



DESERT VIEW BIBLE CHURCH

SERIES: WE BELIEVE • SALVATION • 2/12/2023

MAIN POINT

A person experiences salvation by hearing the gospel and believing it.

INTRODUCTION

What hobby or activity do you typically do to help you get away from everything and “recharge”?

What do you think it is about that particular activity that helps restore you?

Do you think that activity would have the same restorative effect on you if you were able to do it more frequently? Why or why not?

At various times in our lives, we all feel the need to be restored. The demands and concerns associated with our jobs, family, and so on eventually become more than we can handle with joy and excellence. In order to do them well, we need a time of

restoration so that we can once again turn to those responsibilities. This need for physical restoration is symbolic of our need for spiritual restoration. In the same way that we become frustrated and exhausted from our responsibilities, all of us are broken in our relationship with God. In order to be with Him, we need restoration. Yet no amount of down time or effort on our part can bring this restoration about. Thankfully, God, in His great grace and mercy, has made restoration possible. The restoration God makes available is summed up in the gospel, the story of God's saving purpose in sending Jesus Christ to us in order to bring us back to Him.

UNDERSTANDING

Separation from God is the fundamental problem that we all encounter in life. Because of our sin, because of our choices, we need restoring to a relationship with God. Thankfully, God, in His great grace and mercy, has made restoration possible. The restoration God makes available is summed up in the gospel, the story of God's saving purpose in sending Jesus Christ to us in order to bring us back to Him. The gospel is articulated throughout the Bible with four key points. Let's spend a few minutes discussing each one.

1. God rules.

Take turns in your group to have different people read the following texts: Genesis 1:1; Revelation 4:11; and Colossians 1:16-17. What do these verses mean to you? What do these verses teach us about God? Why is it important to understand that everything started with God?

Read Genesis 1:31. What does this verse reveal about God's creation?

The good news of the gospel always begins with God. The Bible says God created everything, including you and me, and His creation was perfect. Once God's work of creation was complete, He settled into His role as ruler, and He remains in charge of everything even today (Col. 1:16-17).

2. Man sinned.

God created us for a relationship with Him—a relationship that centers around praising Him and making His name known to the world. But the Bible doesn't mince words when it tells us that our relationship with God is broken. There was a time when Adam and Eve, the first humans, walked with God and lived in His presence (Gen. 1–2). Genesis 3 describes the fall, or unraveling, of creation, when sin entered the world.

Read Romans 3:23. What does this passage reveal about us and who we are apart from God? What do you think it means to “fall short” of God's glory?

Read Romans 6:23. What is the result of punishment for sin?

Sin is understood as missing the mark when it comes to God and His expectation for His creation. As a result of sin, we are all born separated from God, and that separation has a cost—death. The apostle Paul said that because of sin, we're considered dead as sinners—completely separated from God and under His judgment. Without God's grace, we're all spiritually hopeless. Thank God that our spiritual story does not stop with this dark picture of sin. He didn't leave us there, in the hopelessness of separation from Him. From the beginning of creation, God had a plan to save us by His great grace.

3. God sent Jesus.

Read John 3:16. What words from this passage help us understand the manner of God's love for us?

What did God's love lead Him to do? Why is this such a big deal?

Read also Ephesians 2:8–9 and Acts 16:30–31. What does God offer us through Jesus?

Instead of leaving us to die in our sin, God sent Jesus to die for us. He's the perfect solution to our sin problem, rescuing us from the punishment we deserve. Out of love for us, God sent Jesus to accomplish our salvation on the cross. John 3:16 tells us that whoever believes in Jesus gains eternal life, which is eternity in the presence of God. When we believe in Jesus we believe in both His identity as the Son of God and His work—His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. Salvation is something we could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. God's love provided salvation for the world through the gift and sacrifice of His Son, but salvation comes only to those who believe in Christ.

4. We respond in repentance and faith.

Read John 14:6. What does Jesus mean in referring to Himself as the way? Truth? Life?

Read Romans 10:9-10 and 10:13. According to these verses, how is a person saved, and to what result?

If you are a Christian, what were some of the things that previously kept you from believing in Jesus? What changed your mind?

Once you believe in God's gift of salvation, the next step is responding to His great gift in repentance and faith. Turn away from your own direction and back to God. Repent from self and sin, then turn to Jesus. We receive salvation and eternal life through faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The phrase "believe in your heart" (Rom. 10:9) refers to genuine faith, an absolute trust that God made salvation possible and available to all when He raised Jesus from the dead. Saving faith focuses solely on Jesus the risen Lord. Our inward commitment and outward confession are to agree on the primacy of Christ.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Deciding to follow Christ is the most important decision you will ever make. Today, if you are ready to make that decision, you will be saved. God will save you from your sins and give you a new life. If you are ready to make this decision, meet with me afterwards, and I will point you in the right direction.

PRAYER

Close with a prayer of gratitude and thanksgiving to God for the good news of the gospel. Praise God for sending His Son to die for us and that we now have a message of hope to share with the world. Give your group members the chance to pray silently as they assess their own relationship with God and their commitment to sharing the gospel with others.

COMMENTARY

JOHN 3:16

3:16. How poignantly it states that eternal life comes not because of anything we do. Salvation comes as a free gift when we believe what God has said. For almost two thousand years people have been adding to the gospel, but the truth still rings clear today—whichever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. Nicodemus had superb religious training but very little spiritual insight. He could not grasp Jesus' statement that a person must be born from above to experience eternal life.

Four times in three verses (vv. 16–18) Jesus uses variations of the word “believe,” perhaps the most important key word in John's Gospel. The Son of God classified the

entire human race into two groups—those who believe and are not condemned, and those who do not believe and are condemned already.

The gospel begins with God's love, penetrates through the cross and the empty tomb, and results in eternal life for those who believe. Nicodemus would have believed firmly that God loved Israel, but not much in Jewish theology allowed for God to love the world. This is new revelation, the new covenant breadth of the gospel. Jesus had just evoked one Old Testament image in the Pharisee's mind (the snake in the desert), and now he touched on another—the aged Abraham sacrificing his only son on the altar (Gen. 22:2).

We've already explored the word "believe," so crucial to the message of the gospel and the record of John. But two other words call for attention in this splendid verse. To describe God's love for the world John chose the verb "agapao" for the first time in his writings. He used it thirty-six times, more than twice as many as any other book of the New Testament except his first epistle in which he used it thirty-one times. But the gospel does not center in God's love, but rather what he gave on the cross—the death of his Son. The Bible does not allow us to merely acknowledge that Christ died for the world; saving faith requires a recognition that he died for each of us individually.

The words "one and only" translate "monogenes," which appears again in verse 18. John had already used it in 1:14, 18 and used it again in 1 John 4:9.

The verb "perish" speaks of eternal death in contrast to eternal life. It represents the opposite of preservation, since death is the opposite of life. Those who refuse God's gift are alienated from Him without hope for both the present and the future. A person need not sin blatantly to perish. One may simply fail to act positively in receiving God's gift. When applied to Judas in John 17:12, we learn that the one who perished was the son of perdition, a play on the word "apoleo."

A word needs to be said here about the section that includes verses 16–18. If we take these verses separately in our study, they form a single unit of thought in the text and each verse depends upon the others (though many who could quote verse 16 would not be able to recite verses 17–18 with equal accuracy). Verse 16 tells us that God gave his Son, verse 17 explains why, and verse 18 emphasizes the result.

Yet another point requires mention here. Red-letter editions of the Bible identify Jesus speaking throughout this chapter in response to Nicodemus. However, many

scholars believe that the Lord's words end at the end of verse 15 and that verses 16–21 represent the words of John. It is a reasonable assumption that verses 16 to 21 are not part of Jesus' words to Nicodemus, but comments by the evangelist, as Jesus in speaking of the first Person of the Trinity refers to him as "Father" not as "God."