resurrection of Jesus Christ of central importance to the Christian?

SURVEY

Survey three people.

Who is Jesus?

PERSON

1

PERSON

2

PERSON

3

CHRIST

Perfectly Obedient, Substitutionary Sacrifice, Victoriously Risen

○ REVIEW

God	Mankind

1 Christ: Perfectly _____

Read Matthew 4:1-11.

How is the temptation of Jesus Christ similar to the temptation of Adam and Eve?

How is the temptation of Jesus Christ different from the temptation of Adam and Eve?

FURTHER SCRIPTURE STUDY

Hebrews 4:15

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tested in every way as we are, yet without sin.

1 Peter 2:22-23

He did not commit sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth; when He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He was suffering, He did not threaten but entrusted Himself to the One who judges justly.

2 Christ: Substitutionary_____

2 Corinthians 5:21

He made the One who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Theologians often describe the substitution of Christ as “The Great Exchange.” According to 2 Corinthians 5:21, what does Jesus receive from us?

What do we receive from Jesus?

○ DON'T MISS THIS

This concept of substitution is not a new idea to the New Testament; this is woven through the entire Bible.

Read Isaiah 53:4-11.

How is mankind described in this passage?

What does the Servant of the Lord do to solve the problem of our sin?

The concept of substitution is seen in the passage we read for this week. According to 1 Corinthians 15:3, why did Jesus have to die?

3 Christ: Victoriously _____

What “proofs” or “evidences” does 1 Corinthians 15 offer to prove that Jesus has been raised from the dead?

Why is the resurrection of Jesus Christ of central importance to the Christian?

Answer this same question from the following Bible texts.

Ephesians 2:4-10

Romans 6:4-11

Romans 8:8-11

○ REVIEW

God	Christ	Mankind

FOR NEXT TIME

LISTENING ASSIGNMENT

Listen to the sermon by R.C. Sproul on justification. You can access this online at cornerstonelife.com/tog. Take notes on the following page.

MEMORIZATION

Romans 3:23-24 - We will work on memorizing these verses over the next two weeks.

SURVEY

Survey three people. Come prepared to share your observations with the class next week.

QUIZ

There will be a quiz next week to check your completion of the assignments listed above.

The Center of Christian Preaching: Justification by Faith by R.C. Sproul

Accessible online at cornerstonelife.com/tog.

SERMON NOTES

In order to assist you in understanding, fill out the answers to the questions below as you listen to the message.

According to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, what two sacraments are essential to justification?

The Roman Catholic Church distinguishes between various types of “meritorious works.” What are they?

Does the Roman Catholic Church teach salvation by works without faith?

What is the difference between faith as a necessary condition for salvation and faith as a sufficient condition for salvation?

According to Roman Catholic teaching, whose righteousness is the final ground of my justification before God: my righteousness or Christ's righteousness? How is that different from the Protestant understanding of justification?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What is a verse, statement, or quote that sticks out to you from this sermon?

What is “justification by faith”? Why is this doctrine central to the Christian faith?

SURVEY

Survey three people.

**Is there more than one
way to God? (Please explain)**

PERSON

1

PERSON

2

PERSON

3

JUSTIFICATION

○ REVIEW

God	Christ	Mankind
LOVING _____	PERFECTLY _____	WILLFULLY _____
SUPREME _____	SUBSTITUTIONARY _____	PASSIONATELY _____
FINAL _____	VICTORIOUSLY _____	CONDEMNED TO _____

What Is Justification?

Justification is an instantaneous legal act of God in which He _____ of our sins as forgiven and thinks of Christ’s righteousness as belonging to us and therefore _____ us to be “just” or morally righteous in His sight.¹

¹Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Zondervan, 1994), p. 723.

ROMANS 3:19-28

Romans 3:19-20

Now we know that whatever the law says speaks to those who are subject to the law, so that every mouth may be shut and the whole world may become subject to God's judgment. For no one will be justified in His sight by the works of the law, because the knowledge of sin comes through the law.

Romans 3:21-26

But now, apart from the law, God's righteousness has been revealed—attested by the Law and the Prophets—that is, God's righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ, to all who believe, since there is no distinction. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. They are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. God presented Him as propitiation through faith in His blood, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His restraint God passed over the sins previously committed. God presented Him to demonstrate His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be righteous and declare righteous the one who has faith in Jesus.

Romans 3:27-28

Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By one of works? No, on the contrary, by a law of faith. For we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.

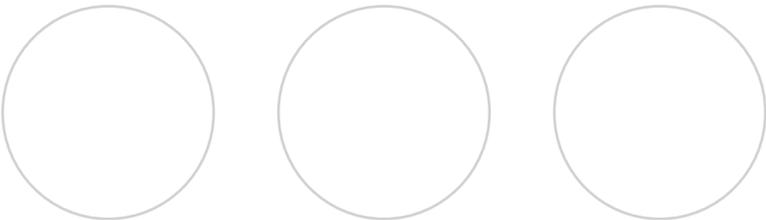
JUSTIFICATION

1 We Are More Than Just _____.

THE COURTROOM ILLUSTRATION

Imagine yourself standing before the bench of the judge, waiting to be sentenced to death for a crime that you committed. As the verdict is announced and you are declared guilty, something shocking happens; the judge rises from his place, walks out to where you are seated, and tells the bailiff to release you. As you stand free, in shock, you watch as the judge himself is placed in your chains, taking your punishment and penalty. You are set free because of the SUBSTITUTION of the judge on your behalf. Now many times, if people give this analogy they stop there. But salvation, in the way the Bible speaks of it, is much better still. Instead, after being released from your chains, the judge leans over to you and hands you his keys, saying, “I want you to possess all that I own. My car, my house, my bank account; it’s all yours.” THIS IS Justification — not only are you set free from the penalty of your sins, you are given the very righteousness and perfection of Jesus!

THE R.C. SPROUL 3 CIRCLES ANALOGY



2 The Problem of Justification:

How can a _____ God forgive _____ people?

KEY TERMS

They are justified freely by His grace through the _____ that is in Christ Jesus. (Romans 3:24)

God presented Him as _____ through faith in His blood. (Romans 3:25)

○ DON'T MISS THIS

Redemption: A debt repaid. Before God, we owed a tremendous debt and were unable to pay it back. The blood of Jesus pays our sin debt.

Propitiation: Wrath-removing sacrifice. God was angered and insulted by our sins. Only a wrath-removing sacrifice could appease God. Jesus satisfied the just wrath of God that should have been spent on us.

Romans 3:26

God presented Him to demonstrate His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be righteous and declare righteous the one who has faith in Jesus.

THE MERCIFUL KING

This is an adaptation of a story once told by Fred Barshaw, an elder at Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, CA. He had a gift for creating incredible parables — allegorical stories with deep biblical themes running through them.

Once upon a time in a kingdom far, far away, there lived a great king. He was simultaneously the most powerful man in the kingdom as well as the kindest and gentlest man in the entire realm. The kingdom was known for its peace, harmony, and goodwill. Neighbors cherished one another and years would pass without a single crime being committed.

One day, however, the chief servant of the merciful king came into the throne room with ill tidings. “There is a thief in the realm of your kingdom, sire,” said the servant. The king was astonished! “Find that thief! And when you do, bring him to me. He will be punished with 10 lashes!” Those in the room were astonished. It had been so long since a crime had been committed that they could hardly imagine who would have done such a thing.

A week went by and the servant again made his way into the throne room. “I have bad news for you, sire,” the servant reported quietly. “The thief has not been found and he continues to rob from your people.” In anger, the king raised his voice and said, “Find the thief and when you do he will receive 25 lashes!” The people began to murmur among themselves, “Who could withstand such a punishment? Who could possibly be committing such a crime?”

But as time went on, the servant once again came back into the throne room with yet another bad report. “Your Majesty, the thief has not been found. We have searched in vain for him. Your people are still being robbed.” The king was enraged. “Find that wretched thief! And when you do his punishment will be 50 lashes!” Now the people were filled with dread. They were not even sure that the king himself could withstand such a punishment! And if he could not, then certainly no one could. Who could be doing such a thing?

Soon afterward, the servant again approached the king in his throne room. His face was pale and his voice timid and hollow.

“Your Highness,” spoke the servant, “the thief has been found.” “Bring him to me this instant!” cried the king. The crowd that had poured into the throne room slowly parted revealing the thief who now stood trembling in the middle of the room. To the utter shock and dismay of all, it was the king’s aged mother. There she stood, trembling and crying. Her small and frail body was shaking with fear and shame. She was, perhaps, the very last soul that anyone would have suspected of such a crime. And there stood the king, in shock, deeply wounded.

The crowd began to wonder and murmur among themselves. What will the merciful king do? Will he set aside the law and display his love and mercy by forgiving his mother for her crimes? Or will he display His sovereignty and justice by giving her exactly what she deserved? Will he choose mercy or will he choose justice?

The king raised his hand to quiet the crowd. “Bring the whipping post,” he said. The crowd was dumbfounded. Would the king truly have his mother receive such a punishment? Even the king could scarcely survive such a flogging! This frail woman would not last even a few strokes! The old woman was tied to the post. Her garment was rent, exposing her back to the whip-master. Her ribs could be counted for her frailty. “Administer the lashes,” said the king. Not a sound could be heard as the whip was raised.

But just as the whip-master was about to unleash his first stroke, the king cried, “Halt!” The crowd sighed in utter relief! But not for long. The king stood from his throne. He slowly removed the crown from his head, laying it upon the regal seat. As he began to walk down the stairs toward his mother, he laid aside his royal robe and finely woven tunic. Coming to his mother, he wrapped his enormous body around her, completely enveloping her under his frame. “Now, administer the lashes,” said the king.

Thus in one act did the king display pure mercy and perfect justice. “...so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:26).

How Do We Receive Justification? By Faith _____.

Romans 5:1

Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Galatians 2:16

Know that no one is justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ. And we have believed in Christ Jesus so that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no human being will be justified.

Ephesians 2:8-9

For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift — not from works, so that no one can boast.

○ DON'T MISS THIS

*Justification comes as a result of God's grace (or free gift), which means we don't deserve it nor can we earn it. Justification also comes to us by faith, which means that we **trust** God to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.*

False Views of Justification

To understand this reality and help it deeply work into you, we are going to spend some time comparing four views on how we receive justification:

① Religion Says...

_____ = Justification

2 Roman Catholicism Says...

+ Good Works = Justification

Condign merit supposes an equality between service and return; it is measured by commutative justice (*justitia commutativa*), and thus gives a real claim to a reward.¹ (Example: An employee gets a just wage for his work)

Congruous merit is not precisely merit, but well-founded expectation. It is all the blessings we are confident God will grant, without having the absolute assurance that he will do so. Congruous merit is associated with the divine goodness, whereas condign merit rather depends on God's fidelity to His promises.² (Example: A soldier receiving a medal of honor)

Supererogatory merit is "actions believed to form a reserve fund of merit that can be drawn on by prayer in favor of sinners."..."So much merit that it spills over and is deposited into the treasury of merits. Those who achieve this level of merit are known as SAINTS."³

3 Decisionalism Says...

of faith = Justification

Based on Ephesians 2:8-10, what is the necessary fruit of true faith?

¹ Joseph Pohle. "Merit." *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (10). New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911. www.newadvent.org/cathen/10202b.htm (accessed August 13, 2014).

² John Hardon. *Modern Catholic Dictionary*. Eternal Life Publications, 2000 www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/dictionary/index.cfm?id=32749 (accessed August 13, 2014).

³"Supererogation". *Oxford Dictionaries*. Oxford University Press. www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/supererogation (accessed August 13, 2014).

○ DON'T MISS THIS

We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone.

④ Legalism Says...

Justification by _____,

but right standing with God by _____.

○ DON'T MISS THIS

Legalism is seeking to achieve forgiveness from God and acceptance by God through obedience to God.¹

How should these truths transform us?

FOR NEXT TIME

READING

Read through Acts 17:16-34 a minimum of three times. Use a different translation each time if possible.

MEMORIZATION

Romans 3:23-24 - Be prepared to copy this verse word-for-word for your quiz next week.

SURVEY

Survey three people. Come prepared to share your observations with the class next week.

QUIZ

There will be a quiz next week to check your completion of the assignments listed above.

¹C.J. Mahaney, *The Cross Centered Life*. (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2002)

ACTS 17:16-34

Read through Acts 17:16-34 a minimum of three times. Use a different translation each time if possible.

Outline the main ideas Paul addresses in his presentation of the gospel in Acts 17.

What does Paul address in Acts 17 about the following key themes of the gospel that we have covered so far?

God

Mankind

Christ

Justification

SURVEY

Survey three people.

How Will God Determine Who Goes to Heaven and Who Goes to Hell?

PERSON

1

PERSON

2

PERSON

3

RESPONSE TO THE GOSPEL

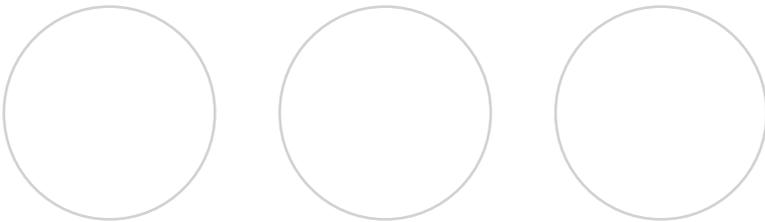
Acts 17

○ REVIEW

What Is Justification?

Justification is an instantaneous legal act of God in which he thinks of our sins as forgiven and thinks of Christ’s righteousness as belonging to us and therefore declares us to be “just” or morally righteous in His sight.

THE R.C. SPROUL 3 CIRCLES ANALOGY



Four False Views of Justification

Religion: Good works = Justification

Roman Catholicism: Faith + Good Works = Justification

Decisionalism: Profession of Faith = Justification

Legalism: Justification by faith, but right standing with God by works.

ACTS 17:16-31

Now that we have studied what God has done for us, let's look at a biblical example of proclaiming these truths to unbelievers.

Read Acts 17:16-31.

How is mankind described?

How is God described?

What is the call of the gospel?

Outline the main ideas of the message Paul gives in Acts 17:24-31.

What does this passage say about Christ and Justification?

Think about the worldview of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. How does Paul's message of the gospel confront their thinking?

Epicurus

Epicurus (342-270 B.C.) held that pleasure was the chief goal of life, with the pleasure being a life of tranquility free from pain, disturbing passions, superstitious fears and anxiety about death. Epicurus did not deny the existence of God (or “gods”) but was “deistic,” meaning he believed the gods took no interest in the lives of humans.

Stoicism

Stoicism was founded by Cypriote Zeno (340-265 B.C.) of Athens. His philosophy centered on living life harmoniously with nature and he emphasized man’s rational abilities and individual self-sufficiency. He was basically pantheistic and thought of God as “the World-soul.”¹

What did you find particularly helpful about Paul’s example in Acts 17?

What Is the Biblical Response to the Gospel?

_____ and _____

Mark 1:14-15

After John was arrested, Jesus went to Galilee, preaching the good news of God: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe in the good news!”

¹Richard N. Longnecker, *The Expositor’s Commentary* (9). (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 473-474.

Peter's call for a response to the gospel for a _____ audience. (Acts 2:36-38)

Paul's call for a response to the gospel for a _____ audience. (Acts 17:30)

Repentance and belief can be studied separately, but they describe what occurs _____ when a person responds positively to the gospel.

○ DON'T MISS THIS

In repentance we change our minds about sin as we forsake it. In belief we trust solely in the finished work of Christ for the forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life.

The Role of Baptism:

Read Romans 6:3-4 and Colossians 2:12-14.

What does baptism picture?

Therefore, who is to be baptized?

Consider this personally: If you have repented and believed the gospel, have you publicly demonstrated this belief through baptism?

FOR NEXT TIME

- READING**
Read through Romans 6-8 a minimum of three times. Use a different translation each time if possible.
- YOUR GOD STORY**
Complete the assignment titled “Your God Story”. Be prepared to share your God story during class next week using your notes.
- MEMORIZATION**
2 Corinthians 5:21. Remember to review Ephesians 2:8-10 and Romans 3:23-24.
- SURVEY**
No survey this week.
- QUIZ**
There will be a quiz next week to check your completion of the assignments listed above.

ROMANS 6-8

Read through Romans 6-8 a minimum of three times. Use a different translation each time if possible.

In two sentences, summarize Romans 6.

In two sentences, summarize Romans 7.

In two sentences, summarize Romans 8.

○ YOUR GOD STORY ASSIGNMENT

Read Paul's God story in Acts 26. Note that Paul tells his story in three key sections: life before Christ, how he gave his life to Christ, and his life now in Christ. These three elements can serve as a helpful guideline to writing out your God story.

Outline your personal God story below.

- Keep it simple. Don't tell every detail but hit the high points.
- Don't gloss over the crossover. When you share how Jesus saved you, give the gospel clearly enough that the key elements of the gospel are all there (God, Mankind, Christ, Response).
- Be clear. Avoid "churchy" phrases like "blessing" or "propitiation."
- Keep it short. Be ready to share your God story clearly in three minutes.

My Life Before Christ

When I Gave My Life to Christ

My Life Now in Christ

NEW IDENTITY

Sanctification and Adoption

○ REVIEW

God	Christ	Mankind
LOVING _____	PERFECTLY _____	WILLFULLY _____
SUPREME _____	SUBSTITUTIONARY _____	PASSIONATELY _____
FINAL _____	VICTORIOUSLY _____	CONDEMNED TO _____

Because of the work of Christ, we can stand justified by God. What is justification?

The call of the gospel: REPENT and BELIEVE.

What is the role of baptism?

But now what happens? How does the gospel change me?

This week: how the gospel transforms my life here and now

Next week: looking forward to our hope for the future

PART ONE: SANCTIFICATION

What Is Sanctification?

Sanctification is a _____ work of both God and man that makes Christians more and more free from sin and more and more like Christ in their actual lives.

God and His children _____ in this work, both playing distinct roles.

While Christians can expect to progress in their sanctification, they will never achieve perfection until Christ returns.¹

Romans 6:6-14

For we know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that sin's dominion over the body may be abolished, so that we may no longer be enslaved to sin, since a person who has died is freed from sin's claims. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him, because we know that Christ, having been raised from the dead, will not die again. Death no longer rules over Him. For in light of the fact that He died, He died to sin once for all; but in light of the fact that He lives, He lives to God. So, you too consider yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, so that you obey its desires. And do not offer any parts of it to sin as weapons for unrighteousness. But as those who are alive from the dead, offer yourselves to God, and all the parts of yourselves to God as weapons for righteousness. For sin will not rule over you, because you are not under law but under grace.

Look again at the definition of sanctification on page 54. How does this passage describe the progressive and cooperative nature of sanctification?

How did you summarize Romans 6?

¹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 746

How did you summarize Romans 7?

The Old Me / Old Way of Life = _____ with Christ

The New Me / New Way of Life = _____ with Christ

Resident within my body, indwelling sin remains. As long as I am in this body, I will have to fight the old desires for sin and cultivate the new desires for God.

EMANCIPATED SLAVE

Imagine you are an emancipated slave. You are free from the tyranny of your former owner and master. You decide to start a new life as a free man. Incredibly, a farm is given to you right next to your old slave master. You begin to live your new life, yet your former slave owner continues to call you from across the fence and demand that you submit to him. Remember, you have been set free. His voice may frighten you and even cause you to flinch. You may even begin to obey him. But stop! You can turn and face your old master and, by the power of Christ, say,
“No! You don’t own me.”

1 Sanctification Is A _____ .

Christians are no longer _____ by sin and
no longer love to sin. (Romans 6:11, 14)

But while the power of sin is broken, the

_____ of sin remains while we are in the physical body of this life.

Since sanctification is a process, we will never be completely free from the _____ to sin in this life. (1 John 1:8)

Although we will never be completely free from sin in this life, we should still expect to see a regular increase in our sanctification. (Romans 6:14)

Romans 8:1-13

Therefore, no condemnation now exists for those in Christ Jesus, because the Spirit's law of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. What the law could not do since it was limited by the flesh, God did. He condemned sin in the flesh by sending His own Son in flesh like ours under sin's domain, and as a sin offering, in order that the law's requirement would be accomplished in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh think about the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, about the things of the Spirit. For the mind-set of the flesh is death, but the mind-set of the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind-set of the flesh is hostile to God because it does not submit itself to God's law, for it is unable to do so. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God lives in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. Now if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, then He who raised Christ from the dead will also bring your mortal bodies to life through His Spirit who lives in you.

So then, brothers, we are not obligated to the flesh to live according to the flesh, for if you live according to the flesh, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

What are the key themes in Romans 8:1-13?

2 Sanctification Is _____ .

God's Role in Sanctification: Give life and power by the

_____ .

Our Role in Sanctification: _____

○ DON'T MISS THIS

Romans 8:13 says to "put to death the deeds of the body" (that is, sin), implying an active role on our part. This is a continuation of what Paul taught in Romans 6. God unites us with our substitute, Jesus Christ, in His death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6:3-4). Therefore, we can cooperate with Him by not allowing sin to reign in our mortal bodies (Romans 6:11-12). The same active and passive role is found in Philippians 2:12-13, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."

3 Sanctification Is A _____

of Our _____ .

Read Romans 8:1 again.

You have already been set free. God did this. The Judge who once condemned you now declares you, “justified.” Therefore, Romans 8 describes sanctification **not** as a means of working our way into God’s favor. It is “walking” in the new life God has for us in the Spirit. It is an entirely new mindset.

PART TWO: ADOPTION

Romans 8:14-17

All those led by God’s Spirit are God’s sons. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father!” The Spirit Himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God’s children, and if children, also heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ—seeing that we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

What Is Adoption?

Adoption is the work of God whereby He takes those who were not part of His family and He makes them His children.¹

From slave to son! Romans 6 reminds us that, before Christ stepped in, we were slaves to sin. As we travel through Romans 6-8 the story continues to get better. Now we reach the crescendo in Romans 8!

¹Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 736.

○ DON'T MISS THIS

We once lowered our eyes in shame and fear before God. Now we lift our voices and cry out to Him, "Abba, Father!" No longer a distant Ruler that we have dishonored, God has become our Father.

How does knowing you are adopted into God's family change the way you live as a Christian today?

FOR NEXT TIME

READING

Read Romans 12 a minimum of three times. Use a different translation each time if possible.

MEMORIZATION

Memorize Romans 12:4-5 and review all other verses (Romans 3:23-24, Ephesians 2:8-10, 2 Corinthians 5:21). Be prepared to write out all the verses word-for-word.

SURVEY

Ask at least three people what they think of when they think of "church."

QUIZ

There will be a quiz next week to check your completion of the assignments listed above.

ROMANS 12

Read Romans 12 a minimum of three times. Use a different translation each time if possible.

Paul concludes his long treatise on the gospel (Romans 1-11) with a beautiful song of worship in 11:33-36.

Then, Paul turns his attention to the application of the gospel in the remaining chapters of Romans. Notice the first word of Romans 12, “Therefore...”

Paul immediately begins to teach the Roman Christians how vital it is that they live out the gospel with one another, in community. This New Community (made up of those who have received the gospel) is called the church.

See if you can summarize Paul’s admonition to be “one body” according to Romans 12.

SURVEY

Survey three people.

Ask at least three people what they think of when they think of “church.”

PERSON

1

PERSON

2

PERSON

3

NEW COMMUNITY

New Creation and Glorification

○ REVIEW

Based on your study of Romans 12, what is your summary of Paul's admonition to be "one body?"

What did you hear from the people you surveyed?
What is the impression most of your peers have about "church?"

1 The Universal Church

Many Christians recite the Apostles Creed as a part of personal and corporate worship. One of the confessions in the creed states:
"I believe in the holy catholic church, the communion of saints."

The word, "catholic" means, _____ .

Hint: It is not a reference to the denomination (Roman Catholic Church).

The word, _____ means, "to share together in."

This part of the creed is a confession that all believers are connected together.

The church is the community of all true believers for all time.¹

The Universal Church is sometimes referred to as the “invisible church.” That is because all true believers share an invisible connection with all those who confess Christ all around the world and share an invisible connection with all true believers from ages past and all who are yet to join us.

THE CHURCH IN SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:17-22

Hebrews 12:22-25

Revelation 7:9-10

2 The Local Church

The Local Church is sometimes referred to as the “visible church.” That is because it is the gathering of Christ-followers that we can see with our mortal eyes.

The book of Acts records the expansion and establishment of local churches wherever the gospel went out. Planting churches was an integral and essential piece in the fulfillment of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20).

Most of the New Testament letters, or, “epistles,” are written to churches or groupings of churches. The letters to Timothy and Titus are written to leaders of local churches in Ephesus and Crete, respectively.

From these letters we can gain much insight as to what God intends for local churches.

¹Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 853.

What are some of the keys to a truly biblical local church?

An allegiance and submission to Jesus Christ

Ephesians 3:20-21 and Colossians 1:15-18

A bold adherence to and proclamation of the Bible

2 Timothy 2:1-2 and 4:1-5

An authentic expression of God-centered worship

Colossians 3:12-17

A visible expression of the sacraments:

Baptism - Colossians 2:12-15

Communion - 1 Corinthians 10:14-17 and 11:23-26

An emphasis on one-another community

1 Corinthians 12:4-7

A passion for the lost

1 Thessalonians 1:8-10

A visible expression of mercy and justice (locally and globally)

James 2:14-17

A plurality of godly leaders

Hebrews 13:7 and 1 Peter 5:1-4

A theology of the gospel must point us to the church. Why? All who embrace the gospel are immediately birthed into the new community of the church. The church is our new home. Fellow believers are our new family. In the gospel, we are not just united to Christ, we are united to His Church.

In an age of bold individualism and autonomy, Christians in 21st Century America need this gospel-reorientation. Jesus Christ died and rose again for “us” - not simply for “me.”

1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10

Coming to Him, a living stone—rejected by men but chosen and valuable to God— you yourselves, as living stones, are being built into a spiritual house for a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

FOR NEXT TIME



READING

Read Revelation 20-22 a minimum of three times. Use a different Bible translation each time if possible.



MEMORIZATION

Memorize 2 Corinthians 5:21 and review all other verses (Romans 3:23-24, Ephesians 2:8-10). Be prepared to write out all the verses word-for-word.



SURVEY

Create your own survey question.



QUIZ

There will be a quiz next week to check your completion of the assignments listed above.

REVELATION 20-22

*Read through Revelation 20-22 a minimum of three times.
Use a different Bible translation each time.*

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Many great stories begin with **RISING ACTION AND TENSION**, often beginning with a crisis. This leads toward a **CLIMACTIC CHANGE**, a major turning point. Next comes the **FALLING ACTION**, the drama that ensues as events either unravel or come together in the lives of the protagonist and antagonist. The final piece is the **RESOLUTION** where all the conflict is resolved and things get set in place as they were meant to be. Every great story is a shadow of **THE** story — God's story of the gospel.

How do the final chapters of the Bible describe an epic resolution? Be specific about the elements and list them below.

SURVEY

Survey three people.

Create your own survey question:

PERSON **1**

PERSON **2**

PERSON **3**

NEW HOPE

New Creation and Glorification

○ REVIEW

Based on your study of Revelation 20-22:

1 Because of the Gospel... A New _____

How do the final chapters of the Bible describe an epic resolution to the story of the Bible?

Often great stories will tie together themes and ideas brought up in the beginning at the end. What do you see in this passage that reminds you of the beginning pages of Genesis?

2 Because of the Gospel...

Glorification is the final step in the application of redemption. It will happen when Christ returns and raises the bodies of all believers for all time who have died, reuniting them with their souls. He will also change the bodies of all believers who remain alive, thereby giving all believers at the same time perfect resurrection bodies like his own.

Romans 8:11

And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

Romans 8:18-25

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

What does this passage teach us about our future glorification?

Two Big Applications to New Creation and Glorification:

_____ is a real, tangible place.

Our eternal hope is to live in a new resurrection

_____ in a new _____ and
new _____ .

FURTHER SCRIPTURE STUDY

1 Corinthians 15:51-52

Philippians 3:18-21

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

John 20:20, 27

Revelation 21:24-26

REVIEW

God	Christ	Mankind
LOVING CREATOR	PERFECTLY OBEDIENT	WILLFULLY IGNORANT
SUPREME AUTHORITY	SUBSTITUTIONARY SACRIFICE	PASSIONATELY REBELLIOUS
FINAL JUDGE	VICTORIOUSLY RISEN	CONDEMNED TO DEATH

Expand on each of the descriptions above. Do you understand each one along with their interrelationship?

Romans 3:23-24

2 Corinthians 5:21

Ephesians 2:8-10

KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Sin

Justification

Propitiation

Legalism

Decisionalism

Repentance

Belief

Sanctification

Adoption

Glorification

Now, how would you define the gospel?

Epilogue

Colossians 1:9-14

For this reason also, since the day we heard this, we haven't stopped praying for you. We are asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God. May you be strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for all endurance and patience, with joy giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the saints' inheritance in the light. He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son He loves. We have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, in Him.

“Theology of the Gospel” is another way of saying “The study of God by way of the gospel.” May your spiritual appetite be whetted by TOG and may you seek to satisfy your hunger for God all the days of your life. Now take His good news to the ends of the earth!

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