

The Gospel through reformed, covenantal theology

A training guide for teachers at CTK on what we teach about God, His Word, Man and all of Life
Note, this is a shorter, adapted version of God's Plan of Salvation from the ESV® Study Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright ©2008 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

God

The God of the Bible is the one and only true God. He is the greatest of all beings. He depends on no other being for His existence. He exists eternally as one God in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—a mystery beyond our understanding, but not a contradiction. He “works all things according to the counsel of His will” (Eph. 1:11). God created the world and acts in it today in accordance with His own perfect, holy, good, and loving plan, in accordance with His own good pleasure.

Creation and Rebellion

God made this world and all that is in it. He created human beings in His own image to be like Him and to have unhindered fellowship with Him: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.... God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:1,27). When His work of creation was finished God saw that it was “very good” (Gen. 1:31).

Although the first people God created, Adam and Eve, had complete freedom to live in friendship and trust with Him, they chose to rebel (Gen. 3:1-7). The Bible teaches that because of that sin, the entire world was affected—we are all born morally fallen (Rom. 5:18) and we all died spiritually (see Rom. 3:1-20; Eph. 2:1-10). We all individually sin against God in our own lives (Rom. 3:23). Fellowship with God was broken. Instead of enjoying His holy pleasure, we instead face His righteous wrath.

Redemption

God would have been perfectly just to leave matters there, with all human beings under His holy judgment, but He didn't. God instead set in motion His plan to save His people from sin and judgment and set free the entire creation from its subjugation to sin and the curse. How? By sending His Son as a true man who would bear the penalty for our sin and die in our place: “Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3).

How did Jesus accomplish this?

Fully God and fully man. The Son of God, who has eternally existed with the Father and the Holy Spirit is fully God, possessing all the attributes of God. Willingly born into this world, Jesus Christ was also fully man. He had a fully human body—he experienced hunger, felt thirst and tiredness, and faced temptation.

Perfect life. Jesus Christ lived a perfect life—his words and actions were as they should be (John 12:50, John 5:19; Heb. 4:15; Luke 22:42). Jesus lived the life of consistent, wholehearted love to the Father that Adam and Eve and Israel—and all of us—should have lived. He deserved no punishment from God because He was never disobedient.

Crucifixion, resurrection, ascension. Jesus entered this world to redeem us from sin and guilt (Mark 10:45; 1 Tim. 2:6). By His death He paid the penalty for our sin. Jesus Christ's crucifixion was a horrible act of violence by the people who rejected, sentenced, mocked, tortured, and crucified Him. And yet it was also a display of the self-giving love of God, as the Son of God

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bore the penalty of God's wrath against us for our sin (Deut. 21:23; Isa. 53:5; Rom. 3:25-26, 4:25, 5:19, 8:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 2:8; Heb. 9:28). On the third day after His crucifixion, Jesus was raised from the dead by God and ascended to heaven. This demonstrated God's acceptance of Christ's sacrifice for all those who would repent and believe (Rom. 1:4, 4:25).

Living under grace and growing in godliness.

So if God has done this in Christ, what are we to do to be saved? We must turn to God in Christ, which entails turning back from sin. If we repent of (decide to forsake and turn from) our sin (as best we understand it) and trust in Christ, we will be saved from God's righteous wrath against our sins and restored to a right relationship with Him. Such saving faith is a gift from God. Paul writes, "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" (Eph. 2:8-9). We don't create our own salvation by our actions, but the evidence of that salvation is lived out in the continual work of God's Spirit.

Because we Christians are liable to deceive ourselves, we should give ourselves to the study of God's Word to be instructed and encouraged in our salvation, and to learn what is inconsistent with it. The obedience that typifies God's people, beginning with repentance, is to result from the faith and trust we have in Him and His Word (e.g., Josh. 22:16; Acts 27:25).

Consummation

Christians experience salvation in this life in both a past and present sense, and we anticipate salvation in a future sense. Christians have been saved from the penalty of our sins; we are currently being saved from the power of sin; and one day, we shall be saved even from the very presence of sin. God will restore all of creation. The heavens and the earth will "pass away" and be radically transformed (2 Pet. 3:7-13; Rev. 21:1). We read of the glorious culmination of this in the book of Revelation, where God's people, the redeemed, are brought into the presence of God to live (Rev. 21:1-22:6). This is life as it should be, literally as it was meant to be.

A note about how we are to teach our children (about God, His Word and His Church)

In explaining the above truths of God, we want to teach our children *covenantally*. God voluntarily condescends to have a relationship with us, His creation made in His image. This relationship is by way of a covenant (promise). We want to teach our children using the whole of Scripture as "one story" of God's plan to redeem his people through Jesus. In the Old Testament, God established His covenant with His holy people, Israel, and fulfilled His promises through Christ in the new covenant of grace (as foretold in the Old Testament and fully explained in the New Testament). We want children to know and understand that God's promises also extend to us so that they would live in joy and hope as His people, His children and His church.