

The Core Doctrines of the Gospel – 3

What did God do?

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When we are talking about the Gospel, we are talking about the Good News. In the words of one Pastor, “The Gospel is good news not good advice”. It is not a 12-step program to become the best you or to have the best life now. It is God’s news. The world is in great danger, and God has done something about it. He has entered into our world and acted. So what did he do? What is the good news? The good news is at least three things:

1. God gave us what we did not deserve.
2. God kept all of his promises by sending Jesus.
3. God loved us by sending Jesus to die for our sin.

1. God gave us what we did not deserve.

Most of us have studied another language at some point, whether English, Spanish, French, Chinese or German. One of the ways that a good teacher teaches new words is using opposite words: hot and cold, near and far, tall and short. Language experts say that by understanding opposites, the brain can maintain the words it learns better and understand the words at a deeper level. So I will test you. What is the opposite of open? Close. What is the opposite of love? Hate. When we know the opposite of a word, it means that we understand what the word means. That is why we can answer so quickly. So by knowing that hate is the opposite of love we really must understand what love is. Some words are easier, and others are harder. What is the opposite of night? What is the opposite of fear? Let us try a harder word today. It is one of the most essential words in the Bible. This word separates Christianity from all other religions. I will tell you the word, and you tell me the opposite.

What is the opposite of **Grace**? If you are not sure what the opposite of grace is, that means that the word is not clear for you. Grace is receiving a good gift that you did not earn. Merit is receiving what that you did earn. When a man works, he earns his money. But when it is a gift, he did not earn it. When we see the story of God is a story of Grace. God gave us what we did not deserve. Think of a few examples. When the first people sinned, they realized they were naked. They were ashamed. They wanted to hide their sin and cover it up. So they went out and made a poor covering of leaves. God had all the right to leave them itching in leaves. But instead, he comes to them and gives them animal skins to cover them. Sure an animal had to die to cover them. But they were covered. Did they deserve this? No.

According to the Bible, Abraham was a pagan who worshiped all kinds of gods. He did not think in his mind, "I will follow the one true God". Instead, God came to this pagan and chose to make him into a great nation. Did he deserve this? No. Jacob was a liar and cheater who lied and cheated his father and brother. God came to him and promised to bless him and be with him. Did he deserve that? Moses was a murderer, David was an adulterer, Peter denied Jesus, Paul persecuted Christians. Did any of these men deserve all the good things God gave them? They all received grace. They all received what they did not deserve.

Now before you think this is how it always is, let me remind of the truth. God owes no man anything. God has no debts. If he gives, he gives because he chose to give. No man can make God do anything. 2 Peter 2:4 says that God did not spare the angels when they sinned. The Bible speaks about a rebellion of the angels. This is where Satan comes from. The shocking part is that not one angel was ever given a second chance. They never received grace. So when God does give grace here and now it is entirely freely given. He does not owe anyone. This is why grace is so amazing. —What did you do to earn which family you were born into? What did you do to earn to be born into this period of human history? What did you do to earn God's love? What did you do to earn Jesus to suffer for you?

We are all hopelessly guilty before God. If you are a believer in this room today, I want you to understand very clearly that you did nothing to deserve God. God came to Adam, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Rahab, Ruth, David, Peter and Paul. They did not come first to him. God came to us. That is grace. This is why the gospel is good news. God is offering his mercy to every person.

2. God kept all of his promises.

The second piece of the Gospel puzzle is that God tied all of the promises of the Bible together in Jesus. Though the Bible has more than 40 authors over 1,500 years, it points to Jesus. Luke 24:27 says:

"And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."

John 5:39 says:

"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me."

What these passages are talking about is at least two things. First, Jesus is the focus of the predictive prophecies of the Old Testament. This is the easiest form of prophecy to explain. God says something is going to happen and it happens. There are many examples of this, but one of the most beautiful passages comes from Isaiah 53. The entire prophecy, which starts at 52:13, goes all the way to 53:12. In verse 5 and 6 we see the sacrifice of Jesus for the sins of his people:

“But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—everyone—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

Notice the “him to us” language. **He** was pierced for **our** transgressions, crushed for **our** iniquities, with **his** wounds **we** are healed, the Lord has laid on **him** the iniquity of **us** all. This prophecy was around 800 years. Before Jesus was born. It is an amazing prophecy. God was telling the world that he always had a plan to bring salvation. Jesus for us is the plan.

The second kind of fulfillment is symbolic fulfillment. Jesus is not just predicted, he is pointed to. God designed the entire story of the Bible to point to Jesus. Jesus is a better Adam. Adam failed as the head of humanity, but Jesus saved us all. Jesus is a better Ark than Noah’s ark. As God judges the world, Jesus can save billions and keep them safe until the end. He is a better Abraham as he left his home in heaven and obeyed perfectly. He started a new people of God that brings all the tribes together. He is a better Joseph. Joseph was betrayed by his brothers and then suffered terrible things, only to be exalted and save the world from a famine. Jesus was betrayed by his brothers, the Jews. They did not allow Jesus to reign over them. They killed him but God raised him, and he saves from sin, not just famine. Jesus is a better Moses. Moses was almost killed as a child, and then led the people out of Egypt and out of slavery, and into a covenant that brought death and judgment on them. Jesus was almost killed as a baby. Then he died to free people from slavery to sin that killed and consumed their lives. His covenant is better as he can save completely those who come to him. Jesus is a better David. David killed Goliath, but Jesus destroyed the power of sin and death. Jesus is the better sacrifice. The Israelites killed animals to pay for their sins, but they had to keep giving sacrifices again and again. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world forever. He is a better high priest; his body is a better temple, he is a better rock, he is the bread from heaven, the light of the world, the exact image of God, the author and perfecter of our faith, the great I am. This story of God is all about him. He is the greatest, most beautiful, most precious person ever. He is the greatest treasure any person could ever receive. It is all about him. He is everywhere. That is what he was teaching his disciples.

3. God loved us by sending Jesus to die for our sin.

Now that you are thinking about this magnificent Jesus the Christ, I want to talk about the love of God. Not just any man came. Not just any man is able to save. Do you understand how much God loves you? Romans 5:8 says this:

“⁸ But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Let us think on this verse a little. First, it says that while we were sinners God loved us and Christ died for us. Don't let those words come lightly to you. Christ died for you. Do you understand what that means? Let us walk through the crucifixion so you can meditate on what that means. Most of the info I use comes from Dr. Metherall, a medical expert. First, it began in the garden. Luke said that as he prayed his sweat fell like drops of blood. This a rare medical condition documented where people are under extreme stress. It is called hematidrosis. Capillaries break, and sweat mixes with tiny amounts of blood, and therefore a person appears to be sweating blood. This leaves the skin very weak and easy to tear.

Then Jesus was arrested and kept awake all night. He was mocked and slapped. Then came the flogging. Romans were known to flog a person very severely before crucifying them. This would usually be at least 39 lashes of a special whip. This whip would frequently have 9 whips. Each would contain small stones or pieces of bones. The stones would bruise and weaken the skin, and the bone would sink into the skin and rip out flesh as the whip was pulled back. It was horrible. A third-century historian by the name of Eusebius described a flogging by saying, "The sufferer's veins were laid bare, and the very muscles, sinews, and bowels of the victim were open to exposure." So this whip with braided leather straps and bones came down on Jesus' shoulders, neck, back, backside and the back of his legs. This is why we see Jesus struggle to even make it to the cross. He had not slept all, and his skin was weak.

Then they whipped him. And he bled and struggled to even carry the cross. Imagine carrying a piece of rough wood on a whipped shoulder. Historically, most likely, Jesus only carried part of the cross, called the crossbeam, which is the horizontal part of the cross. But he could not do that, so they had to get another man to do it for him.

Then they laid him down where they nailed his hands to the crossbeam. Now the Greek word for hand means hand or wrist. There is only one word. Archeologists have found skeletons of crucified men where the nail is still in their wrists. It would have been between the arm bones on the median nerve. Do you know what it feels like to bump you on behind the elbow? Imagine being nailed through that nerve. The pain was something like that.

Then came six hours of hanging on a cross. Now people who were crucified did not die of pain. They were usually killed by breaking their legs. Why? Because they had to breath by pushing up with their feet. As they pushed, they could breathe. But Jesus had been beaten so badly and lost so much blood that he cried out of thirst. Then as a person bleeds to death, their heart speeds up and they can tell something is very wrong. Most likely, Jesus would have to know that he was about to die just from the way his heart raced. When you understand crucifixion, you understand what God thinks of sin. If sin were just a little thing, why would he crucify his son? God is holy, and sin is despicable to him. On the cross God's justice is satisfied. But at the same time hear the word of God: ***"But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."***

At the cross, God shows his love. God did not show his love for you when you were perfect. He showed it when we were far from him. This is the love of God. This is the amazing grace of God. He gave his son as the sacrifice for sin. Notice one last phrase of the verse. It says that God shows his love, not that he

showed his love. Today as we meditate on Jesus death for sin we see love. God is showing love. Just believe, and your sin is paid for by Jesus. What did God do? In faithfulness to his promises, by grace and in love God planned the sacrifice of his only son.

Discussion questions:

- 1.** What does grace mean?
- 2.** Talk about some examples in the Bible of people who received God's grace (something they did not deserve).
- 3.** Read John 5:39. How do the Old Testament scriptures bear witness about him?
- 4.** Look at Isaiah 53:5-6. This is a prophecy about Jesus. What do you learn from these verses?
- 5.** Look at Romans 5:6-11. What do you learn about the love of God? Who did God love? How did God show that love?
- 6.** How should we respond to that love?