

Baptism Class (Pt. 1)

Importance of Gospel Clarity for Baptism

Intro

*“And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, **baptizing them** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 **teaching them** to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-19)*

- Twin aspects of the Great Commission: *baptizing & teaching*.
- This morning we will focus on seeking doctrinal clarity about the Gospel, and next week we'll discuss the meaning of Baptism. We do the class like this for two reasons:
 - *The relative importance of the Gospel over baptism.*

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures,...” (1 Corinthians 15:3)

“For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.” (1 Corinthians 1:17)

<p><i>“The gospel that Christ died for our sins is the daily meat and drink for growing Christians. It is not a ticket in, to be torn up; it is the air breathed, to be increasingly enjoyed.”</i> –Dane Ortlund, “Christocentrism,” <i>Themelios</i> 34.3, 320</p>

- *The necessity of Gospel clarity for those who are baptized.*

The Gospel Message

- Christianity is built around a piece of news. At the heart of the Christian faith is an *announcement*.

“The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God...” (Mark 1:1)

- The gospel is based in historical and theological realities—in other words, things that are outside of us.

GOD

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1)

“[God’s] invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.” (Romans 1:20)

- The basic presupposition of Christianity: *God is.*

- Two implications of this fact.
 - *Our lives have a purpose.* We have a wise & loving Creator.

 - *We are owned by another.* The fact that we are God’s creatures informs us that we belong to him, are dependent upon him, and are accountable to him.

“The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth” (Romans 1:18).

MAN

- The problem goes back to the first man: *Adam.*

- Our basic impulse, since the fall, is to declare ourselves as god and lord of our life.

- The problem is, we don’t view ourselves in this way. We think we’re pretty good.

“But far from owning that they hate God, the vast majority of men will not only vehemently deny it, but affirm that they respect and love Him. Yet if their supposed love is analyzed, it is found to cover only their own interests. While a man concludes that God is favorable and lenient with him, he entertains no hard thoughts against Him. So long as he considers God to be prospering him, he carries no grudge against Him. He hates God not as One who confers benefits, but as a Sovereign, Lawgiver, Judge. He will not yield to His government or take His law as the rule of his life...The only God against whom the natural man is not at enmity is one of his own imagination.”

–A.W. Pink, *The Doctrine of Human Depravity*, 114

- The Bible presents our problem not *primarily* in terms of victim/wounded/needy. We are mainly *criminals, offenders*. And God is the offended party.

“For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.” (Romans 1:21-22)

- This should inform how we think about our testimony.

“Once the gospel starts being presented primarily as that which brings such and such benefits, be they freedom from alcohol abuse or just emotional highs every once in a while, the distinctive particularity of Christianity is lost.... Self-help programs have brought many back from the brink of self-destruction to decent lives; and, while Christianity gives me a sense of meaning and worth, so, I believe, does ferret-breeding for some people. So what have I to say to the perfectly content ferret-breeder? Not a lot, if Christianity is primarily about feelings, whether of satisfaction, happiness or otherwise. I have Jesus; they breed ferrets. Result in both cases: happiness. So what’s the difference? The difference, of course, lies not in the experienced effect but in the cosmic bottom line: Christ is God acting to save for all eternity; ferrets are good only as temporary distraction from the deeper realities and concerns of life.”
–**Carl Trueman**, *The Wages of Spin: Critical Writings On Historical and Contemporary Evangelicalism*, 73

CHRIST

“But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 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, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.” (Rom 3:21-25a)

- This is the good news of the gospel! God took on human flesh and entered our world.
- Two key terms:
 - **Propitiation.** Jesus is credited with our sin and is punished for it.
 - **Justification.** We are credited with Jesus’ righteousness and are rewarded for it.

- Substitution is the heart of the Gospel:

“The concept of substitution may be said, then, to lie at the heart of both sin and salvation. For the essence of sin is man substituting himself for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for man. Man asserts himself against God and puts himself where God deserves to be; God sacrifices himself for man and puts himself where only man deserves to be. Man claims prerogatives which belong to God alone; God accepts penalties which belong to man alone.”

–John Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 160

RESPONSE (Conversion)

- The gospel requires a *response*.
- If you are a Christian, that means there was a moment in your life when you went from death to life. This is called **conversion**.

“...testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.”
(Acts 20:21)

Faith

“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.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

- It is characteristic for the New Testament to place a strong, clear contrast between *working* and *believing*.
- There are several verbs that the Bible uses to describe this response: *Coming* to Christ, *Looking* to Christ, *Believing in* Christ, *Trusting* Christ.

*Nothing in my hands I bring
Simply to Thy Cross I cling
Naked, come to Thee for dress
Helpless, look to Thee for grace
Foul to thy fountain fly
Wash me, Savior, or I die*

Repentance

“If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Romans 10:9)

- The attitude of faith affirms the Lordship of Christ. This is *repentance*.
- This doesn't mean that we stop sinning—far from it. But it means we've *chosen sides*.

“The difference between an unconverted and a converted person is not that one has sins and the other has none; but that the one takes part with his cherished sins against a dreaded God, and the other takes part with a reconciled God against his hated sins.”

–**William Arnot**, *Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth*, 311

- What did it cost you to believe in Christ? What did you turn *from* to turn to Christ?
- The gospel is simple to understand, but impossible to accept. It is an assault on human pride.

Homework:

- Read article “**A Healthy Church Member Is Genuinely Converted.**” Take notes, write down questions, and we can interact more next week.
- Look at the “**Understanding Gospel Conversion**” page and use it to write out your testimony. Turn it in by next Sunday.
- **Questions?** E-mail evan@lakeviewchristiancenter.com or call the church office: 504-482-6221.