

1. The Centrality of the Cross

Training objective

To understand the grace of God given to us through Jesus' death and resurrection

Study

- 'Grace'- means unmerited favour. 'God's Riches At Christ's Expense'. It is through the cross that we realise God's favour towards us.
- To really appreciate God's grace through the cross we need a revelation of just how dependent on His grace we are- just like the lady who wept at the feet of Jesus and poured perfume on them-Luke 7:47

Our Need of God's grace

- The fall of mankind- historical (genealogies, Jesus quotes, N.T quotes)

Mankind pre-fall

- Mankind made in the image of God (Gen 1:27) and did not know sin (Gen 3:25)

Mankind post-fall

- Mankind knows good and evil- Gen 3:22
- Universality of sin- all affected by Adam, our federal head- Rom 5:12; Rom 3:9-18,23
- Sinful at birth- Ps 51:5. Ps 58:3- a child will grow to sin when it is capable
- Retains image, although marred- Gen 9:6. God shaped hole-Augustine

'Total Depravity'

- Does not mean as bad as possible- Lk 11:13
- Means every part of mankind tainted by sin: will, mind, body, soul, spirit
- A scholar cannot reason their way to God apart from His revelation- 1Cor 2:4; Rom 8:7; Tit 1:15; Rom 1:20-22
- Our will is affected- without God's intervention we would never choose to follow Him- Rom 3:11; John 6:44; Acts 16:14
- Emotions affected- depression, sorrow, shame, guilt, seared conscience, self-justification
- Physical bodies affected- death, pain, suffering, sickness.
- Creation affected by our fall- thorns and thistles, decay & death, earthquakes etc.

'Total Inability'

- We cannot undo the fact that we are sinners.
- Dead in our sins- Eph 2:1-3. Dead person cannot save themselves. That's why we pray for the lost.
- Slaves to sin- Jn 8:34. We cannot free ourselves.
- Cannot obey God's law. Paul- doing well until heard about 'do not covet'

God's Justice and Love

- God would be unjust and sinful if He did not punish sin. He is described as a Holy God and a God of justice- 1Jn 1:5; Ex 34:6-7. He will judge all- Heb 9:27; 2Cor 5:10
- The wages of sin is death- Rom 6:23. Hell is a real place of eternal punishment for sin- Matt 10:28; 25:41,46; Rev 14:10; 20:10,12,15
- But God is a God of love and desires to save us- John 3:16; 1Tim 2:4

God's Rescue Plan

- Planned before the world began- Rev 13:7-8; Eph 1:4-6
- Announced before hand by the prophets (over 300 Messianic prophecies in O.T)
- His Son to be our substitute

The Perfect Substitute

- Sinless- God becomes a man, born of virgin & so not tainted by Adam's sin. Lived a perfect life, or would have had to pay for His own sin!
- Human- Only a human life can substitute for a human life
- Divine- 1 life is worth 1 other life, but God is worth more than the sum of His creation

The Wrath Absorber- Propitiation

- Propitiation means something which takes away anger. God's anger against our sin was poured out upon Jesus on the cross- Is 53:10
- These verses speak about Christ's death being a propitiation for us- 1John 2:2; 4:10; Heb 2:17; Rom 3:25-26
- This means that God is no longer angry with us because of our sin
- Jesus went through Hell (the anger of God against sin) on the cross, so we don't have to- Matt 27:46
- Jesus had finished the work when He said 'it is finished' (John 19:30). Thoughts that He then descended into Hell are at odds with Lk 23:43, 46. Apostles creed had 'descended into Hell' as a later addition. The scripture in 1Pet 3:19-20 is making the point that the gospel was preached through the Spirit of Christ by Noah to people who disobeyed, and now their spirits are in prison awaiting judgment day.

Our Identification with Christ

- Our new federal head to replace Adam- Rom 5:18
- When we place our faith in Christ we are considered to be 'in Christ' This means that legally speaking, our old self was crucified with Him, buried with Him and raised from the dead to newness of life- Rom 6:4-12, Eph 2:4-7

The cross brings spiritual, physical and emotional healing

- We are healed by His stripes- Is 53:5; Matt 8:16-17 (physical sickness)
- He bore our sorrows- Is 53:4. The chastisement for our peace was upon Him- Is 53:5
- The same greek word SOZO meaning 'saved' is also translated 'healed' and 'delivered': 'saved'- Matt 1:21; Rom 10:13; 'healed'-Mark 5:34; James 5:15; 'delivered'- Lk 8:36. Therefore our salvation is not purely spiritual.

Justification- being declared righteousness

- Being justified is the opposite of being condemned
- As Jesus became our federal head and paid the price for all our sins we are now legally pronounced 'not guilty' rather than condemned- Rom 3:26,28; 5:1; Gal 2:16; Rom 8:1
- This means Satan no longer has any legal right to accuse us saying 'you have broken God's laws' as Jesus has now legally canceled our debt, fulfilling the righteous requirements of God's law on our behalf and taking the punishment for our lawless deeds- Col 2:14-15; John 12:31; Rev 12:10; Rom 8:33
- Also our rags have been exchanged for Jesus' riches. His righteousness is given to us as a free gift. We are now legally declared by God to be righteous! -Is 61:10; Rom 3:21-22; Rom 4:3; Rom 5:17,19; 1Cor 1:30; Phil 3:9

We are saved not by works, but simply by believing

- Even our faith which saves us is a gift from God!- Eph 2:8

God predestined us to be saved

- God desires that all come to know Him- 1Tim 2:4-6; 2Pet 3:9
- However those who do come to know Him have been predestined by Him- the terms predestined and election are often used- Acts 13:48; Rom 8:28-30; Rom 9:11-13; Rom 11:7; Eph 1:4-6; Eph 1:12; 1Thess 1:4-5; 2Thess 2:13; 1Tim 5:21; 2Tim 1:9
- We need to hold on to the tensions between man's freewill and God's election as they are two sides of the same coin.
- God has also chosen to display His judgment against sin as well as His mercy and compassion- Rom 9:22-23. Without God's mercy we all deserve judgment. We need to always remember that God is good and takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked -Ez 33:11

The Implications of the Resurrection

- It proves the sacrifice of Jesus for our sins was accepted by God the Father- 1Cor 15:17; Rom 4:25
- It proves that Jesus really is the Son of God- Rom 1:4; Acts 17:31
- It proves to us that if we trust in Jesus He will also raise us physically from the dead-Rom 6:5; Rom 8:11; Col 2:13; 1Cor 6:14; 2Cor 4:14; 1Cor 15:12-58

The Implications of the Ascension

- It proves that Jesus is all powerful and in charge of the universe-Eph 1:1-20; 1Pet 3:22; Psalm 110:1; 1Cor 15:25; Matt 28:18
- It proves that we too will be brought by God into Heaven- 1Thess 4:17; John 14:2-3; Eph 2:6
- It shows us that there is a human being who understands our weaknesses and is representing us before God the Father, and praying for us- 1Tim 2:5; Heb 4:14-16; Heb 10:12; Heb 7:25;

Implications

- In Christ your sin has been paid for. This is not dependent on you. It is all of grace. If your sin has been paid for then your salvation is *sure*. It would be unjust of God to demand payment twice - once of Christ and once of you - (Heb 9:27,28).
- Read Rom 6:1-6. This certainty that God has effected our salvation brings a response of love and gratitude that results in change. Rom 8:28-39. Knowing the security of our position brings a real stability to our christian lives.

Practical Application

Are you free from feelings of guilt? Bring your sins to the cross and ask for God's forgiveness, and receive this by faith.

Are you free from feelings of needing to earn God's favour? It is by grace that we have been saved - (Eph 2:8-10). Accept this and pray for God to reveal the full extent of His grace as displayed on the cross.