

FTBC

GROWTH TRACKS


*Dr Peter Ng*

Welcome to Growth Tracks which is FBC's program designed to set the disciple on the firm foundation spiritual maturity.


*In 2 Corinthians 4:6 (ESV) Paul writes "For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ".*

The key to growth in our spiritual lives is encountering the glory of God through the person of His Son who is His perfect image. The more our hearts are filled with the knowledge of Him the more our characters are moulded, the more our hearts are filled with His love and more our lives will be directed towards the purpose for which we were created....to glorify Him. Each chapter is designed to provide a progressive track to show the face of Christ through selected but key passages in the Bible laying down the bed rock foundations of faith that will form the basis for a life -long learning and growing in to the likeness of Christ. Prayerfully follow these chapters and His Spirit will propel you into a trajectory of robust growth and spiritual transformation. Learn how to read the bible by tackling whole passages of Scripture rather than piece meal verses. See how principles from the passages will be translated to everyday life. For those disciples going into the Gamma program these presentations will help bridge the gap between the Alpha Beta programs and the more in- depth Gamma discipleship program.

For those who prefer to listen and see the contents of this book you can go to our website at [www.fbc.com .my](http://www.fbc.com.my) and each chapter will be presented in a series of slides at the resources section of our site under the title "Growth Tracks"



MODULE 5



**SALVATION IN THE GOSPEL**

Romans 1:18-21; 3:19-25

2 Thessalonians 1:7-9

2 Cor 3: 18

2 Corinthians 5:21

In the previous modules we have looked at the world created by God, of God's perspective. We looked at the nature of man and we looked at the nature of sin and we are left with a situation where we were spiritually dead. How do we receive salvation? That is where the gospel comes in.

### **What is the gospel?**

The gospel is the good news of what God has done for us in His Son Jesus Christ. The gospel is necessary because of the problem of sin. So we will talk about the problem of sin. Let's read this key passage about the meaning of sin.

*Romans 1:18-21 (ESV) For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his 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. So they are without excuse. 21 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.*

The problem of sin is that it incurs the wrath of God. Now the wrath of God is not some explosive rant of a capricious God for some unreasonable issue like our own wrath.

Let's look at the passage and it does say his wrath is because of ungodliness and unrighteousness of man. We have been made in His image, we are supposed to reflect Him, like Him in character and behavior, being right in all things in our actions. Instead of being godly and righteous we are not like God, we are ungodly and our behavior is not right i.e. we are unrighteous.

### **How then are we ungodly and unrighteous?**

*Romans 1:18-21 (ESV) For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth*

So, it occurs when we deliberately suppress the truth. God's wrath is His settled opposition to human unrighteousness.

### **What is the truth?**

Verse 19 gives us the idea of the truth.

*19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his 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. So they are without excuse.*

The truth is all about God, the fact that He exists and is their creator, His immense power is all clearly seen in the spectacular beauty of nature. In the face of the overwhelming evidence of the existence of God and His majesty and beauty and the fact that they owe their very existence and purpose to Him, it was only natural that there be a

reciprocal acknowledgement and honour that is owed to this God who created them but verse 21 says

*21 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.*

This is a sin that even though they knew there was a God responsible for their existence, because man was created by this God and we owed Him our very lives. We derived our purpose from our Creator. We were supposed to live in accordance to His desires for us. Instead, we chose to ignore God and live independent of Him. Instead of grateful submission there was stubborn defiance.

So the consequences of sin are that the man became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened. So they begin to think that for example, evolution accounts for everything in the universe, i.e. the blind process of how the world came into existence without a designer, without a God. That humans are the accidental combination of molecules. There is no creator who designed us. We are self-made man. We depend on ourselves. We set our own goals and determine our own destiny. This is the sad reality.

*Romans 1:22-23 (ESV) Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.*

The worship of idols stem from the sin of man. It involves the pursuit of everything man made. Money, prestige and power become the ultimate destination of every man because once we refuse to worship God we have no alternative but to worship the things below God.

Moving onto the third chapter of Paul's letter to Romans,

*Romans 3:22-23 (ESV) the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

The guilt is universal. Sin affects every single human being. No one have made their own decision to honor God all, all are subject to the wrath of God. There is no one in the entire world who has not sinned and there is no one who is not subject to God's wrath, which is our problem.

### **What about people who do good works?**

*Romans 3:20 (ESV) For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.*

Paul writes in the Book of Romans that if we try to obey God's law we will never be able to do this because it is the very law that we are attempting to obey becomes the instrument that detects the sin in our lives. There are a lot of misconceptions about God's moral law given to us. Some people think that God's law is a ladder. He sets a set of rules and we climb up the ladder and reach the very threshold of heaven itself.

No, God's law is not a ladder. You cannot reach God by living a good life, because it is not possible. The law of God is more realistically like a thermometer. It tells us our temperature and because of our sinful nature we always have a fever!! All mankind has sinned and the law tells us like a thermometer that we have crossed the line, it tells us

where the line is. The law cannot save us. It would seem that we are truly trapped at the bottom of the well called sin and we cannot climb out and consider what will happen when we actually die?

Here is another letter of Paul to the Thessalonian Christians. It talks about the consequences of God's wrath.

*2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 (ESV) when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels 8 in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might,*

It is a tough language. This passage describes the consequences of God's wrath, which is endless destruction which occurs because we who refuse to honor Him and we get exactly what we wish for. We live a life far away from God, the source of all life and goodness and love.

This is taken from the Gospel of John, very famous passage. It tells of the gospel.

*John 3:16-18 (ESV) "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.*

So this is the gospel. For God so loved the world. The gospel is what God has done for us. He has done it out of His great love for us. It was not done because of what we deserve. The term used is 'grace' which means something freely given without reference to anything worthy in the recipient of the favor. Look at what John writes.

*John 3:16 (ESV) "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son,*

The condition of salvation is belief or faith in Jesus. Those who trust in Jesus will have eternal life and those who do not will remain forever in the darkness away from God's presence

Paul writes,

*For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith (Romans 3:22-25 ESV)*

It is a difficult passage, but let's break it down. This passage has three difficult terms to understand. They are justified by his grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood.

Let's look at the first two metaphors to explain the first two ideas. One is a court room scene for the word 'justification' and the other one is a slave trade term for the word 'redemption'.

## **JUSTIFICATION:**

In the case of the court of law, there is a long process of a trial and at the end of it there are two verdicts that will come out. In the ancient times when the person is found guilty, he will be given a black stone, which means he is unjustified, he is unrighteous, he has committed the crime. However, if he is not guilty, it means he is justified. He was righteous all along, he did the right thing and he would receive a white stone. So justification is someone who

receives a white stone, a not guilty verdict, a righteous verdict.

## **REDEMPTION:**

Let's look at the next metaphor which is a slave market metaphor. A rich person would come to the market and would pay a large sum of money to redeem a slave from the market and bring him home. Such a slave would have been redeemed. The process is called redemption.

We have the same concept when we go to a pawn shops where we pay money to redeem an object of value, which we have previously left with the pawn shop owner.

So we are all sinners, we all fall short of the glory of God but how does God saves us? It is because we are justified by His grace as a gift. There is a logical problem, we didn't do the right thing. We broke the law, we dishonored God, we were not righteous. You are absolutely right! we receive the white stone the symbol of the not guilty verdict. We were justified but we didn't deserve the not -guilty verdict, we were not justified based on our own merit nor behavior for intrinsically we deserved death.

We were justified by his grace as a gift. Grace is undeserved favor. Something that you receive out of the blue, totally undeserved. The Malay equivalent to this is Durian runtuh, which means somehow in those days, the Durian fell down on your head and it was a good thing.

So here is the concept of justification. Justification conveys the concept of status God gives you of being righteous, justified even through you are guilty and do not deserve it. It is entirely his work, you did nothing.

Now how does this come about? It actually comes about through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. We are redeemed by Jesus and this brings us to the second word picture or metaphor

Here we have the slave market metaphor. Jesus Christ comes and redeems us, pays a price for us to set us free from the slave market. The only difference is that we were slaves to our fate and penalty of death because of our sin. Jesus came and paid the ultimate price

So here we have the concept of redemption. Redemption conveys concept of a price being paid for our change of status. We received it for free but it cost Jesus His life.

So before we go on, let's have a revision for the process of salvation

- We were declared righteous. The process of doing this is called justified. We were justified.
- This was done out of grace we did not deserve it as it was completely a gift
- A price was paid to release us from our slavery to the consequences of our sin and this was paid by Jesus

## **How was Jesus able to do this for me?**

This brings us to the last concept, how Jesus makes us righteous and redeems us. If we look in verse 25

*25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith*

To understand this word, we have to go back to ancient cultures. The word 'propitiation' means the averting of

the wrath of deities and this is regularly done by a sacrifice to avert the wrath of a deity, so appease the deity as it were. Propitiation is like satisfaction. A similar concept is like thirst. We are thirsty, whenever we lack water or dehydrated, it is something that needs to be completely satisfied and water will satisfy it.

Just like thirst needs to be satisfied, the concept of justice needs to be satisfied as well, because we live in a world where God is just. God has said, if you sin, the day you sin he told Adam you will die. Now if Adam sins and he does not die, there is no penalty then God is not just but God is an absolutely just God. Sin must be punished. Hence there is a penalty to be paid. It is either we die for our sins eternally or Christ becomes our substitute, takes the penalty of our sin and dies on our behalf.

### **How was Jesus qualified to be our substitute, to pay our price?**

Jesus is unique. He is fully human and fully divine. Now the fact that he is fully human is important because as he is fully human he could fully represent us. He could bear our sins. He lived a righteous life, the kind of life that we should have lived and died a death that we should have died, for us. He is fully divine, so he is fully God. So that His single death is of immense value and it could pay for the sins of the whole world

### **So how do we become Christians?**

We become Christians from the last part of verse 25,

*25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith*

We have to believe in Jesus and trust in him and live for him.

*Romans 10:9 (ESV) because, 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.*

It is the process, confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord. The whole issue is making Jesus the king of your life, letting Jesus take control. The default mode for all of us is that we are in control of our own lives. We are the lord of our own lives because we believe that we are best suited to take charge of our own lives, but when we come to faith in Jesus Christ we therefore lose faith in our own ability to adequately control our lives. We no longer believe that we can manage our lives any better. We believe that Jesus is the person who should control our lives, so therefore we turn away from the control of our own life. We give up that control, that process is called repentance. We return towards our Lord Jesus Christ. He becomes our Lord, he takes control of our lives and we live to glorify and honor him instead. That process is having faith. We cannot let Jesus take control of our lives unless we are convinced He is able and willing to do the job. Hence faith is believing that He is the Son of God who loved us and died for us and will be able to move us back to living according to our original purpose for which we were created. Faith begins in our minds but must necessarily translate in to action. We can believe that getting on that particular airplane will take us to London safely but faith will include us getting on the airplane. Faith is not just mental assent disconnected to a real life change in the way we live and what we live for.

*2 Corinthians 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*

The process is so well described by Paul in this verse. It's like he became sin he bore the penalty of our sin for us. When God looks at Jesus and sees our sin there and the penalty fell on Jesus instead of us. As a consequence of that we became the righteousness of God. Hence when God looks at us He sees His Son Jesus, His righteousness on us.



## **What happens when we have faith in Christ?**

First of all, when we come to God we actually come with liabilities. We were rebels, slave to sin. Jesus however comes with assets. He is righteous, He is resurrected with resurrection power and then we came to believe in him and take him as our Lord and Savior. As a consequence of that there is a spiritual union. We are joined to Christ spiritually and in this union he receives our liabilities and we take his assets. So when God looks at us, He no longer sees us as the rebels that we are under the penalty of death. Instead, He sees the righteousness of His own Son. When he looks at Jesus, Jesus receives our liabilities and that's the sin and our death sentence and He died for our sin.

This is Jesus promise to us

*John 11:25-26 (ESV) Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"*

This means whoever believes in Jesus Christ, though he shall go into physical death yet he will resurrect like Jesus did to live forever. Everyone who lives and believes in Jesus Christ shall never suffer eternal death. That is Jesus's promise to us. With Jesus promise, death have lost its sting. Paul writes,

*"Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting 1 Cor 15:54b-55"*

We are to receive Jesus by faith. Here are the steps to new life in Christ.

**Step 1:** We ask God to forgive us of our sins, we repent, repentance is a decision, changing your mind and your direction of your life. Instead of living to please ourselves, we now believe and make Jesus Christ our Lord and we live to please God.

**Step 2:** Believing in Jesus. This is trusting in who he is and what he has done for us. It involves three things:

- We believe that Jesus is the son of God.
- We believe that he is our substitute for our sin
- We believe that he rose from the dead.

**Step 3:** Lifelong process of following Jesus. Living like him and for him.

- Jesus becomes our Lord and purpose of our lives. We live to please and love Him
- Our lives are liberated from self and we live to serve others in the power of His love and Holy Spirit

There is no difference between Christians and disciples. All Christians are disciples.

## **How do we continue as disciples?**

*(2 Cor 3: 18) And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another*

Paul says that as we look or behold and appreciate God's glory, we will then be transformed gradually into his likeness from one degree of glory to another. A simple analogy is like insects being drawn by the light. We are instead drawn by the light of Jesus Christ to be transformed.

Before we were Christians we were drawn to so many things from our old life. They are like stars that sparkle at the light, we continually look at them and we are mesmerized. But when the Sun comes up we do not see the stars anymore because we are overwhelmed by the light of the Sun. Knowing, worshipping and loving Him by the Word and living by faith will transform us

### **Questions on the passage**

1. What is the gospel?
2. Why is God angry with us? How is God's wrath different from our own anger?
3. What right does God have to be angry with us? Why can't He leave us alone?
4. What were consequences of man suppressing the truth about God?
5. Is it possible for a man to use the law as a ladder and become good enough or do enough good works to earn his way into heaven? Why not?
6. How did God provide salvation for us?

### **Application Questions**

1. What steps do you have to take to become a Christian?
2. What does repentance mean?
3. How do you know that Jesus can actually save you from your sin?
4. A young man says he believes that Jesus is the Son of God but is not willing to read the bible and live out its values. Is such a person saved?
5. A young woman has professed faith in Jesus but is always careful to do good works and be morally upright. She is leader in church and has the gift of healing when she lays hands and prayer for people many are healed. She looks down at other Christians and feel many of them are not genuine. One day she fell to sexual temptation with a man who seduced her and she wanted to kill herself as she could not accept that she had failed. Do you think her response to sin is normal for a Christian? What is her problem?