



The BASIC Good News

ALIENATION

Issue 2

Discovering the Essentials of the Christian Faith

The Color BLACK symbolizes that Sin has ALIENATED people from God and His Best for them.

“A” is for ALIENATION

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Sin: Our Thirst for the Worst

What in the world is wrong with us?

That is our question for this issue of “The Basic Good New.” Any newspaper on any day of any year will tell us something is wrong. What is it? The simple answer

given to us by God is “sin.” There is evil and tragedy and death in the world because of us, because of our sin.

The news this time

seems anything but good. It is news about the reality of sin and evil and death. The Good News is that God has overcome our wrong by His love in Jesus Christ, but we cannot understand, appreciate, accept and celebrate God’s grace until we come to terms with the

bad news of sin.

What is sin? It is, fundamentally, a rejection of God, His truth, His goodness, His love. It is expressed in our habitual failure to do what God says to do and our natural desire and vain attempt to live

according to our own delusion of reasonable wisdom and adequate health apart from God.

And the result of sin? **ALIENATION.** It separates us from God. It separates us from one another. When we choose to live apart from God,

the Bible says, He lets us. Rather than overwhelming us by His power and making us behave ourselves according to His will and in spite of our own, God honors our humanity, our free will. He gives us over to our foolishness. So by our experience of futil-

ity in sin we ought to come running back to God, but we don’t. Sin has corrupted us too completely.

Sin is a brokenness that is part of our basic nature since the time of our most ancient ancestor, Adam. And it is our own choice to do what is wrong—in thought, word and deed—again and again and again.

Sin is a pervasive reality for the whole human race. We ignore it to our continual and eternal peril. It is also an inescapable personal responsibility. I can’t blame God or anyone else for my own choice to turn away from what is right, away from the Living God, and to embrace evil instead. The great Christian writer of last century, G.K. Chesterton, was asked by the London Times to offer an essay in response to the question “What is wrong with the world?” Chesterton’s reply contained only two words: “I am.”



The Basic Gospel Bracelet

B.A.S.I.C.

- **BEST (GOLD):** The BEST of everything is found from, through, in and to the Living God.
- **ALIENATION (BLACK):** Sin has ALIENATED people from God and His best for them.
- **SALVATION (RED):** We are SAVED eternally only by the gracious sacrifice of God’s Son Jesus Christ.
- **IDENTIFICATION (WHITE):** We recover our true and best IDENTITY by *admitting* our need, *believing* in Jesus and *calling* on God.
- **COMPLETION (GREEN):** We *grow* as we live by faith, trusting and glorifying our God who is making us COMPLETE.

Why Does the “S” Word Make People So Angry?

“Sin” is a word that stirs people up these days. Have you noticed? “Don’t use that word around my children, please!... Hey, what’s the matter with you? That word went out with the Inquisition!...”

People in our culture really don’t like the “S” word. It’s as though the word itself was dirty rather than a broadly apt and essential way of expressing the dirty realities of our broken world. Why the anger?...

I suppose nobody likes to hear bad news, and nobody wants to admit that things with them,

with us, are out of kilter. But beyond this, I think the concept of sin conflicts with one of the fundamental assumptions of our culture, the notion that we human beings are basically good folks. Since before Protagoras the Greek said it some 2500 years ago, we have been attracted to the idea that “Man is the measure of all things.” It doesn’t get any better than us! We are taught that whatever problems we might have, we can overcome them all with some additional learning and some extra effort. We want to believe that all those bad people we hear about on the news are the exception to the rule and we are part of the basically-good-or-at-least-well-intentioned ma-

majority.

So, when somebody uses the “S” word, people in our culture think they’re being unnecessarily negative. But the Bible says they’re being necessarily honest. And the Bible is God’s inspired message to humanity. And God is the real “measure of all things.”

And here’s the real tragedy of our modern over-optimism about ourselves: Such a view prevents us from hearing and accepting the Good News of God’s grace in all its fullness.

Romans 1:18-32 — An Horrific Picture, Humanity in Sin

God's Wrath Against Mankind

¹⁸ The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, ¹⁹ since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

²¹ For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

²² Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal

God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

²⁴ Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. ²⁵ They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and

committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

²⁸ Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.

²⁹ They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are

gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; ³¹ they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³² Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

“Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts...”

worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

²⁶ Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. ²⁷ In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men

Questions to Ask:

1. Against what is God's wrath directed? Why do you suppose God reacts this way?
2. How do human beings actively rebel against God? How does God respond to this?
3. What qualities characterize humanity living in rebellion against God? What evidence do you see of these things in people today?



Romans 3:23 — A Universal Calamity

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..

Questions to Ask:

1. How does this verse conflict with modern ideas of what it means to be human?
2. Whom does it say is affected by the reality of sin?



Romans 6:23 — Sin's Deadly Consequence

²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Questions to Ask: 1. What do we earn by our sin? What are its “wages?”

2. What is the difference between a wage and a gift?
3. What is the “gift” God gives?

Isaiah 53:6 — Humanity in Sin, Going Our Own Way

6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Questions to ask:

1. What does the Prophet say our problem is?
2. What is the Lord's response? Who is "him?"

Genesis 3 — The Great & First Tragedy, Paradise Lost

The Fall of Man

3 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"

2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

4 "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. 5 "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"



10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

11 And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

12 The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

14 So the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, 'Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. 15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.'"

16 To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

17 To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' 'Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.

18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. 19 By the sweat of your brow, you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

20 Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.

21 The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. 22 And the Lord God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be

allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of

life and eat, and live forever." 23 So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. 24 After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman.

Ephesians 2:1-3 — Human Nature, Dead in Sin

2 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

Questions to ask: 1. What does it mean to be dead? What can a dead person do for himself?

2. Whom and what do sinful people tend to follow? What do they live to do? What do they earn by this behavior?

ALIENATION



Reaching Out with
the Message and
Love of Jesus Christ

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Our Mission

Covenant Presbyterian Church is a Christ-centered church whose members seek to: reach out to others with the message and love of Christ, enable people to become faithful, mature disciples of Jesus, and help people discover and use their spiritual gifts through meaningful worship, nurture, prayer, education and service to our members and beyond.

Our Focus

Teaching the Word of God

Our Vision

To proclaim, teach and live the Word of God so that our members, their families and friends, and our neighbors in the community receive and respond to God's Word by coming to know Christ as their Savior and Lord, growing in their relationship with Him and with one another, fulfilling God's unique purpose for their lives, and sharing their faith with others.

We Share with You the Good News...

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures... (I Corinthians 5:3-4)



✝ That Christ died for our sins

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows... But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed... We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; & the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:4-6)

✝ And that He was buried

You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19) ...as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. (Psalm 103:12)

✝ And that He rose again

For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. (I Corinthians 15:22)... Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives & believes in me will never die..." (John 11:25-26)

🔑 Humanity's Need

But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear. (Isaiah 59:2)... for all have

sinned and fall short of the glory of God... For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 3:23, 6:23)

🔑 God's Remedy

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:16-17)

➡ What shall I do, Lord?

That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved... for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Romans 10:9-13)

♥ Choose Life

I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. (Deuteronomy 30:19-20)... Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. (Isaiah 55:6)