

GROW 201 – What We Teach

Lesson 4

RG² and the CROSS

KEY PASSAGE(S):

“For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (Gal. 5:1).

THE BIG PICTURE – THE *Story*:

As noted in lesson one, “Why Grace,” the red ball in Newton’s Cradle is the Gospel. Regrettably, our view of the gospel is somewhat stunted. To speak of the gospel, is to speak of God’s *Story* and to speak of God’s *Story* is to speak of the person and work of Jesus. Jesus is that “red ball.” Everything in God’s *Story* comes from, is sustained by, and flows back to Him. Nothing in the Bible or in this world can make sense apart from Him. This lesson enables us to see just how foundational the gospel is in everything that follows.

The *Story* flows to and from the person and work of Jesus Christ. He is the *Story*’s Hero. The person and work of Jesus Christ is so vast and of such limitless quality that all He does is lavish in its ability to cancel out the nature of the crime against Him by His people.

AN INTRODUCTION:

As one who is perhaps new to the relational truth of the Christian faith, it is necessary to begin informing the mind so that one might enjoy all they are in Christ. The Bible makes a strong distinction between living under the Law and living under grace (Rom. 6:15) and of being in bondage versus being set free (Gal. 5:1). The vast majority of people live quiet lives of desperation not knowing where they came from, why they are here, or where they are going.¹ Such questions as these are only correctly answered from the biblical record. Such questions form the *Story* God wrote. Apart from Jesus, all is lost. The Christian is to learn to live in the freedom Christ has set them free. Such truth moves the believer from “having to,” to “wanting to.” It moves the believer from the sphere of duty to that of desire. We are not to live in the arena of punishment, but of pardon. We are to cease our doing and begin to enjoy our resting.

BASIC IDEAS:

1. The Bible tells a single *Story* and at the center of this *Story* is JESUS.
2. Who JESUS is and what JESUS does forms the basis for anyone’s relationship and standing before the FATHER.
3. Who JESUS is and what JESUS does is enough for this life and for the life to come.
4. Works cannot maintain what God gives by grace.

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One of the glaring tragedies of the Christian life is the pharisaical bondage in which most believers live. It is a subtle slavery that goes mostly undetected by the individual. The vast majority of believers have embraced a freedom from hell's damnation, only to live in bondage to their daily sin and a performance-based acceptance before God. They have never tasted true freedom. They are like the institutionalized inmate who upon gaining a complete pardon has no idea how to function in freedom and so goes back to finding safety in the routines of their imprisonment. Or they are like the slave who has been released only to remain as a slave. Neither knows how to act or behave. They are both free but still act as if they are in bondage.

The Bible was given in order that we might know God. It was not given to be a rulebook or an end in itself. It was given so that we might see Him. Because of our self-centeredness that manifests itself in our self-sufficiency, we have the constant battle to usurp authority over Christ. **God gave us the Bible, not to tell us how to live, but that we might see what He is like.** There is a world of difference between those two ideas.

When one believes in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of their soul, ignorance abounds. The recipient of Christ is often completely ignorant of the tremendous theological truth that had transpired and is transpiring all around them. It is not necessary to know all of this to be saved. It is necessary, however, to know all of it in order to “know all you are in Him and He is for you.” It is only when we learn the truth that we can truly rest in His finished work.

Alignment with God's *Story* flows from the person and work of Jesus Christ. His life provides the perfect sacrifice whereby His death becomes efficacious. **His life and death are the means whereby God can placate His justice and pardon His people.** To understand the richness of His work is to align with His *Story* and to live in His rest.

There are several primary words found throughout the New Testament that will facilitate our study. Initially, we will work in the Book of Romans, but our study will quickly expand to other New Testament books.

I. His work of REDEMPTION enables debt to be cancelled (Rom. 3:24)

“being **justified** as a gift by His grace through the **redemption** which is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24).

“In Him we have **redemption** through His blood, the **forgiveness** of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:7).

“so that He might **redeem** those who were under the Law, that we might receive the **adoption** as sons” (Gal. 4:5).

“in whom we have **redemption**, the **forgiveness** of sins” (Col. 1:14).

“who gave Himself for us to **redeem** us from every lawless deed, and to **purify** for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds” (Titus 2:14).

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“and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal **redemption**” (Heb. 9:12).

Just a simple reading of these verses carries tremendous power. The word itself is found in excellent company. Redemption is the basis for forgiveness [by God] and propitiation [for God].

The English word redemption means “repurchase” or “buy back”, and in the Old Testament referred to the ransom of slaves (Exodus 21:8). In the New Testament the redemption word group is used to refer both to **deliverance from sin and freedom from captivity**.

The word “redemption” presupposes debt and bondage. Inherent within the word is the idea of buying back. As it relates to our sin debt, it speaks of its complete and full cancellation. When Christ redeemed us, He paid in full our sin debt before the Father.

To save us, Christ had to pay the debt because of our own inability to do so. When He paid the debt, He did so in full. He did not leave any behind. None was left for us to consider. Never can we be a debtor to God for our sin. As far as our Father is concerned, the sin issue has been addressed in full.

What are the implications of such a thought?

- The Father will never bring up the sin issue again. Why? Because He has dealt with it in full. To bring it up would be to minimize the redemptive act of Christ.
- We now can live in a “debt-free relationship” with the Father as it relates to the sin issue. If the debt has been canceled in full, can we now once more become a debtor?
- There is no possibility of going into debt again. We do not have to start all over again and try to keep the slate clean. There is no more slate. God is not keeping score, granting or withholding blessings on the basis of our performance.²

II. His redemptive work secures His ability to FORGIVE our transgressions against Him.

“be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, **just as God in Christ also has forgiven** [charizomai] **you**” (Eph. 4:32).

“when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, **having forgiven** [charizomai] **us all our transgressions**” (Col. 2:13).

“I am writing to you, little children, **because your sins have been forgiven** [aphiemi] **you for His name's sake**” (1 John 2:12).

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines forgiveness as “to grant free pardon and to give up all claim on account of an offense or debt.” God’s forgiveness is not based on what we do, but what He does. His forgiveness of us is gracious on His part by providing the means for forgiveness to take place. He sends our sins away. This idea is captured in Psalm 103:12 and Micah 7:19.

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“As far as the east is from the west, **so far hath he removed our transgressions from us**” (Ps. 103:12).

This is pictured in the Old Testament in the laying on of hands on the goat and sending it away into the wilderness, never to return.

“He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, **you will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea**” (Micah 7:19).

Forgiveness is a pardoning whereby the sentence against us is dropped. **God’s forgiveness of us negates sin’s eternal consequence because of the cross. However, our forgiveness of others cannot negate the intrinsic demerit of sin.**

What are the implications of such truth?

- Because God dealt with our sin in full, we never lack His immediate and unconditional forgiveness.
- We need not ask for what is already ours in Christ before the Father.

III. The life and death of Jesus Christ enables the Father’s justice to be addressed and His wrath to be PROPITIATED (Rom. 3:25).

“whom God displayed publicly as a **propitiation** in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed” (Rom. 3:25).

“Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make **propitiation** for the sins of the people” (Heb. 2:17).

“and He Himself is the **propitiation** for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world” (1 John 2:2).

“In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the **propitiation** for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

The word “propitiation” has to do with anger and wrath. **Only God is propitiated.** He is wrathful against the sinner’s sin. To propitiate means, “To placate, satisfy, or appease.”

God is angry with the sinner. The sinner is the object of God’s wrath (John 3:36). The death of Jesus Christ placates the wrath of God against the sinner. The sufficiency of His death satisfies the justice of God against sin.

In Christian theology, propitiation is accomplished through Jesus Christ on the cross in his crucifixion and sacrifice. He fulfilled the wrath and indignation of God. **The crucifixion and sacrifice of Christ conciliates God**, who would otherwise be offended by human sin and would demand penalty for it.

What are the implications of such truth?

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- If the death of Christ sufficiently and effectually removes the object of God’s wrath thus placating His anger and satisfying His justice, then God can never be angry with us again.
- We will never face God’s anger. God will never be angry with those who participate in the propitiating work of Christ before the Father.

Let us not fear such freedom, but let us tremble at the sheer joy of its glory as it is but a whisper of His voice and the hem of His garment.

IV. Because His person and work is so vast, God the Father can now declare and see those in Christ as RIGHTEOUS. (Rom. 3:22).

The word **JUSTIFICATION** means “to declare righteous.” The Reformation was fought over whether or not it meant “to declare” [imputation] or “to make” [infusion]. Protestants believe it means “to declare.”

“nevertheless knowing that a man is **not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus**, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified” (Gal. 2:16).

¹⁸ “so then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. ¹⁹ For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous” (Rom. 5:18, 19).

“even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction” (Rom. 3:22).

“being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24).

“**He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him**” (2 Cor. 5:21).

In a positional sense, we are what Christ is. The practical outworking of this is the putting on of the new and the putting off the old by the renewing of one’s mind (Eph. 4:22-24). In so doing, our Lord will be seen in our earthen vessels. It is, in this sense, that *we* are righteous. In truth, it is His righteousness being seen in and through us. This is what Ephesians 5:9 and Philippians 1:11 are referring. Our righteousness is actually the outworking of His righteousness in us. It is as we become aware of what He is that we are desirous of putting on those qualities that will reveal Christ to others through us.

Justification by faith will always bring forth the fruit of righteousness (Rom. 2:13, 15). It is not the works of the Law that justify, but a justifying faith that produces adherence to the Law. Only the justified can “keep” Law. **Yet the justified keep the Law only so far as Christ kept the Law. His Law-keeping kept the Law for us.** We do not have to because He did/does. It is the enabling power of God quickening me that equips me to fulfill His demands upon me (Rom.

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8:10). My conformity to the will of God is because of His conformity to the will of His Father. My conformity is a result of His conformity. **I am because He is.** It is only as we understand the nature of God's grace that we can live righteously (Titus 2:11-15).

What are the implications of such a thought?

- Practically, nothing changed. In justification, one is still a sinner, yet a saint. One's acceptance by God rests solely on who Jesus is and what He did, not on who we are or will do.³
- If justification is seen in light of the context within Romans, then to be right with God is to be justified. It is impossible not to be right with God if one is justified.
- Justification or being right with God is not based on how we feel.

V. God's redemptive work justifies the ungodly and REMOVES FROM THEM ALL GUILT before His judgment seat (Rom. 3:19)

"Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable (guilty) to God" (Rom. 3:19).

Prior to the cross, we stand guilty. After the cross, such is no longer the case. We are blameless.

What are the implications of such truth?

- We will never be punished by the Father for our sin.
- For the Father to punish us for our sin would be to declare our Lord's punishment inadequate.

Should a believer "feel guilty" when they sin against God? Absolutely, for the sin has intrinsic culpability. However, such guilt is not before the Father. The Father is not holding you liable and He will not extract from you the punishment intrinsic to the sin. **Those who "feel" no guilt in sinning have many challenges facing them.**

VI. The Father's justice is able to be satisfied because He PLACES ON His Son the sins of the rebel and TRANSFERS TO the rebel His Son's righteousness (Rom. 4:6-8)

In *How People Change*, Timothy Lane and Paul Tripp note the following in the chapter titled, "Married to Christ."

This is what happens when we become Christians. **Christ assumes our liabilities and graciously gives us his assets.** This is God's amazing grace.⁴

Positively considered, it means that we have the righteousness of Christ credited to our account (4:6). We are, because of Him, as righteous as Jesus Christ is. It is an **alien righteousness**. It is

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not indigenous to us. Because of the doctrine of imputation, we have all the necessary resources to meet any charge brought against us.

Negatively considered, God will never credit sin to our account (4:8). Romans 4:6-8 is a quotation from Psalm 32:1, 2. David longed to be this man though such an **experience** was foreign to him. He still felt God's heavy hand against him. Truly, the man who was not credited with sin would be a blessed man.

What are the implications of such truth?

- New Testament believers are blessed. Though omniscience sees sin, **God will never credit it to their account**. God will never count or consider sin against the New Testament believer.
- God will always deal with us as righteous and He will never deal with us according to our sin.

VII. By placating God's justice, the rebel is RECONCILED to the Father.

"For if while we were enemies we were **reconciled** to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been **reconciled**, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5:10).

"Now all these things are from God, who **reconciled** us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of **reconciliation**" (2 Cor. 5:18).

"yet He has now **reconciled** you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach" (Col. 1:22).

"The word 'reconciliation' refers to the process of changing something thoroughly and adjusting it to something else that is a standard. For example, when you adjust your watch to a time signal, you are reconciling the watch to a time standard. Or when you reconcile your checkbook, the standard to which you match it is the bank's record of your account. On rare occasions the bank must reconcile its accounts to yours."⁵

If propitiation is the negation of judgment, reconciliation is the positive embracing of the one pardoned. Reconciliation is possible because God's judgment against sin has been placated.

VIII. What we once were IN ADAM has been swallowed up by what we now are IN CHRIST.

The New Testament believer is described as being in Christ. The term is synonymous with salvation (Rom. 8:1; 2 Cor. 5:19; Eph. 1:20). No one in Christ can be lost. The preposition "in" is a locative of sphere. To be in Christ is to be in the realm of His ownership, identification, association, fellowship, and presence.

"In Christ" is an expression of intimate interrelatedness, analogous to the air that is breathed: it is in the person, yet at the same time, the person is in it.⁶

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The opposite is equally true. Not to be in Christ is to be lost. No one can be in Him and out of Him at the same time. Such a statement raises the question as to whether or not the Father ever sees us apart from His Son. The answer must be no. For Him to see us apart from His Son assures us of our lost estate. Our heavenly Father never sees us apart from being “in Christ.”

Self-righteousness shows itself in a search for one’s own identity apart from relationship. Identity is sought in performance, position, and success. But let’s face it, you will never have an identity except in your relationship with Jesus. In Christ, you are important. Outside of him, you are lost.⁷

IX. As a result of God’s REDEMPTIVE activity, His people are once more ADOPTED into His family.

“so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons” (Gal. 4:5).

“He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will” (Eph. 1:5).

Whatever existed prior to the fall is restored with a recognition that everything changed and is changing. The same idea of intimacy and purpose prior to the fall continues to this day. Adoption enables the alienated to participate in the inheritance.

CONCLUSION:

This is the truth we are called upon to believe. We have drawn too sharp of a distinction between what we are in Christ and the continuing battle we have with the old nature. **We have allowed ourselves to make our failed experiences and submission to the old nature as our defining points.** This is woefully catastrophic. The purpose of this short study was to see that Jesus Christ is enough in this life and in the life that is to come. There is nothing and no one who can be for us what we are in Him. Who we are in Him is not determined by our activity or ability. There is nothing more that must be done for us to acquire what is already ours. Nothing can alter His opinion of us or His dealings with us. Why? Because He deals with us according to the merit of His Son and on the basis of grace alone.

BASIC APPLICATION	
1. What did you find helpful from today’s lesson?	7. What do you believe to be the practical difference between living under the Law and living under grace?
2. What did you find confusing from today’s lesson?	8. Is there anything a believer can do to undo what God did at the cross?
3. How does this lesson help you in thinking through the gospel?	9. Do you believe the Father will ever bring up your sin issue again?
4. How does this lesson help you in how you view yourself?	
5. What was your “aha” moment?	
6. How might this text challenge you in your daily activity?	

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¹ “Most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them.” “I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.” Henry David Thoreau
<http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/h/henrydavid132662.html#ixzz1jea26jK0>

Thoreau understood the questions confronting us all. He failed in not allowing the Biblical text to form his worldview; thus robbing Him of lives fullest and ultimate meaning and purpose.

² Jerry Bridges, *Transforming Grace*, 21.

³ The idea expressed in this statement is to acknowledge that we are saved while sinners. Although everything does change in our relationship to God and sin, we are the same person after our conversion as we were before. It is a nod to the Lutheran phrase, “Simultaneously just and sinners.” Listen to how R.C. Sproul explains the idea. “Perhaps the formula that Luther used that is most famous and most telling at this point is his formula *simul justus et peccator*. And if any formula summarizes and captures the essence of the Reformation view, it is this little formula. *Simul* is the word from which we get the English word simultaneously. Or, it means ‘at the same time.’ *Justus* is the Latin word for just or righteous. And you all know what *et* is. It simply means and. *Peccator* means sinner. And so with this formula Luther was saying, in our justification we are one and the same time righteous or just, and sinners.” <http://www.ligonier.org/blog/simul-justus-et-peccator/>

⁴ [Emphasis added] Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp, *How People Change* (New Growth Press, 2006), 55. This is an excellent chapter on the believer’s union with Christ.

⁵ <http://www.realttime.net/~wdoud/topics/reconciliation.html>

⁶ R. David Rightmire, “Union with Christ,” in *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 789.

⁷ Hall, *Grace Works*, 87.

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