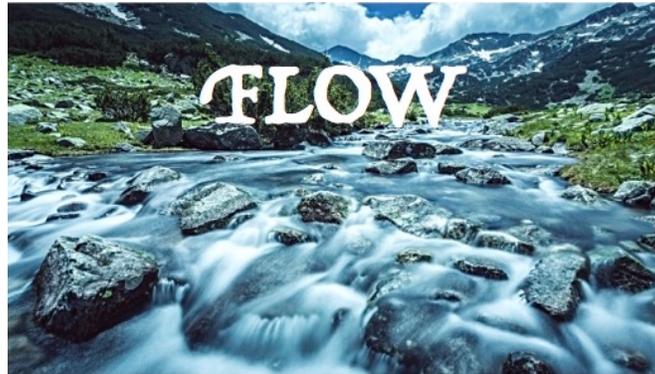


#3 March 3, 2017



We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people— the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel that has come to you. In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace."

Colossians 1:3-6

The Gospel

by Dan Taylor



What is the best news you could hear today? That your loved one is safe? You got the job? The disease is gone? The relationship is restored? We are often in the place of waiting—wondering whether it's going to be good news or bad news and how our lives will be different because of it.

The word, gospel, means good news. In the weeks to come other devotionals will focus on individual pieces of the Good News. But today is the big picture of the Good News—the news that, without minimizing emotional weight of all the bad news we may receive, does put it in perspective. This is the Good News that transforms our lives and gives us purpose. This is the

Good News that is so good we can have no other response than gratitude that overflows in worship.

What, then, is the broad sweep of God's Good News? It began with the very good creation. God created. And He called His creation good. Particles, plants, people, sexuality, community, and work were called good by their creator. And he delighted in them! The goodness of creation was like a captivating song, like dancing in complete freedom and acceptance, the most delectable taste, the smell that stops you in your tracks and explodes as a smile on your face.

But all that was good was twisted when human rebellion from relationship with God—part of which involves honoring God as our rightful king—came into the story. Fear, shame, suffering, punishment, banishment, but also provision for the journey were added to the human experience.

As we are unable to repair the damage from our side, God's people have always needed God to initiate restoration of the relationship. God's movement to bring His people back into right relationship with Himself, other people, and creation culminated in Jesus, God Himself, demonstrating an astounding love for us such that He would die in our place, removing the guilt and shame that became embedded in human life in that very first rebellion.

Imagine if tomorrow you received an enormous package in the mail from the Queen of England. Inside were the crown jewels—3.1 trillion dollars worth of crowns, scepters, and jewels. You would be profoundly uncomfortable in receiving such an immense gift! That is the scandal of God's grace—that you have done nothing and been given everything! Since we can obviously not repay God, our only response is sincere gratitude and worship that overflows in lives lived to please the Lord.

Starting with those first scared-then-bold-beyond-reason followers of Jesus, the too-good news of Jesus has been shared throughout the world. The Church was formed, and re-formed, was grown and pruned, was planted and withered. Church history overflows with examples of that original twisted-ness of a good creation being embodied in poor decisions, gross injustices, and hate-filled actions. But that the Good News remains (and is also embodied throughout Church history) is a testament to God's sustaining, story-authoring work. We today also become the scared-bold followers of Jesus, embodying the Good News to our families, neighbors, and world.

But the end of the story, ah, the end. We will one day see all that was created, then twisted in sin, become beautiful and fully restored and in right relationship with God! But seeing good restored will be nothing, really nothing, next to the overwhelming awe of face-to-face-knowing our Creator. We will never cease to be amazed at who He is and what He has done. Like a novel so delightfully gripping we see and hear nothing but the unfolding story, but so much more so, we will be captivated by the presence of God and will finally understand that this is why we exist. We will have found our home.

We can see evidence of God at work in the world and we can look at our own lives and see evidence of transformation, but we can also see so much lacking. We confidently hope for Jesus' return but until then, we've been invited into God's work. Just as Adam was given good work in the garden prior to sin, so being forgiven of sin, we have again been given good work to do until that day when our work fully becomes worship.

QUESTIONS:

1. Where have you noticed grace today?
2. Close your eyes and picture yourself opening a surprise package of jewels. What would you actually feel in that moment?
3. How do you avoid receiving grace—what are your go-to responses to the reality of everything-for-nothing? (some examples might be: attempting to be good enough to be worthy of the gift, downplaying how much you need grace as if you aren't really all that bad, living in fear of God's wrath or losing your salvation if you don't measure up, being numb which is ignoring the greatness of your sin and/or the greatness of grace, complaining, blaming, and being critical, just to name a few)

PRAYER:

Loving Father, we praise you that even when your good, beautiful creation was twisted with sin, you stayed to redeem it, not discard it. So we thank you that though we are far from perfect, you work in us right in the middle of our imperfection, weakness, and brokenness! We praise you, our King, that you invite us into your work! Thank you for including us, thank you for using us, thank you for your compassion to us, thank you for giving us purpose, thank you, thank you, thank you! Amen.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:

Colossians 1:16-23

(what is the ultimate point of the reconciliation in v. 22?)

Read the whole chapter of Colossians 1.

What verses serve as concise statements of the Gospel?

(I found 4 just in this chapter!)

Sit and reflect on v. 27.

Then reflect even more. And then bask in it even more!