

Why the Bible?  
The Gift of Christ  
Romans 5:21

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Romans 5: <sup>21</sup>So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful kindness rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The very first chapters of the Bible's Old Testament tell us about the original sin and the result for all mankind. Some would argue that Adam and Eve's eating fruit from the tree in the center of the garden was not a very big sin.

Sin has the same result as throwing a rock at a window. A big rock or a small rock has the same result in shattering the window into millions of pieces. This one small act of disobedience shattered God's perfect creation.

So death by Adam's sin, this huge abyss separating us from God, dominated the landscape of Old Testament times. Even those who didn't sin precisely as Adam did by disobeying a specific command of God still had to experience this termination of life, this separation from God. Yet, God forgave Adam and points ahead to the One who will get us out of Adam's mess that effects us all.

Adam (? BC): Man was to obey God and be a caretaker of and subdue nature and animal life.

§ Genesis 3: <sup>15</sup>From now on, you and the woman will be enemies, and your offspring and her offspring will be enemies. He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

- God is talking to Satan the snake in the Garden. "He will crush your head" foreshadows Satan's defeat when Christ rose from the dead. A Strike on the heel is not deadly, but a crushing blow to the head is. In Genesis 3:15, God was already revealing his plan to defeat Satan and offer salvation to the world through his Son, Jesus Christ.

- Can you believe God in his grace, since the beginning, is looking forward to your and my salvation?
- Noah (? BC):
  - § Genesis 6: <sup>22</sup>So Noah did everything exactly as God had commanded him.
- Abraham (about 2100 BC): Father of a nation through whom God would one day administer His rule over the world and give us the gift of His son, Jesus Christ.
- Moses (about 1500 BC): Instrumental in revealing God's will to Israel's people.
- David (about 1000 BC): God promised that a descendant of David would always sit on the throne and that person was Jesus Christ to come.
- God raised up Prophets: These prophets spoke words from God through a direct prompting of the Holy Spirit. These true prophets were men who were called to speak for God. To tell of his forthcoming Son, Jesus Christ.
  - o Isaiah (about 740 BC): Told of Jesus Christ in such detail it sends shivers up my spine. Listen to just one of many of Isaiah's prophecies that came true 740 years later.
    - § Isaiah 53: <sup>5</sup>But he was wounded and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped, and we were healed! <sup>6</sup>All of us have strayed away like sheep. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the guilt and sins of us all.
    - § Isaiah 56:3 "And my blessings are for Gentiles, too, when they commit themselves to the Lord."
  - o Jeremiah (about 627 BC): He constantly proclaimed God's judgment and yet he was also a prophet of hope and salvation.
  - o Ezekiel (about 571 BC): To announce God's judgment and to foretell the eventual salvation of God's people.
  - o Daniel (about 535 BC): God is in control of heaven and earth, directing the forces of nature, the destiny of nations, and the care of his people.

The entire Old Testament is the story of how God's plans unfold resulting in God's own visit to earth through his Son, Jesus Christ.

In the Old Testament, all passing laws did against sin was produce more lawbreakers. But sin didn't, and doesn't, have a chance in competition with the aggressive forgiveness we call grace. When it's sin versus grace, grace wins hands down. All sin can do is threaten us with death, and that's the end

of it. Grace, because God is putting everything together again through the Messiah, invites us into life—a life that goes on and on and on, world without end.

I have taken Jesus Christ as my savior many times in my life. I would hear Billy Graham, or some other minister who inspired me and perhaps even go to my knees in acceptance of this gift of God's grace.

Yet, after a bit, I would start to feel like I was unintentionally pulling away from God. Then I would see another TV minister, and go through the whole cycle again. At church, I would be offered the chance to come forward and accept Christ. I knew I had done that many times before, at least at the TV, so why repeat it. Now I know I had a hardened heart. I was also a little on the shy side. You might say – a typical guy.

In a Disciple II class, several years ago, we were studying Luke. Luke was a doctor, not part of the original Disciples. His goal as a Greek Gentile, the only known Gentile of the New Testament, was to document what had happen during Jesus time a few years earlier. He was a close friend and companion of Paul. His documentation in Luke and Acts occurred about 60 AD. When I read Luke I could feel the Holy Spirit calling me.

As I sat in class, it occurred to me what being born again was about. I interrupted the class and said I am a sinner and I repent, I accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and savior, son of God, raised from the dead, born of women – or very close to these words. I said I want you, my class, as my witnesses.

For me it was very important to know the place I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior. It was in Bethany's Library room in front of about 12 witnesses.

It reasoned, as I thought about it, when I got married, I wanted witnesses. I made a covenant with my wife Bev, for better or worse until death do us part. If I am going to accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and savior, I want witnesses. My salvation and acceptance of God's grace is as important as life itself. It results in eternal life.

What did this do for me? I know I have accepted Jesus Christ – for sure as my Lord and savior – in front of witnesses. I know where I accepted Jesus Christ. I know for sure this happen – not like being by myself and wondering

if it really did happen. Being human we need to have reference points and witnesses to the important things in our lives.

Why? If you believe in Christ you believe in Satan. I believe Satan worked on me by seeding in my mind doubt, discouragement, diversion, defeat and delay – you know – his favorite tactics. I believe Satan worked on me enough that I might never have walked through the narrow door to God's grace and salvation. I may have just walked to it. With witnesses, there is no doubt; I know I have walked through that door. This has set me free.

Grace is a wonderful gift. When shared it is even more precious. Christ was given to us as our salvation. I know I have accepted this free gift of grace? Well, it is not quite free. I had to make the first move – to walk through the door to God's grace, released from sin, gaining God's grace and eternal life.

Luke 13: <sup>23</sup>Someone asked him, "Lord, will only a few be saved?" He replied, <sup>24</sup>"The door to heaven is narrow. Work hard to get in, because many will try to enter, <sup>25</sup>but when the head of the house has locked the door, it will be too late. Then you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Lord, open the door for us!' But he will reply, 'I do not know you.'"

Romans 10: <sup>10</sup>For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved.

1 Peter 1: <sup>3</sup>All honor to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for it is by his boundless mercy that God has given us the privilege of being born again.

That is my story. I am born again, and I must say, before it was too late. Many of you have been a great blessing to me. You are my family. Many of us have been in covenant together in Jesus Christ – for years. No matter how long, when you walk into the doors of this church you are in a covenant relationship – a carrying relationship – with other Christians. We are told wherever two or more are gathered he is with us. There is more than just coveting – there is personal acceptance of God's grace.

John 3: <sup>3</sup>Jesus replied, "I assure you, unless you are born again, you can never see the Kingdom of God."

This is the test for being born again, two simple questions:

1. Where were you when you accepted Christ as Lord and Savior?

2. Did you have witnesses?

If you can answer where and yes to you had witnesses, you are a born again Christian. If now you are a Christian there is no doubt in my mind that you are. You will have to decide if Jesus words of John 3 are meant for you.

If you have any doubt, this is your moment to walk through the narrow door of God's grace. You will know you are born again and you will know it has been witnessed to. No doubt can ever be in your mind again about your salvation. Don't go for years, as I did, not really knowing. This is your chance.

- o Come forward to the rail where others will help you.
- o You will be asked to repent of your sin. This gets rid of our self-pride. Don't let pride keep you from the door of God's grace.
- o Then you will be asked if you believe in God and his son Jesus, born of women and raised from the dead.
- o When you have done the above you are born anew in Jesus Christ. Your sins are forgiven. You are guaranteed by God's grace and in his son Jesus Christ, eternal life.

And that's not all: We throw open our doors to God and discover at the same moment that he has already thrown open his door to us. We find ourselves standing where we always hoped we might stand—out in the wide-open spaces of God's grace and glory, standing tall and shouting our praise.

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