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Green Valley CoC IOI

Green Valley Church of Christ is growing together in the grace and faith of Christ.

Our Response

"He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we've done in righteousness, but according to His mercy..." Titus 3:5a

The Bible's central message is this: An all-powerful God lovingly seeks to live in loving fellowship with all mankind. God makes that his central message because above all things that is what he wants us to grasp. God's love is not for a select few!

This message isn't told to us *only* in words. God tells it to us in deeds also. The words give the deeds meaning and the deeds make it clear that God does more than talk. It's important for us to know that both ways of telling the Message are essential. Without an explanation, who would have known that the young man dying on the cross was God himself bearing the sin of the world? We need the words to tell us the meaning of the deeds of God. The cross had to be experienced by God and not just talked about.



Creation was God's power expressed in love! That's what Psalm 136:5-9 tells us. Because God is love he can never act lovelessly (1 John 4:8). When our pain and confusion come we need to remember that eternal love made us!

God created mankind and not just a part of it! In creating Adam and Eve, God created the father and mother of all the living (Genesis 2:21-22 and 3:20). There is no elite nation or group before God! Jesus made it clear that God was still providing humans with the necessities of life. In Matthew 5:43-48 he says God shows his love even to the ungodly. The rain that falls and the sun that shines on the fields of a rebel tell us that God loves all.

God created **sons** and **daughters**, not just creatures! Adam was the son of God (Luke 3:38) and all men are made in God's image (James 3:9). In that respect the Bible teaches the universal Fatherhood of God.

While there are different kinds of **covenants** in the Bible, they all have one thing in common: God bothered to make them with people. We must matter to him. That God would have anything to do with puny and sinful people such as we was amazing to David (Psalm 8:3-4). Every time you read of God making a covenant with someone remember that this shows humans are important to God!



There is something else. Every covenant God makes is connected with all men. The covenant with Noah involved the whole of mankind (Genesis 9:8-17). The covenant with Abraham was to bless all nations (Genesis 12:3; 18:18). The Mosaic covenant at Sinai created a nation to serve the world (Isaiah 49:3-6). All the covenants of the Bible relate to God's intention to bless the whole of mankind!

ELECTION IS ...

Election is one of those words which frighten people. They have heard horror stories about God creating people for no other reason

than to eternally torture them because it pleases him to do so. We need to make up our minds to this! God created out of love (paragraph 3). You can't love a person and at the same time create him for no other reason than to eternally torture him! A God who would do that is not the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! We need only read John 3:16-17 to know what God wants for all his creation!

The characteristic teaching about election is that God chooses people both to bless them and to bless others through them. Election speaks of choosing. God chose people like Abraham, Moses and Israel to bless them and to lay on them the responsibility of taking blessing to the world! Jesus is said to be God's chosen (Luke 9:35; Matthew 12:18-21). The Church is the elect or chosen Community which is to bring God's saving light and wisdom to mankind (Ephesians 3:10-11,21 and 1 Peter 2:9).

Election is not based on man's goodness but on God's grace (see Deuteronomy 7:7-8 and 9:4-6). The Church is made up of people who deserve wrath like the rest of the world (Ephesians 2:1,3) but who experienced God's great love in Jesus Christ (2:4-5). In both cases, Israel and the Church are to take that message of love and blessing to mankind (Titus 2:11). Each time you read about God electing someone remember they are God's instruments to bring salvation to the whole world!



THE CROSS OF CHRIST IS...

Christ's death on the cross is the act of God to which all other acts of God pointed. When the time was right (Galatians 4:4) God made his love for humanity known as never before. The cross of Christ didn't create the love of God, it expressed it in a way nothing else could ever do.

The love of God isn't for a few! The death of Christ wasn't for a few! Christ did not die for some of the ungodly! He died for all (2 Corinthians 5:14; 1 Timothy 2:6). His blood is an atoning sacrifice not only for Christians, but for the whole world (1 John 2:2). By God's grace he tasted death for every man says (Hebrews 2:9). It is the whole world God so loved that he gave Jesus, says John 3:16.

So anxious is he to redeem and transform us, says Romans 8:31-32, that he wouldn't spare even his own Son but delivered him up for us all! At the cross, God gently takes our face between his strong hands, looks right into our eyes and says: "No matter what you see or think you see after this, remember I love you. I will always do right by you. If you can't trust me after seeing what I do for you here, you have resisted my strongest argument. Here I offer you my best argument and if that doesn't convince you of my enduring love for you, I've lost you."



"Baptism now saves you...an appeal to God for a good conscience - through the resurrection of Jesus Christ..." 1 Peter 3:21

HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND TO GODS LOVE?

We should love and trust him! From the beginning to the end of the Bible God calls us to lovingly trust him. Galatians 5:6 says that it is faith working by love that counts with God. He wants sinners to commit themselves to him by trusting him.

Unforgiven sin severs a soul from God. Our loss of blessing is our own doing. A person can't earn or buy forgiveness and life with God. He can't talk or fight his way back into Gods grace. He is called to surrender all dependence on himself and receive, in Christ, Gods gracious gift of life! Faith is the confession of ones helplessness and the throwing of oneself on Gods love.

For Noah, faith meant building an ark (Hebrews 7:11). For Abraham it meant leaving his home and accepting God's bare promise that he would father a multitude of nations (Hebrews 11:8-12 and James 2:21,23). For Israel it meant marching around Jericho in silence (Hebrews 11:31). For thousands on Pentecost trusting meant being baptized in the name of the Christ they so recently rejected (Acts 2:37-41). In all of this we see faith. In all of this helpless people committed themselves to God on his terms. That is how we should respond!

And when we have ourselves been made right with God by taking the name of Christ upon us, we should then spread the word of blessing about Jesus Christ. We should stand alongside Jesus Christ telling the world that they don't need to live and die without God. Jesus wasn't sent to condemn the world (John 3:17). The world does a perfect job of that by themselves. He came to save! And we need

to make that known by our lives and by our words! That's how we should respond to God!

Questions:

1. What's the Bible's central message?
2. Is this message given to the world only in words? What very important event needs some explaining?
3. How was the power of God expressed in creation? What Psalm tells us?
4. God didn't just create creatures. He created _____ and _____?
5. What do all the covenants have in common?
6. Every covenant God makes is connected _____ _____?
7. What is characteristic teaching about election?
8. Election is not based on what?
9. Which act of God has all other acts of God pointing to it?
10. What does John 3:17 say?
11. How should we respond to God's love?
12. What is so dangerous about unforgiven sin?
13. Can a people redeem themselves by human efforts?
14. What are different ways people have responded to God in history?
15. Baptism for thousands at Pentecost in 33 AD was a response of faith. Discuss how.