

“What is the Gospel: Part 6”

Review: We have seen so far that God created the first man, Adam, put him in the garden of Eden, gave him the duty to cultivate the garden and guard it, and entered into a covenant with him. In this covenant, in which he represented all of his posterity, except for Christ, he was commanded not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But Adam failed to guard the garden, and ate of the tree God told him not to eat of. The result was that Adam died, and all of his posterity died in him. That death was not just physical death, although it did include that, but also judicial death, or the penalty of everlasting damnation. But there is one more aspect to this death in the garden, and that is spiritual death. This is what we will look at this morning, before we turn to consider what the Lord did to recover fallen man.

II. The fall brought man into an estate of death.

- A. The seeds of physical death were sown in his body, and he eventually died.
- B. He fell under the judgment of eternal damnation.
- C. But he also died spiritually.
 1. What does it mean to be spiritually dead? It means that man is totally depraved.
 2. What does total depravity mean?
 - a. Every part of man’s being is affected by sin. What are those parts?
 - (i) His body, as we have seen.
 - (ii) But also his mind and his affections. He now desires evil, and the bent of his heart makes his mind work against good and towards evil.
 - b. Now everything he does is tainted by sin. What does this mean?
 - (i) With his affections corrupted, everything he does has the wrong goal and motive, even when he is doing things which may be outwardly right.
 - (ii) Most of the time, the things he does are also outwardly wrong.
 3. If this is true, how can a man ever come to God and receive the gift of life that He offers in His Son? He can’t. Man is also totally unable to do anything to commend himself to God.
 - a. Paul writes, “The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8:7-8).
 - b. He writes, “There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one” (Rom. 3:10-12).
 - c. This is why Jesus said, “No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:44).
 - d. And again, “For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father” (6:65).
 - e. Even if salvation is offered to man, he will never savingly embrace it, because

he can't apart from the grace of God.

- f. Does this mean that he can't understand it? No, he can understand it. He might even want to embrace it to escape hell. But he will never be able to savingly embrace Jesus with all his heart, because until his heart is changed, he really can't love God or Christ at all.
 - g. Are the Arminians right when they say that in Calvinism God holds some people back from the kingdom? No. Man holds himself back. God offers all men salvation, but man won't receive it, because he doesn't want to, which is why God holds him guilty for not doing so.
4. Why is it important that an unbeliever know that this is true?
 - a. He needs to know that there is nothing he can do save himself. He is absolutely helpless to keep God's Law. He also cannot atone for the sins he has already committed.
 - b. He needs to know that he cannot of himself even receive the gift of eternal life that God offers him, but is absolutely dependent upon God from first to last for his salvation.
 - c. If an unconverted man ever comes to believe that he can be saved at any time he wishes, he will put that promise in his back pocket and live the way he wants to, until he really believes that he needs it, usually at his death bed. But he needs to realize that this is not the case. If that is his attitude, it just shows that he loves his sin and not God, and therefore is not saved.
 - d. We will see that even the desire to seek after God for salvation comes from God and can never come from man, because of the condition of his heart.

III. This now brings us to the third point: Man cannot save himself, but God can. And He has provided everything we need in the Covenant of Grace.

A. What is the Covenant of Grace?

1. It is a Covenant, like the one God made with Adam. It is an agreement between God and Christ, and the elect in Christ.
2. What do we mean that the covenant is made between God and Christ?
 - a. It is an agreement between the Father and the Son, that the Son would take upon Himself our nature to save us and that the Father would reward Him with those whom He had chosen.
 - b. But this covenant is not made between God the Father and God the Son, strictly speaking, but rather between God the Father representing the Trinity and the God-man, or the incarnate Christ.
 - c. Remember, Jesus has two natures.
 - (i) What are they?
 - (ii) He is God.
 - (a) We've seen this before, but here are a couple of quick review verses.
 - (b) John 1:1-2 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God."
 - (c) John 20:28 Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"
 - (d) John 10:30 "I and the Father are one."

- (iii) And He is man.
 - (a) 1 Tim. 2:5-6 “For there is one God, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the* man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony *borne* at the proper time.”
 - (b) Gal. 4:4-5 “But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”
 - (c) Rom. 5:15 “But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.”

3. Why is it important that Jesus have two natures?
 - a. He had to be a man, to pay the debt to God’s justice that man owed.
 - b. He had to be a man in order to be a merciful and faithful high priest. Heb. 2:17-18 “Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.”
 - c. He had to be a man to die for our sins. Acts 20:28 “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” 1 Cor. 15:3 “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.”
 - d. But He also had to be God so that He could withstand the wrath of His Father.
 - e. And He had to be God that His sacrifice might be worth enough to satisfy the infinite debt of His people.
4. Do the cults believe that Jesus has two natures? Typically no.
 - a. Mormons: He is the spiritual offspring of a god who was formerly a man.
 - b. Jehovah’s Witnesses: He is Michael the Archangel, a creature.
5. Why is it important to believe in the Christ who is both God and man? Because this is the only true Christ.
6. Why is the Virgin Birth important to the Covenant of Grace?
 - a. If Christ had not been born of a virgin, not only would He not have fulfilled prophecy, but He would not have been qualified to be the Redeemer. God would not have accepted a blemished lamb for a sacrifice, only a spotless one.
 - b. Sin apparently is credited through the father to his children. Christ had a divine father and therefore was not reckoned among Adam’s children.

- B. What did Christ do in the Covenant of grace?
 1. What His people failed to do, Christ does.

- a. He stands as the representative of His people, just as Adam did for his.
 - b. 1 Cor. 15:21-22 “For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.”
 - c. What He did, He did for us. His obedience is counted for our obedience. Rom. 5:18-19 “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. 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.”
 - d. When Adam sinned, his sin was imputed to his people. When Christ obeyed, His obedience was imputed to His people.
2. He is now the Surety, or Guarantee, that the conditions of the Covenant of Grace will be met for His people.
 - a. What are those conditions? The same as they were for Adam: perfect obedience.
 - b. How did He meet those conditions? He lived a perfect life.
 - c. But this was not enough. Because His people had sinned, He had to die to atone for their sins. Now that He has, He has secured those blessings for His people.
 - d. What are the blessings of that covenant? Eternal life and an eternal inheritance in the heavens.
 3. In this covenant, Christ has also been given three offices.
 - a. Prophet: What does He do as our prophet? He declares to us the will of God for our salvation.
 - b. Priest: What does He do as our priest? He lays down His life for us and intercedes for us.
 - c. King: What does He do as our King? He rules over us, protects and defends us, and subdues all His and our enemies.
 - d. These three offices will be important when we talk about assurance of salvation, for no one can truly embrace Jesus in one of His offices and neglect the other two.
 4. But there is one other thing. There is something that man must do in this covenant: he must repent and believe. This is what we will want to look at next week.