

FTBC

GROWTH TRACKS


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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 16



BAPTISM - PART 1

There are seven sections in this lesson plan

- 1) Baptism as a Rite of Passage
- 2) The Gospel: Confirmation of salvation
- 3) Criteria for baptism
- 4) Reason for baptism
- 5) Meaning of the symbols of baptism
- 6) Other Issues
- 7) The Ceremony

1. BAPTISM AS A RITE OF PASSAGE

A rite of passage is a ceremony and it marks the transition from one phase of life to another. Examples of rites of passages in human culture are for example the Masai Lion Hunt, where the Masai people of Tanzania and Kenya have a rite of passage in which their adolescents move into adulthood and prove themselves worthy of being warriors by killing a lion. This is an ancient rite of passage. Similarly, the Hamar Tribe of Ethiopia have a rite of passage in which their men are whipped on their backs and then made to run over the backs of 4 castrated bulls before they are declared to be man eligible to be married. In the same way, Baptism is the Christian rite of passage that symbolises the passing of the old life replaced by a new spiritual life in Christ.

Let's understand some of the terminology before we proceed. There are two commonly used terms for the rite of baptism

- Sacraments
- Ordinances

SACRAMENT: Firstly, the word 'sacrament'. This is used by Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and a few of the Protestant denominations. It is a sign which results in grace being conferred by God to a person. These sacraments are necessary for salvation. These sacraments are the vehicles of grace which they convey. As a Baptist church we do not believe in that because grace by definition is given freely by God and not conveyed by any ritual. The ritual of foot washing which is practiced in Catholic churches, arose from what John 13 records of what Jesus did, that he washed the feet of his disciples to symbolize their cleansing of sin from His anticipated death on the cross. Jesus washed the feet of Judas, his impending betrayer. If washing of the feet of the disciples was natural ritual or sacrament that conveyed grace, was Judas saved. The answer was 'no'. Judas went ahead and betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver and killed himself. This ritual did not convey grace nor salvation to Judas, even though it was Jesus himself who had been the one washing his feet.

The proper approach to baptism is that it is not a sacrament, it doesn't convey grace to provide salvation but it is an ordinance.

ORDINANCE: It is used by Protestant denominations. It is a symbolic re-enactment of the gospel message that Christ lived, died, was raised from the dead, ascended to heaven, and will someday return. The ordinance are visual aids to help us better understand and appreciate what Jesus Christ accomplished for us on the cross. There are two ordinances clearly prescribed in the Bible and they are the Lord's Supper and Baptism

2. THE GOSPEL: CONFIRMATION OF SALVATION

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.

Sin causes the alienation of man from God. Let's look into this 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 loss of temper because of an unpredictable God who is capricious, it is instead God's settled opposition to all sin. We live in a world created by God and we incur his wrath.

Now why is he mad at us?

The passage says that His wrath is because of ungodliness and unrighteousness of man. We have been made in His image and are supposed to reflect Him. We are to be like God, 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?

Sin occurs when we deliberately suppress the truth...what is 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 it 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 overwhelming evidence of the existence of God and his majesty and beauty and loyalty that they must owe to this God who created them, 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 is a God, because man is created by this God and we owe Him our lives. We derive 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 man became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened. Turning away from God, the source of all life and goodness will result in disordered thinking and immorality.

When men ignore God they ignore the very purpose of their lives and the very thing that will bring true meaning into their lives and once this occurs they have to substitute Him with their own ideas, which are actually distorted.

So they begin to think that evolution accounts for everything in the universe, i.e. a process 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 like a statue. We depend on ourselves, we set our own goals, determine our own destiny. This is the sad reality, claiming to be wise they became fools and exchanged the glory of an immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

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

Moving on to 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 has made their own decision to honor God, 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?

Paul writes,

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 actually 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', the law of God is not a ladder, you cannot reach God by living a good life, because it is not possible. God's law is more realistically 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 the thermometer that we have crossed the line, it tells us where the line is. The law cannot save us.

It would seem as if 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 church, talking 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,

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

Let's now look to the solution to our dilemma of sin.

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.

The gospel is what God has done for us. He did this 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. The condition of salvation is belief in Jesus Christ. 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.

How does God do this?

Let's go back to Paul. He 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. These three words gives us three pictures or metaphors.

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, because we are justified by his grace as a gift. This means by using the court metaphor, when we go to court and the verdict comes in and we are declared with the white stone, we are righteous, we are given a not guilty verdict, we are declared justified, righteous, we did do the right thing, we upheld God's standard, we honoured him.

There is a problem, we didn't do the right thing. We broke the law, we dishonored God, we were not righteous, we

did not honor God, we dishonored him. You are absolutely right, we receive the white stone and not guilty verdict. We were justified but we didn't deserve the guilty verdict, we were not justified by ourselves.

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 the status God gives you of being righteous, justified even though you are guilty and did 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 a price

So here we have the concept of redemption. Redemption conveys the 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 god, so appease to god as it were. Propitiation is like satisfaction. The 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 told to Adam, if you sin, the day you sin 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 absolute 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. 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 the control of our own 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. That process is having faith.

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, He 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 come to believe in him and take him as our lord and savior. As a consequence of that there is 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 the rebels that we are and 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