**What Is The Gospel? (Andy Acreman, TCF)**

**Week 1 – Realistic About Sin and Its Consequences**

***Teaching Series Overview***

Sometimes it is hard to sum up what our gospel is all about. How do we explain the key issues to someone who is seeking God? What Is the New Covenant all about, and what are its benefits?

In this short series, we will base ourselves in Paul’s Letter to the Romans, which he calls *his gospel.* There will also be a few references from other books of the Bible to reinforce the teaching.

Actually the New Covenant was first revealed in the ancient prophecy of Jeremiah, in the Old Testament: *Jeremiah 31:33-34 NIV*

*“This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbour, or say to one another, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”*

This prophecy is also quoted in full in Hebrews 8:8-12 and partially in other New Testament passages.

We can see that there are three main kinds of benefit outlined here:

1. Judicial Innocence
2. Inner Christlikeness
3. Blessings of a Close Relationship with God

All these benefits are given to us as a gift (= grace) as a result of what Jesus Christ has done for us. There are also extreme dangers of rejecting this gift and continuing in a life of sin. So this teaching series is based on the Book of Romans and is in five weekly parts...

* **Realistic About Sin – and its consequences!**
* **Recognising Jesus' Death and Resurrection – what it achieved**
* **Righteousness as a Gift Through Faith – judicial innocence**
* **Released from the Power of Sin Over Us – an inner Christlikeness**
* **Received Into God's Family – the blessings of a close relationship**

Today we look at the first of these topics...

**“Realistic About Sin and Its Consequences”**

**Today, I will cover the following points:**

* **What is Sin and where did it originate?**
* **Who does it affect?**
* **What are the Consequences of sin in our lives?**

**What is Sin and where did it originate?**

* *1 John 3:4 NIV. Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.*
* Therefore, sin is rebellion against the will and commands of Almighty God. It describes both the ***act*** of rebelling and the ***tendency***to rebel.
* *Romans 5:12 NIV. Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way, death came to all people, because all sinned…*
* This looks back to the Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve – the earliest ancestors of mankind - were in paradise and were given a single command, which they rebelled against. This was the first sin, and the gateway for sin to enter our world. (See Genesis chapter 3).
* Because we are *all* descended from Adam and Eve, we all sinned and are counted as sinners as a result of what they first did. Sin is now rampant in our world, like a virus!

**Who does it affect?**

* *Romans 3:9-18,23 NIV. What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. 10 As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one; 11 there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. 12 All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one”. 13 “Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit”. “The poison of vipers is on their lips”. 14 “Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness”. 15 “Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16 ruin and misery mark their ways, 17 and the way of peace they do not know”. 18 “There is no fear of God before their eyes”. ... 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God…*
* Every human being on the planet is affected! If we look back at Genesis 6, just before the Great Flood…
* *Genesis 6:5 NIV*
* *The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that* ***every*** *inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was* ***only*** *evil* ***all the time****.*
* Clearly this ‘infection’ of sin was far more virulent and deadly than any biological virus. Everyone gets infected and its effects are deadly!
* As we will now see..

**The Consequences of Sin**

* **Consequence #1: Sin *condemns* us... Legally x2:**
  + **The scene is a courtroom…**
  + God is our Righteous Judge, and we are in the dock! There are penalties to pay!
  + *Romans 5:12 NIV. Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way, death came to all people, because all sinned…*
  + *1 Corinthians 15:21-22 NIV*
  + *For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. 22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.*
  + One of the penalties of sin – for the whole human race – is **Physical death**; and
  + *2 Thessalonians 1:7b-9 NIV. …This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might*
  + So we see that another penalty of sin is **Eternal death** – and you only need to fail once! This punishment is forever! It is terrible and terrifying. God is paying sinners back for what they have ‘earned’ by their sins.
  + *Romans 6:23a NIV. For the* ***wages*** *of sin is death...*
* **Consequence #2: Sin *enslaves* us... Behaviourally**
  + **The scene is a prison…**
  + *Romans 7:14-15,18-19 NIV. We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. 15 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do… 18 For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do - this I keep on doing.*
  + The **drive of sin** in our old nature causes us to slip back into our bad habits and evil behaviour, rebelling against God, despite our high-minded resolutions to be better.
  + *Romans 1:18-32 NIV. The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, 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 people 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 a mortal human being 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 about God for a lie and 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 sexual 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 committed shameful acts with other men and received in themselves the due penalty for their error. 28 Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they 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 have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. 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.*
  + **Sin is a slippery slope!** The more we give in to those rebellious behaviours, the worse our behaviour becomes – it’s rather like a narcotic addiction!
* **Consequence #3: Sin *separates* us… Relationally** 
  + **The scene is a leper colony…**
  + *Isaiah 59:2 NIV. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that He will not hear.*
  + **A barrier between us and God.** Destroying the relationship that He planned we should always have together.
  + *Ephesians 2:12,14,19 NIV. …Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world… 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility… 19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household,*
  + **Barriers between one human and another**, and between one group and another. Racism, sexism, tribalism, prejudice.

**In Summary…**

* **Sin is rebellion against the commands of Almighty God; it began when Adam and Eve first rebelled in the Garden of Eden**
* **Sin now harmfully affects every member of the human race – past, present and future**
* **Sin *condemns* us... Legally x2:**
  + Physical death (entering the devil’s domain); and
  + Eternal death (sharing the devil’s punishment) – you only need to fail once!
* **Sin *enslaves* us... Behaviourally**
  + The drive of sin in our old nature causes us to slip back into bad habits, despite our high-minded resolutions to be better people
  + The more we give in to those bad habits, the worse our behaviour becomes – like a narcotic addiction
* **Sin *separates* us... Relationally** 
  + Barrier between us and God
  + Barriers between one human and another.
* **On its own this is very depressing and gloomy!**

**Epilogue**

* I cannot end on the *bad* news. Must give every listener a lifeline. Especially those listening in to this recording! There really is light at the end of the tunnel. There really is some good news! Listen to the following verses from the Book of Romans. In the next few weeks, we will be looking at how Jesus opened the doorway to our salvation and our reconciliation to God…
* *Romans 1:16-17 NIV*
* *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. 17 For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith”.*
* *Romans 10:9 NIV*
* *If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord”, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*
* **Everyone needs to know who to call on for salvation. If necessary, even on their deathbed, if they haven’t done so beforehand.**
* *Acts 2:21 NIV. “…Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved”.*
* Never underestimate the **power of the gospel** of grace when it is preached. It can melt even the hardest of hearts…
* The greatest English evangelist preacher of all time, George Whitefield (a contemporary of John Wesley), began preaching the gospel in the open air in February 1739 at Kingswood, Bristol. His text was the first three verses of the Sermon On The Mount. His audience was many thousands of poor and working class people, mainly coal miners from the local pits. These men were the roughest of the rough and had never been in a church in their lives! The account that follows is in Whitefield’s own words...
* *Having no righteousness of their own to renounce, they were glad to hear of a Jesus who was a friend to publicans, and came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. The first discovery of their being affected was the sight of the white gutters made by their tears, which plentifully fell down their black cheeks as they came out of their coal pits. Hundreds of them were being brought under deep conviction, which, as the event proved, happily ended in a sound and thorough conversion.*
* I urge you to surrender your life to Jesus. To call upon Him for your salvation from the penalty, the slavery, and the separation of sin. Do *not* allow your life to be destroyed forever. Call on the Name of the Lord, call on Jesus to save you. *If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord”, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*