



Prayer of Thanksgiving: God works things out for the good for those who love God. ²⁶ ¶ **Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. ²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." (Ro 8:26-28 ESV)**

Please do not forget to pray for all the shut-ins and isolated brothers and sisters in our congregations Mrs. Jack and C. Campbell (Fredericton) and J. Steffes (Caribou, Me), Mr. Ross Bathurst, P. Ward (Saint John) and others.

ACTIVITIES FOR THE MONTH OF OCTOBER 2019

Times of worship services: Moncton – 10:30 AM every Sunday

Time of services in Saint John – 2:30 PM September 13 and 27,

Communion- on the 2nd and 4th Sunday of the month in Saint John and on the 1st and 3rd and 5th Sunday in Moncton.

Address: Moncton—70 King St. —Sage building;

Saint John—50 Newport Cres., Portland United church.

The next Discipleship groups will be on Wednesday October 9 and 23 at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Vautour – 7:30 p.m. We will study 2nd Peter. After 2 Peter is done, plans are to study Philippians.

Prayer reminder: *"1 ¶ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."* (1 Ti 2:1-4 ESV)

The Posture of Grace

[September 17, 2019 - From the President](#)

Dear GCI Family and Friends,



Greg and Susan
Williams

What does it mean to "think theologically" about current issues like politics, social justice, and worldviews? It begins with key questions: Who is the God revealed in Jesus? What is God's nature? And what is God up to? These fundamental questions help us to think theologically and help form a foundation for informed conversations concerning societal issues.

Leaving God out of our thinking (or adding him when it suits our purposes), is the core issue facing a large part of our world (especially the English-speaking countries). Also problematic is an overarching under-developed view of God. Is it simple, perhaps naïve, for a Christian to believe that Jesus is the answer, no matter the complexity of the issue? When we plumb the depths of who Jesus is, then we know he is the answer; he is the deep, profound answer to complicated human issues. This doesn't give Christians permission to stay uninformed about the world in which we live—rather, it challenges us to be aware of the times in which we live, while simultaneously being aware of the Lord's presence.

What I often see in the news—especially among passionate Millennials—is that many conversations dealing with societal issues begin with the problem (be it abuse, injustice, or anything that "needs to be fixed"). The passion builds around the wrongness of the offense and is followed by a demand for action to fix the perceived problem. If God enters the conversation at all, the question is often: "How can a loving God allow such evil?" So where and how do we as believers enter the conversation and initiate a relationship?

You may recall the apostle Paul's charge for the church to follow him as he followed Christ ([1 Corinthians 11:1](#)). The posture Paul took with the church at Corinth is applicable to the question "How do we gracefully and truthfully represent Jesus in the emotive polarized world of today?"

For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you. For we are not writing to you anything other than what you read and understand and I hope you will fully

understand—just as you did partially understand us—that on the day of our Lord Jesus you will boast of us as we will boast of you (2 Corinthians 1:12-14 ESV).

Paul met questions and contentious issues head-on. He spoke confidently about his approach—the moral sensibilities of his conscience (a Spirit-guided sense of right and wrong), enhanced by his knowledge of God’s Word, and understanding the mind of Christ. It was from this platform that he shaped his conduct and communication in his relations with the Corinthians.

There are three important things to note about Paul’s conduct.

- It was with “simplicity” or the sense of singlemindedness that Paul wrote. He always pointed toward the Triune God, and the grace that flows from Father, Son and Spirit.
- His conduct was sincere, honest, and genuine. Being authentic carries a lot of weight.
- His motive was not in the vein of worldly wisdom, which is ultimately self-serving. He was instead guided by a love for others and sought what was in their best interests.

Paul’s letters matched his conduct: simple, sincere, and filled with God’s grace (I suspect that you notice in Paul’s tone that he operates out of “High Support”—love for the brothers and sisters and their best interest, and “High Challenge”—not backing down from ungodly behavior and failings within the church). Paul had no hidden meanings or ulterior motives in his correspondence with the Corinthians. With Paul, what you see is what you get, and he was the same way in his letters.

Paul knew that he had been more corrective with the believers in Corinth than with any other church, but he also believed his sincere motives and genuine love would win them over in the end. Compelled by the love of Jesus, Paul was tenacious and unrelenting in pointing them to Jesus. I believe his hope was that they would eventually come to vindicate him and even boast of him in the day of the Lord Jesus.

We can learn a lot from the consistency of Paul’s message, his motives and his conduct. Paul knew how to become all things to all people that he might win some to Jesus. We would do well to follow him as he so closely followed Christ. We would do well to allow the love of Christ to inspire us tenaciously and unrelentingly point others to Jesus. We would do well to be sincere, honest and genuine, and to let Christ’s love be our motivation.

My final thought is this: As followers of Jesus, Christians are uniquely empowered to display patience and tolerance. This is because we are well-founded in our relationship with Jesus and we know the convictions for which we stand. And just like the apostle Paul, our goal is about winning people, not arguments. We, who have been transformed by God’s grace, can operate out of the posture of grace no matter what the social climate brings.

Living in that posture in grace,
Greg Williams

By [Ted Johnston - September 22, 2019](#)
(from GCI <http://thesurprisinggodblog.gci.org>)

Can those who have never heard the gospel in this life, hear and receive it after death? Dr. Gary Deddo, president of Grace Communion Seminary, answers this question by explaining how Grace Communion International approaches the topic of postmortem evangelism/postmortem conversion.

First, let’s be reminded that the nature, character and purposes of our Triune God revealed to us in Jesus Christ are foundational to our faith. We believe that all people are created according to the image of Jesus Christ. Further, we believe Jesus is Lord and Savior of all—he died for all and God does not want any to perish. These foundational truths are explicitly declared in the New Testament by Jesus and his appointed witnesses. On the basis of these truths, GCI teaches that God will do everything to draw all to himself and enable them to receive all he has for them through Jesus Christ.

Understandably, some wonder about seemingly insurmountable barriers to this drawing and receiving. What about babies who die before birth or when very young? What about people with disabilities and other circumstances that prevent them from hearing the gospel or outwardly responding? What about those who have never heard the gospel? It is GCI’s conviction that none of these barriers stand in the way of God getting through to these people. Moreover, GCI believes that by his Word and Spirit, God works in ways beyond what we can conceive of to give all people the opportunity to hear the gospel, then humbly receive God their Savior and all that he has for them.

On that basis, GCI is *hopeful* concerning those people whose lives are limited by circumstances that, to us, create seemingly insurmountable barriers in this life. We are hopeful even though we do not know exactly how or when these people will hear the good news of their salvation in Jesus Christ.

GCI does not have a doctrine that specifies exactly *when* or *how* God will draw individuals in limiting circumstances.

Why? Because Scripture does not specify such detail, and it does not say that God will *necessarily* work in any specific way or time. For GCI to say otherwise would be speculation, and doctrine should never be based on speculation, even when it is linked to Scripture. Such speculations typically are linked to verses that do not directly address how or when God will work, and so make use of what theologians call "logical inferences." But that practice is not a valid way to establish church doctrine.

We need not speculate concerning how or when God will draw people to himself in circumstances that seem to us to be limiting or even impossible. Instead, we can rely on what has been clearly revealed in many biblical passages, including the words of Jesus himself, concerning the nature, heart, character and purposes of God to bring people into right relationship with himself. By his Word and Spirit, God can and does work in many ways, even ways we cannot imagine, to call people to himself so that they might respond, receive and humbly trust in him as their Lord and Savior. By his power and in his grace, God can deal with any and all situations, including every limitation and barrier. That's what we believe, and our doctrinal statements focus on that, not on speculations.

In looking at the timing of when God will work with some groups of people, GCI has at times pointed to **Revelation chapters 20-22**, noting the possibility raised there that some may have a chance to have a change of mind/heart after death and even after the general resurrection of the dead. However, it should be noted that when such possibilities have been mentioned by GCI, it was also noted that it was a matter of *speculation*, not doctrine. The book of Revelation is written as *apocalyptic*, a literary genre that makes heavy use of metaphorical, symbolic language. It is a misuse of Revelation to turn its metaphors and symbols into literal teachings, and then use them to establish church doctrine.

Revelation 21:25 speaks of the gates of the Temple in the new Jerusalem never being shut. This is a metaphor---a symbolic image that is not to be understood as *necessarily* true. To speculate as to its literal meaning and import using logical inferences, and then to use those conclusions to make dogmatic (doctrinal) statements concerning postmortem evangelism, would be unwarranted and a breach of the rules of logic.

The metaphorical/symbolic imagery of the book of Revelation must be interpreted in light of what is explicitly and directly taught, both in that book and in the context of what the rest of the New Testament explicitly declares. Passages like **Rev. 21:25** do not provide a basis on which to establish a doctrine that God's mercy will *necessarily* involve after-death conversions (via postmortem evangelism). God can work his mercy out in ways that don't require such means.

What Revelation does declare is that God is a just, merciful and gracious God who is eternally opposed to evil, and who will overcome all evil so that, in the end, it will be no more. God assures us in Scripture that *evil has no future* and that he will rescue from evil all who turn to him in repentance and faith. Revelation warns against unbelief and a lack of repentance and serves as a basis for patient hope, awaiting God's ultimate victory over evil and the vindication of those who put their trust in Jesus, their Lord and Savior, the Alpha and Omega.

- Dr. Gary Deddo

Bible prophecy: Hell

From <https://www.gci.org/articles/hell/> by Mr. Joseph Tkach

"If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away," said Jesus. **"It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell"** (Matthew 5:30). Hell is serious. We need to take Jesus' warning seriously.

Our approach

On this subject, as with many others, we must listen to Jesus. If we take him seriously when he teaches about mercy, we should also take him seriously when he teaches about punishment. After all, mercy doesn't mean much unless we are escaping something.

Warnings about fire

In one parable, Jesus warned that wicked people will be thrown into a fiery furnace (**Matthew 13:50**). In this parable, he did not talk about incineration, but about **"weeping and gnashing of teeth."** In another parable, Jesus describes the punishment of a forgiven slave who would not forgive a fellow slave as "torture" (**Matthew 18:34**). Another parable describes the wicked person as tied up and thrown "into the darkness" (**Matthew 22:13**). This darkness is described as a place of weeping and grinding of teeth.

Jesus does not explain whether those in the darkness weep from pain or from sorrow, and he does not explain whether they grind their teeth in remorse or in anger. That is not his purpose. In fact, he never explains in detail the fate of the wicked.

Jesus does, however, warn people in vivid terms not to hang on to anything that would cause them to be thrown into eternal fire: **"If your hand or your foot causes you to sin,"** Jesus warned, **"cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life**

maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire” (Matthew 18:7-8). It is better to deny yourself in this life than to be **“thrown into the fire of hell” (verse 9).**

Does the punishing of the wicked last forever? The Bible can be interpreted in different ways on that. Some verses suggest eternal suffering, while others suggest a limited duration. But either way, hell is to be avoided at all costs. This reminds me of a book on this subject: *Two Views of Hell*. Edward Fudge argues for annihilation; Robert Peterson argues for eternal suffering. On the cover of this book are two men, both with hand over face in an expression of dread or horror. The point being made with the graphic is that even though there are two views of hell, no matter how you look at hell, it is ghastly. God is merciful, but the person who opposes God refuses his mercy and therefore suffers.

Epistles

Jesus used a variety of word-pictures for the punishment of those who refuse the mercy of God: fire, darkness, torture and destruction.

The apostles also talked about judgment and punishment, but they described it in different ways. Paul wrote, **“For those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil” (Romans 2:9).**

Regarding those who were persecuting the church at Thessalonica, Paul wrote, **“They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power” (2 Thessalonians 1:9).** So we define hell as “separation and alienation from God.”

The Old Testament penalty for rejecting Moses was death, but anyone who deliberately rejects Jesus deserves a greater punishment, says **Hebrews 10:28-29. “It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (verse 31).** God is merciful beyond imagination, but if people refuse his mercy, only judgment is left. They will reap the consequences of their own actions.

God does not want anyone to suffer the horrors of hell — he wants everyone to come to repentance and salvation (**2 Peter 2:9**). But those who refuse such wonderful grace will suffer. That is their choice, not God’s. Thus we say that hell is “chosen by incorrigible sinners.” That is an important part of the picture.

The final victory of God is also an important part of the picture. Everything will be brought under the control of Christ, for he has redeemed all creation (**1 Corinthians 15:20-24; Colossians 1:20**). Everything will be set right. Even death and Hades will be destroyed in the end (**Revelation 20:14**). The Bible does not tell us how hell fits into that picture, nor do we claim to know. We simply trust that God, full of righteousness and mercy, will conclude it all in the best possible way.

Of all that Jesus taught about hell, the most important thing is that Jesus is the solution to the problem. In him, there is no condemnation (**Romans 8:1**). He is the way, the truth and the life eternal.

The justice and mercy of God

A God of love would not torture people forever and ever, say some people. The Bible reveals God to be compassionate. He would rather put people out of their misery than see them suffer eternally. The traditional doctrine of an ever-punishing hell, many believe, portrays God as a vengeful sadist who sets a terrible example. Moreover, it would not be right to punish people forever for a life that lasted only a few years or decades, say some.

But rebellion against God is infinitely terrible, say some theologians. We cannot measure evil by the time it takes to commit it, they explain. A murder may take only a few minutes, yet the consequences may extend over decades or centuries. Rebelling against God is the most serious crime in the universe, they contend, so it demands the worst punishment.

Unfortunately, humans don’t have a very good handle on either justice or mercy. Humans are not qualified to judge, but Jesus Christ is. He will judge the world righteously (**Psalms 9:8; John 5:22; Romans 2:6-11**). We can trust his judgment, knowing he will be both righteous and merciful.

When it comes to hell, some parts of the Bible stress anguish and punishment and others use images of destruction and cessation. Rather than trying to make one description conform to the other, we let them both speak. When it comes to hell, we must trust God, not our imagination.

Author: Joseph Tkach

GCI principle website and Moncton Websites—www.gci.org, www.worshiphim.ca, www.facebook.com/GCIMoncton; For a wealth of helpful articles about God, grace and his plan for salvation, who we are, etc., please see the GCI.org website.
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