

Six New Testament Words You Need in Your Vocabulary

We've dumbed down the gospel for too long. Let's rediscover the Bible and become mature disciples.

I love words. That's why I do a crossword puzzle every day—not just because it is the mental equivalent of a three-mile bicycle ride, but also because I enjoy discovering that a word such as “coulrophobia” means a fear of clowns, or that “jobbernowl” means a stupid person.

Words are especially important to us as Christians, not only because Jesus is the *logos*—the word made flesh (see John 1:14)—but because our faith rests on the truth revealed by God in the Bible. We can't really know Him apart from the God-inspired words that describe who He is and what He has done for us.

“Countless martyrs died so that we could have the Bible, yet today we are forgetting it. I urge you to rediscover the timeless truths of Scripture.”

Sadly, however, we are losing our biblical vocabulary. Many Christians don't read the Bible consistently, and many church leaders assume that basic theology is optional

for discipleship. Meanwhile many of us charismatics often will choose Holy Ghost goose bumps and flash-in-the-pan miracle services instead of an hour of sound doctrine.

We are like the Corinthians, whom Paul said were “infants in Christ,” stuck on milk because they couldn’t handle solid spiritual food (see 1 Cor. 3:1-2). In this day of watered-down, dumbed-down faith, God is calling us to reclaim the genuine apostolic gospel and the words that frame it. I encourage you to make sure these words are part of your vocabulary:

Justification. Paul uses forms of this Greek word *dikaioo* 27 times in the New Testament. It means “to declare to be righteous.” It is sometimes translated “to free,” “to acquit” and “to vindicate.” It describes what happened to you when you put your faith in Jesus as your Savior: In the courtroom of heaven, God declared “Not guilty!” over you! Are you walking in full awareness of this awesome revelation? Romans 5:9 promises: “Having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him (NASB).”

Redemption. We miss the meaning of this word *apolytrōsis* today because we don’t have public slave markets. But in ancient times, a slave could be liberated from bondage when a wealthy person paid a hefty fee. Redemption means “released from slavery by the payment of a ransom.” This is what Christ achieved for us when

He died on the cross!

Ephesians 1:7 says, "In Him we have *redemption* through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses."

Propitiation. This is certainly not a word we use in everyday conversation, since we have no cultural concept of making sacrifices for sins. This word, *hilasmos*, is packed with meaning—and speaks of a sacrifice that covers sin and satisfies the demands of a holy God. When Jesus died for us, He removed our guilt by transferring it to Himself. 1 John 2:2 says: "He Himself is the *propitiation* for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world."

Sanctification. This word, *hagiasmos*, is sometimes translated "holiness." It signifies separation unto God (not self-righteous separation from people) and separation from evil things and ways. It is the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit, who purges us continually as we offer our lives in consecration and devotion. The Bible also says *sanctification* is not optional: "Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). In this season when our culture is redefining morality, this is not a word we should ignore.

Judgment. We live in a permissive culture, and any talk of final judgment is considered socially insensitive. Yet this inflammatory word was used by Jesus Himself to speak of the final destiny of sinners who reject Him. Jesus was certainly not politically

correct when He said in John 5:24: "He who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into *judgment*." Meanwhile the author of Hebrews reminds us: "It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes *judgment*" (9:27). The Greek word, *krisis*, means "a sentence of condemnation, damnatory judgment, condemnation and punishment." If we believed God's final judgment was a reality, it would certainly alter the way we interact with unbelievers.

Grace. There is a reason the hymn writer called grace "amazing." This word is almost impossible to define. According to Strong's Lexicon, the Greek word *charis* means not only (1) the goodness and favor of God, and (2) the kindness by which God exerts His holy influence upon us, but also (3) "the spiritual condition of one governed by the power of divine grace." Grace is not just God's unmerited favor, but also what it does to us and through us. This is implied when Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:10: "But by the *grace* of God I am what I am, and His *grace* toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me."

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urge you to rediscover the timeless truths of Scripture and expand your vocabulary. By the power of His grace, you will become a living demonstration of these words to everyone around you.

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