

Sonship

Sonship

Lesson One

John 1:12 ~ But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right (**exousia**, authority, right, liberty; ability, capability) to become children of God

Romans 8:15 ~ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

The goal of this lesson is to help us grow in attaining a deep confidence and understanding of the nature of our relationship to God, to one another and to the broken world around us, as sons and daughters of the Most High God, who have been chosen by God, by grace, to become the agents of his righteousness and healing in every area of brokenness in this world through our union with Christ and the promised power of the Holy Spirit.

- A. The confidence of being sons and daughters of God includes having a deep sense and knowledge of our freedom: freedom from the kingdom of darkness in all its lies, deceptions and emptiness, and freedom to be restored as the very image of God in this world

"So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed," John 8:36

1. Freedom because we are Sons -- not Orphans

- Freedom from fear of abandonment by God [*John 14:15-21; Hebrews 2:10-18*]

Orphans are on their own; often fearful and insecure and equally often over-compensating by a manipulative distrust of others; trying to gain for themselves the basic securities of life that a loving parent would normally provide.

When we live in this world and approach any issue or set of relationships as if we are spiritual orphans, we lose the confident freedom of knowing and seeing the loving hand of our Father provide our needs, direct our steps and fulfill his kingdom purposes. In place of that confident trust, we can be driven to anxiety, self-protection and our old, customary idols.

- Freedom to openly relate to God as a loving Father who is going to bring our "sonship" to full expression [*Gen 6:1-4 cf Psalm 82:1-8; John 10:31-38 cf Luke 4:18-20; Rom 8:28-29; Eph 1:3-6*]

The sonship God is committed to bringing to expression in us is rooted in bringing righteousness and compassion (love), in a humble walk with God to this broken and hurting world. The true "sons" are those who image God, and Jesus our older brother, in their goodness. This is the manifestation of the glory of God. God is relentlessly,

faithfully committed to maturing us into the dignity of being his image bearers in this world.

2. Freedom because we are Sons in a family -- not isolated individuals

- Freedom from fear of abandonment or isolation from others, either because of past or current sins [*Eph 2:11-22 cf 1 Peter 2:9,10, I John 1:1-4; Galatians 3:26-29; Phil 2:1ff*]

The hyper-individualism of our culture is actually the old lie of the deceiver in Genesis 3:4-5 that our greatest good is wrapped in our greatest, individual self-expression, totally independent from God and by extension, independent from others.

When we relate to one another in the church as a group of individuals each seeking our own greatest good (even the things we refer to as “my ministry”), we undermine the very image of God in us as “male and female” (Gen 1:27) that is meant to reflect the goodness and glory of the Trinity as one God (unity) in three persons (diversity).

The more we focus on ourselves, the more isolated we feel from others, and the more we miss the value of the diversity of gifting and insights and help that we absolutely need from others.

- Freedom to completely embrace one another, celebrating and benefiting from the diversity of God’s gifting [*2 Cor 5: 14-19; 1 Cor 12:12ff*]

The pain, the injustice, the betrayal and the brokenness of sin in our relationship to one another (Gen 3:12ff) that turn our hearts to condemnation of others and turn our differences into points of division, are all healed in the work of Christ on the cross. It is here that the wrath of God against each of us, as well as our hostility against one another is forgiven and healed (Eph 2:13-16).

We are not simply sons and daughters in a spiritual sense in our relationship with God; we are sons and daughters in a real, living, human family of God’s people who are bound together across all racial, ethnic, tribal and class lines of division. Together we are each gifted to complement one another as we seek together to fulfill God’s purposes of bringing his love and righteousness to this world.

3. Freedom because we are Sons by grace -- not by works of the Law

- Freedom from a guilty conscience and condemnation in our present struggle with sin

One of the most basic points of wrestle and insecurity in the Christian life can be self-condemnation because of the ongoing presence of sin (I John 3:19-24); and it is one of the greatest areas of attack from Satan, the “accuser of the brothers” (Rev 12:10).

The remedy is to not falsely judge, measure and condemn ourselves by a standard of perfection in keeping some external guidelines of the law we attach central importance to. Instead, we need to freely recognize we are sinners who never have been able to

keep the heart of the law based on our own efforts, and the only hope for us is for God to freely work in us, through faith in Christ and the gift of the Spirit what we could never produce on our own (Romans 8:1-4).

The “works of the law” were not caring for the poor; helping the widow and orphan; feeding the hungry; taking in the stranger; loving your enemies – but a simplistic externalizing of the law that left sinful injustice intact and self-justified.

- Freedom to deal honestly with our sin in a context of grace and to ask for the Spirit’s power to become the expression of God’s righteousness in this world [*Luke 11:5-13; Galatians 3:1-5; 1 John 1:5-10; Romans 6:12-14*]

One of the greatest freedoms of the Christian life is the freedom to no longer live in denial about our sinful tendencies, but to know that our sure hope for change and growth is found in repentance, faith and the gift of the Spirit. Gal 5:16-25

4. Freedom because we are Sons - not slaves in bondage to the injustice of others

- Freedom from fear of slavery to either the unrighteous systems, or the personal bondage to sin that once enslaved us [*John 8:31-38; Gal 4:4-6; Rom 8:12-16*]

The constant references to slavery-bondage-freedom throughout the New Testament, no doubt, have a background reference to the slavery-bondage-freedom issues of Israel’s experiences in Egypt.

While a crucial part of the application of this freedom is to our personal bondage to sin, there is also an undeniable reference to the application of these truths to the bondage that injustice in the systems of the world can impose on us, whether through evil dictators, oppressive employers (masters) or oppressive spouses (husbands, almost exclusively in the NT context). The message of the gospel is that we are ultimately free because God’s redeeming love cannot be defeated, and our willingness to righteously suffer will be redemptive in the lives of our oppressors, even as it was redemptive in the life of Christ (1 Pet 3:13-22).

- Freedom to boldly love this world and enter into the sufferings of Christ because the Lord, Messiah is on his throne [*Rom 8:15-16; Phil 1:27-30; Col 1:24-25*]

In all our relationships, as sons and daughters, we are free to embrace the hardship of dealing with a broken world because of God’s commitment to ultimate healing and setting all things right.

5. Freedom because we are Sons who are heirs of the world – not servants of futility

- Freedom from futility that our labors are in vain [*Mt 5:5 Rom 4:13; 8:18-25; 1 Cor 15:12-28, 58*]

Because this is God's world (Psalm 24:1) and because he created the physical world as good (Gen 1) and because he created us as physical-spiritual beings (Gen 2:7), his intention is that our labors in making his love known, both spiritually and physically, will not be wasted. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is God's ultimate stamp of eternal commitment, not just to our bodies, but to the redemption of the physical universe (Col 1:15ff). Our labors of love, healing, restoration and compassion -- our physical/spiritual labors -- are not in vain because all the nations of this world and the very creation itself will become the eternal home of God's people.

- Freedom to boldly enter into the sufferings of Christ as the means of expressing God's love because our inheritance is secure [*Rom 5:1-5; 2 Peter 2:11-18; Phil 2:4-11*]

B. The Context of Our Sonship: the reconciliation of all things under the headship of Christ

Shalom; Peace; Grace; Restoration; Healing; Righteousness; Justice; Compassion; Humility

1. God setting all things "right" -- the reversal of the curse of Genesis 3; Col 1:3-23

- Between us and God
- Between us and each other
- Between us and creation
- Between us and our "self"

2. The basis of the confidence of our sonship: faith alone in Christ alone by grace alone

-- versus the hindrances that lead to insecurity, fear and doubt [*Romans 8:28-30*]

- Predestination: confidence that God's goodness and glory in Christ over us, in us and through us will come to expression, despite the obstacles and opposition of evil and brokenness in this world, because God has predetermined the outcome of every difficulty we face as a gift in Christ [*Eph 1:11-14*]

-- versus fear that something will separate us from the love of God that is in Christ [*Rom 8:29-39*]

- Calling: God's agenda to be his agents of righteousness and reconciliation in this world as a gift in Christ [*2 Cor 5:14-21; Rom 1:5-6*]

-- versus the insecurity and fear that arise from seeking a god to fulfill our own agenda, which in turns leads to fear of others, fear of suffering and the brokenness of creation in Christ, as a gift, by faith [*1 Tim 6:1-10*]

- Justification: things set right (righteous) in every area as a gift in Christ [*Col 1:15-23*]

-- versus the insecurity and fear of building a record of self-righteousness based on keeping a limited number of outward, external, religious signs of righteousness [*Gal 3:10-14, cf 5:2, Col 2:16-23; Isa 1:10-18; Matt 23:23-26, cf Mark 12:38-40*]

- Sanctification: his faithful work to make us holy as a gift versus living under the fear and insecurity that our real wrestle with sin will stop the process [*Phil 1:6-11, 3:7-11; 1 John 1:5-2:6; Heb 4:14-16*]

- Glorification: the guaranteed inheritance of all things versus the insecurity and fear that we must grab after self-protection to ensure our inheritance [*Gen 3 versus Phil 2:1-11*]

Heirs with Christ as a gift

- The Spirit and the Father: both the power from God as a gift and the relationship with God that is necessary to see this through as a gift in Christ [*John 16*]

- Family status as a gift in Christ [*Gal 3:26-29*]

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Lesson Two

The Righteousness which comes through faith in Christ

Romans 1:16 ~ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

Philippians 3:7 ~ But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith - ¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

The promise of God to bring about his salvation of the world, and of a people for himself from among all the nations, and of us individually, is rooted in his covenanted, faithful commitment to bring righteousness to the world. Another way of saying this is that God has promised and determined "to set all things right."

The way he has fulfilled / is fulfilling that commitment is by sending his Son, Jesus the Messiah, as the faithful, righteous servant of the Lord who is the one who was resurrected from the dead and has defeated all unrighteousness and death and is now, as Lord (King/Ruler) of all, bringing God's righteousness to expression in the world through all who put their faith in him [*Romans 1:1-5*].

The "gospel," the "good news," is not narrowly defined as God coming to "forgive our sins and give us a place in heaven through faith in Jesus." Certainly, forgiveness of sins is at the very center of the message; without that, we could go nowhere. But it is forgiveness set in the greater context and the richness of the good news that God has come to set all things right through the establishment of his kingdom, and that you and I are qualified to be obedient sons and daughters who manifest the righteousness of that kingdom through faith in Christ [*Col 1:9-14*].

Our continued growth in confidently embracing and being fruitful in God's kingdom is connected to a deepened understanding of all the things God has given through our union with Christ so that more and more we can see sin defeated and in its place righteousness established -- both in our lives personally and corporately, as well as in the world around us.

In Romans 8, Paul notes five major areas of God's covenanted commitment and gifts to us in Christ that will bring our sonship/adoption to expression. Each one contributes to the fulfillment of the righteousness of God's kingdom in and through us as his people.

- 1) Sanctification / the Spirit [*Romans 8:1-16*] -- God's practical commitment to empower us through the presence of the Spirit to actually defeat sin and live out righteousness, flowing out of our family fellowship with the Father and Son
- 2) Predestination [*Romans 8:28-30*] – God's Sovereign determination to make sure that absolutely everything in our lives and in the world around us will work toward the end purpose of establishing his righteousness
- 3) Calling [*Romans 8:28-30*] – God's sovereign determination to faithfully keep leading us back to, and into, our purpose in life of being his agents of restoration, righteousness and healing in this world
- 4) Justification [*Romans 8:28-30*] – God's definitive act of vindicating us, declaring us to be righteous in his sight, through our faith in Christ
- 5) Glorification [*Romans 8:15-16, 29-30*] – God's certain commitment to bring us into the final place of eternal resurrection in the re-created, eternal new heavens and new earth, the home of righteousness forever

Over the next several weeks we will unpack each of these promises. Each of these five areas of God's commitment to us is equally ours as a gift in Christ, and is equally critical to God's fulfillment of his purposes for us. The protestant tradition, since the Reformation, and especially within the last 20+ years in American evangelicalism, has highlighted the issue of justification to a status all its own and in some ways has lost the holistic value of all the other promises. We want to see justification for the glorious truth it contains, and see it perspective with all the rest of God's commitments to us in Christ.

JUSTIFICATION

- A. One of the key ways God has purposed to bring about righteousness in this world and specifically in and through us is to give us a standing and declaration of being "righteous" in his sight, because of our union with the Messiah. He makes this pronouncement over us as the Judge of all the earth and he does so because of our faith in Jesus [*Romans 3:21-26*].

The word we translate as an action verb, "to justify" is actually from the same Greek word (*dikaioo*) which means "righteousness." A good translation, though not very kind to our ears, would be to say that in Christ, God "righteous-fies" us.

When the Scriptures speak about “justification” – God declaring things righteous -- there are at least 4 major areas where this word is used.

- 1) God speaks about Jesus himself being “justified” or (same greek word) “vindicated”

“Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory,” 1 Timothy 3:16 [*cf Romans 1:4*]

- 2) God speaks about every believer being justified in Christ [*Romans 3:21-26*]
- 3) God speaks about justification through Christ as the basis of reconciliation and inclusion in the family of God [*Galatians 3:23-29; Romans 4*]
- 4) God speaks about bringing his righteousness (justice/justification/setting things right) through Christ in terms of the entire creation [*Col 1:15-23; Romans 5:12-19, cf 8:18ff*]

B. The importance of being “declared righteous” by God

1. People can try to justify themselves, but in the end, it is always self-deceptive and destructive because the genuine righteousness of the Law is left unfulfilled
 - a. The parable of the Good Samaritan, and the lawyer who, “desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, ‘and who is my neighbor?’” Luke 10:29
 - b. The Jews and Judaizers who wanted to justify themselves by keeping certain cultural aspects of the Mosaic law – feast days, circumcision, Sabbaths, food laws, not eating with gentiles [*Gal 2:15-17; Col 2:16-19*] -- and wanted to measure the acceptance of others into fellowship based on the same outward forms of justification
 - c. Galatians 3:7-14 -- the contrast between self-justification of keeping a few, reduced, external laws, and the righteousness / justification that comes by faith as a gift
2. The glory, beauty and amazing grace of God’s gift of salvation is that he justifies us through faith in Christ alone. How can he do that?
 - a. Christ is our Corporate Head; our legal, actual, real representative in the same way Adam was. And in Adam, as our head, sin and death came into the lives of all his

descendants. In the same way, in Christ, righteousness and life have come into the lives of all his descendants *[Romans 5:12-20]*

- b. Do not mistake the legal, courtroom type language of being “declared righteous” as something distant or impersonal. The very personal, real, vital impact could not be greater. What a judge decides about your guilt or innocence (good standing) has a complete and total impact on your life. When he declares you righteous, it completely changes your life
 - This standing before God as a gift is meant to give us freedom and confidence to know that God completely accepts us into his family, despite our past, present or future struggles with sin. We are reconciled, forgiven and profoundly, declared to be righteous in his sight. He now takes absolute delight in us and loves us and will never condemn us, even when we struggle with sin, because our standing is one of secured acceptance. Our guilty consciences are now free. We are righteous, because Christ is righteous, and we are in him and nothing can separate us from his love *[Romans 7:25-8:4; Romans 8:31ff]*
 - Because this acceptance and standing is not based on any righteousness of our own that we bring to God, but is based exclusively on Christ’s righteousness being credited to us as a gift, it is something that we can never lose and will never be taken away. When we put our faith in Christ, he binds himself and the fulfillment of his righteousness to us -- we are united with Christ
- We are confronted with the need for the confidence that we are indeed accepted and that God will indeed bring his blessings of righteousness to us and through us to this world, both because of the opposition of the world *[Habakkuk 2:4]*, the opposition of our own remaining sin *[Gal 5:16-18; Romans 6:12-14]*, and the opposition of Satan *[Revelation 12:10-11]*
- This standing of righteousness in Christ is the basis of our confidence to freely ask for the presence and the power of the Spirit to do God’s will *[Gal 3:1-5; Romans 6; Gal 5]*
 - This standing of righteousness gives us the freedom to see others as “righteous” and live with hope for them, and completely accept them into the family as equal members of the body *[II Corinthians 5:16 ff]*
 - This standing of righteousness gives us a secure hope for the future, that more grace and blessing is on its way *[Romans 5:1-11]*

We are not just forgiven and given repeated chances to get things right; we are actually declared to be completely righteous in God's sight. You will never be declared more righteous in the sight of God than you are at this moment, because the righteous standing you possess is Christ's standing. That does not mean you won't grow in walking in holiness and righteousness increasing in and through you - we will spend the rest of our lives doing so. It does mean you will not be more acceptable to God later on than you are now.

Your entire Christian life -- your maturing in following Christ, your obedience, your confidence for God's blessings, your experience of seeing the Holy Spirit's power at work in your life and the lives of others, the redemption of the world, your joy, your freedom to forgive and enter into the love of God -- is meant to be nourished, fed and increased, and flow out of a constant and ever deepening focus of faith on Christ Jesus and His gift of salvation. The application of the Gospel to the believer -- Romans, Ephesians, Hebrews, 1Peter -- is not presented as a presumptive principle, but a living fountain of grace.

Sonship

Lesson 3

Union with Christ, Justification and the Gift of the Spirit

The goal of these lessons is to help us grow in attaining a deep confidence and understanding of the nature of our relationship to God, to one another and to the broken world around us, as sons and daughters of the Most High God who have been chosen by God, by grace, to be healed ourselves and to become the agents of his righteousness and healing in every area of brokenness in this world through our union with Christ and the promised power of the Holy Spirit.

The true “sons of God” are those who image God, and Jesus our older brother, in their goodness. This is the manifestation of the glory of God. God is relentlessly, faithfully committed to maturing us into the dignity of being his image bearers in this world.

Our continued growth in confidently embracing and being fruitful in God’s kingdom is connected to a deepened understanding of all the things God has given through our union with Christ, so that more and more we can see sin defeated and in its place righteousness established -- both in our lives personally and corporately -- as well as in the world around us.

In Romans 8, Paul notes five major areas of God’s covenanted commitment to us in Christ that will bring our sonship/adoption to expression. Each one contributes to the fulfillment of the righteousness of God’s kingdom in and through us as his people.

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- 2) The Spirit and Sanctification [*Romans 8:1-16*] -- God’s practical commitment to empower us through the presence of the Spirit to actually defeat sin and live out righteousness, flowing out of our family fellowship with the Father and Son
- 3) Predestination [*Romans 8:28-30*] – God’s Sovereign determination to make sure that absolutely everything in our lives and in the world around us will work toward the end purpose of establishing his righteousness
- 4) Calling [*Romans 8:28-30*] – God’s sovereign determination to faithfully keep leading us back to and into the expression of our purpose in life of being his agents of restoration, righteousness and healing in this world
- 5) Glorification [*Romans 8:15-16, 29-30*] – God’s certain commitment to bring us into the final place of eternal resurrection in the re-created, eternal new heavens and new earth, the home of righteousness forever

Each of these five areas of God's commitment to us is equally ours as a gift in Christ, and each one is equally critical to God's fulfillment of his purposes of making all things new. Last week we looked at justification and the free gift of the standing of righteousness we have before God in Christ. This week we want to look at the gift of the Spirit to produce that righteousness in us, and the important connection between justification in Christ, and the sanctifying work 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]

Sonship

Lesson 4

The Power of the Spirit for Defeating the Flesh 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

I 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 [*Psalms 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 [*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; 1 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]*

Sonship

Lesson 5

The Confidence of Sonship in the Light of Our Calling, Predestination and Ultimate Glorification -- Romans 8:28-30

I. Called, Chosen, Elect

Our Sonship comes in the context of a specific calling and purpose for our lives individually and now, as children of God, for our lives corporately as part of the people/family of God. Understanding that calling gives us wisdom in understanding the purposes of God in the larger movement of history, as well as our place in it, and gives us the perspective and knowledge to live fruitful, productive lives for God's glory - his goodness displayed in the earth - whatever circumstances we find ourselves in.

The terms that Scripture uses to define the nature of our relationship with God is that we are "called" and "chosen" (or elect - same word), which carry different nuances of the same issue: that God has laid claim to our lives for his purposes. The one term - "elect/chosen" - places more emphasis on the fact that it is God who has set up this relationship and the other term - "called"- places more of an emphasis on the effect this has on us, but both terms are interacting around the same issue: that God has chosen and called us, as his people, to be the expression of his kingdom of light, righteousness, compassion, justice and humility for the benefit of the dark, broken world around us.

In the scriptural use of these terms, calling and election are not presented as points of doctrinal debate and discussion. They are life-defining terms for the church that are meant to instill us with the confidence that God knows exactly the problems of evil in this world; he knows exactly the problems of our own sin; and yet, he has in his love and wisdom, called and chosen us to be his people to bring the healing of his salvation to the nations.

- A. Called, Elect, Chosen - we have received a summons; it is more than an open-ended invitation (as in "consider this" as an option), but a stronger sense of demand and responsibility; an obligation.

How does scripture describe the different elements of what we are "called" to and "chosen" for?

Romans 1:6 - called to belong to Christ Jesus. He is your Messiah, your King. His agenda is the agenda of your life; we are called to be in fellowship with him [*1 Cor 1:9*]

Romans 1:7 - called to be saints; God's holy ones in this world - set apart for his purposes of goodness and righteousness in the world [*cf 2 Thess 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9*]

Ephesians 1:18 - called to inherit the world, the home of righteousness forever [*cf 2 Pet 2:8-13*]

Colossians 3:15 - called to reconciliation and peace [*Eph 4:1-6*]

1 Peter 2:21ff - called to enter the sufferings of Christ, by enduring injustice in order to bring salvation [*Romans 8:16-17*]

- B. Put all together, our calling and "chosen-ness" are directly related to the reality that we, together with all God's people, are part of the reconciliation of all things in Christ. In fact, we are the means of God's practical implementation of the reconciliation purchased by Christ on the cross.

Ephesians 1:3-10; Colossians 1:13-20

Reconciliation comes about through the preaching of forgiveness and the Kingship of Christ through the cross and resurrection AND equally, the display of God's justice, mercy and compassion among the nations through the reconciled church.

Ephesians 3:1-13

You are called, chosen, elect for this purpose - to display the true nature of God's glory in the earth; to bring healing and restoration and life, wherever there is death. This is simply Jesus' command to seek first the kingdom of God.

Crucial application: this gives us both individually and corporately the direction and purpose for our lives on a daily basis, as well as the broader framework for making larger life decisions.

- Each day we are called to be about the business of addressing the evil of that day, and doing good [*Matt 6:31-34*]

- Even if we are in places of injustice, we are God's answer and means of salvation to the one who is oppressive and evil [*1 Peter 2:13-3:7*]

- Corporately, the church is called to care for the poor and oppressed, especially in the family of God; even on a global scale [*Acts 2:42-47; 2 Cor 8-9; Matt 5:43-48; Gal 6:9-10*]

C. That specific calling has always been there for the people of God and God will not waver in seeking to bring that to expression in our lives as his people

1) Abraham as the Covenant head of the people of God [*Gen 12:1-4 cf 18:16-19*]

2) Israel as the Covenant people [*Exodus 19:1-4*]

a. Their failure was not only a personal failure of sin, but also a corporate failure to be the light of the nations [*Isaiah 26:16-19*]

b. Her failure was precisely in her refusal to bring justice and compassion to expression [*Isaiah 1:15-19*]

3) That calling was fulfilled in Christ

a. Jesus is the True Servant Israel who brings God's justice to the nations [*Isaiah 42:1-4*]

b. He is anointed by the Spirit to fulfill his calling [*Luke 4:18-20*]

c. He fulfills the law [*Matt 5:17-18*]

4) That calling is over the life of the church

You are the salt of the earth and the light of the world

You are the new nation of God's people, called from Jew and Gentile to proclaim God's glory among the nations [*2 Pet 2:9ff*]

D. The calling is irreversible. God is absolutely committed to bringing it about.

- 1) Even when Israel failed miserably, God never changed his purpose for their lives

[Isaiah 2:1-5; Isaiah 26:16-19 cf Eph 5:7-21; Jeremiah 31:1-14, 31-37; Romans 11:1-12, 25-36]

- 2) And he will not change his purpose for our lives either

[John 15:1-11; Romans 11:13-24; Col 1:9-14; Galatians 6:6-10; I John 3:16; Revelation 2-3]

II. Predestination *[Romans 8:28-29]*

Closely connected to our calling is the Sovereign promise of God that he has already predetermined that every event in our lives will work toward the purpose of fulfilling this calling. His calling is backed by his power and grace and love to fulfill this. This is God's active commitment to make sure that all things work together to fulfill his good purposes in and through us as his people. This gives us the freedom and confidence to look for and see those purposes being fulfilled now.

Eph 1:11-14

A. God's predestinating work in the life of the Patriarchs and Israel

- 1) Abraham and Pharaoh *[Gen 12]*; Abraham and the Canaanite kings *[Gen 14]*; Abraham and Sodom and Gomorrah *[Gen 18]*; Abraham and Abimelech *[Gen 20]*
- 2) Isaac and Abimelech *[Gen 26]*
- 3) Jacob and Laban *[Gen 28ff]*
- 4) Joseph and Pharaoh and the nations *[Gen 36-50]*

- 5) Israel in exile [*Gen 15:13-16*]; 7 of 10 times “that the Egyptians may know,” [*cf Isa 19:19-22*]
- B. God has graciously and sovereignly determined to use even our sinful choices and the sinful choices of others to fulfill these purposes
 - 1) Acts 2:22-24 - Christ on the Cross - “you by the help of sinful man did what God had predetermined to happen as the means of your salvation”
 - 2) Acts 8:1-4 - the persecution of the church leads to the spread of the Gospel
 - 3) Philippians 1:12-14 - imprisonment leads to the spread of the Gospel
 - 4) Romans 11:29-36 - even disobedience leads to mercy

III. Glorification - an aorist indicative - an accomplished, past-tense action, factually stated

Closely connected to this calling and predestination is the absolute promise and guarantee of God that this is all headed toward and will end in the complete restoration of all things; the complete expression of God’s goodness and righteousness [*2 Pet 3*] - the home of righteousness forever.

This promise of “glory” is not simply future. It is the living hope that we will see the goodness/glory of God manifest now in this broken world, as well as the ultimate hope that our labor will be eternally blessed and God’s full goodness will be finally, fully revealed.

- A. An understanding of “glorification” from the life of Christ [*John 12:20-33*]

Both the “son of man” is glorified and God is glorified. And that glorification is both in his death and in his resurrection and that brings life for all men.

B. 2 Cor 3:7-4:18

We are “glorified” - put into a position of manifesting the glory of God now, and men see that and glorify our Father in heaven. Even if they don’t acknowledge it, the glory still remains. At the same time, we are looking for the day when the full glory of God will manifest in the new heavens and the new earth.

Debunking misinterpretations of Habakkuk 3:17-19

IV. The assurance of our faith is strengthened by seeing the calling and predestinating and glorifying work of God at work in our lives

I John 3:11-24; 2 Peter 1:3-11

Sonship

Lesson 6

Sonship and Prayer

Prayer: Fellowship with God as the means for advancing the kingdom

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 6:9-15; Luke 11:1-11*]
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.

APPENDIX

- **Testimony To Sonship** - Rose Marie Miller
- **Martin Luther's Argument of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians** - (Paraphrase in modern English by Bill Slack)
- **The Importance of Being Broken for Others** - F. Kefa Sempangi
- Cross Chart

Testimony To Sonship

Rose Marie Miller

If you had told me ten years ago that I would be writing an article on team ministry, I'd have laughed. Just keeping my marriage vows had been team ministry enough for me. My husband Jack, is a pastor, church planter, seminary professor, and evangelist - with almost a limitless supply of energy. He says it comes from understanding the book of Galatians and building his life on justification by faith. My life's pattern generally veers toward the how-to's, to the law and its duties. Given that combination, my feeling was the less team ministry I had with Jack the better. Where he saw opportunities, I saw work, loads of it.

I had good reasons to feel that way. We live in an ancient three Story house on the outskirts of Philadelphia. Once our teenagers left this large old home in the early 1970's, Jack and I agreed to take in people who were in desperate need. This was our team ministry: taking in people like drug addicts, homosexuals, state hospital drop-outs, and refugees from motorcycle gangs. We had some dramatic conversions during this time and from this work sprang the seeds that blossomed into New Life Presbyterian Church of Jenkintown, Pennsylvania.

Jack's role in our ministry to these troubled people was to be the representative of grace. He gave the gospel to everyone in the house. I was the law, motherly but firm and resolute. It was needed. Some of these people were really burdened and it took firm measures to keep them under control. During this time, I was a growing puzzle to my husband. He would tell me how gifted I was, how effective my work was becoming, with the result that it made me feel guilty. I really should say, even more guilty, because there was a dark cloud over much of my life. Even seeing the beautiful conversions taking place in our home and the new lives developing did not give me much lasting joy. No matter how well things went for me, I always felt I should have done more. I could see countless flaws in the best things I did. Intact, my own private view of myself was that I never could do anything really worthwhile.

I remember an experience back in the sixties which typified my attitude. Jack received annual invitations to speak on "Ski and Skeptics", evangelistic weekends in the Pocono Mountains. Jack approached the events with typical enthusiasm, earnestly seeking to win every skeptic to Christ. Me? I loved the skiing and at night slipped up to my room with my favorite Agatha Christie novel under my coat. While Jack fought for the lives of the skeptics downstairs in the lodge, I unraveled the mysteries of Agatha snuggled under the covers. Only the skiing and Agatha made these weekends bearable. Actually, I used to pray that no money would come in so that I would not have to go. Nowhere in me could I find the wisdom and the compassion needed to reach out to these college students. I felt that I didn't have anything to offer anyone. I felt as if I barely knew Christ as a real person myself. The more I thought about it, the more I was paralyzed. "What to say? How to say it. When to say it?" and then afterwards, "Did I say it right?"

But it was hard to get Jack to hear how I felt. I often complained to him, "You don't listen." But all I gave him to listen to were problems of my own and those of the people we lived with. Worse yet, I expected Jack to act as Holy Spirit and solve these problems. Jack, for his part, didn't listen to the deeper

struggles of my heart. The pressure built inside me until July 1978 when we vacationed in Tennessee, taking with us one of the troubled young people living in our home. One evening walking by the lake, I blurted out, "I feel like I am walking under a dark cloud. God seems far away and I don't even know if I believe He exists." Up to this point Jack usually had ready answers, but now he was shocked into silence.

As soon as we returned home, Jack handed me a copy of Martin Luther's Argument to the Book of Galatians. I read, "For in the righteousness of faith, we work nothing, we render nothing unto God, but we only receive, and suffer another to work in us, that is to say, God." (xii). I was eager to hear about another righteousness for me. At that time we had living with us a charming, cultured young person who continually evaded and resisted our efforts to get him to take responsibility in the home. I could forgive the living illustrations of Romans 1 that we had taken in before. But I couldn't forgive this fellow's expectations that we serve him hand and foot. I couldn't love him. I felt so guilty that I would have loved another's righteousness to do it for me, but I didn't know what I had to do to get it.

I kept reading Martin Luther and a year later during a conference in Switzerland the Lord made it clear to me what I needed to do. Jack was speaking at a conference on family relationships and one sunny day I chose to go skiing. I chose the mountain too, one that was way beyond my skill as a skier. Within ten feet of the top I fell and lost one ski. Although I could have turned around at the top and gone back down the gondola. I did not. For two hours I slid and bumped and fell down that mountain. When I got back to the hotel, weary and aching, I slid into a hot tub. I was very angry at God. Wasn't it His fault that I had made such a fool of myself? After all, He knew how high that mountain was. He could have kept me from going.

But the Lord had something better to cover me with than all my ready excuses. Sunday morning during a communion service, Jack broke a large loaf of French bread to be passed around. In the crack of that bread, I suddenly saw Jesus broken for me. And finally I understood what Luther was saying, that Jesus' righteousness covered all my own unrighteousness. And what did I need to do to get it? Just accept His work for me. As I sat there with tears streaming down my face and one small kleenex to stem the tide, I saw that trip down the mountain as a picture of my record of self-righteousness. I was struck by the obvious fact that I hadn't needed to go down the mountain the way I did. The other way was to enjoy a cup of tea on the mountaintop restaurant and go back down on the gondola, admitting that for me the skiing down was an impossibility. I suddenly saw the past as so much self-effort that had produced "good things," but could not deal with failure or defeat. Now I understand that Christ's righteousness covered all of that. All my excuses were gone and I accepted Christ's perfect record as what I needed. All my self-righteousness made me a spiritual paralytic, but Christ's righteousness brought peace. God reached into my life and dealt with my fundamental sin.

About a year later we were invited to speak together at a church. What happened in Switzerland was still very real to me, but other than telling women about it, I had trouble seeing how it could help them. So I decided to teach them about women of the Bible. After I spoke, a young woman came up and said, "I have to talk to you." As we sat talking in her home, with her children playing under our feet, she confessed. "I hate my husband, I hate my kids, I hate being a pastor's wife." Several years earlier I would have told her how to discipline her kids or how to submit to her husband, but the how-to's had never worked for me. They always seemed to involve me again in the vicious cycle of self-sufficiency,

self-effort leading to failure, and self-accusation. All I had for her now was what Jesus had done for her. "You have to yield to the righteousness of Christ," I said. "Is that all?" she wanted to know. "Yes, that's all. She knelt down to pray and confessed that her life was filled with her own righteousness, that now she wanted Christ's, and she came off of her knees different, with a heart to love her husband, children and her work. She then told all the women in the church about the change and they too wanted to know about how to be different. I told them the same truth - and they experienced a change too.

I felt like a spectator to God's work. Here I was being the team member Jack wanted by just telling the women about Christ. This is the only church we spoke in together in which the men lagged behind in their response to my husband's teaching.

The message of justification by faith began to give me purpose and identity in our team ministry. I no longer wondered, "Just who am I? Wife or junior partner?" I knew that we were partners together in the gospel. I could speak with conviction about the power of the gospel to dispel the dark clouds of guilt that hang over our lives: it worked for me. I began to study the book of Galatians in earnest. When we took a day off, my conversation was no longer filled with my problems, rather I had things to share with Jack about how the book of Galatians applied to my needs and to those around me.

In December 1979 Jack received an invitation from a Ugandan pastor, a former student at Westminster Seminary, to minister to the church in Uganda as it emerged from the blood and violence of Amin's eight year reign of terror. Jack prepared to go with his usual enthusiasm, and I prepared with fear. God still was molding this "team."

In Uganda, we stayed in a hotel filled with returning exiles, Asians, and Indians. We made friends and prayed with people of all religions through one crisis after another, including insecurity, sickness, loneliness, bad food, and no water. During this time we saw more evil in two months than in twenty-three years of ministry. The physical and emotional brutality began to wear away at my soul. I did not know how to handle all the evil I heard about and saw. Arriving in Kenya for two weeks of rest, we went to Mombassa, a fashionable resort for Africans, Asians, and Europeans. On the first evening there, we went to a small park overlooking the Indian Ocean. I was simply content to rest and enjoy the beauty of the scene, but with us in the park were many Muslims meeting to enjoy friendships and the balmy evening air. Jack and some other missionaries with us began to preach, and soon I heard him say, "My wife will now tell you how a Christian marriage works." Not only did I not want to speak, I was ready to terminate our "team ministry" right there. I stood up, however, and spoke reluctantly, and later was overwhelmed with a deep sense of guilt, despair and defeat. Anger and resentment smoldered in me.

On the way home I couldn't hold it in any longer. With tears streaming down my cheeks I said to Jack, "Why couldn't I cope? What is wrong with me?" Jack turned to me and said, "Rose Marie, you act like an orphan. You act as if the Holy Spirit never came and could never help you through any impossible situations like Uganda and Mombassa."

I knew he was right. All I could say was, "Lord, I am sorry, please teach me how to be a daughter. In Uganda I had seen lots of orphans. One had tried to steal my purse as we knelt to pray in the market place. They would kill almost as quickly as steal. Because they had no father to look after them they made sure they took care of themselves: lying, cheating, stealing, and deceiving to get along. I had been acting like them, as if I had no father, as if I didn't have His authority, His power, His spirit, His heart and His ear. Although I knew I was justified by faith, I still thought that obedience was more or less up to me. I now began to discover that I could rely on God's promise, and, by "faith working through love," do my work. During this time I began to study the book of Galatians. I no longer asked, "How can I study this to help other people?" It was life and breath for me, food and drink. I had to understand how to live a Christian life and be on the front lines with my husband without always collapsing. I also began to study the book of Romans, another book that for years I had avoided because I couldn't understand it. Now it too was a delight to read, study and teach.

The ways God had been blessing me had been wonderful. I didn't suspect what He would teach me next. Since 1979 Jack and I had been going to Uganda twice a year, and in December 1982, driving to Kenya in our old Land Rover, I said to Jack, "This is it! I'm never coming back to this country. For all practical purposes this "team ministry" is over." God gave Jack grace to be quiet, and just say, "Well, I'll have to go alone, but for shorter periods of time. And in June 1983, Jack, our son-in-law, Bob, and another young man went for a month together. On the day before their scheduled return, the telephone rang. Bob was on the line. He said, "Dad has had a heart attack. It did not take me long to decide what to do. "Tell Jack I'm coming out," I said. But before I went, I said, "God, you know how I feel about this country. Please go with me" And in the quiet of my heart the promise came very sure, "My presence shall go with you and I will give you rest."

The next day I was on the way, not knowing what I would find when I got there. I knew what the hospitals were like; I had been in them. I knew the scarcity, but this time I knew that God was with me, and that His presence was far more real than the evil, and the problems I would encounter. I went with joy. Our whole congregation and many others were praying. The church even sent an old friend to accompany me and minister to Jack. Now I began to understand in a fuller way what it means that I am not an orphan. I have the Spirit, I have the promises, I have the Father's love. I have the sacrifice of Christ. My husband lived, and now our team ministry is more effective than before, and not so riddled with my confusions and unbelief. Perhaps Jack's perspective on our partnership says it best:

"While I lay on a hospital bed in Uganda, the presence of Rose Marie was like a light to fill the room. I am home now, up to about 80% of my work load, but it is a load Rose Marie shares with me. In her part of our ministry Rose Marie does counseling with women, but even more important to her is her Bible teaching using the books of Romans and Galatians. Tuesday afternoons she instructs the wives of missionaries preparing to go to Uganda. Thursday afternoons she teaches a class mostly made up of single women. We are so in tune with each other that she may ask me to drop in for some part of her class to teach and we don't miss a beat."

"Saturday mornings I have the primary responsibility for teaching Galatians to our students in our Leadership Training program. Rose Marie also takes key lectures and gives a vivid account of the meaning of Galatians in relationship to her own life. By this time we know each other so well that a few

months ago, when I was called out of a Saturday morning session, Rose Marie completed the lecture on Galatians that I had just started. The students told me afterwards, "It was an excellent presentation. We would have been sorry to have missed it. Her uniqueness is that she lays a sound theological basis in justification by faith and sonship - for all that she presents. She has a wealth of superb illustrations from her struggles and triumphs with the people who have lived in our home, and from the country of Uganda."

"But I think there is another base for God's giving us unity in team ministry. We pray together a great deal. We have a rule: 'Never sit on a problem waiting for it to hatch a lot of worries. Stop and pray.' We also have prayer meetings for the church in our home. On Thursday mornings we meet with people from the church to pray from 7:00 A.M. to noon. I believe that prayer is, along with justification and our adoption as sons, the primary foundation for our ministry. Personally I do not see how it is possible to have an effective ministry without the freedom given by a justification through grace and the power given through prayer."

"What did I need to do before this team ministry was possible? As a husband, I had to repent of my dominance and learn to listen to my wife, to show love in that way. I also had to teach her justification by faith and the meaning of our sonship through union with Christ. Once I repented, I expected her to be liberated with me. No way. So after a time, in desperation I gave her Luther on Galatians, and the change was amazing. I have seen some great changes in people, but Rose Marie's whole being was liberated by Luther's commentary."

The gospel has also changed my expectations for us as a team. I no longer expect Jack to be the Holy Spirit. I have the Holy Spirit. I know I am already justified by grace. I'm not constantly demanding Jack's approval and sponging off of his emotional life. Now I can give love to him as well as receive. I don't expect Jack to be perfect. If he makes a mistake in our team ministry, I know that his sins as well as mine are covered by the righteousness of Christ. I no longer expect to find any wisdom or compassion in myself. It's all in Jesus and He has enough for everyone that I meet.

So deep is my sense that God accepts me just as I am, that I can live free of the expectations of others. As I talk to pastor's wives and women in ministry from different parts of the country, they tell me about what others expect of them: to be the model wife, mother and housekeeper, as they also minister in the church. I know that the expectations of others can be overwhelming and where I do give you a list of practical helps on how to be the perfect pastor's wife, it might only add to the pressure you have. Instead I tell women involved in team ministry that they don't have to be perfect, because Another is perfect for them. Women in ministry respond with such wonder and joy, that I'm convinced that this is the overwhelming need today: for Christians to hear the gospel.

Martin Luther's Argument of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians

(Paraphrase in modern English by Bill Slack)

Paul sets down the biblical teachings of faith, grace, forgiveness of sins or Christian righteousness, so that we can know without a doubt the difference between 'Christian' righteousness and all other kinds of righteousness. There is political or civil righteousness that world leaders, philosophers and lawyers deal with. There's ceremonial righteousness (acting correctly at weddings or formal dinners, etc.) that deals with men's tradition. This righteousness parents and teachers can teach safely, because they don't claim that being righteous in these ways pays for sin or makes us perfect or pleases God or earns us God's favor, but they teach these righteous ways to correct our manners and teach us about our day-to-day life with other people. There is another type of righteousness called the 'righteousness of the law', or the Ten Commandments, that Moses teaches. The church teaches about this, too, but in light of faith.

There is another far better righteousness--that is, 'the righteousness of faith' or 'Christian righteousness.' This righteousness we must separate from the rest because it works in a completely opposite way from Christian righteousness. The other kinds of righteousness come out of the laws of governments (we obey the law and are righteous) or church tradition or even the Ten Commandments. The other kinds of righteousness we can work at ourselves by our own strength or by extra strength that God gives us, because we couldn't even be righteous in these ways without God's strength. He gives us all good things that we enjoy.

But this Christian righteousness is the greatest righteousness. God puts it on us without our lifting a finger. It's not political or ceremonial. It doesn't have to do with our obeying God's law. It has nothing to do with what we do or how hard we work, but it is given to us and we do nothing for it. It's 'passive righteousness' because we don't have to work for it. With this 'free righteousness' we don't do anything, we don't give anything to God, but we receive and allow someone else to do it. That's why we'll call it 'passive righteousness.'

This 'passive righteousness' is a mystery that someone who doesn't know Jesus can't understand. As a matter of fact, Christians don't completely understand it and don't take advantage of it when they're tempted. So we have to constantly teach it over and over again to others and repeat it to ourselves, because if we don't understand it and have it in our hearts, we will be defeated by our enemy, and we'll be totally depressed. There is nothing that gives us peace like this 'passive righteousness.'

But men are so weak and miserable that when we are close to death or afraid of God, we do not see anything but the Law (the Ten Commandments) and what we have done to be righteous or, how worthy we have made ourselves. And when we see the Law, we see our sin. The evil in our lives comes to mind, it tears us apart, and we groan and think,

'How bad I have been. My life is full of hate and evil. Please, God, let me live and I will fix up what I have done wrong.' Man is so evil that all he can see is what he should do to be righteous. He is so evil that he cannot see what Christ has done for him to be righteous.

On the other side, Satan, taking advantage of our natural weakness, increases and fires up those thoughts in us. Then our consciences are more troubled, terrified and confused. For it is impossible

for a man's mind by itself to find comfort, look for God's grace, or reject Satan's argument about works just because he feels sinful and is disgusted by it. These things are far above man's strength and ability; in fact, it's even beyond the power of God's law. It is true that God's law is the most excellent thing in the world, but it is not able to ease a man's troubled conscience. Rather, it increases his fear and causes him to despair; 'That through the commandment, sin might become utterly sinful.' (Rom. 7:18).

So the afflicted and troubled conscience has no cure for desperation and death unless it takes hold of the forgiveness of sins by grace, offered free of charge in Jesus Christ, that is 'Christian' or 'passive' righteousness. When the person realizes this, he is at peace and can say 'I am not going to work for my righteousness, even though I need to have it, and I need to be righteous. Because even if I could work up to righteousness and fulfill what I thought was righteousness, still, I could not trust it to make me right at the judgement of God. So I throw away all my works, my tries at obeying God's law, and firmly hold on to 'passive righteousness,' that is the righteousness of grace, mercy and the forgiveness of sins. In short, I trust only in the righteousness that Christ and the Holy Spirit give me!!

It is like this: the earth does not produce rain, nor is it able by its own power or work to get it. The earth simply receives it as a gift of God from above. It is the same with 'passive' righteousness. It is given to us by God without our deserving it or working for it. So let's look at what the earth is able to do to get the rain each season so that it can be fruitful, and we will see how much we are able in our own strength and works to do to get heavenly and eternal righteousness. We see we will never be able to attain it unless God Himself, by the great gift of His Son, gives us Jesus' perfect righteousness. The greatest knowledge and wisdom a Christian can have then is not, to know the Law, but to forget works and to forget all our working toward righteousness especially when we think about God judging us. The person that does not know Christ, on the other hand, needs to know and earnestly seek the Law and good works.

But it is a very strange thing, and unknown to the world, to teach Christians not to know the law, and to live before God as if there were no Law or wrath of God, but total grace and mercy for Christ's sake! But even though it is strange, unless one disregards the Law and is convinced in his own heart that there is no Law or wrath from God but only grace and mercy for Christ's sake, he cannot be saved because all the Law does is show us our sin.

On the other hand, works and keeping of the Law must be required in the world as if there were no promise of grace because people are stubborn, proud, and hard-hearted. They only need the Law put in front of their faces so that they will be terrified and humbled. The Law is given to terrify and kill the proud, stubborn man and tear out his old nature, and both the word of grace and wrath must be rightly understood according to Paul. (II Tim. 2).

A faithful and wise preacher or teacher of the Word will give out the Law in such a way that it is kept in perspective. The man who teaches that people are justified before God by obeying the Law gives the Law much more power than it has, and mixes up 'passive' righteousness with 'earned' righteousness, he is a bad teacher because he misunderstands the Word. On the other hand, he that uses the Law to cause a man to see his sinfulness and convict him, and who also shows how God forgives sin (by 'passive' righteousness) when the man repents and turns from that sin teaches the Word well, for the man that does not know Christ must be shown the Law and works. The new man (one who knows Christ) must be affirmed in God's promises and mercy. So when I see a man that is bruised enough already, burdened by the Law, terrified with sin, and thirsting for relief, that is when in truth it is time to take the Law and 'works' righteousness out of his sight and show him by the Gospel 'passive' righteousness (Christian righteousness) which offers the promise of Christ without

the Law, that Christ came for the hurting and for sinners. Then the man is raised up and has good hope, he is no longer under the Law but covered by grace. How is he out from under the Law? Because he is a new man to whom the Law does not apply! For the Law does not reach past Christ as Paul says, 'For Christ is the end of the Law.' (Rom. 10:4). Since Christ has come, Moses' Law ends, circumcision ends, the sacrifices, the Sabbaths, yes, even all the prophets end.

This is our goal -- that we teach how to show the difference between the two kinds of righteousness, 'works' and 'passive,' to the end that outward actions and faith, works and grace, policy and religion should not be confused and mixed together or taken one for the other. Both are necessary, but both must be kept in their bounds. Christian or 'passive' righteousness, only applies to the new man (one who knows Christ), and 'works' righteousness only applies to the old man, who is born only of flesh and blood. Upon the old man, as upon a donkey, a great load must be placed to press him down. Until he becomes a new man by faith in Christ, he cannot know the Spirit of grace and enjoy the Kingdom, both that we are able to appreciate now and the fullness of the Lord's grace to come.

This I say so that no man thinks we reject or forbid good works as the Papists falsely accuse us, because they don't understand what they are saying themselves or what we teach. They only know the righteousness of the Law ('works' righteousness). Yet they pass judgment on the doctrine of 'passive' righteousness which is above the Law and which no carnal man is able to judge. That is why they are offended; they can't see any higher than the Law. Whatever is higher than the Law then is a great offense to them. But we see in our minds two worlds, one heavenly, the other earthly. We put these two kinds of righteousness ('works' and 'passive') in these two worlds being set far apart from each other. The righteousness of the Law (works) is earthly and has to do with earthly things, and by it we do good works. But just like the earth does not bring forth fruit unless it is first watered and made fruitful from above, even so by 'works' righteousness, by doing many things, we do nothing, and in obeying the Law, we do not really obey it unless first without deserving it or working for it, we are made righteous by the Christian (passive) righteousness, which has nothing to do with 'works' righteousness of the Law or to earthly righteousness. But this righteousness is heavenly; which as we said, we do not do it ourselves, but receive it from heaven. We don't work for it, but by grace it is given to us, and we get it through faith. It takes us above all the Law and works. So, as we have looked and acted like, the earthly Adam, as Paul says, let us now look and act as the new man. This new man has: a heavenly image in a new world where there is no Law, no sin, no guilt or pain in our conscience, no death, but perfect joy, righteousness, grace, peace, life, salvation, and glory.

So do we do nothing? Don't we do any work to obtain this righteousness? I answer, nothing at all, for this is perfect righteousness, 'to do nothing, to hear nothing, to know nothing of the Law or of works;' but to know and believe only this, that Christ is gone to the Father and is not now seen. He sits at His Father's right hand not as a judge but making us before God wise, righteous, holy, and redeemed; briefly, that He is our high Priest pleading for us and reigning over us and in us by grace. In this heavenly righteousness sin can have no place because there is no Law, and where there is no Law, there can be no breaking of the Law. (Rom. 4:15).

You see then that sin has no place here, so there can be no painful guilt, no fear, no weight on our shoulders. That is why John says (I John 5:18) 'He that is born of God cannot sin.' But if there is any fear or our conscience is bothered, it is a sign that our 'passive' righteousness is 'withdrawn' -- that is, grace is hidden from us, and Christ is darkened out of our sight. But when we truly see Christ, we have full and perfect joy in the Lord with peace of mind, and we certainly think: 'Although I am a sinner by the Law and under condemnation of the Law, still I don't despair, still I don't die, because Christ lives, who is both my righteousness and my everlasting life.' In that righteousness and life I

have no sin, no fear, no guilty conscience, no fear of death. I am indeed a sinner in this life of mine and in my own righteousness, as a child of Adam; where the Law accuses me, death controls me and eventually would destroy me. But I have another life, another righteousness above this life which is in Christ, the Son of God, who knows no sin or death but is eternal righteousness and eternal life; by Him this body of mine being dead and turned to dust shall be raised up again and freed from the chains of the Law and sin and shall be made holy together with the Spirit.

So we have both these (the old man and the new man) with us while we are here. The flesh is accused, tempted, weighed down with sorrow, bruised by the 'works' righteousness of the Law; but the Spirit reigns, rejoices and is saved by this 'passive' and Christian righteousness, because our spirit knows that it has a Lord in heaven at the right hand of His Father who has done away with the Law, sin, death and has conquered all evil, captured it, and triumphed over it Himself. (Col. 2:15).

Because of this St. Paul sets out diligently in this letter to teach us, to comfort us, and to keep us constantly aware of this Christian righteousness that is so great. For if the truth of our being justified by Christ alone is lost, then all Christian truths are lost. Those in the world that do not hold this truth are Jews, Turks, Papists, or heretics. For there is no middle ground between 'passive' and 'works' righteousness. The person who wanders away from 'passive' righteousness has no other choice but 'works' righteousness; that is to say 'If he does not depend on the work of Christ, he must depend on his own work.'

So we must truthfully proclaim and continually repeat the truth of this 'passive' or 'Christian' righteousness so that Christians continue to hold to it and never confuse it with 'works' righteousness. Otherwise we will never be able to understand God's truth, because on this truth and only this truth the church is built and has its being; but eventually we will either become canonists, observers of ceremonies, 'observers of the Law, or Papists, and Christ will become so hidden that no one in the church will be taught the truth or comforted.' So if we are to be leaders or teachers of others, we must pay close attention to these things and to mark well the difference between 'works' righteousness and 'Christian' righteousness. This is easier said than done. Even though we diligently practice it, it is very hard; because when we are about to die or when our consciences are troubled, these two 'righteousness' start to get confused and cluttered together.

'Wherefore I do admonish you, especially those who will become teachers and counselors, and each individual, that you practice this by study, by reading, by meditation of the Word, and by prayer, that when you are tempted you will be able to teach and comfort yourself and others, and bring them from the Law to grace, from 'works' righteousness to 'passive' righteousness and to conclude 'from Moses to Christ.' For when we are in trouble or conscience bothers us, the devil likes to make us afraid by using the Law, and he tries to lay on us the guilt of sin, our wicked past, the wrath and judgment of God, and eternal death to drive us to desperation, make us slaves to him and pluck us from Christ. Furthermore, he wants to set against us the parts of the Gospel where Christ requires works from us and with plain words threatens damnation to us if we do not do them. Now, if we cannot see the differences between the two kinds of righteousness and we do not take hold of Christ by faith, sitting on the right hand of God (Heb. 7:25) who pleads our case, sinners that we are, to the Father, then we are under the Law, not under grace, and Christ is no more a Savior, but a Lawgiver; so that now there is no salvation, but a definite despair, and everlasting death, unless we repent.

Let's diligently learn to judge between these two kinds of righteousness so that we know how far to obey the Law. Now, we said before, the Law in a Christian's life must be kept in bounds and should only rule over the flesh which is subject to it and remains under it. When this is true, the Law stays in its bounds. But if it creeps into your conscience and tries to rule there be a shrewd thinker

and draw the line on it. Give no more heed to the Law that what it deserves, and say to yourself, 'You, Law, would climb up into my conscience and rule me and reprove me of sin and would take away my joy that I have by faith in Christ and drive me to despair that I would be without hope and perish. This you try to do without authority, keep yourself within your bounds, and use your influence on my flesh, but do not touch my conscience, for I am baptized and by the Gospel am called to partake of 'passive' righteousness and of everlasting life to the Kingdom of Christ where my conscience is at rest, where there is no Law but total forgiveness of sin, peace, quietness, joy, health, and everlasting life. Don't bother me in those matters; I won't allow you, such a tyrant and cruel tormentor, to rule my conscience for conscience is the seat and temple of Christ the Son of God who is the King of righteousness and peace and my most sweet Savior and Mediator. He will keep my conscience joyful and quiet and the sound and pure truth of the Gospel, and in the knowledge of this 'passive Christian and heavenly righteousness.'"

When I have this righteousness reigning in my heart, I descend from heaven like rain making the earth fruitful that is to say, I enter into a new Kingdom and I do 'good works' whenever and however I get the opportunity. If I am a minister, I preach, I comfort the hurting, I administer the sacraments. If I am a parent, I govern my house and family, I raise my children in the knowledge and the fear of God. If I am a judge, that duty is given to me from above, and I do it diligently. If I am a servant, I do my master's business faithfully. To conclude, whoever is convinced that Christ is his only righteousness, does not only do his work cheerfully, gladly and well, but also submits to the judges and the law, even when they are sharp and cruel, and if necessary submits to all kinds of burdens and dangers in this life with love because he knows this is God's will, and God is pleased by his obedience. This is what the letter to Galatians speaks of. Here Paul shows us this by addressing the presence of false teachers among Galatians who had covered up this 'passive' righteousness. He sets himself against them and defends and commends his authority and office.

The Importance of Being Broken for Others

By F. Kefa Sempangi

Walking in the Light

Immediately after my conversion in 1961, I was introduced to the late Mondo, one of the founding fathers of the Revival Fellowship in Uganda. From time to time I would visit Mondo; I was profoundly attracted to his emphasis on walking in the light.

It was through Mondo's teaching that I came to learn about the East African revival. In the 1930s several Ugandans had discovered that, though they were busy having Bible studies, holding prayer meetings, and attending church services, the things they were doing were not the central message of Christ's teaching. They had to ask themselves: did Jesus die for their meetings? Or was it for something else?

They found that Christ gives the instruction: before you can enjoy your devotional life, make sure you are reconciled to your brother and sister whom you might have wronged during the day (Matthew 5:23). The command is to go quickly and make amends. Christ died not for our devotions; what Christ so dearly paid the price for is our relationship with God and with each other. When those relationships are violated, our devotions are an abomination to God.

A broken relationship is a poison. The Bible makes no exceptions: both the offended and the offender are equally guilty before God. You are to seek out those you think have something against you. If someone wrongs you, you have the obligation to rebuke him. If he repents, you have the obligation to forgive him.

The Revival Fellowship also found that we must confess our sins to one another. Confessing our sins is synonymous with walking in the light. Both James and John agree that when this occurs, there is a healing from the Lord (James 5:16, I John 1:7). When there is no walking in the light, however, our prayers and church services are used only as religious counterfeits.

Every time I met with Mondo I was greeted with a threefold challenge:

'Are you repenting?'

'Are you walking in the light?'

'Are you being broken?'

Mondo's questions were directed to the kind of fellowship I was having with the Christians with whom I was doing mission work. His suspicion that we were avoiding the real work of God in our lives was well-founded. Gradually, it became clear to me what Mondo was saying: Jesus did not die for working together but for fellowshiping together. He died for walking in the light, for confessing sins to one another.

I remember when I walked into my first Revival Fellowship meeting. It was a Friday afternoon. The hall was almost packed, and the people were singing and praising God. Most of the songs were about the blood of the Lamb that was slain. Different people stood up one after another confessing their sins. When a brother stood up and confessed openly his sin, I noticed that the rest of the people were not paying much attention to the sin confessed. Before a sister would finish her confession, they would burst out in songs of praise.

Even though I was a little shaky, I finally stood up too. I confessed about my past unfaithfulness to my creator and how that had damaged my life. Before I finished, people started to sing praises for the

blood of the Lamb. When I resumed my seat, one brother came and embraced me; I could feel the warmth in his hand as he said to me. 'This is victory, brother.'

'Is this the fellowship?' I asked myself. These brothers and sisters hardly majored on my sin. Mondo explained to me later. 'What we hear is not your sin, but God's work in your life. We hear you giving witness to God's power to break the chains of sin. We know that, left to ourselves, we can never go to a brother and confess to him, 'I have done foolishly, forgive me.'

This can only occur when grace takes over and pushes our pride into a tight corner.'

One lady wrote me recently about a Revival Fellowship meeting which was meeting underground in Uganda. At one meeting many people began to be convicted of the sin of dishonesty in their lives. They confessed this sin to one another. One of Ami's spies was in the meeting and before he knew what was happening to him, he was on his knees confessing his deception. He was pretending to be a Christian, he said, when he was actually a spy. After this conviction of sin, he had the desire to know Christ.

Now I understand what Mondo meant. If I am having Bible study but disowning my brother, I am not walking in the light. If I am going to church but keeping my sister at a distance, I am not walking in the light. Without a willingness to live a transparent life before my brother and sister, our meetings are just another form of alienation. Where there is walking in the light, these things are the outflowing of a praising life.

In the mission command that I had heard as a young man, the emphasis had been on go, not love. It was the ministry, not the brethren, that was most important. As a result I came to love my sermons more than the people to whom I preached. In my zeal to carry out the commission I failed to see that the commandment came first. I was to love my brothers and sisters.

From Mondo I learned that walking in the light means a total sharing of my secrets with my sisters and brothers. Christ spoke to his disciples, 'I no longer call you servants; a servant knows not the secrets of his Lord, but I have shared with you the secrets of my father' (John 15:15). When we share our secrets, there is a total identification with one another. We have a reciprocal bond.

When a body of Christians begins to walk in the light together, there is no room left for gossip. Walking in the light puts gossip out of business. Nothing needs to be talked over in secret which is already in the light. Gossip is converted into efforts to seek solutions together. Instead of majoring on a brother's weakness, we can defend him where he is weakest and promote him where he is strong.

I knew that, if it was up to me, I could never walk in the light with my brother or sister. Gradually, I realized that walking in the light was not so much what I was able to do, but what Christ had made me to be-- a light, or better still, a lighted candle. I understood this best when I considered the African hurricane lamp: for its light to shine, the hurricane lamp requires a transparent glass, a trimmed wick, and unpolluted oil. If the glass is dirty, the light is faint. If the wick is untrimmed, the light flickers. And when the oil is contaminated, the light grows dim and eventually dies.

Many a Christian life would like to shine without being transparent and without being trimmed. And in Matthew 5 there is a whole list of things which contaminate the oil: sinful anger, lust, contention, and evil hatred towards one's enemies. Without pure oil, we cannot be a light, and we cannot live transparent lives before our brothers.

When we cannot be a light, we cannot walk in the light. When we cannot walk in the light, we pile sin upon sin. There is anger and resentment instead of reconciliation. There is lust instead of love,

contention instead of contentment, concealment where there should be confession, and bitterness where there should be forgiveness.

Every time I lose an argument with my wife, I feel I am ready for a divorce. But, beyond the argument, I can recognize that Christ, through his blood, has paid the price for my marriage. My identity has been paid for. It no longer depends upon winning or losing an argument. So every day when I am ready to swear and curse, I know Jesus paid for my peace. Instead of going to fight Judas, I go to wash his feet. I was saved by grace, and it is grace that will sustain me in all my relationships.

But we are mistaken if we believe-- as I think perhaps many in the Revival Fellowship did -- that confessing our sins to one another is the whole of walking in the light. To walk in the light is to renounce all the works of evil and to live the fruits of the spirit which are the work of grace in our lives.

It is a work of grace which fills my heart with humility and compels me to seek forgiveness from my brother. It is a work of grace which makes me restless until I can forgive him. But no matter how spiritual I feel confessing my sin to a brother in my devotional group, if I am not practicing the whole counsel of God, I am not living in the light.

The God whom we serve, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, has identified himself not only as the father of sinners, but as the father of orphans. He is the defender of widows, the liberator of prisoners, He gives good to the hungry and justice to those who are denied it (Psalms 68:5, 146:7). And he has commanded his church to do the same:

Let the weak and the orphans have justice, be fair to the wretched and destitute; rescue the weak and needy, save them from the clutches of the wicked. Psalm 82

One who suppresses God's truth for poor and oppressed is in as much spiritual darkness as the one who lives in a perpetual state of unconfessed sin. If it is a work of grace to humbly confess my sin, it is likewise a work of grace to walk among the broken down houses of my community and to be touched by the poverty of those who dwell there.

If it is a work of grace to feel remorse until I am reunited with a sister against whom I have sinned, it is likewise a work of grace to feel restless until justice is restored to my neighbors. It is a work of grace to become part of the healing ministry which brings God's truth to the poor and the oppressed.

But we must remember that, before we are a light to our neighbors and to the world, we are first a light to the home. Unless we are a light to one another -- to our families and to the body of believers to which we belong -- we will not shine at all. The light that is in us will turn to darkness. If we are to avoid the futility which comes when the blind lead the blind, if we are truly to walk in the light with one another, we must first be broken.

There is a popular expression among the fellowship that describes this disposition in the life of an individual. The Ugandan word is Okxmexyeka. There is no word just like it in English. It is a 'broken' individual. To be broken is to have no pride, for where there is pride, there is no confession and no forgiveness. To heal a broken relationship, one must be broken; one must be willing to 'give in;' one must not find his or her identity in always being in the right.

When Jesus fed the five thousand, took the five loaves of bread, blessed them, broke them, and gave them to disciples to give away (Matthew 14:1). One brother of the Revival read this verse and then looked at me. 'Until God breaks your will, he will never use you,' he said. 'You will only remain a nice loaf

of bread.' What Jesus did in feeding the multitude was very symbolic of what was going to happen to his body. To his own disciples he said, 'This is my body which is broken for you.'

Unless we are broken, we are of no use to God. And unless we are broken, we are of no use to the community of believers of which we are a part. Hardly any of us can go to his own Christian community and say, 'This is my body which is broken for you. I am laying all my professional skills, abilities, and economic resources at your disposal. Take them and use them as you see fit.' We cannot say this, because we are not broken. We are too proud to give our lives away to people who are not perfect. We don't want to lose ourselves for sinners. We want to find the perfect person and the perfect community, but we never find them.

So, like Judas, we make only a partial commitment to the body of believers to which we belong, and we find our identity in our rebellion from them. Unlike Paul who clearly saw his identity -- 'an apostle of Jesus Christ' -- in terms of his function in the body, we see our identity in how we are different from the body and opposed to it.

If we are following Jesus, we cannot wait for the perfect community. It was while we were yet sinners that Christ allowed his body to be broken for us. Jesus lays the foundation for community life in the midst of betrayal: 'the Lord Jesus Christ, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread....' He gave thanks and broke it and gave it. Our commitment to one another in community can be no less than his: 'This is my body broken for you.'

Without the crucifixion of pride, we will always consider ourselves too inadequate to feed our brother and sisters in community. We will never want to run the risk of trying, because we have a secret anxiety that we will fail. Jesus said to his disciples, 'Give to the people to eat.' The disciples' reaction was that what they had was not sufficient. Still Jesus told them to 'go and see' (Mark 6:38). He knew that the Father was sufficient.

The problem is that we fail to realize that it is the small things -- a few loaves of bread or a widow's little oil-- that God wants us to place in his hands. God asked Moses. 'What is that in your hand?' Moses knew it was only a poor shepherd's stick. He knew he was only a poor shepherd. God wanted Moses in his service, but Moses could not believe that God would use the weak and base things of the world to declare his glory.

I know how my wife and I once tried to avoid God's call. We had only narrowly escaped death in Uganda and had come to seminary in the United States. Before long we started getting letters from our fellow refugees in Nairobi asking for help. At first we tried to ignore them. We hardly had enough for ourselves; how could we give to other refugee families?

Gradually the truth about Christ started to take hold of our lives. He would take the little we had and bless it. He was not asking us to set up a refugee fund for thousands of people; he was only asking that we be faithful with what we had. As we started to give, the miracle of the loaves took place. What we had thought was barely enough to feed ourselves became, through the Father's sufficiency, food and housing for many refugees.

We are broken for the community, and in community we are broken. In community we can no longer stand aloof and protect ourselves, we can no longer be 'spiritually incorruptible.' As we walk in the light with one another, as we repent and confess, our pride is no longer in control of our actions. We are empowered by the Holy Spirit, and together we are given to the world.

In that giving we are broken again. We are broken by a renewed sense of our own inadequacies, and we are broken by the very people we are trying to help. In 1971, with the help of Mrs. Hans Rookmaaker, I opened up an orphanage home in Uganda. It was always a discouraging and humiliating

experience to go to a village and pick up an orphan. As I would drive away, ten other orphans would be chasing behind me until they gave up, exhausted.

It then began to hurt... 'Lord, why am I taking one when there are ten others? Can't you give me a chance to save them all?' But then in the deep silence of my frustration, I would feel the conviction of the master saying, 'It is this one I wanted you to take.'

God wanted to teach me then of my own inadequacy and of his love for me. The need was clearly far greater than all my resources. My limitations, in light of the enormity of the evil I saw, began to haunt me. I felt useless in God's kingdom. I was humbled and broken by my own expendability. And it was then that I knew that God loved me, for it was not just my service he wanted; he wanted me.

When we are broken by grace to serve God's people, we find that our brokenness is only a beginning. Christ gave himself for us in humility and lowliness. The very people he came to save responded to his sacrificial giving by crucifying him. His best friends abandoned him when things stopped going well. But somehow we have been led to believe that our own lot should be different than our master's. We have forgotten that no servant is greater than his master and that our master died on the cross, despised and rejected by men.

So when we give ourselves to others, we are discouraged to the point of giving up when things go wrong. When we begin to be broken for our neighbors and find our efforts being hindered by the very people we are trying to help, we want to abandon them to Satan. We want to say, 'Lord, it wasn't these sinners I wanted to die for. Isn't there someone else, someone more grateful, more talented? Isn't there someone that will make me feel more successful in your kingdom?'

Our questions become the masks behind which we hide our disobedience, our unwillingness to follow the Lord Jesus Christ who gave himself for sinners.

But as we learn to abide in Christ, as we live in obedience to him and are broken for others, we find that God is not concerned to make us Christian success stories. It is not our reputation and successful service God wants. He wants us. He wants hearts that are humble. He wants a community of believers that is faithful. He wants a people who can say with their lives: this is my body which is broken for you.

It is then and only then that we can know the hope of glory, the crucified and resurrected Christ.

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