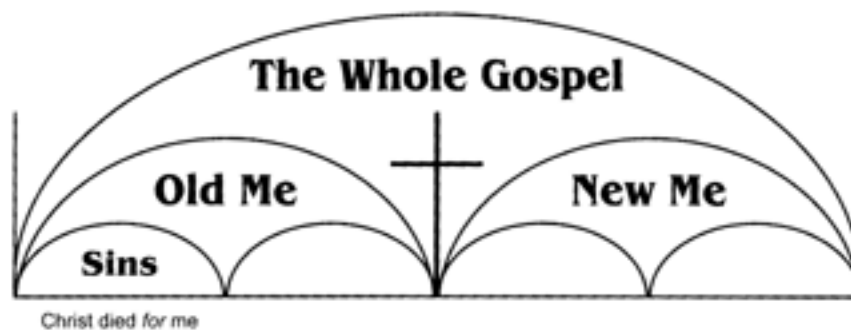


The Power of the Gospel

3

The Great Exchange

In the last lesson, we saw how God dealt decisively with the problem of your separation from God. We also saw how this is the first fourth of the Gospel – the part that deals with the problem of *sins*.



This is unquestionably the most important part of the Gospel. Even if a Christian never knows the rest of the Gospel, this one quarter unlocks the gift of eternal life. Because Christ took my punishment, I can experience forgiveness and cleansing from sin. Because of a revelation that *Christ died for me*, I am able to exercise faith and receive the gift of salvation through God's grace.

Let's have a look at this sequence again:

- **Revelation** – *God's initiative*
- **Faith*** – *my response*
- **Grace**† – *God's response to my faith*

This sequence of revelation, faith and grace flows right through the whole Gospel. Note the orientation of the Gospel. It is always God to you, not the other way around.

In this lesson, we continue to look at the wonder of the good news brought to light in the first quarter of the Gospel.

* Faith is me taking God at his word. It involves more than just believing. Faith includes obedience and repentance.
 † Grace is God's power in action, doing what he said he would do. Grace is active, not passive.

Jesus – Your Substitute

God's plan of salvation hinges on fulfilling the requirements of two diametrically opposed principles:

- His unchanging love for you
- His unchanging standard of holiness

The only way that God could fulfil both these requirements was to find a substitute to die in your place. But it was not as simple as that. A suitable substitute had to meet the following conditions:

- He had to willingly lay down his life – *love* like God's
- He could have no sin in his life – *holiness* like God's

But there was no man who could meet these conditions – for *all* have sinned (Romans 3:23). Nor would anyone have been able to meet God's condition of absolute and unconditional love. Sure, God could have found someone who would die for good people, but would anyone be willing to die for the very worst of sinners? Would anyone be willing to actually carry *their* guilt before God?

Read Romans 5:6-8

No suitable substitute could be found in the whole of the human race. So God took on the requirements of a substitute himself. The Son of God became the Son of Man (**Luke 19:10**) in order to reconcile man to God.

Read Philippians 2:5-8

Read Hebrews 2:9

This is the amazing love of the Cross. Jesus met both of God's requirements – absolute love and absolute holiness – and thus qualified to be our substitute before God. And as the perfect substitute, Jesus also totally identified with us so that we could totally identify with him (read **Hebrews 4:14-16**).

Read Isaiah 53:4-5

The Cross was the place where God's love and justice met. God's righteous judgment demanded the death penalty for sin, but God's love met his own demands.

Read 1 Peter 2:24

No Other Mediator

Read Hebrews 12:22-24

A mediator is an intermediary who acts on behalf of two parties in order reconcile differences, strike an accord and effect cooperative action. In the Bible, mediation particularly has to do with covenant (see **Galatians 3:19-20; Hebrews 8:6; 9:15**).

The Cross was God's method of mediation. In Christ, you and God were brought together.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:18-19

This work of mediation was complete. There is now no barrier between you and God, nor is there any need for another mediator to stand on your behalf before God. This is so revolutionary that many Christians still have difficulty grasping this concept. For many believers, a belief still stubbornly clings that they need someone to stand between them and God – a pastor, a preacher, a prophet, a priest or a pope. But the good news of the Gospel is that you have direct access in a straight line between you and God, through Jesus Christ alone. There is no other mediator.

Read 1 Timothy 2:5

Saved Completely

Read Hebrews 7:25

To be “saved” means to be rescued from certain catastrophe and put in a place of safety and security. A drowning man, helpless in the water and heading for certain death, looks for someone to *save* him. In the same way, God has come to the aid of the human race, floundering in its sin and heading for certain judgment.

Read Titus 3:4-5

Read 2 Timothy 1:8-9

Read 1 Timothy 1:15-16

God's plan of salvation saves you from every area that has been affected by sin and broken fellowship with him. You have been saved...

From judgment

Read Romans 5:9

Almost the first understanding we have of God's salvation is its comprehensive solution to judgment. The Bible says that you were on a collision course with God's judgment, with only one verdict possible: hell and eternal separation from God.

Read Hebrews 9:27

Read 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9

In many ways, it takes a revelation of judgment and hell before we can fully appreciate the salvation we have been given.

The important thing to understand about your salvation from God's judgment is exactly how God went about it. He did not cancel your appointment with judgment. He did not “pull some strings” behind the scenes to let you get away without going to court. No, you do not need to face judgment because your judgment

has *already* happened! In Christ, at the Cross and at the Resurrection, you have *already* been judged.

- In the Cross, you were judged guilty
- In the Resurrection, you were judged guiltless

This is what it means to be “justified.” Justification means there is no heaven-or-hell judgment waiting for you to face.* Your appointment with the Great White Throne Judgment (**Revelation 20:11-15**) has not been cancelled; it has been deemed redundant.

Read Luke 10:20

When you believe and embrace the fact that Jesus died for you in order to reconcile you to God, God writes your name in his Book of Life (read again **Hebrews 12:22-23**). This is the registry for all the citizens of heaven. You are going to heaven because your name is already recorded as a kingdom citizen (see **Philippians 3:20**). You have a “no questions asked” entry visa for heaven.

Read John 5:24

From being “lost”

Read Luke 19:10

The Bible describes a person who has not yet been reconciled to God as “lost.” This has a double meaning. Firstly, that person has “lost” their way, but even more importantly, that person has been “lost” to God.

Jesus told several parables that described the condition of a person lost to God. For example, in **Luke 15:3-7**, he tells the story of a sheep who had strayed from the fold. Again in **Luke 15:11-24**, Jesus tells the story of a young man who left home and wasted his life and his inheritance.

Like the lost sheep and the lost son, we too had lost our way (note **Isaiah 53:6**). We had strayed away from God onto the wrong road – a road that led to death and destruction – and we had no way of finding the right path home. The Cross became a beacon, bringing us back on track and uniting us with the Father again.

From Satan’s dominion

Read Colossians 1:13-14

At the Cross, a transaction was made between you and God. The blood of Christ “bought” you (see **Acts 20:28**). But it did much more than that. It also had a direct effect on your citizenship in the dominion of Satan.

- Firstly, the blood of Christ puts God on your side against the devil (**Romans 8:31-34**)

* Note that this does not mean that as Christians there is no judgment ahead. **2 Corinthians 5:10** tells us that we all (as Christians) must face the judgment seat of Christ, but this is a whole different type of judgment. This judgment is not regarding heaven or hell, but involves rather a meting out of rewards or rebukes.

- Secondly, the blood of Christ dissolves Satan’s legal rights of ownership over your life (**1 Corinthians 6:19-20**)

This switch from Satan’s authority to God’s authority has numerous repercussions for your life. When ownership changes, the rules and conditions change (see **Romans 6:13**). But so also do the benefits (**Romans 6:16-23**).

Read Acts 26:18

The salvation God has engineered through the Cross is a total salvation. This is not a partial Gospel, but an all-embracing one. Jesus is “able to save completely those who come to God through him” (**Hebrews 7:25**). As the Amplified Bible translates this verse:

“Therefore He is able also to save to the uttermost – completely, perfectly, finally and for all time and eternity – those who come to God through Him...”

The Great Exchange

Read 2 Corinthians 5:21

What a powerful scripture! This one verse describes the method of God’s plan of salvation. At the Cross, Jesus totally swapped places with you.

The Living Bible renders this verse in this way:

“For God took the sinless Christ and poured into him our sins. Then, in exchange, he poured God’s goodness into us.”

This exchange is what the first quarter of the Gospel is all about. God took your sin and placed it on Jesus on the Cross. Yes, but he did something more than that. The exchange also went the other way. God took the righteousness of Jesus and counted it as your righteousness.

This is the nature of the exchange described in the Gospel. The exchange is a total change of position. One minute you are an enemy of God; the next minute you are a friend of God. One minute you are condemned to judgment and hell; the next minute you are declared righteous, with all the incredible benefits that this entails.

Read Ephesians 2:1-7

On the Cross, your sin was exchanged for Christ’s righteousness. Your condemnation was exchanged for his guiltlessness. Your death sentence was exchanged for his life. Your poor excuse for “life and godliness” was exchanged for a “life and godliness” that meets the holy standards of God.

Read 1 John 5:11-12

Sowing and Reaping

Read Galatians 6:7

There is a law of sowing and reaping. If we sow sin, we will reap judgment and death. If we sow righteousness, we will reap life and glory. But on the Cross, God reversed this law. Jesus sowed what he did not reap and reaped what he did not sow.

Read Isaiah 53 (the whole chapter)

Note what Isaiah writes in prophetic declaration of the future work of the Cross:

“But he was pierced for *our* transgressions, he was crushed for *our* iniquities; the punishment that brought *us* peace was *upon him*, and by *his* wounds *we* are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has *laid on him* the iniquity of us all” (verses 5-6).

Jesus did not deserve to die. He had not sown sin and therefore did not need to reap judgment and death. But when Christ went to the Cross, God made the Great Exchange. Christ reaped what you sowed and you now reap what he sowed! Christ took the punishment you deserved. And now you receive all the blessings that Christ deserved.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:9

Salvation in Christ only comes through the way of exchange. If we reject the Christ’s work of mediation on the Cross, we must reap the judgment we ourselves have sown. But if we choose to rely on God’s way of exchange, our judgment has already been taken by Christ himself on the Cross.

Read Ephesians 1:13

As a believer, you have been “included in Christ.” When you stand before God, he does not see your past because it has been exchanged for the past of Christ. As far as God is concerned, you now have Christ’s past – all of his righteousness – which calls upon it the blessings of God. Just look at what you stepped into when you stepped into Christ:

Read again Ephesians 1:3-11

All these blessings listed – “every spiritual blessing [in the heavenly realms]” – actually belong to Christ. But they now also belong to you because you are in Christ. You attract the blessings of heaven because when God looks at you, he sees his Son.

But not only do you now have Christ’s past. You also have Christ’s future. At the Cross, Jesus took your future of judgment and hell. In return, because you are now in Christ, you have received his future of glory and hope. No wonder the Bible calls the Gospel “the gospel of the glory of Christ” (**2 Corinthians 4:4**).

Linked with Christ

Read Colossians 3:3-4

Your life has been linked by the Holy Spirit to the life of Christ himself. This is one shade of what it means to be “in Christ.” This is now how you live the rest of your life – linked in Christ to the throne of God! You are linked to his life. You are linked to his blessings. You are linked to his future. You are linked to his authority. And, most importantly, you are linked to his relationship with his Father.

Read Galatians 4:6-7

What a vista has been opened up to you in the Gospel. The boundaries of your life have been expanded to embrace the fullness of the life of Christ himself. No wonder we get overwhelmed by everything that God has done! No wonder God has thrown eternal life into the package. We need the rest of eternity, firstly to *discover* everything we received in that one moment in time when we received Christ, and secondly, to *praise* him for the matchless love that he has lavished upon us.

Read 1 John 3:1

We never deserved any of it. But that is the message of the Gospel. Because Christ received what he did not deserve, we now have what we do not deserve. Such is the love of God!