

## *Arbor Foundations*

### 7 – The Gospel Part 1: What exactly is the Gospel?

Oct 28, 2018

#### **Suggested Reading**

#### **Key Ideas / Biblical Basis**

Our Problem: Sin—Any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude, or nature (Grudem)

A. We have inherited sin from Adam (this concept is sometimes called “Original Sin”)

1. We are counted guilty because of Adam’s sin

- *Rom 5:18-19: Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.*

- Some might say this is not fair, but it is also not fair that we can be made righteous by the obedience of Christ!

2. We have a sinful nature because of Adam’s sin

- *Ps 51:5: Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.*
- *Eph 2:3b: [We] were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.*

B. We commit actual sin in our lives

- Rom 3:23: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God
- See also 1 John 1:8, Rom 3:9-10, Ps 14:3, Ps 143:2

C. Because of all of these, we deserve death and are under God’s wrath and headed towards eternal punishment, if nothing is done

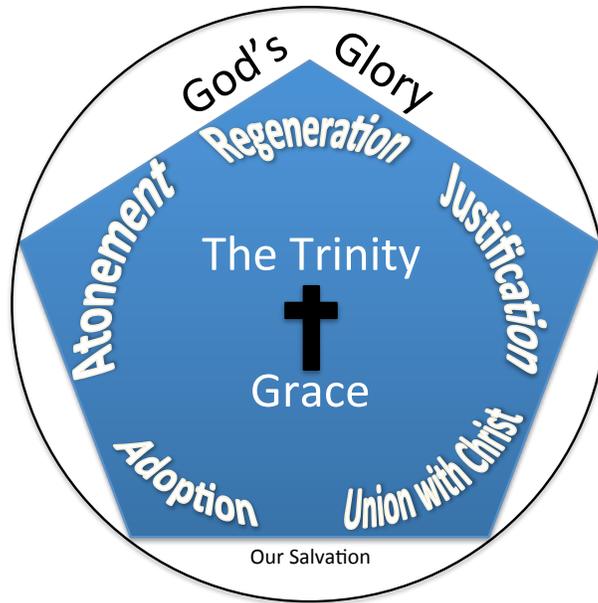
- Rom 6:23: For the wages of sin is death
- Rom 1:18: For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

This is the situation in which the gospel—good news—can be understood. If we were not in such a desperate situation, then the good news would not really be good news.

Jesus Christ and his work is the central theme of the Scriptures, and the “good news” is a shorthand description of the work that he did and how that affects us.

In one sense, the basic concepts of the gospel are simple. However, the Bible describes the gospel from a number of different angles. It is of value for us to see and understand the complete picture as much as possible, because the more we see, the more we will worship and honor and thank God for what he has done.

We will cover five different concepts that are very closely related to the gospel. The diagram below attempts to show that that these concepts, while distinguishable, are all part of the same bigger picture—that the triune God, for his glory, saved his people, as an act of his grace.



#### A. The atonement

- The atonement is the work Christ did in his life and death to earn our salvation (Grudem)
- 1. Two aspects of Christ's work:
  - a) Christ's obedience for us
    - Christ had to live a life of perfect obedience in order to earn righteousness for us
    - *Rom 5:19: For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous*
  - b) Christ's sufferings for us
    - Suffering through his whole life
      - Temptation in the wilderness (Matt 4:1-11)
      - *Heb 5:8: Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.*
      - Opposition from Jewish leaders (Heb 12:3-4)
      - Grief at death of close friend Lazarus (John 11:35)

- The pain of the cross
  - Physical pain
  - Pain of bearing sin
    - *1 Pet 2:24a: He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree*
    - *2 Cor 5:21: For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*
    - See also Isa 53:6, Is 53:12, Gal 3:13
  - Pain of abandonment
    - *Matt 27:46: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*
  - Bearing the wrath of God
    - He “made propitiation” for our sins—a sacrifice that bears God’s wrath to the end and changes God’s wrath toward us into his favor
    - *1 John 4:10: In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*
    - See Heb 2:17, 1 John 2:2
- 2. Jesus was our “substitute”—he bore the punishment that we deserved
- 3. As sinners, we have four problems that are addressed by the atonement (adapted from Grudem):

Because of sin:	Jesus was or accomplished:
We deserve to <i>die</i> as the penalty for our sin	<b>Sacrifice:</b> Jesus was a sacrifice for us (Heb 9:26)
We deserve to <i>bear God’s wrath</i> because of sin	<b>Propitiation:</b> Christ died as a propitiation for our sins, meaning he took all of God’s just wrath for our sin on himself.
We are <i>separated</i> from God by our sins	<b>Reconciliation:</b> God reconciled us to himself through Christ (see 2 Cor 5:18-19)
We are in <i>bondage to sin</i> and to the kingdom of Satan	Redemption: We have been redeemed or “bought back” from the dominion of darkness and brought into the kingdom of light (see Col 1:13)

**B. Regeneration**

- Regeneration is a secret act of God in which he imparts new spiritual life to us. (This is sometimes called being “born again”, see John 3:3-8)
- 1. Regeneration is totally a work of God
  - a) We play no active role at all
    - *John 1:13: [the children of God] were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*
    - *Ezek 36:26-27: And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.*
  - 2. The exact nature of regeneration is mysterious
    - *John 3:8: The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.*
  - 3. Regeneration comes before saving faith
    - *Eph 2:4-5: But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ*
    - *Col 2:13: And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses*
    - See also 1 Cor 2:14, Acts 16:14, John 6:44
  - 4. Genuine regeneration must bring results in life
    - *1 John 3:9: No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.*
    - *Gal 5:22-23: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*

## C. Justification

- Justification is an instantaneous act of God in which he (1) thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ's righteousness as belonging to us, and (2) declares us to be righteous in his sight.
1. God declares us to be just in his sight. This involves two things:
    - a) Our sins are forgiven, so there is no longer any penalty for them
      - *Rom 8:1: There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*
    - b) He also gives us credit for Christ's righteousness
      - *Philp 3:9: and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith*
    - c) These two things together are often called the "Great Exchange": Christ took the punishment for our sin, and we get the credit for his righteousness
      - Sounds too good to be true...but it is!
  2. Justification comes to us entirely by God's grace, not on account of any merit in ourselves
    - Grace is God's goodness towards those who deserve only punishment
    - *Rom 3:23-24: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*
    - *Eph 2:8-10: For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*
  3. What's the difference between regeneration and justification?
    - a) John Murray: Regeneration is an act of God in us; justification is a judgment of God with respect to us. The distinction is like that of the distinction between the act of a surgeon and the act of a judge. The surgeon, when he removes an inward cancer, does something in us. That is not what a judge does—he gives a verdict regarding our judicial status. If we were innocent he declares accordingly.

## D. Adoption

- Adoption is an act of God whereby he makes us members of his family.

## 1. Scriptural evidence

- *John 1:12: But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God*
- *Rom 8:14-17: For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*
- See also Rom 9:7-8, Gal 3:23-26, Gal 4:4-7, 1 John 3:1-2

## 2. Adoption is distinct from justification

- a) In regeneration, we are made spiritually alive, able to relate to God. This does not automatically mean that we are adopted into God's family.
- b) God adopting us into his family actually goes above and beyond pure justification. We could have legal standing with him, but not be part of his family.

## 3. The privileges of adoption

- a) We can relate to God as a good and loving father
- b) The privilege of being led by the Spirit of God is also a benefit of adoption
  - *Rom 8:14: For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.*
- c) God disciplines his children (and this is a privilege!) (Heb 12:7-10)
- d) As children of God and joint heirs with Christ, we have the privilege of sharing both in his sufferings and in his subsequent glory
  - *Rom 8:17: and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him*
- e) We relate to each other as brothers and sisters

**E. Union with Christ**

1. Summary statements
  - a) We are in Christ
  - b) Christ is in us
2. We are in Christ
  - a) Christ represents us
    - We have been crucified with Christ (Gal 2:20)
    - We have been buried with Christ (Rom 6:4)
    - We have been raised with Christ (Col 3:1)
    - We have been seated with Christ in the heavenly places (Eph 2:6)
  - b) Our identity is also in Christ
    - We don't need to prove ourselves any more
    - We don't need to manage our own reputation
    - We don't need to be intimidated by anyone
    - We don't need to fear the judgment of God
    - We can rest
3. Christ is in us
  - a) Christ dwelling in us in His Spirit is a guarantee that we can and will change
    - Gal 2:20: I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
    - 1 John 4:4: Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

**So What?**

It is important for us to understand some of the distinctions talked about above in order to avoid falling into error.

Examples:

- Thinking that our justification comes from something that we do (like in Roman Catholicism)
- If we fail to realize that regeneration precedes faith, then we can start to “take credit” for being “smart enough” to have faith. As it is, our faith itself is also a gift from God—we have no place for pride or boasting.

Also, the more we consider these various aspects of the gospel, the more start to grasp how amazing God is—his demonstration of love for us by adopting us into his family, the suffering he had to go through to personally bear our sins, God's righteous wrath that should have been poured out on us, but instead was poured out on Jesus, etc. There is lots of material here that enables us to truly praise and worship him. At the same time, we should recognize that at its most basic level, the gospel is relatively straightforward: I'm a sinner in rebellion against my creator, and my only hope is, by faith, to believe in Christ and his work for my salvation.

**For Further Study**

Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*

<https://www.monergism.com/topics/atonement>

<https://www.monergism.com/topics/regeneration>

<https://www.monergism.com/topics/justification>

<https://www.monergism.com/topics/union-christ>

<https://www.monergism.com/topics/adoption>