

New City Fellowship

Breaking the Bondage of Sin

God's Remedy for Destructive, Addictive Patterns of Behavior

LESSON 1

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. ¹³ Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. Romans 6:11-14

How do you know when you are a slave to sin? When you keep thinking and doing the same sinful, destructive deeds over and over again, even though you know better and want to be free from their control in your life.

What is God's promise over our lives as his children? Freedom from the control of sin in our lives, replaced by freedom to live out God's righteousness, the life of the eternal age, now.

Genesis 4:1-7 Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man." ² Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. ³ In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. ⁴ But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, ⁵ but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. ⁶ Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? ⁷ If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."

James 1:13-15 ¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. ¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to **sin**, and **sin** when it is fully grown brings forth death.

2 Peter 2:17-19 ¹⁷ These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them. ¹⁸ For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. ¹⁹ They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity-- for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.

Romans 5:19-6:18, 8:1-14

¹⁹ For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous..... But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, ²¹ so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord....We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?....⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.....⁶ For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin-- ⁷ because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.... ¹⁰ The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. ¹¹ In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. ¹³ Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. ¹⁸ You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. **Romans 8:1-14** There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³ For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶ To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹ You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. ¹² So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

The humble freedom in identifying the source of the problem

The sin nature within us: the ongoing struggle, even for the believer

Genesis 4:1-7 James 1:13-15; Galatians 5:16-18

The points of temptation- the world, in structures and philosophy and religion and lifestyle as it stands opposed to God in thought and in deed; our own “flesh” in its fallen condition that is prone to evil desires and fears; the spiritual opposition of the lying-wrapped-in-half truths of the evil one (1 John)

Embracing and Applying God’s solution in Jesus the Messiah

How Grace (God’s Favor) Works - John 1:14

- The central issue of identity Romans 5
- The transforming power of receiving grace- God’s grace teaches us to say no to ungodliness Titus 2:11-13
- The wrestle for the free gift versus self-generated transformation Galatians 5:1-4
- The wrestle aspect of faith- Heb 12
- The “not yet” complete elimination of the sin nature- but the elimination of the power of the temptation and the power of the sin nature
- God’s good discipline: changing the “will

Renewing your mind: Speaking to your “old self” the promises of God and taking every thought captive

The Presence and Power of the Holy Spirit

Galatians 3:1-6; 5:4-6, 16-18

Abiding in Christ: The Power of Our Union with Christ and the Presence of the Spirit for Defeating Sin and Establishing Righteousness

Jesus has come to set us free from the power of sin and death and free to become righteous -- people who look like Christ -- who pursue justice, love to show mercy, and walk humbly with God; who see righteousness restored in our relationships with one another across the previous divisions and brokenness; who see God's goodness flowing to the nations; who live in light of the hope of the rescue and deliverance of the creation itself. The Gospel is itself God's power for unleashing that life of the Spirit of God in us, to see sin more and more defeated, and growth in true righteousness more and more practiced in all these areas [*Isa 61:1-4*].

How does this work out in practice? There are 'two sides' to this coin of growing in obedience (what the Scriptures call 'sanctification') that go hand in hand. **One side of growth is to see and deal with the sin nature and the overall brokenness of sin in light of the Gospel; the other side is to see and pursue God's righteousness in the light of the Gospel.**

In the following notes when we use the phrase "believing the gospel," this is shorthand for believing that Christ atoned for sin, granted us the status of righteous sons, has empowered us by the Spirit to live out his kingdom righteousness in a redeemed family community together, that he will have the complete and ultimate victory of seeing all things restored, healed and united under his righteous and just Kingship, and has already begun that process with the authority and power over all things to bring that to expression.

I. Believing the Gospel gives us the freedom to deal honestly with sin

1 John 1:5-2:2

Our identity with Christ - our righteousness in Him as a gift - is what gives us the freedom to relax and see the truth about our sin nature and the brokenness of the world around us. Our standing before God and our hope for restoration is not dependent on whether or not we see sin arise in our hearts or the evidence of the destructiveness of sin on a corporate or cultural level. Our standing and hope on our 'best day' or on our 'worst day' (personal or corporate) is not based on how things are going that day: it is based solely upon Christ's work for us (personally and corporately as his people and for the world as a whole – Col 1:19-20), both his forgiveness and his righteousness on our behalf.

What feeds the fear of being able to deal honestly with sin is an underlying question, a doubt of whether or not God will still meet us: still love us, still bless us, still teach us as his children, still break into the ruin that sin produces in entire nations - even right at that point where sin is being exposed. Does his commitment to being "faithful" to his promises and to us as his people take into account our own stubborn struggle with sin as well as the stubborn rebellion and mess of the nations? Or will God (rightly so in our minds) see us as unworthy and be angry with us and cast us off? The less we believe that our personal standing and our hope for corporate

and global restoration is based solely upon the righteousness that comes through Christ as a gift, and not on ourselves, the more we will be susceptible to these doubts.

These doubts, in turn, can lead us away from “believing Christ” and receiving his righteousness as a gift, and feed the thinking that we have to work hard to bring God a good performance in order for him to delight in us and truly bless us. With this mindset, the exposure of sin will be seen as a hindrance, a major setback, a defeat; something we will tend to cover up. But what God really intends for us is the freedom of knowing we are his loved children by faith in Christ, and that this fundamental relationship will never change, so that even the exposure of sin is not a basis for fear but a further opportunity for growth. To take this one step further - we actually need the continued exposure of sin to take place, so that continued healing and restoration can deepen. In order for us to have this freedom, the work of Christ on the cross must become more and more central to our faith and hope [see “Cross Chart”].

II. Believing the Gospel gives us the freedom to deal honestly with the character of our sin nature and the depth of the devastation of sin in the world around us

A. Even as believers, this sin nature (or ‘principle of sin’) is still at work in our lives

Galatians 5:16,17 James 4:1 Ephesians 4:22,23

This is so important to recognize this reality as openly as Scripture does. If not, we can find ourselves shocked, dazed, defeated and confused by the intensity of sinful thoughts, desires, and our own brokenness that emerges as we walk with the Lord, and also by the level of brokenness in others.

B. The character of our sin nature and the damage sin has created on a corporate level is more than we can handle on our own (that’s why we need a Savior):

1. This sin nature is now and always will be totally corrupt [Romans 7:14-20]

There isn’t anything you, or others, aren’t capable of..... Cf. Romans 1-3, and consider David and Peter - both in the garden of Gethsemane and later, with the Galatian gentile Christians - as cautionary examples.

Your sin nature will never get any better. **You** will grow and change, but your sin nature will not. The best defensive strategy is to recognize this so you aren’t defeated by the reality of its presence in yourself or others.

2. This sin nature is self-deceiving and hidden in its character to you [Jeremiah 17:9]

That's why you need the Spirit to search you [*Psalm 139:23*]; it's why others see your sin first and you see the sin of others better. If you don't recognize this, you will be all the more susceptible to its control. The most dangerous person is the one who knows he is right but doesn't see himself as a sinner who has been declared righteous - only as a gift of grace.

3. This sin nature is opposed to the life of the Spirit in you and can powerfully (but only temporarily) defeat you [*Galatians 5 / Romans 7 / James 4*]

This is not to say at all that you will be ultimately defeated and can just decide to give in to sin without struggle. It is however, a humble, bold recognition (that only the Gospel allows you to accept) that you will still struggle with sin. It also strips away all pretense of turning repentance into penance, or by assuring God or yourself that your confidence for forgiveness is that you will never sin again. It also explains how sins can be so habitual.

III. Believing the Gospel, even in the light of this brokenness of sin, in others and in the world, is the very means for this sinfulness to be overcome

It is extremely important to understand that though your sin nature is still present, and God is not shy about telling us that in his Word, the good news of the Gospel includes the reality that you have died *to your sin nature* and that *your sin nature is dead in its ultimate power over you* because of your new identity with Christ

A. You are One with Christ, just like you were One with Adam [*Romans 5:12, 18-19*]

You were born in sin and have suffered its effects because of your identity with Adam. In fact, the whole of mankind, all culture and institutions and creation itself has suffered because of Adam's sin

You are now 'free' from the condemnation and power of sin, and are instead born into righteousness and will receive all the effects of it because of your identity with Christ. This applies not only to us individually, but also to us corporately as God's people. In a very practical way this gives us great freedom that though individual members of the body may struggle deeply with sin, this does not defeat the corporate movement of the kingdom through the greater body of Christ.

B. You have both died with Christ to sin and been raised to new life in Him [*Romans 6:1-14*]

Who we were - the 'old self, identified only as a child of Adam, a sinner' - was crucified with Christ - and because of that death, we are free from that identity with sin.

Who we are - the 'new self' with a 'new nature' - created in Christ Jesus to be righteous' - was raised with Christ, and because of that resurrection to God, we are free to identify with righteousness and all the benefits that come from it, including the redemption of the physical world itself.

This is a gift of God. It is the good news of the Gospel. Every time we act out of our sin nature or see the devastating effect of sin around us, God wants us to come and receive his mercy on a deeper level, and learn the freedom of submitting to righteousness.

If we were under a relationship of 'law' with God (where he judged us according to our deeds) we could never be free from our sin natures - we would always only be receiving punishment, and that would leave us under the power of sin all the time. But we are not under law; we are under a relationship of grace. And because we can come to the throne of grace and receive mercy in our time of need, and because God will not treat us as our sins deserve, but will freely accept us as His very own sons and daughters, through Christ's work on our behalf, and will freely bless us and give us his Spirit, then sin's power will not be our master.

IV. Believing the Gospel for the depth of sin

Romans 7:14 - 8:4

Paul's sense of the problem of the sin nature and the answer of the Gospel comes to its fullest expression in Romans 7. This **does not mean** Paul is saying sin ultimately has the upper hand and we just learn to live with it. What he is saying is that the struggle is real, and that when he sees things most clearly he realizes this struggle with sin will always be a part of his life, and as a man who loves God, he hates the presence of sin and feels an inner 'wretchedness' about its presence.

Every true child of God experiences this at different times. When that happens, the important question is this: Do you give up in defeat? Or do you, like Paul, run back to the good news of the Gospel? (For those who are not used to believing the Gospel, but keep striving for a righteousness of their own to offer God, this chapter presents an incredible moral dilemma).

V. Believing the Gospel for the Spirit to pursue righteousness

Romans 8:5-17

Because I am righteous through Christ as a gift (even, or especially in that very area where I just sinned) I can ask for the Spirit's help/blessing to put on righteousness.

Jesus has come to set us free *from the power of sin and death* and free to *become like him, in true righteousness and holiness.*

A. God Himself has several ways in which he summarizes what it means to 'be righteous'

The Ten Commandments [*Exodus 2*]

The 'Two Great Commandments' [*Matthew 22:37-40*]

The 'New Command' [*John 13:34 "Love one another...as I have loved you"*]

So what does 'love' mean? God Himself has summarized righteousness and true love for us this way:

The central, defining, core values of God's 'kingdom', of being 'righteous', of 'loving', of becoming 'like Christ' are summed up for us in Micah 6:8 'He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.'

To act justly:

To make sure you personally treat others with all goodness, rightness and justice in every situation of life - as a merchant (*Lev 19:36*), an employer (*James 5:4,5*), a spouse (*Ephesians 5*), a parent (*Eph 5*), a citizen (*Romans 11*), even a homeowner (*Deut 22:8*)

But also to take an active role in helping others whom you see being treated them with injustice. In other words, to do whatever good we can for those who are being oppressed. (*Isaiah 58:10*) The people who are the most vulnerable to injustice, and the ones to whom we are called by God to pay special attention are the widow, the orphan, the immigrant and the poor [*Jeremiah 22:16; James 1:27; Leviticus 19:10, 33,34; Exodus 23:9*].

To love mercy:

To be the kind of person who delights in showing compassion for people in need - when we see people in pain, distress or misery, to step in and take action to relieve their need.

This applies to all kinds of need - but God calls us to pay attention to obvious physical need: hunger, shelter, clothing, sickness [*1 John 3, Luke 10, Isa 58*].

What is so unusual about God's mercy is that it comes from a God of grace: we extend such help even to people who are unworthy or, who deserve just the opposite; we even show mercy to our enemies *[Matthew 5:43 ff, Romans 12:17]*

To walk humbly with our God:

To not pursue this lifestyle from a position of arrogance, superiority or condescension, but from a humble walk with God and a humble walk with others at their point of brokenness and need. That humility will stem first from seeing our own need for, and reception of God's mercy and favor in our lives through the Gospel, so that the deeds of justice and compassion will not be marked by a motivation of making ourselves feel good or important, but they will be done as a true expression of the love of God, with careful concern for the person's true need, and 'quietly' - without drawing a lot of attention to ourselves *[Isa 42:1-4]*

These three traits of justice, mercy and humility are at the heart of God's character. As children of his kingdom, all the promises of the Gospel - his discipline, love and fatherly care will be bent towards shaping our lives as people who are marked by these traits.

Neither God nor your own conscience can accept a lack of growth in these areas and you need to know that you cannot grow without continually being refreshed in the Gospel.

B. Seeking obedience in the context of exercising faith in the Gospel and the power of the Spirit

1. Genuine growth requires the exercise of your will in choosing righteousness (God's will)

- a. As a son/daughter of God you are 'response-able'
Galatians 6:7-10 compare Hebrews 12:12-16

You can and are called to yield yourself to righteousness, because even though sinful attitudes or thoughts or traits may mark your obedience, it is acceptable because it is covered by the righteousness of Christ *[Romans 6:12-14; I Peter 2:4-12]*

Remember - these calls to obedience come to people like you and me who still have this struggle with the sin nature. The call to obedience comes with the recognition that this is the case, and with the hope of the Gospel as the answer.

- b. The exercise of your will in choosing righteousness (God's will) is meant to take place through a cooperation with the Spirit's power, received through the believing of the Gospel *[Romans 1:5, Titus 2:11-13]*

1) (Your will) - (Active faith) = Human (fleshly) Power for obedience

God has to teach us what it means to actively walk by faith because we tend to rely upon Him for a time (short or long) and then move towards self-reliance to live the Christian life - to love, to serve, to exercise gifts. When we are confronted with the lack of power to do these things, our need becomes the very opportunity to turn to God and trust his grace in Christ even more.

2) (Your will) + (Active Faith) = Spirit's Power for obedience

Your progress in sanctification is organically connected to your resting in your justification and all the other attending promises of God bringing righteousness to expression. Your need to grow will require you to believe the Gospel more. The "I can't/won't" of the 'flesh' asserts itself; the accusations of the Accuser hit hard; the temptations of the world and the cares of life pull us away. The believing of the Gospel - that we are free in Christ - is the *focus of faith* we need in order to continue to grow. As we learn to actively believe the Gospel - to freely ask for the Spirit; to fellowship with the Father and lose your will to His, we will see increasing freedom to seek obedience

2. Action Steps for Obedience

a. Let the law guide you *[Romans 3:31]*

The Law is good. The heart of the Law is about love - to God, our neighbor let the Law flesh that out: widows / orphans / justice / mercy / sex / enemies / spouses / children, etc.

b. Let the gospel empower you *[Galatians 5:1-6]*

Promise vs. Performance

c. Seek the Spirit's wisdom in how to love *[Eph. 3:14-19]*

Sanctification is about learning how to practically love. Look for immediate/practical expressions of that - the 'Kingdom is within you' - it is wherever you are!

d. Let the hope of the gospel determine your outlook on others *[II Cor. 5:16ff]*

Either as new creations, or as potential new creations. Exercise forgiveness as a lifestyle; know that God is in the business of changing people's lives; keep the real enemy in view -- whenever tempted not to love

e. Be full of courage - risk or rust *[Romans 12:1, 2; I Peter 1:13-15]*

Remember: God is with you -- see every command as a call backed by the promise of God's grace to enable you to do his will; remember what Jesus Himself taught us to pray: 'Your Kingdom Come'

f. Learn to endure in love *[Galatians 6:7-10]*

Expect opposition/conflict -- from within and with others; expect trial

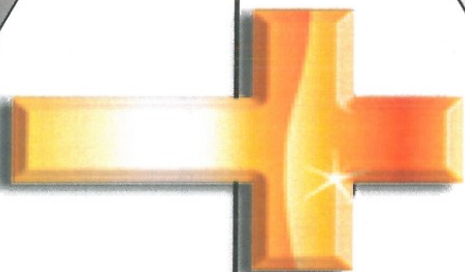
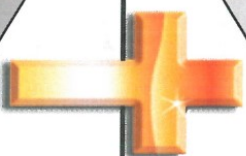
All these things are tools in God's hands to make you more mature in the expression of righteousness *[James 1:1ff]*

CROSS CHART

GOD'S HOLINESS -- UNLIMITED

BECOMING A CHRISTIAN

TIME LINE OF OUR LIVES



GROWING AWARENESS OF HOLINESS

GROWING AWARENESS OF SIN

OUR FLESH / SIN -- UNLIMITED

Breaking the Bondage to Sin - Lesson 4

The Promise of the Spirit

I. The Necessity of the Promised Spirit

John 1:29-34; Acts 2:17-18; Galatians 4:4-7; Romans 8:12-17

A. Jesus Christ -- The Anointed One [*Matthew 3:16*]

“Christ” – Greek New Testament; “Messiah” -- Hebrew Old Testament

Both include the definition of “anointed for a purpose” [*Dan 7:13-14; Luke 4:18-19*]. Jesus was the “anointed” one, who was called by God to fulfill his purposes of salvation in this world, the redemption of all things, through the destruction of evil and restoration of righteousness by his death and resurrection.

Jesus Christ came to usher in the kingdom of God that would be marked not by empty religious ceremony and the traditions of men, but by the establishment of God’s justice on behalf of the oppressed, his mercy for sinners in need of grace, and the fellowship of His presence as the delight of His children. All this would be started and brought to completion through the anointing and power of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus Christ, and through him, poured out upon his people.

Through the anointing of the Spirit, Jesus would:

- face trials, and remain submitted to his Father [*Luke 4:1 ff*]
- proclaim the message of God’s favor for the oppressed and poor [*Luke 4:14 ff*]
- perform countless deeds of mercy and compassion [*Luke 4:31 ff, 5:17*]
- call and equip others to follow in his steps [*Luke 9:1ff, cf Matt 10:20*]
- see Satan’s power of lies, destruction and demonic oppression broken and defeated [*Luke 10:17-24, 11:14-20 cf Mt 12:28*]
- endure the Cross and be raised again from the dead [*Romans 1:2-4*]

B. Our Anointing *[Romans 8:1-17]*

One of the core promises that belong to as “sons of God” is this same outpouring of the Spirit of God upon our lives that Jesus, our Elder Brother, received. God’s purpose all along was to make him the “firstborn among many brothers” *[Romans 8:29]* who would, like him, receive the Spirit’s power to become people who do justice, love mercy and have intimate fellowship with the Father *[John 1:32, 33; Acts 1:3-5, Joel 2; Gal 3:13-14]*

Through the Spirit, we are also enabled:

- to put sin to death and yield our bodies to do righteousness *[Romans 8:9-14]*
- to fellowship with the Father- calling Him “Abba”, without fear *[Romans 8:15-16]*
- to proclaim the Word of God boldly, with the presence of God’s power *[Acts 4:31]*
- to perform deeds of mercy, compassion and justice *[Acts 3:1 ff, 4:32 ff]*
- to see Satan defeated *[Romans 16:30]*
- to endure whatever sufferings following our King may bring *[Rom 8:17,15:13]*

II. The Promise of the Spirit: Through Faith Alone In Christ Alone

Just like our acceptance as sons who are declared “righteous” as a gift through the finished work of Christ, God grants us the Presence of the Spirit to bring that sonship to expression, not on the basis of our performance but on the basis of the finished work of Christ *[Galatians 3:1-5]*

A. As a son of God, you have the Spirit, because this is the gift of the Father

[Romans 8:9; I Corinthians 12:12,13; Ephesians 1:13,14; Galatians 4:4-7]

B. As a son of God, you need to ask for the Spirit’s presence to be made known, because this is a living relationship *[Acts 4:23-31; Ephesians 5:18]*

C. In order to be confident about asking God for the Spirit you need to ask:

1. Exclusively on the basis of Christ's finished work *[Gal 3:1-5]*
2. For God to fulfill his kingdom purposes *[Luke 11:5-13]*

III. The Radical Commitment of God to Freely Bless us with His Spirit

A. The Example of David

II Samuel 11, 12 -- the sin with Bathsheba and the killing of Uriah, and David's repentance and faith in Psalm 51

1. Psalm 51

Note how David deals with the need for the restored presence of God:

- he relies on the free/undeserved mercy of God *[51:1-2]*
- he is totally honest about his sin *[51:3-6]*
- he asks God to freely give him the joy of knowing his sin/guilt has been removed (blot it out) *[51:7-8]*
- and for God to give him a pure heart and steadfast spirit to serve the Lord *[51:9-10]*
- and for God to restore his joy in God Himself through the confident presence of the Spirit *[51:11-12]*
- and for God to give him the opportunity to share the love of God and teach others *[51:13-17]*
- and for God to prosper the work of the people of God *[51:18-19]*

2. II Samuel 12-19 -- the discipline of the Father

This presence of the Spirit allowed David to:

- accept God's discipline as the hand of His loving Father [12:9-14]
- seek God's mercy to reverse His decision [12:15-23]
- worship God in the midst of the consequences [15:24-29; 16:9-14]
- receive God's further blessing on his life [chapters 12-19]
- return to his responsibilities as King and totally trust the Sovereign hand of God to fulfill His will - in whatever that required in David's life [19:16-23, ff]

B. The Example of Peter

1. The three denials of Christ [Luke 22:54ff]
2. The three affirmations of Christ [John 21:15ff]
3. The anointing at Pentecost [Acts 2:14ff, cf Jn 21:18-19]

BREAKING THE BONDAGE OF SIN: OVERCOMING EVIL AT ITS SOURCE BY LEARNING TO ENDURE IN GOD'S GOODNESS AND GRACE THROUGH THE TIMES OF TESTING

Learning to have victory, by the blood of Christ and the power of the Spirit, where Adam and Eve failed

The reshaping of our inner most character from bondage and patterns of sin, to the freedom of patterns of righteousness, comes through learning to face the driving forces of testing and temptation that would pull you toward sin and by the power of faith in Christ and the Spirit, choose righteousness.

Romans 5:1-5; James 1:2-18; 1 Corinthians 10:13

Learning to take your stand in the middle of the trial by recognizing what is behind your patterns of sin--

Things that are not sin on you part- but can become the cause of sin in you.

Fear- money; health; oppression; injustice; violence; "missing out"- failure; illness; loneliness; insignificance

Anxiety

False Desires of the "Flesh"

Depression

Anger

General Brokenness of life

Rebellion of others

Stubbornness of Sin

Condemnation

Oppression

GOD DOES NOT REMOVE THE TRIAL OR TEMPTATION OR SOURCE OF FRUSTRATION OR FEAR IN THIS WORLD- INSTEAD HE TEACHES US HOW TO STAND FAITHFUL IN THE MIDST OF IT- HE TRAINS US FOR BATTLE-

EPH 6; Romans 5 ; 1 Cor 10:13

This requires learning to do battle which includes:

Learning to do spiritual warfare Eph 6

Learning to wrestle and accept discipline/training Hebrews 12

Learning to embrace joy beyond the immediate difficulty James 1

Learning to have our thinking reshaped, our minds renewed to see the hope of the glory of God Romans 5; 2 Cor 10:1-6

Learning to wait on the Lord Psalm 37

Fear- money; health; oppression; injustice; violence; “missing out”- failure; illness; loneliness; insignificance Luke 6, 11 ; Romans 8

Anxiety- Psalm 37

False Desires of the “Flesh”- Exodus 20, Eph 4:17ff

Depression- Psalm 41, 42

Anger- in your anger, do not sin Psalm 4

General Brokenness of life Psalm 73

Rebellion of others- Romans 11

Stubbornness of Sin- where sins abounds, grace abounds all the more

Condemnation- self; others; God Romans 8

Oppression by others Psalm 37; Luke 6; Romans 12:17ff

The Need for Prayer in Defeating the Power and Bondage of Sin: Fellowship, Worship and Faith in a Living Relationship with God

Prayer: Fellowship with God as the means for defeating sin and walking in righteousness

I. Understanding prayer as ‘meeting with the Father’ to know Him, to fellowship with Him and be filled by His Spirit for doing His will

To believe the claims of Jesus – that he is the Messiah for the world; that he has utterly defeated sin and death and is ruling over the nations to accomplish his saving purposes in the earth; that God’s purpose is to unite all things under his headship; that as his followers we are both forgiven and freed from the bondage to sin that keeps mankind in captivity and a constant state of brokenness and injustice; and that we are delighted in and empowered by his Spirit to be his body, his hands and feet in this world (nothing less than the salt of the earth and the light of the world in our union with Him) to bring the righteousness, compassion and justice of his kingdom rule and reign to expression even now -- is all pretty stunning stuff.

How can we “mere mortals” actually be guided and led into lives that reflect this vision of God over us as his people? Where do we get the daily “wherewithal” to keep this in perspective despite our own sin; despite opposition; despite our own financial and emotional and relational fears, needs and brokenness? Even if we totally embrace this and accept it as our “calling,” where do we get the perspective and wisdom to follow through on this and have both the needed desire as well as the actual power to put this into practice?

This is what prayer is all about. This is the means God has appointed to existentially enable us to see this move from abstract principles we may consent to, to actually living this out in our daily lives.

A. What makes prayer so powerful?

Prayer is the means of conscious fellowship with God as our Father, who wants to bless us, through communion and fellowship with himself, the Son and the Spirit, to understand and fulfill the righteousness of the kingdom of God in this world.

1. This is the invitation of Jesus in John 14:11-14; 15:4, 7,8, 16; 16:23-24 and repeated by John in his letters

All these promises of God answering our prayers are in the context of recognizing the Father’s love, the love of the Son, the blessing of the Spirit and the doing of God’s will
[John 14:15-21; 15:9-12; 16:12-15]

2. This is the “discipleship” prayer Jesus taught us in the Sermon on the Mount [*Mt 6:9-13; Luke 11:1-13*]
3. This is the kind of praying Paul models for us in his letters [*Col 1:9-14*], and is evident in the lives of the Old Testament people of God [*Dan 9:15-19*]

Wisdom from God, obedience in doing his will, strengthening of our hearts and minds to see and embrace his purposes, and delighting in God’s presence to accomplish all his good purposes all go hand in hand in prayer.

- B. Prayer is not powerful because it is the fulfillment of a religious duty. People often put faith in their prayers instead of faith in God - this is what Jesus warns against in being like the hypocrites or the pagans [*Matthew 6:5ff*]

The two extremes here are of religious boasting and religious insecurity.

- C. The Gospel gives us the freedom to pray to God as ‘Father’

You can and *are meant to* pray as a Son or Daughter of the King, knowing you are heard because the righteousness of Christ is both the source of your acceptance and the focus of your prayers.

1. You have been vindicated in the presence of God; declared righteous – not because you were not guilty -- but because your guilt has been atoned for by Christ.

As a side note, God as “Father” is not something new to the New Testament. The people of Israel were always known collectively as God’s “Firstborn Son” [*Ex 4:22, 23 cf 13:2, 12, cf. Jer 31:7-9; Hosea 1:10*]. The breadth of the term, the sense of intimacy comes to fullest expression in the New Testament, and the source of the confidence is the focus on Jesus the Messiah, and faith in Him.

2. You know you have the Spirit who calls out Abba, Father. If you have Christ, you have the Spirit and the promise of the kingdom [*Gal 4:4-7, Lk 11:11ff*]

II. This kind of praying is crucial in the ministry of Christ and in the life of the church

- A. The Gospel of Luke reveals Jesus’ prayer life (his fellowship with the Father) as one of the central driving forces for his ministry

- keeping focus with the demands of ministry [Luke 5:12-16]
- choosing the disciples/Sermon on the Mount [Luke 6:12 ff]
- gaining the great confession [Luke 9:18]
- The Transfiguration [Luke 9:28]
- teaching others to pray [Luke 11:1]
- effective, priestly prayer [Luke 22: 32]
- prayer before the Cross [Luke 22:41]

B. Paul's letters reveal that same central significance of prayer for his ministry

- needs prayer for faithfulness in opposition [Romans 15:30 ff]
- prayer as the source of meaningful deliverance [II Cor 1:8-11]
- prayer for the Spirit to communicate the greatness of God's salvation; prayer for the presence of Christ to increase; prayer for effective warfare [Ephesians 1:15 ff, 3:14 ff., 6:18-20]

C. Our own lives reveal the deep need for such prayer/fellowship with God as the means for seeing the kingdom advance in ourselves and others. We are confronting the darkness in our own sin nature, the broken world, and over against the opposition of Satan.

When Jesus says you cannot bear fruit without abiding (dwelling) in him, it is an absolute truth! [John 15:5ff]

III. A few key perspectives to keep in mind for your prayer life

A. God loves you and is full of grace for you in Christ and wants to meet with you each day

1. This was the significance of the morning and evening sacrifices in Israel; Daniel's praying three times a day and David calling out to God in the Psalms early in the morning, all day long and even through the night
2. You are not an orphan casting feathers in the wind, but are meant to be confident of God's Fatherly presence and power [John 14:15-21; Romans 8:15-17]

The more you get this settled -- that you have the "right," the "standing before God, granted by Him, to come into His presence -- the more effective your praying will be because you will have the freedom to believe God more

- B. You can come with all kinds of prayers and all kinds of issues, but come [*Jeremiah 20:7ff; Psalm 22; Eph 3:14-21*]

Begin each day by asking for the Spirit, freely, and then move on in your prayer life: at times your sense of the Spirit's presence will be experiential and strong, at times you may not 'feel' a whole lot; but in either case, be assured, if you ask for the Spirit, the Father will give Him to you [*John 14:23*]

- C. As you seek to do God's will -- to pursue justice and mercy and humility with all people in all circumstances of life -- you may feel like you are naive, foolish, easily led astray; but, as you learn to come to your Father in prayer you will learn more and more that you can trust God to lead you into paths of righteousness for His name's sake. He wants to give you wisdom; and you need to ask for it.

Phil 1:9-11; James 1:2-8

Through the fellowship of prayer with God you can give up self-glorying and let God lead you into relationship with Himself and others - even through suffering, when needed.

- D. You are in partnership with God

1. He has the resources for all you need for today, tomorrow and beyond [*Phil 4:14-19*]

Your task is to show up, believe and obey through the Spirit's power

2. You do not have to approach God's will as an alien -- strictly from the viewpoint of your wounds -- but from the confidence of his grace sustaining you. These are "big" prayers Paul prays for us -- and that Jesus prays for us -- [*Jn 17*]. Can you pray those big prayers for yourself and others?
- a. Determine if your ambitions and desires are the Lord's -- are they about justice, mercy and love? Are they about doing God's revealed will -- loving your spouse, children, neighbor, the widow, the oppressed, the immigrant, your enemies? Then, pray expectantly for the blessing of God [*John 15:5*]
- b. Repent of anxiety and worry, which hinder our fellowship with God throughout the day. Anxiety reveals self-centeredness.

- It makes plain that the kingdom of self is raging and reigning. It reveals we have ambitions, desires, dreams, demands, expectations and more that we are keeping to ourselves for our self
 - It shows a decided lack of faith in God's ability to provide
 - It is focused on self instead of God
- E. Remember that prayer mirrors the Gospel and God has determined to display his glory and presence through the means that do mirror -- and therefore reinforce -- the Gospel

In prayer we come to God at our point of need. We recognize God alone is the central actor who can fulfill his purposes. The results are always a gift.