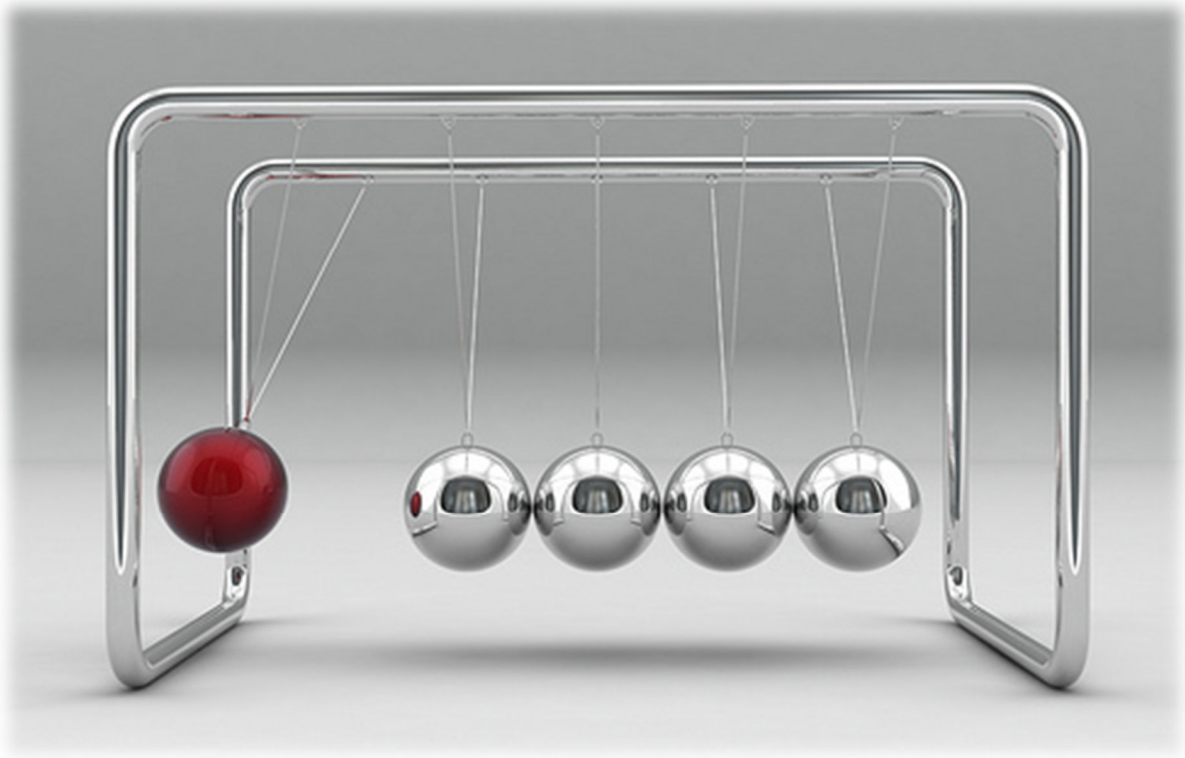


Reigning Grace



Why Jesus is not only
necessary, but **enough**

Patrick J. Griffiths

“Reigning Grace”

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God's Word to You

The Story in Six Acts

1. **God** - "In the Beginning **God**" (Gen. 1:1)
2. **Creation** - "In the Beginning God **created**" (Gen. 1:1; Col. 1:15-17; 1 Cor. 8:6)
3. **Rejection** - "You shall not eat . . . She took and ate and He ate" (Gen. 2:15-17; 3:6)
4. **Redemption** - "The LORD God made garments of skin and clothed them" (Gen. 3:15-21)
5. **Re-Creation** - "You Must Be Born Again" (John 3:1-21; 2 Cor. 5:17; Rev. 21:1)
6. **Joy through Worship** - "Stop weeping, the Lion . . . has overcome" (Rev. 4; 5)

The biblical *Story* in which all of life exists begins with God.

"Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet"
Matthew 1:22

No matter where we "poke" our stick in the Bible, we will touch the *Story*. **The Bible tells a single, unified Story and at the center of this Story is JESUS. The Bible tells us why God created. His purpose from the beginning of time has been to fill the earth with the knowledge of His glory for the joy of His people** (Isa. 11:9; Hab. 2:14; Ps. 16:11; Isa. 25:6-9). **This is His Vision. A part of this Story is the fall of man, his rescue by God, and the relationship between the two that flows from this.**

This is what many call the "meta-narrative." It is the MELODIC LINE running from "top to tail."

The *Story* traces the fulfillment of a **promise** made by God to crush sin by the voluntary and vicarious sacrifice of His only begotten Son, the seed (Gen. 3:15, 21), whereby redeeming His people from sin and adopting them into His family. It is the *Story* of His immeasurable grace. This is the **gospel**; it is **good news**.

This Story of Fall, rescue and joy is the telling of the following tale. The *Story* ends where it began, with God. The **Gospel** secures for God **worshippers** and all things created will end with the singular **worship** of God (Rev. 4, 5, 21, 22). Such **worship** in that approaching day will be without hindrance. This is a glorious and happy day. It is a day filled with God!

About *RG*

The idea of “Reigning Grace” begins in Romans 5:12-21 where the apostle Paul speaks of the reign of sin and death, but now the reign of grace and life. The shift is because of who Jesus is and what Jesus did/does.

²⁰ “The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but **where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,** ²¹ **so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord**” (Rom. 5:20, 21).

“Reigning” means leading, administering, ruling, governing. “Grace” is unmerited favor given with unconditional acceptance. The extension of goodness in place of deserved condemnation. Grace is the platform through which God administers His love, acceptance, forgiveness, favor, kindness, and mercy. We very much believe where once sin and death reigned, grace and life now reign. **In Jesus, the vertical relationship a person has with God the Father has been forever altered.** He does for us what we could never do for ourselves. He answers once and for all the challenge brought about by our own sin resulting in death. Because there was nothing we could do to earn this favor/status, we equally believe there is nothing we can do to change, maintain, or alter this favor/status.

Just as the vertical, so also the horizontal. **What God has done for us, He gives to us, working in us and through us, to those around us.** It is the very life of Christ that now governs both the vertical and the horizontal. In reality, it is impossible to outrun grace. Grace will always win. **We seek to capture the absolute thoroughness of His existence by calling this “Reigning Grace [RG].”**

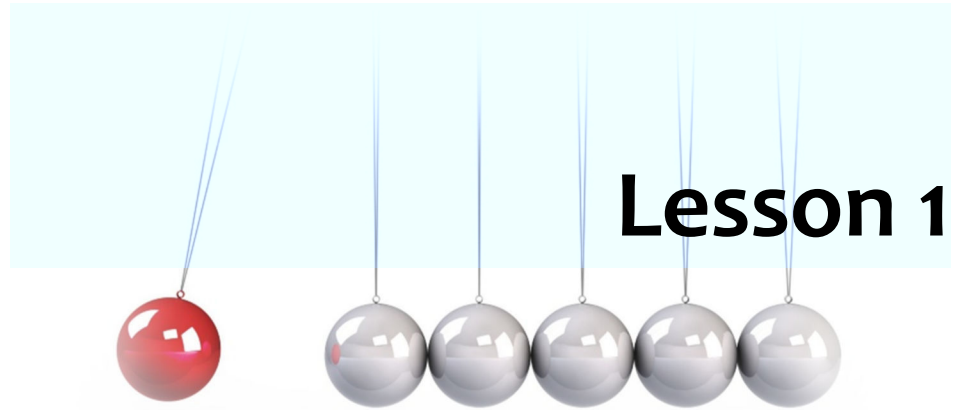
“Reigning Grace” defines our DNA. It is how we interpret our life and the lives of those around us. It colors our theology, it colors our thinking, and it colors our relationships. Grace should rush in at all times and in all situations for the believer. For a preview of where this is leading, jump to the Epilogue [Lesson 14] and read through the ten gospel truths. These statements will be explored and clarified in the following chapters.

We believe all of life comes from JESUS, is sustained by JESUS, and ultimately leads back to JESUS. In all of the following areas of study, let us make sure to keep JESUS as the center of the Story. Let us remember that, “Beyond Him, there is nothing; and without Him, there is no one.”

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Revised June 1, 2017; Feb. 13, 2020

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RG and WHY STUDY GRACE?

NEWTON'S CRADLE AND GOD'S Story

"Newton's cradle, named after Sir Isaac Newton, is a device that demonstrates conservation of momentum and energy using a series of swinging spheres. When one on the end is lifted and released, it strikes the stationary spheres; a force is transmitted through the stationary spheres and pushes the last one upward. If one ball is pulled away and is let to fall, it strikes the first ball in the series and comes to nearly a dead stop. The ball on the opposite side acquires most of the velocity and almost instantly swings in an arc almost as high as the release height of the last ball. This shows that the final ball receives most of the energy and momentum that was in the first ball. The impact produces a compression wave that propagates through the intermediate balls."¹

BASIC IDEAS:

1. In the absence of God's condescending and unconditional actions toward humanity, there would be no salvation from sin and death and for joy and glory.
2. Creation by a Creator assumes and demands grace.
3. Grace existed before the presence of sin and the fall.
4. All of Creation and Humanity are recipients of God's gracious condescension to act favorably toward His creation.

In shadow form, this illustrates for us the centerpiece of the Gospel for the Christian life. Who Jesus is in His person and work is the red ball. Everything that follows carries the energy of that first strike. Moreover, everything will come back to that first action. We believe the Bible teaches a single *Story* and at the center of this *Story* is JESUS. Everything from start to finish and everything in between is from the gospel, sustained by the gospel, and is for the gospel. FOR JESUS IS THE GOSPEL!

Our intent in studying this subject is to show the centrality of the gospel in all the various pieces and stories making up the biblical *Story*. Unfortunately, it is possible to look at various themes and topics that are Bible based and not see how the gospel produces and sustains the parts. Because of this neglect, subjects that are consequences of one's relationship to God because of

the gospel become causes forming the basis of our relationship to God. This is unfortunate. If we do not see the fruit as fruit, it becomes the root and instead of freedom and life, there is bondage and death. Thus, the intent of this study is to celebrate the gospel and the fruit it produces in the life of God's people. With this in mind, let us begin.

AN INTRODUCTION

Charles Ryrie opens his work, *The Grace of God*, with the following thought. "Christianity is distinct from all other religions because it is a message of grace. Jesus Christ is the supreme revelation of God's grace; salvation is by grace; and grace governs and empowers Christian living. Without grace Christianity is nothing."² **In all other religions, the goal is something attained by the individual. Only in Christianity is the goal gifted.** Only in Christianity does the master take the place of the servant, the king its subjects, and the innocent in place of the guilty.

Most all world religions speak of grace, but none is so thoroughly saturated by grace, as is Christianity. All world religions are "auto-soteric" [self-saving] systems. All of them depend on the individual to do their part *before* God will do His. Only Christianity leans fully in the work of another. To eliminate grace from the *Story* is to end the *Story*. In light of our initial thought, we can properly ask, "What is grace?" Grace lives in the arena of need and inability. If there were no deficiency or need, there would be no necessity for grace.

To eliminate grace from the *Story* is to end the *Story*. **Grace lives in the arena of need and inability.** If there were no deficiency or need, there would be no necessity for grace. Without *grace*, the foundation of Christianity is altered in such a way as to eliminate its uniqueness among the world religions.

"Grace lives in the arena of need and inability. If there is no deficiency or need, there would be no necessity for grace."

In light of our initial thought, we can properly ask, "What is grace?"

Jerry Bridges defines grace as follows: "Grace is God's **free** and **unmerited** favor shown to guilty sinners who deserve only judgment. It is the love of God shown to the unlovely. It is God reaching downward to people who are in rebellion against Him."³

Thus, in the absence of God's condescending and unconditional actions toward humanity, there would be no salvation from sin and death and no joy nor glory. Therefore, the study of grace is vital.

Q1 - What do you believe are the prominent characteristics in defining grace?

Q2 - What makes Christianity different than all other world religions?

I. THE BIBLE AS STORY

In order to answer the question, it is necessary to consider the Bible as a whole. “Fundamentally, it is just one book written by one author with one main subject.”⁴ The Bible is a *Story*. Identifying it as a story does not mean it’s a fairytale. It is a true and accurate *Story* of a Creator who acts, an Author who writes, a King who rules, and a Hero who wins. It contains villains, wars, defeat, and victory. Inside the biblical *Story* there are six acts or ideas unfolding the person and purpose of God. It will be God’s person and purpose that provide the subject matter or theme of the *Story*. They are as follows.

- Act 1 - **God** - “In the Beginning **God**” (Gen. 1:1 [The Power of God – Pt. 1])
- Act 2 - **Creation** - “In the Beginning God **created**” (Gen. 1:1; Col. 1:15-17; 1 Cor. 8:6 [The Mystery of God])
- Act 3 - **Rejection** - “You shall not eat . . . **She** took and **ate and He ate**” (Gen. 2:15-17; 3:6 [The Justice of God])
- Act 4 - **Redemption** - “**The LORD God made garments** of skin and clothed them” (Gen. 3:15-21 [The Grace of God])
- Act 5 - **Re-Creation** - “**You Must Be Born Again**” (John 3:1-21; 2 Cor. 5:17; Rev. 21:1 [the Power of God – Pt. 2])
- Act 6 - **Rest** - “Stop weeping, **the Lion** . . . **has overcome**” (Rev. 4; 5 The Glory of God])

This entire *Story* tells of God who condescends to give humanity the joy of His own internal fellowship within Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This entire *Story* tells of a God who condescends to create in order that His creation might know and experience the joy He has within Himself and this joy is only known and experienced in His presence.⁵

Q3 – What is humanity’s greatest fault and need?

Q4 – How does God address humanity’s deficiency?

II. THE NEED FOR GRACE

Prior to creation, God existing in Trinity was all there was. Within the Godhead or Trinity nothing needed grace, for every thought or action was worthy of the thought or action. However, all this changed once God created. In creating, He condescended. Grace stooped. Grace existed even before the presence of sin and the fall. The created is always in need of grace from the Creator, for the created is always dependent on the Creator.

The biblical reader will notice how there is rebellion/rejection and condemnation. We see this in the villain’s appearance. As noted earlier, grace exists simply because God created; but its presence becomes even more pronounced with the arrival of the villain. It is “sin abounding where grace will much more abound.”

Unless I realize I'm a sinner deserving of God's just wrath against sin, I cannot experience the richness and fullness of His grace. If I deny my sin, I shut the door on grace. This was Jesus' message to the woman at the well. *Yes, you are a woman who is living in sin. Yes, you are just the kind of person I came to save.* We have to acknowledge both realities. This is why talk of the word, "sin" should not frighten us who believe in the gospel. Because it was not mistakes or missteps or misunderstandings that Christ came to conquer and defeat. He came to defeat sin and sin's awful child: death.⁶

Grace is the kind action of God toward those who deserve destruction and damnation.⁷ [*read endnote*] In mercy, God withholds from us what we justly deserve. And in grace, He gives us what we cannot earn. Listen to the graphic language of Pastor / Theologian C. Samuel Storms.

The first and possibly most fundamental characteristic of divine grace is that it presupposes sin and guilt. Grace has meaning *only* when men are seen as fallen, unworthy of salvation, and liable to eternal wrath. . . . Grace does not contemplate sinners merely as *underserving* but as *ill-deserving*. . . . it is not simply that we do not deserve grace; we *do* deserve hell (emphasis his)!⁸

This is seen in Romans 5:6, 8, and 10. Humanity is weak, wicked, and at war with God and yet Jesus dies for them even while they are rebelling against Him. The same is true in Ephesians 2:1-10 where we read of God's great intervention in verse 4, "But God." This action on God's part brings Him glory. Grace is the platform through which God administers His love, acceptance, forgiveness, favor, kindness, and mercy.

Q5 - How is the mercy of God seen in His actions toward humanity?

Q6 - How is the grace of God seen in His actions toward humanity?

III. THE ROYAL GIFT COVENANT

When God moved forward on making good His promise to Adam and Eve, He used a ROYAL GIFT COVENANT.

There are various types of Covenants in the Ancient Near East.

1. Covenant among equals - marriage
2. Royal gift covenant - unconditional agreement of a superior to their inferior [the Seed Promise (Gen. 3:15) and the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1-3)].
3. Vassal treaty - a conditional agreement between the superior and the inferior. The benefits of the treaty are only possible through obedience and conformity to the treaty. Violation of the treaty brings condemnation [The Mosaic Covenant (Exod. 20; Gal. 3:10-18; Rom. 8:1; James 2:10)].

The initial command given to Adam and Eve in the **Garden of Eden is a Vassal Treaty**. Adam and Eve failed to obey. As a consequence, they die in their relationship with God. God, however, condescends and gives them the **Royal Gift**. He will provide an offspring from the woman who will destroy their enemy. And He provides a blood sacrifice that atones for their sins. The **Mosaic Covenant is a Vassal Treaty** with Laws and Stipulations, Blessing and Cursing. **God's Redemptive Purpose is a Royal Gift**.

Why is this important? First, God's redemptive purpose is a gift. Second, God's governance of the Nation of Israel is a Vassal Treaty. Grace always operates in the arena of relationship. **Law governs the horizontal, not the vertical**. The two are not the same. God is not saving Israel in the Mosaic Code or the Law. God is governing Israel in the Mosaic Code. God saves Israel as a Royal Gift. Thus, to impose redemptive purposes onto the vassal treaty leads to heresy. Is there continuity between the two? Yes.

Look at Galatians 3:16-29 and notice with me the relationship between the ROYAL GIFT and the VASSAL TREATY.

¹⁷ What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. ¹⁸ **For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.** ¹⁹ Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made (Gal. 3:17-19).

Jesus fulfills both covenants. When you make the Vassal Treaty redemptive, you end up with the problems Paul addressed in Galatians! Now let us continue to explore the greatest embodiment of grace in God's Story.

Q7 – Why is keeping these two covenants separate in our thinking important?

IV. THE STORY'S HERO – *Jesus Christ*

²⁵ "And He said to them, 'O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?' ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures . . . ⁴⁴ Now He said to them, 'These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.' ⁴⁵ Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and He said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem'" (Luke 24:25-27, 44-47). [cf. Acts 24:14, 15; 26:22-29; 28:23]

As the Bible is read as *Story*, it becomes apparent from the very start of the *Story* that everything will revolve around one primary and central figure. This person will be foretold and imaged so precisely that all who look for Him will find Him (Matt. 2:2).

RG and Why Grace?

Jesus Christ, the second member of the Trinity, is the hero of the *Story*. He is **the promised seed** of Genesis 3:15 and **the blood picture** of Genesis 3:21. All of the chapters point to Him. The storyline has meaning only as it is sourced in and flows from Christ.

The relationship of Jesus Christ to the word of God in Scripture is that he sums it up, brings it to fulfillment and interprets it. Thus, the *Word of God* is Jesus Christ. Every word in Scripture **points to Jesus and finds its meaning in him**. . . The significance of this is worth repeating: Jesus Christ in his life, death, and resurrection is the fixed point of reference for the understanding of **the whole of reality**.⁹

Think of how atonement happens through the death of the innocent. What was the impact of the first sacrifice to Adam and Eve? After all that, they would be asked to wear the skins of this dead animal. When a mother cow gives birth to a stillborn calf, she mourns over her loss. Sometimes a mother cow will reject their calf. In such cases, the farmer will take the skin from the dead calf and place it on the live calf. The live calf will wear the skin and hopefully be adopted by the mourning mother cow. Farmers call this adoption. In Jesus, the alienated are adopted and the rejected are restored.

The Hero's arrival in human flesh is the greatest embodiment of grace by God and His obedience to His Father in life and in death is the greatest display of grace for all times. Nothing else can match who He is and what He has done.

When Adam and Eve rejected God and chose their kingdom and their will over His, they immediately began to "feel" the impact of their decision. This consequence is notable by the attempt to cover their nakedness with vegetation. God could have allowed them to continue in their rebellion, but He condescended and provided atonement for their transgression. Two elements are notable in the unfolding of the *Story*. The first element is **God's promise** to those who rebelled against Him (Gen. 3:15). The second element is **God's picture** of what His atoning work will look like. (Gen. 3:21). Thus, the promise and the picture become the defining elements within the larger narrative of history. Jesus Christ is the promise fulfilled and the picture completed.

Both the **incarnation** and **crucifixion** are expressions of God's initiation toward man's inability and rebellion. Both acts on His part are gracious.

Q8 – Where do we see the greatest embodiment of grace?

Q9 – Where do we see the greatest display of grace?

CONCLUSION

"Why study grace?" Because without it there is no *Story*. God created and in this simple sentence grace was born. Everything that happens after this initial act will be platforms for God to act

graciously toward those He loves for the purpose of bringing them into His presence so that they might enjoy Him forever.

As the Bible is read, it becomes apparent from the very start of the *Story* everything will revolve around one primary and central figure, the hero who will rescue humanity from their sin. This person will be foretold and imaged so precisely that all who look for Him will find Him (Matt. 2:2). Jesus Christ, the second member of the Trinity, is the hero of the *Story*. He is **the promised seed** of Genesis 3:15 and **the blood picture** of Genesis 3:21. All Scripture points to Him. The storyline has meaning only as it is sourced in and flows from Christ.¹⁰ [Read endnote]

Q10 - What application can we make from this chapter?

Q11 - What does this study cause you to change in your thinking and/or actions?

NEXT LESSON – The occurrence of the word *grace* in the New Testament.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newton%27s_cradle

² Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *The Grace of God* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1963), 9.

³ Jerry Bridges, *Transforming Grace*, (NavPress: Colorado Springs, 1991), 21, 22

⁴ Vaughan Roberts, *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible* (IVP Books, 2002), 16.

⁵ "All other religions teach that humans must work their way toward divinity. The truth is Jesus. The truth is a person who dies in our place, for our crimes, and in turn gives us his life. The truth is that God works his way down to humanity and dies for us. That's grace. See, the truth isn't a special prayer or code word we say at the pearly gates. In Christianity, the truth is essentially revealed in a Person, Jesus, full of grace and humility. All other religions God is impersonal, but in Christianity we meet God in Jesus."

<http://www.gospelproject.com/2013/10/25/what-is-unique-about-christianity-among-the-world-religions/>

⁶ <http://www.danieldarling.com/2013/02/if-there-is-no-sin-there-is-no-grace/>

⁷ "Grace is simply another word for his tumbling, rumbling reservoir of strength and protection. It comes at us not occasionally or miserly but constantly and aggressively, wave upon wave. We've barely regained our balance from one breaker, and then, bam, here comes another. God's grace dethrones your fears. Anxiety still comes, for certain. The globe still heats up; wars still flare up; the economy acts up. Disease, calamity, and trouble populate your world. But they don't control it! Grace does."

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/articles/spiritualformation/grace-more-than-we-deserve-greater-than-we-imagine.html> *Grace: More Than We Deserve, Greater Than We Imagine*, Max Lucado explains why we must embrace the whole truth about grace. An interview with Max Lucado.

⁸ C. Samuel Storms, *The Grandeur of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), page 124.

⁹ [Emphasis added] Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (IVP Books, 1991), 59, 60.

¹⁰ "The relationship of Jesus Christ to the word of God in Scripture is that he sums it up, brings it to fulfillment and interprets it. Thus, the *Word of God* is Jesus Christ. Every word in Scripture **points to Jesus and finds its meaning in him**. The significance of this is worth repeating: Jesus Christ in his life, death and resurrection is the fixed point of reference for the understanding of **the whole of reality**" [Emphasis added] Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (IVP Books, 1991), 59, 60. "The apostolic way of reading and preaching Scripture is to see Jesus Christ as the subject of the entire Bible, the subject of all history. He is the single overarching story of all time. He is the meaning of the entire narrative of human history" Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Worship: Proclaiming and Enacting God's narrative* (BakerBooks, 2008), 119. "The centrality of Christ to all of history and to the meaning of human existence invites us into Jesus Christ, through whom we read the entire Bible from beginning to end" Ibid., 121.



Lesson 2

RG in the NEW TESTAMENT

INITIAL TRUTHS TO REMEMBER

1. The *Story* has six acts: (1) God (2) Creation (3) Rejection (4) Redemption (5) Re-Creation (6) Worship
2. This *Story* is the panoramic view for the entire Bible.
3. The *Gospel Story* within the *Story*: God creates each individual, they reject God, and God intervenes and redeems sinners, places within them a new heart, and enables them to worship Him.

OVERVIEW OF THE LESSON

1. The embodiment of grace
2. The expression of grace
3. The endurance of grace
4. The example of grace

AN INTRODUCTION

“A religion is known at its center rather than on its circumference. The religion which underlies the New Testament writings is a religion of grace, or *it is nothing*. The point here is that all depends upon the emphasis. Christianity is primarily a religion which lives upon grace as the royal saving power of God manifested through His Son Jesus Christ.”¹

BASIC IDEAS:

1. God did not have to do what He did, but He did what He did not have to do.
2. The favor of God rests upon those who believe because of position, not performance.
3. The grace of God exceeds the need of man because Christ is infinite.
4. The entire Christian life is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

It will become evident how the gospel permeates and saturates the entire *Story* running from Genesis through Revelation. No part is left untouched. Our desire is to read the Bible as a single *Story* and at the center of this *Story* is JESUS.

The *Story* God wrote includes a fall into sin and an appropriate but horrific consequence. The sin and its demerit accent humanity's inability to erase their shame, fear, and guilt. Only God can do it and only God does. **That fact that He did and does is because of grace.** This grace is embodied and displayed in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the Hero of God's *Story*. It is now only for us to know who He is, what He has done, and who we are in Him.

Regardless of the act God takes toward His creation, grace colors all of it. All acts of God are acts of condescension when directed toward creation in general and humanity in particular. We live, move, and have our being because God is gracious. "*No grace, no gospel; that is what it comes to, when you study the classical documents of the primitive Church.*"²

The incarnation of Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the promise and His life and death are the completion of the picture. This *Story* is a story of gracious humiliation whereby God would dwell with man in order that man might dwell with God.

This study attempts to help us understand how grace forms the foundation on which the *Story* rests and how Jesus Christ is the fullest expression and embodiment of God's gracious condescension.

I. WHAT IS GRACE?

What is grace? What does it mean to be under grace? Are grace and law antithetical? Initially we must understand how God is intrinsically gracious. He acts graciously in creating, and in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, grace is embodied. To assist us in understanding the magnitude of this idea we will consider the word itself as found in the Bible.

Several times the word grace (**charis**) is translated with "thank" (Luke 6:32-34), "favor" (Luke 1:30; 2:52; Acts 2:47; 25:3), "liberality" (1 Cor. 16:3), "benefit" (2 Cor. 1:15) and elsewhere with "pleasure" (Acts 24:27; 25:9). Yet apart from a handful of exceptions, the Greek word **charis** is translated as "grace" in English.

What does the word mean and how does it occur? The Greek word **charis** occurs 156 times throughout the New Testament. It has come to mean, "God's undeserved, unearned, and undesired favor toward condemned sinners." What this tells us is **God did not have to do what He did, but He did what He did not have to do.** There was nothing within humanity moving God to act in a gracious manner toward us. The motive for grace rests solely in God.

Grace [Charis] in the NT		
Rev.		2
Jude		1
2 John		1
1 / 2 Pet.		10 2
James		1
Heb.		7
Phm.		3
Titus		4
1 / 2 Tim.		4 5
1 / 2 Thess.		2 4
Col.		5
Phil.		3
Eph.		12
Gal.		7
2 Cor.		18
1 Cor.		8
Romans		21
Acts		16
John		3
Luke		8

Forgive [Charizomai] in the NT		
Phm.		1
Col.		2
Phil.		2
Eph.		1
Gal.		1
2 Cor.		3
1 Cor.		1
Romans		1
Acts		4
Luke		3

“In the New Testament, read even casually, it becomes clear that ‘grace’ is almost absent from the gospels and never absent for very long from the pages of the apostle Paul. Paul came into Christianity as the Faith or the Truth or the Way opened up by Jesus the Lord. His powerful statement of it as a religion of grace, or rather as the religion of grace, was due to his dominant conception of God bestowing undeserved favor and fellowship upon men.”³ “Jesus never speaks of grace, and none of his disciples ever applied the word to him. Like hope and freedom, grace does not occur in his teaching as preserved by the gospels.”⁴

What are we to make of this? In the Gospels, Jesus speaks [words] and acts [works of] GRACE. In the Letters, Paul explains GRACE.

Although it is difficult to accept initially, when speaking of God’s grace, we need to understand how **the favor of God rests upon those who believe simply because of position and not performance. The blessing of God is because of location and not action. The blessing of God upon us is rooted in whom we are, not what we do.**

Because this is true, we cannot reverse God’s gracious actions toward us. We cannot alter all God has done and is doing in us, for us, and through us.

Q1 – How would you define or explain grace to someone who is new to the idea?

Q2 – Why is God gracious toward us?

II. CATALOGING ITS OCCURRENCES

To facilitate our understanding of grace it is necessary for us to catalogue its various occurrences as it occurs throughout the New Testament into four primary groupings.

A. The Embodiment of Grace Occurs in The Incarnation of Jesus Christ.

John uses the word grace (**charis**) three times. Jesus is identified in the incarnation as being *full* of grace and truth (John 1:14).

“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

There were displays of grace prior to the coming of Christ but in contrast to Him, they appear as shadow. “The Old Testament Law (a token of grace) is replaced by the revelation through Christ (an embodiment of grace).”⁵ In addition, in Christ the displaying of grace is perfect and lacking nothing. With Christ nothing more can be said. Our quest now is to know Him. **He is grace. There is nothing His people need that they do not already have in Him.** Consider the statement of John 1:16.

“From the fullness of His grace we have all received one blessing after another” (John 1:16 NIV).

“We have all benefited from the rich blessings he brought to us – one gracious blessing after another” (John 1:16 NLT).

The arrival of Jesus stands as fulfillment to all preceding promises. He is the next chapter in the ONE *Story*.

¹⁷ For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.

“The former is the law, viewed by Paul as the antithesis of grace (Romans 6:14; Romans 7:3; Galatians 4:4, and many other passages), in so far as it only lays us under obligation, condemns us, and in fact arouses and intensifies the need of grace, but does not bestow peace, which latter gift has been realized for us through Christ.”⁶

His coming marked a shift in the telling of God’s *Story* (Eph. 3:2, 3).

² “if indeed you have heard of **the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me** for you; ³ that **by revelation there was made known to me the mystery**, as I wrote before in brief.”

In Christ, God’s hero arrives and with Him comes a powerful display of grace and truth. With the coming of Jesus Christ, additional revelation will come to the apostle Paul. Paul will become a primary presenter of Jesus Christ.

When the second member of the Godhead became “flesh,” we had the greatest display of grace and the greatest embodiment of truth. When speaking of this idea theologically, the *incarnation* is the **product** whereas the *kenosis* of Philippians 2 [**emptied**] is the **process** whereby God became man.

When God took on a human nature, He condescended. In the incarnation the second member of the Godhead stooped, He lowered Himself. This is why Paul tells us in Philippians 2:8 “He humbled Himself.” **He became what He had created.** The Creator became that which He had created. It was not simply an identification or association, but an actual “**becoming**” (Rom. 1:3; Gal. 4:4; Phil. 2:7 [each uses **ginomai**, “To become”]).

Q3 – How might we go about describing what the arrival of Jesus means to the *Story* of God?

Q4 – Why would we say His arrival is the greatest embodiment of grace?

B. The Demonstration of Grace as Seen in The Area of Salvation.

By **grace alone** is from the Latin **Sola gratia**, one of the five Solas of the Reformation emphasizing that our justification before God and our resulting salvation are both solely by the sovereign distinguishing grace of God and not dependent on any action or condition provided by man.⁷

Acts 11:21-23 speaks of Barnabas seeing the grace of God evidenced in the salvation of the lost.

²¹ “And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number **who believed turned to the Lord**. ²² The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. ²³ Then when he arrived and **witnessed the grace of God**, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord” (Acts 11:21-23).

Those who believed were recipients of grace. Salvation displays God’s grace (Acts 11:21-23). This is an expansive and heavily emphasized element throughout the New Testament. In the incarnation, God became man. A primary purpose for the incarnation is redemptive. This is notable in the following three passages.

- Matthew 1:21 tells us very specifically Jesus “**shall save His people from their sin.**”
- Likewise, Luke 19:10 says Jesus came “**to seek and to save that which was lost.**”
- First John 4:14 tells us, “**The Father sent the Son to be Savior of the world.**”

In the saving of man, God graced him. He condescended. **Without grace**, humanity could not be saved. God had to give him something he did not deserve nor could merit. Salvation is coming to know the grace of God in truth (Col. 1:6).

“which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you **heard** of it and **understood** the grace of God in truth” (Col. 1:6).

There is nothing we can do to deserve it and there is nothing we can do to undo it.

In the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Creator would “become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8). The giver of life would offer up His life in behalf of the dead. The Lawgiver would be delivered into the hands of those who are without law (Acts 2:23 [“wicked hands”). At the hands of warmongers, the prince of peace dies. The creation of His own hands would entomb the Father of all things.

We are freely justified (Rom. 3:24) by his grace because of redemption. His grace makes it free of charge to us. Yet the Father still has a tangible and concrete basis for acting in the way He did. He is therefore just and able to justify sinners who believe in Jesus. **The redemption of**

Christ gives Him the reason or grounds for acting toward us freely in our justification.
Consider the ideas contained in Romans 3:24.

²⁴ being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵ whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶ for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

- **First**, we are justified. In the doctrine of justification, God declares us righteous. He places us into His Son and treats us accordingly. Before God, we are right. Because we could not earn it nor did we deserve it, it had to be by grace.
- **Second**, the word “justified” is a **present passive participle**. Notice that it is a passive voice. **We are the recipient of the action.** We did not do it. We simply received it. Also, notice it is a present participle. This communicates the idea that right now at this very moment we are right with God. In addition, at any time whoever asks can be justified. How can this be? Can such a thought be true? “Yes! Yes!” Moreover, a thousand times, “Yes!” How can such a thing be true? Because of grace!
- **Third**, Paul uses the word “freely.” It means “without a cause, undeservedly.” Rogers and Rogers, notes it to mean, “**As a gift without payment, gratis, for nothing.**”⁸ The idea strengthens the next statement concerning grace.
- **Fourth**, as noted earlier, God can declare us righteous because His Son humbled Himself and became for us what we could not become. He became the payment that was capable of paying off the debt (redemption), setting us free from the penalty of sin and adopting us into His family.

Q5 - What does our salvation by grace exclude?

Q6 - What is the primary purpose of the incarnation?

C. The Durability of Grace as Seen in The Perseverance of The Saints and Progressive Sanctification.

In Galatians 5:1, Paul uses the word “**stand firm**” as a present active imperative. He appeals to our will. He wants us to choose grace.

“It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore, **keep standing firm** and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery” (Gal. 5:1).

As a command, it speaks of an appeal to our will/volition to continue to stand fast in grace. “[The present tense] indicates a continual and habitual action.”⁹ **The idea of standing fast is that of persevering.** We must be determined to live and thus rest in grace.¹⁰ Paul suggests that both liberty and freedom are synonymous with grace. The word “liberty” and “freedom” come from the same root word. It occurs in Galatians 2:4 of those who would seek “to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order that they might bring us into bondage.” We are also exhorted not to use the idea of grace for “an occasion to the flesh” (Gal. 5:13).

“For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another” (Gal. 5:13).

Notice the contrasting idea of grace. It is that of bondage. **The opposite of grace is bondage.** To remove oneself from grace is to “be entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” **Any biblical exposition leading to bondage is the preaching of a false grace.**

Paul’s exhortation to Timothy is “to be strong in grace” (2 Tim. 2:1).

“You therefore, my son, **be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus**” (2 Tim. 2:1).

He uses “be strong” and, like the word for “standing” in Galatians 5:1, it is a **present active imperative**, whereby he appeals to our will to stand firm. This pattern is consistent throughout the New Testament. We as believers are to persevere in grace. We are not to go back to a work mentality nor are we to leave the umbrella of God’s grace. In our desire to obey, please, and serve the Father, there is a natural tendency to see such actions on our part as being meritorious, as if to say, “Look what we have done.” Yet our “working” is the “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22) and generated solely by our identification in Christ (Gal. 2:20) and thus our abiding in the vine (John 15:5).

Such grace occurs only in Christ and in Christ alone. Peter uses the same word and sentence grammar construction of the apostle Paul in 1 Peter 5:12 as Paul did in Romans 5:2.

“Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard him), I have written to you briefly, **exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!**” (1 Pet. 5:12).

“Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Rom. 5:2).

By implication, Peter suggests there could be a false grace. **What is a false grace?** It is a grace coupled together with works. It is a grace that “has begun in the Spirit, but believes you are now made perfect by the flesh” (Gal. 3:3). A grace that depends on God (i.e. **monergistic**) in justification, but looks to man (i.e. **synergistic**) in sanctification is a false grace.

In fact, when it comes to Christian life and experience, many of us have understood the gospel as the thing that *gets* us in, while the thing that then *keeps* us in (we assume) is our own effort and performance. We recognize that the gospel ignites the Christian life, but we often fail to see that it’s also the fuel to keep us going and growing as Christians.¹¹

Dr. Larry Crabb notes,

How foolish can you be? You received life from God by admitting your failure and weakness and trusting in Christ. Do you think you’ll now live that life by doing enough things right to persuade God to give you what you want? You were saved by grace, and you’ll grow by grace. The Law of Linearity is ended.¹²

Q6 – Is it possible to be saved by grace, but to fall back into a work’s righteousness mindset?
Q7 – How might we guard against this?

D. The Illustrations of Grace as Seen in His Service Rendered Through His Saints.

The work of grace by Jesus Christ and through His people is truly unprecedented. First, note a handful of passages exhibiting what His grace toward the undeserving looks like.

1. The sacrificial and substitutionary death on the cross (Rom. 5:6, 8, 10).
2. The forgiving of the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1ff).
3. The forgiven woman who washed His feet with her tears (Luke 7:36-50).
4. The father’s reception and warmth toward his two prodigal sons (Luke 15:11-32).
5. The healing of the ten lepers and the ingratitude of the nine (Luke 17:11-19).

All of these passages speak to the abundance of God’s grace. A grace that loves without condition, accepts without requirement, forgives without limit, favors without merit, and serves without reward.

Now notice how this grace comes through the believer. Ministry/service/good works are an expression of the grace of God (Acts 14:26; 15:40).

“From there they sailed to Antioch, **from which they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had accomplished**” (Acts 14:26).

“But Paul chose Silas and left, **being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord**” (Acts 15:40).

The words “commend and commit” are the same in both passages and mean “to surrender, to yield up.” It most often occurs as the English word “betray.” It has the strong idea of “being given over to.”¹³ **Paul and Barnabas had been “given over to” the grace of God for the work of the ministry.** As servants of God, we are recipients of God’s grace, thus stewards and administrators of the same. If God’s grace is not operative in ministry, we will fail. Grace keeps us faithful. We are to be ministering grace to others (Eph. 4:29).

“Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, **so that it will give grace to those who hear**” (Eph. 4:29).

All that we are in ministry is a result of God’s grace dealings with us. We have what we have because of grace (Rom. 12:3, 6; Eph. 4:7).

³“**For through the grace given to me** I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

. . ⁶ Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith" (Rom. 12:3, 6).

"But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift" (Eph. 4:7).

Because it is all of grace, no one can boast; no one can be jealous, contentious, or combative. This is Paul's primary point in the Book of Romans. Paul saw his ministry because of grace (Rom. 15:14-16; 1 Cor. 3:10). The overwhelming body of evidence provided for us by the biblical record forces us to conclude, **"Salvation by grace; sanctification by grace; service by grace** – it seems clear that God's entire program for His people is one of grace from start to finish."¹⁴

Q8 - If God treats me with grace, how might I treat others?

Q9 - What does grace look like in your life?

Q11 - What does this study cause you to change in your thinking and/or actions?

CONCLUSION

Paul's gospel was of the grace of God (Acts 20:24). Paul recognized that his ministry was given to him by grace and enabled by grace (1 Cor. 15:10; Eph. 3:7, 8; 1 Pet. 4:10). Paul never lost sight of his grace-based ministry (2 Cor. 1:12). We must never forget that all we have and enjoy is a result of grace and empowered by grace. Grace does not exclude our participation. Yet such participation is not viewed as an independent contractor, but rather as a tool used by the Master craftsman.

NEXT LESSON – RG and One's Identity

¹ James Moffatt, *Grace in the New Testament*, 1932, p. xii, xv, 9 [Emphasis added].

² Moffatt, p. xv [Emphasis added].

³ Moffatt, 8.

⁴ Moffatt, 75.

⁵ Cleon L. Rogers, Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers, III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Zondervan, 1998), 178.

⁶ Meyer's NT Commentary on John 1:17.

⁷ http://www.theopedia.com/Grace_alone

⁸ Ibid, 322.

⁹ Rogers and Rogers, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key*, 430.

¹⁰ "Our hard word, therefore, means coming to a greater understanding of *his* work." Tchividjian, *Jesus*, 96.

¹¹ Tchividjian, *Jesus*, 37.

¹² Larry Crabb, *The Pressure's Off: There's a New Way to Live* (Waterbrook Press, 2002), p. 36. Crabb explains the Law of Linearity as "There is an *A* that leads to the *B* you want. Figure out what *A* is, do it, and you'll have the life you most desire." He contrasts this with the Law of Liberty. Where the recipient, "Come as they are. They do not bathe before they approach God. They come to God for the bath." P. 12.

¹³ BAGD, 614.

¹⁴ J. Carl Laney, Jr., "God," in *Understanding Christian Theology*, ed. Charles R. Swindoll and Roy B. Zuck (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003), 191.



Lesson 3

RG and OUR IDENTITY

OPENING STORY

“How To Find Yourself: 11 Ways To Discover Your True Identity”¹

Knowing who you are is a big deal. Unfortunately, we allow the horizontal to define our identity in the vertical. The above cited article offers a lot of “helpful” thoughts concerning your identity in the horizontal, but it does not shape your identity in the vertical.

David Benner, a psychologist and author of the book *The Gift of Being Yourself*, defines identity as “who we *experience* ourselves to be — the I each of us carries within [Emphasis added].”²

Why is this a wrong way to think of identity?

If we reject our vertical identity, then all we have is the horizontal. But if we accept the vertical, then and only then will our horizontal be impacted and changed.

SOME INITIAL THOUGHTS

Although our story speaks to Adam and Eve’s refusal to obey God, their sin became our sin. How is such possible? Two ideas fuse together at this juncture in the *Story*. **First**, Adam and Eve are **Race Progenitor** [Seminal Headship | Physical]. All of humanity existed in the loins of Adam and Eve. We carry within us their DNA. Their sin is intrinsic to our very makeup. Who he is becomes who we are. This is *original sin*. **Second**, Adam is **Race Representative** [Federal Headship | Spiritual]. Because of his position of headship, he represents each part (Rom. 5:12-21). Thus, the Scripture speaks of humanity as **in Adam**. This is *imputation*.

BASIC IDEAS:

1. It is only by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, that anyone can be saved.
2. In Adam, all are condemned. In Christ, all are justified.
3. The need for Jesus never changes regardless of whether one is in Adam or in Christ. One’s relationship to Christ, however, does change.

Who he is forms our identity before God.

In Adam	In Christ
We Are Condemned by Position	We Are Justified by Position
We Are Condemned by Practice	We Are Justified by Practice

Collectively, in Adam, all of humanity is guilty of transgression and condemned. Yet individually, we all like sheep have gone astray (Isa. 53:6). We are in the *Story* through Adam but also by our own choice.

One of the needs we have as Christians is to understand who we were in Adam and who we now are in Christ. This “position” [Race Representative | Federal Headship | Spiritual] causes our identity before the Father. This identity is based on who we are, not in what we do. What we do always comes from who we are.

Our “In Adam” identity necessitated God’s action of grace. The Scripture describes the unbelieving as being “dead in their trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1-3). Because they are neither good nor righteous (Rom. 3:10-12) they are “by nature children of [divine] wrath” (Eph. 2:3). Their present condition is so atrocious that the wrath of God is even now abiding on them (John 3:36). Fortunately, *what we once were, we no longer are*. The Bible describes for us the condition of the lost. The picture painted is anything but flattering. We will attempt to answer three questions:

- **First**, what were we in Adam?
- **Second**, why is salvation by grace and not works?
- **Finally**, what happened to our old self, in Adam, at the cross?

We will begin with the first question.

Why the stress on what we were in Adam? The purpose of the study is to show us our inability. To study our **fallen nature** is to receive a healthy dose of reality. Because all this is true, we need to consider what we are as believers. This is what makes our justification or salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone **so exceptional and essential**. What we could not do, He did. This leads us to consider Ephesians 2:1-10, which provides for us a context to look at His grace holistically. Before we consider Ephesians 2, let us look at Paul’s preceding thoughts in chapter 1.

“In chapter one Paul wrote of the great purposes and plan of God, culminating in the universal headship of Christ.”³ This purpose finds its inception in the salvation of man. The entire passage accents God’s greatness and man’s debasement.

“One of the richest passages about identity in the Bible is found in Ephesians 1:3-14. In this passage, Paul addresses the church in Ephesus, explaining the new identity given to a person when they are in Christ. According to Ephesians 1, we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing; we have been chosen, adopted, redeemed, forgiven, grace-lavished and unconditionally loved and accepted. We are pure, blameless and forgiven. We have received the

hope of spending eternity with God. When we are in Christ, these aspects of our identity can never be altered by what we do.”⁴

Please notice **the literary flow** of the Letter to Ephesus.

Literary Context:

1:1-14 (v. 3 is the thesis, the premise; vv. 4-14 is the evidence)

- Chosen by the Father (v. 4) to the praise of His glorious grace (v. 6)
- Redeemed by the Son (v. 7) to the praise of His glory (v. 12)
- Sealed by the Spirit (v. 13) to the praise of His glory (v. 14)

Paul’s intent is for our minds to explode!

Paul then prays his audience would come to understand how incredible this opening statement is (1:15-23).

- The riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints (v. 18)
- The immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe (v. 19)
- The working of his great might that he worked in Christ (v. 20)
- The placing of Jesus above all rule and authority and power and dominion (v. 21)

This inflated speech extends throughout the entire Letter. The inflated speech, however, isn’t exaggeration, but revelation.

Q1 – What is Paul wanting his audience to hear as he presents his thoughts in chapter 1?

Q2 – What could be our response to all of chapter 1?

Paul then brings us to **GROUND ZERO** in 2:1-10. What begins in chapter 1, shows itself in us. Notice how Paul ends this description in verse 10. Verse 10 speaks of walking in GOOD WORKS. The GOOD WORKS are then noted in CHAPTERS 4 and 5. Chapters 4 and 5 are the fruit of the gospel. Only the gospel can and will cause this. The world always works to produce this without the gospel and it is nothing but Babel. Chapter 6 tells us that this is war, we are wrestling against principalities, power, and spiritual wickedness in high places and we need to see how life is lived in these two competing realms. We live in a very tangible world, but what you see isn’t all there is to see. Ephesians tells us as much.

What we see throughout Ephesians is, “Human depravity is no match for Divine generosity.” Whatever has been is completely swallowed up by what will be. God’s grace always wins.

He then shows us the magnitude of this generosity in 2:11-22.

God causes Jews AND Gentiles to become

- The household of God (v. 19)
- A Holy Temple in the Lord and (v. 21)
- A dwelling place for God by the Spirit (v. 22)

“The faith which God’s grace elicits is for him incompatible with anything like merit, and it is also beyond any racial distinctions; these are the two foci of his ellipse, ‘all is of grace’ and this ‘grace is for all.’”⁵

There is intentional language taking us back to the Garden in Eden and all the way forward to Revelation 21 and 22.

Think about the divisions that form because of differences created by social, economic, and domestic markings in any community. Think about how we view others who are different than us. Now think about what Paul says here and in chapters 4 and 5.

Paul’s intent is for our minds to explode! As we continue to walk through the Letter, chapter 3:1-13 speak of Paul’s stewardship. He is a steward of *this* gospel. The gospel that is sourced and originating in the Triune God, saving sinners and reconciling the alienated and ostracized. It is the gospel where there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28). It is that gospel that Paul preaches.

This gospel takes all who are in Adam and transfers them together into Christ. They become **in Him**, the household, the living temple, and the dwelling place.

Paul’s continued prayer (3:14-21) is for the fullest impact of this immeasurable greatness of His power in and through His Body, the church. Now, let us look at the largest structure for Ephesians.

Chapter 1 – **The Salvation of Humanity**

Chapter 2 – The Sanctuary of Divinity

Chapter 3 – The Glory of the Mystery

Chapter 4 – **Therefore**, . . . [vv. 1, 8, 25]

Chapter 5 – **Therefore**, . . . [vv. 1, 7, 15]

Chapter 6 – **Therefore**, . . . [vv. 13, 14]

Paul’s intent is to note how the people of God move from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son.

Col. 1:13 For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,

This transfer speaks to identity. We once were; now we are.

Now, let us go back to 2:1-10 and look at GROUND ZERO and what we will see is how human depravity is no match for divine generosity. Whatever has been is completely swallowed up by what will be.

RG and One’s Identity

The gospel shapes one's identity. It changes one's identity from being identified by Adam (vv. 1-3) to that of being identified by Christ (vv. 4-10). In Adam, there is nothing but condemnation. In Christ, there is nothing but justification. Both are thorough and both are equally true.

When looking at Ephesians and its sister Letter Colossians, the two are notably similar. "The two epistles seem to have been written and delivered at the same time to the same general area and by the same individual. Paul describes himself as being in prison in both epistles (Eph 3:1; 4:1; 6:20; Col 4:3). Ephesus and Colossae were fairly close in proximity, which would make it easy for both of them to be delivered on the same trip. Both epistles designate Tychicus as the bearer of the epistle to the designated churches, who would 'tell of Paul's state of affairs upon arrival' (Eph 6:21-22; Col 4:7). If Paul's imprisonment is the one referred to in Acts 28, then Tychicus would have delivered the epistles from Rome. If Paul did write these letters at the same time, it might explain why they are so similar in content."⁶

What makes this study of identity in Adam and then in the transforming power of being in Christ so powerful is the historical and theological context of the audience.

Historical Context

- Paul is imprisoned in Rome and writing to the Church in Ephesus.
- Time wise we are at the end of Acts 28 at about 60AD.
- Ephesus was the capital of what is now modern-day Turkey.
- Noted for its Temple to Diana [roman religion] or Artemis [Greek goddess] (Acts 19). One of the seven wonders of the ancient world. In Acts 20, Paul speaks to the Elders of Ephesus and warns them against 'savage wolves' (vv. 17-38).
- Some suggest Paul never met the recipients of this letter. There are no personal names mentioned apart from the person who delivers the letter. This suggests the church was multiplying beyond Paul's initial impact.
- When you think of the capital city of Jerusalem in Israel, the capital city of Ephesus in Asia Minor, and the capital city of Rome in Italy, you can rightly conclude that these people were very diverse caused by distance, culture, ethnicity, society and economy. And **these differences not only caused occasion for division, but were also to be seen as occasion for celebration**. The power of the gospel is able to join people who are very diverse because of distance, culture, ethnicity, society, and economy and yet in Christ we are all one and together we are the household of God. That is amazing. And it is this incredible work of the gospel that the Book of Ephesians celebrates and we are to celebrate as well.

This is possible because human depravity is no challenge, no match to divine generosity.

Q3 - Why are there ethical or cultural divisions in the church?

Q4 - How do we overcome those differences in the church?

"To understand our new identity, we've got to uncover our old identity. We've got to dig deeper into who we were, beyond our ancestry and family of origin, to see the ugly truth. Paul is going

to show us an unfiltered picture of who we really are. [Tony Merida, Pastor for Preaching and Vision of Imago Dei Church, Raleigh, NC]. Before we can understand just how much God has done for us, we must understand where we have come from or better yet, where we were without Christ.”⁷

Let us walk through Ephesians 2:1-10.

I. Human Depravity - THE BELIEVER'S PAST SIN – The Guilt of Humanity (2:1-3 [In Adam - Radical Corruption]).

This paragraph describes for us our identity in Adam. It is our trespasses and sins that cause the deadness. **We were as far removed from God as we could possibly be. In fact, the unbelieving are disciples, followers of the world, the flesh, and the devil. This is what we once were. All of this changed when we came to Jesus. Whereas once we were disciples of Adam, now we are disciples of Jesus.**

A. What does this look like (vv. 2, 3)?

Often the Christian speaks of the world, the devil, and the flesh as the villains within the story of God. Here is where such an idea originates.

1. We walked according to the course of this world (v. 2a)

The idea of “walked” (**parapateo** [Aorist Active Indicative]) speaks to a “course of life, manner or conduct of living. It denotes the notion of a continual, habitual action.” This walking speaks of deliberate progress in a particular direction. You and I are in the Garden, everything out there is Babel.

2. We walked according to the prince of the power of the air . . . according to the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience (v. 2b)

The devil is the temporary ruler of this age or world. He is not an originator or creator but an instigator that provides ample opportunity for humanity to vent their rebellion against God. John 8:44 refers to the devil as being the father of the unbelieving. It is his philosophy of life/death that shapes and molds the thinking of depraved humanity.

The word “working” is the Greek word **energeo**. We have transliterated it into English as *energize*. It is a present active participle. There is within us a spirit that rebels against God and

against those whom God places over us in our lives. We rage against the federal government, we rage against the state government, we rage against community authorities. We rage at our children's teachers, we rage against our employers, we rage within our homes and we rage within the church. This thing that rebels is our fallen flesh and the prince of darkness feeds it through his control of this world system.

3. We lived in the lusts of the flesh (v. 3)

It is our fallen Adamic flesh that makes us anarchists. The unbelieving is in rebellion against God. The fallen world shaped by the prince of darkness appeals to our fallen flesh.

As a consequence of all this, we become . . .

B. What does this result in? We were children of wrath

What a man does can only be explained by what a man is. One's sinfulness is a result of one's inborn depravity. Our very nature demanded the wrath of God.

Just as God wants me to be overwhelmed by His generosity, so also does He want me to be overwhelmed by my depravity. He wants me to say, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner."

Jerry Bridges correctly notes, "We can never rightly understand God's grace until we understand our plight as those who need His grace."⁸

Thankfully, my depravity is no match for His generosity. Whatever has been, is completely swallowed up by what will be. This is God's grace filled act in behalf of undeserving sinners.

Q5 - Is the unbelieving world capable of solving its social problems?

Q6 - What is the only answer to humanity's social problems?

II. Divine Generosity - THE BELIEVER'S PRESENT STANDING – The Grace of God (2:4-10 [In Christ - Radical Conversion]).

This paragraph describes for us our identity in Christ. We are made alive together with Christ (2:4-10). Listen to the generous language of God.

A. Notice the Richness of God's Generosity

2:4 **plousios** [rich] occurs five times in Ephesians.

RG and One's Identity

Riches [ploutos]

- Eph 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to **the riches of his grace**;
- Eph 1:18 Having the eyes of your heart enlightened; that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are **the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints**,
- Eph 2:7 so that in the coming ages **he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus**.
- Eph 3:8 To me, though I am the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles **the unsearchable riches of Christ**;
- Eph 3:16 That **according to the riches of his glory** he might grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being.

Notice God's generous or excessive language.

- 1:3 **spiritual** blessings
- 1:3 **heavenly** places [1:20; 3:10]
- 1:6 **glorious** grace
- 1:19 **immeasurable** greatness [**hyperballo**]
- 1:19 **great** might
- 1:21 **far** above all
- 1:23 the fullness of him who fills all in all
- 2:4 **great** love
- 2:7 **immeasurable** riches of his grace [**hyperballo**]
- 3:8 **unsearchable** riches of Christ
- 3:10 the **manifold** wisdom of God
- 3:11 the **eternal** purpose
- 3:19 to know the love of Christ that **surpasses** knowledge [**hyperballo**]
- 3:20 far more **abundantly** than all that we ask or think

The generosity of God springs up and overflows with such power and magnitude that we cannot contain it nor stand up against it. It is like resisting the advances of an avalanche or tsunami. God's power destroys and kills sin and transforms and rescues sinners.

[Pastor Pete Zolkowski, Sermon - Liberating Limitations: Surrender, •Streamed live on Nov 29, 2020 {@52 Minute Mark}]

"The only thing that can keep us from the love of God is our sin and Jesus paid for it all. It is finished. We can't even pay for it if we wanted to because Jesus already did. We do not have to secure His favor or earn His blessings. Because in Christ God does not love us as we are but He loves us as Jesus is. Now, in Christ, God looks at us and says you are my children. With you I am well please because of what Jesus has already done."

Human depravity is no match for Divine generosity. Whatever has been is completely swallowed up by what will be. This is God's grace filled act in behalf of undeserving sinners.

B. Notice the Consequences of God's Generosity

Because God is generous, three things happened.

- **He made us alive (v. 5)**
- **He saved us by grace (vv. 5a, 8)**
- **He placed us in Christ (v. 6)**

The purpose of the church being made alive, raised up and seated with Him is for this end. Verse seven gives us the reason as to why He did verses five through six. It is **a cosmic display**.

In mercy, He withheld wrath. In love, He looks upon us favorably. In grace, He gives us His life. Our identification with Christ is all an expression of grace. Why is it all of grace? **So that in the ages to come** He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus (v. 7). Here we see the motive of God as to why He did what was done.

We see His grace by His actions.

Verses 8 through 10 answer the why we are this glorious cosmic display.

- God will be glorified BECAUSE | For it is by grace (vv. 8, 9)
- God will be glorified BECAUSE | For we are his workmanship (v. 10)

Paul's intent is for our minds to explode!

"The main thing Paul wants to stress about all this is the sheer, almost unbelievable, magnificent kindness of God."⁹

Paul notes three thoughts in verses 8-10.

- 1. Salvation is a gift from God (v. 8)**
- 2. Salvation leaves no room for boasting (v. 9)**
- 3. Salvation is the good work of God causing good work from God (v. 10)**

Chapters 4 and 5 show us what this looks like in the church.

What these good works look like become apparent in chapters 4-6. The redemption of His people by His means is His triumph and culmination of His story (2:7; 3:10).

Human depravity is no match for Divine generosity. Whatever has been is completely swallowed up by what will be. This is God's grace filled act in behalf of undeserving sinners.

My wife and I enjoy viewing art. I find art beautiful and shadows of the greater craftsman. But when I view the art, I do not simply think the art is beautiful. I also marvel at the gifting that produced such work.

The Church is the redeemed people of God. We are this picture. We are trophies of grace, and it is as we live as the redeemed that this good work of redemption is showcased in our community. The Church glorifies God. Our good works do not point to us, but to Him. God has called us out from the world and into His church. And then from His church into the world.

- Q7 – How is God described in this section of our paragraph and in the Letter to the Ephesian Church?
Q8 – What three things happened because of God being generous?
Q9 – What application can we make from this chapter?
Q10 – What does this study cause you to change in your thinking and/or actions?

CONCLUSION

You and I have “eaten” all the garbage the world has to offer. Only the gospel can cleanse our palate. Ephesians resets our taste buds; it cleans our palate – so that we can “taste” the riches of His grace and see through the clutter of this world and hear more clearly the voice of God instead of the invasive chatter engulfing us all.

The believer must live with the tension that exists in possessing two natures continually in opposition to each other (Rom. 7:14-24). Sanctification is the process by which God renews the mind of the believer to live in light of his new nature rather than his old nature (Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 5:15; Col. 3:1-14; Titus 3:11-12; Eph. 5:8 [Cf. L5]). It is not a process where God cleans up the old nature in order to make it good. The old nature is non-redeemable (Eph. 4:22). The new nature is non-corruptible (Rom 6:9). Choices made, experiences interpreted, truths believed either exist within the framework of our old nature or according to His Spirit living within us. As our choices are made according to His life within us, our new nature shines forth more brilliantly (2 Cor. 3:18; 4:10-11). The good news is Christ always wins and therefore His life within us is always victorious (Rom. 6:5-7; 1 Cor. 15:57; 1 Thess. 5:24; 2 Thess. 3:3-5).

Listen to this powerful conclusion by Dudley Hall.

Grace doesn't just change your destiny, it changes your identity. You're no longer a slave to unrighteousness, but a slave to righteousness. Every chance you get to obey, to submit to Christ, do it. For in this you are establishing righteousness in your life. Then, when you look in the mirror, you will not be tempted to judge yourself by your history but you can, with sincerity of heart, agree with God and judge yourself by your destiny.¹⁰

NEXT LESSON – RG and the Cross

¹ <https://www.aconsciousrethink.com/10395/how-to-find-yourself/>

² <https://www.cru.org/us/en/blog/life-and-relationships/identity/who-am-i-a-new-way-to-define-identity.html>

³ *NIV Study Bible*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002).

⁴ <https://www.cru.org/us/en/blog/life-and-relationships/identity/who-am-i-a-new-way-to-define-identity.html>

⁵ James Moffatt, *Grace in the New Testament*, p. 9.

⁶ <https://www.onenesspentecostal.com/ephcolossians.htm>

⁷ <https://jasonlsneed.com/2017/02/15/ephesians-your-identity-in-christ-part-2/>

⁸ Jerry Bridges, *Transforming Grace*, p. 32.

⁹ N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone*, 20.

¹⁰ Dudley Hall, *Grace Works* (Multnomah Pub., 2000), 263.



Lesson 4

RG and the CROSS

“For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (Gal. 5:1).

THE BIG PICTURE – THE Story

As noted in lesson one entitled, “Why Grace,” the red ball in Newton’s Cradle is the Gospel. Regrettably, our view of the gospel is somewhat stunted. To speak of the gospel, is to speak of God’s *Story* and to speak of God’s *Story* is to speak of the person and work of Jesus. Jesus is that “red ball.” Everything in God’s *Story* comes from, is sustained by, and flows back to Him (Col. 1:16; 1 Cor. 8:6). Nothing in the Bible or in this world can make sense apart from Him. This lesson enables us to see just how foundational the gospel is in everything that follows.

Each lesson walks us into the next. This lesson speaks to the grace gift freely given from God to His people.

BASIC IDEAS:

1. The Bible tells a single Story and at the center of this Story is JESUS.
2. Who JESUS is and what JESUS does form the basis for anyone’s relationship and standing before the FATHER.
3. Who JESUS is and what JESUS does is enough for this life and for the life to come.
4. Works cannot maintain what God gives by grace. His work in behalf of His people is irrevocable.

AN INTRODUCTION

Listen to this opening comment by James Moffatt.

It is pardon and more than mere pardon, for He reinstates men in His favor, treating them as worthy and accepting them in spite of the past. This is the marvel of His grace. Indeed, Paul now can use the word ‘grace’ for the revelation of the divine *dikaiosuna* [righteousness] in Jesus Christ: it is the only adequate term to describe this saving action and attitude of God, as **He treats men better than they deserve**, moving on His own initiative to rescue them, and to rescue them from their plight so generously, at such a cost. **For this supreme manifestation of God’s ‘righteousness’ the apostle requires a new term, and it is none other than ‘the grace of God.’** [Emphasis added]¹

*"The story of the Cross, i.e. not a mere description of how Jesus was executed but an explanation of why he was put to death and why death was not the last word upon his life – this might be sheer folly or nonsense to pagans, Paul admits, but for us whom God saves it is the power of God."*²

*"This 'kerugma' or Christian message was a scandal to Jews and sheer folly to Gentiles, Paul admits, this message of Christ the crucified. Not the mere fact that Jesus had been crucified. Such capital punishment for slaves was familiar. Not even the fact that a good man had been unjustly murdered by the authorities. It was not Jesus as a victim or a martyr, it was Jesus as Christ, as the Lord who had risen from the dead, that made Christianity at once a living faith and a shocking offence to Jews and Gentiles. In other words, it was the 'grace' of this action that constituted the distinctive element in the Christian gospel."*³

As one who is perhaps new to the relational truth of the Christian faith, it is necessary to begin informing the mind so that one might enjoy all they are in Christ. **The Bible makes a strong distinction between living under the Law and living under grace (Rom. 6:15) and of being in bondage versus being set free (Gal. 5:1).** The Christian is to learn to live in the freedom Christ has set them free. Such truth moves the believer from "having to," to "wanting to." It moves the believer from the sphere of duty to that of desire.

Larry Crabb calls this the Law of Linearity versus the Law of Liberty.

People who live the Old Way believe the *Law of Linearity*, a law that states there is an *A* that leads to the *B* you want. Figure out what *A* is, do it, and you'll have the life you most desire. The pressure's on.

People who live the New Way believe the *Law of Liberty*. They come as they are. They do not bathe before they approach God. They come to God for the bath. They feel no pressure to change either their inner life or their outer life, but they *desire* change in both spheres.⁴

We are not to live in the arena of punishment, but of pardon. We are to cease our doing and begin to enjoy our resting.

The majority of believers have embraced a freedom from hell's damnation, only to live in bondage to their daily sin and a performance-based acceptance before God. They have never tasted true freedom. They are like the institutionalized inmate who upon gaining a complete pardon has no idea how to function in freedom and so goes back to finding safety in the routines of their imprisonment [The Shawshank Redemption].

The Shawshank Redemption - Death of Brooks Hatlen

Among the many issues raised by the film, The Shawshank Redemption, the possibility of leaving prison and rejoining society after an extensive period of time. In the film, we see the words "Brooks Was Here" carved into a wooden overhang with a pocket knife of

an aged ex-con was the culmination of the side story of Brooks Hatlen, released after a sentence at Shawshank State Prison, spanning nearly 50 years 1905 to 1954. Specifically, his suicide makes manifestly heartfelt the notion Morgan Freeman's character, whose name is Red, refers to as becoming "institutionalized", meaning adjusted to life within an institution apart from a larger society, from which release represents essentially capital punishment. News of the suicide of Brooks Hatlen wrestles the desire of prisoners to leave or escape prison life and perplexes them about their own fate, instilling fear and anxiety about the outside world.⁵

Or they are like the slave who has been released only to remain as a slave. Neither knows how to act or behave. They are both free but still act as if they are in bondage.

The Bible was given in order that we might know God. It was not given to be a rulebook or an end in itself. It was given so that we might see Him. **God gave us the Bible, not to tell us how to live, but that we might see what He is like.** There is a world of difference between those two ideas.

"The Gospel announces that we are justified by grace through faith: not by what we do, or even who we are, but by what Christ has done and who he is. Our guilt has been atoned for, the Law fulfilled. In Christ, the ultimate demand has been met, and the deepest judgment satisfied. In his death and resurrection, our sin was imputed to him, his righteousness to us. Note the past tense: This is not up for grabs. Something has been accomplished, and that something is total. Remember, Christ's dying words from the cross are 'It is finished.' Which means that as far as God is concerned, the performance is at an end – gold stars all around."⁶

Initially, when one believes in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of their soul, ignorance abounds. The recipient of Christ is often completely ignorant of the tremendous theological truth that had transpired and is transpiring all around them [National Treasure when they find the Templar's Treasure]. It is not necessary to know all of this to be saved. It is necessary, however, to know all of it in order to "know all you are in Him and He is for you." It is only when we learn the truth that we can truly rest in His finished work. It is for this reason, Peter calls us "to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18).

Alignment with God's *Story* flows from the person and work of Jesus Christ. His life provides the perfect sacrifice whereby His death becomes efficacious [powerful, effective]. His life and death are the means whereby God can placate His justice and pardon His people. To understand the richness of His work is to align with His *Story* and to live in His rest.

There are several primary words found throughout the New Testament that will facilitate our study. Each of these words describe the extent of God's work in behalf of His people. Knowing each word should fill one's heart with humble worship. Initially, we will work in the Book of Romans, but our study will quickly expand to other New Testament books. Although there is no necessary sequence to God's gracious work, I suggest the following order as a logical, but not absolute sequence.

Q1 – Why do you think living under Law brings comfort to some?

Q2 – Why do you think living under grace causes problems for others?

We begin with . . .

“In the Scriptures no doctrine is given in isolation from another, but one doctrine is intertwined with an imbedded in another. So also sanctification is presente4d in, with, and under other doctrines. Though dogmatics lays out its task in topics of loci, the Scriptures do not.”⁷

I. REDEMPTION

His work of REDEMPTION enables debt to be cancelled (Rom. 3:24)

“being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24).

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:7).

“so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons” (Gal. 4:5).

“in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:14).

“who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds” (Titus 2:14).

“and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption” (Heb. 9:12).

Just a simple reading of these verses carries tremendous power. The word itself is found in excellent company. **Redemption is the basis for forgiveness and propitiation.**

The English word redemption means “repurchase” or “buy back,” and in the Old Testament referred to the ransom of slaves (Exodus 21:8). In the New Testament the redemption word group is used to refer both to **deliverance from sin and freedom from captivity.**

The word “redemption” presupposes debt and bondage. Inherent within the word is the idea of buying back. As it relates to our sin debt, it speaks of its **complete and full cancellation.** When Christ redeemed us, He **paid in full** our sin debt before the Father.

Understanding what God’s activity presupposes is important. Listen to the following statement.

James Moffatt notes, “Unless the wrath of God on the disobedient and defiant was real, reconciliation could not be real, and with the Wrath on sinners went the judgment on both saints and sinners.”⁸

Because we do believe God's judgment rests on those who reject His gift of deliverance, the cross becomes essential and unavoidable.

To save us, Christ had to pay the debt because of our own inability to do so. When He paid the debt, He did so in full. He did not leave any behind. None was left for us to consider. Never can we be a debtor to God for our sin. As far as our Father is concerned, the sin issue has been addressed in full. Human depravity is no match for divine generosity. "We cannot out spend God." [Joe Herriges; 2020]

What are the implications of such a thought?

- The Father will never bring up the sin issue again. Why? Because He has dealt with it in full. To bring it up would be to minimize the redemptive act of Christ.
- We now can live in a "debt-free relationship" with the Father as it relates to the sin issue. If the debt has been canceled in full, can we now once more become a debtor?
- There is no possibility of going into debt again. We do not have to start all over again and try to keep the slate clean. There is no more slate. God is not keeping score, granting or withholding blessings on the basis of our performance.⁹

Q3 – What debt has Christ cancelled by paying it for us?

Q4 – Does the cancellation of that debt by Jesus continue to this day?

II. FORGIVENESS

His redemptive work secures His ability to FORGIVE our transgressions against Him.

"be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven [charizomai] you" (Eph. 4:32).

"when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven [charizomai] us all our transgressions" (Col. 2:13).

"I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven [aphiemi] you for His name's sake" (1 John 2:12).

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines forgiveness as "to grant free pardon and to give up all claim on account of an offense or debt." God's forgiveness is not based on what we do, but what He does. His forgiveness of us is gracious on His part by providing the means for forgiveness to take place. He sends our sins away. This idea is captured in Psalm 103:12 and Micah 7:19.

"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us" (Ps. 103:12).

"He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, you will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19).

Forgiveness is a pardoning whereby the sentence against us is dropped. God's forgiveness of us negates sin's eternal consequence because of the cross. However, our forgiveness of others cannot negate the intrinsic demerit of sin.

What are the implications of such truth?

- Because God dealt with our sin in full, we never lack His immediate and unconditional forgiveness.
- We need not ask for what is already ours in Christ before the Father.

Q5 – Will God ever address our sins again?

III. PROPITIATION

The life and death of Jesus Christ enables the Father's justice to be addressed and His wrath to be PROPITIATED (Rom. 3:25).

"whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed" (Rom. 3:25).

"Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation [atonement] for the sins of the people" (Heb. 2:17).

"and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10).

"**'Hilasmos'** in 1 John 2:2 and 1 John 4:10, refers to the death of Jesus with a nuance of meaning similar to the extrabiblical Greek usage: a sacrifice that appeases the wrath of God and makes God propitious (favorable) towards human beings."¹⁰

The word "propitiation" has to do with anger and wrath. **Only God is propitiated.** He is wrathful against the sinner's sin. To propitiate means, "To placate, satisfy, or appease."

Our sin violates the justice of God soliciting the wrath of God. Only Jesus can satisfy His justice and thus, appeasing His wrath.

In Christian theology, propitiation is accomplished through Jesus Christ on the cross in his crucifixion and sacrifice. He fulfilled the wrath and indignation of God. The crucifixion and sacrifice of Christ pacify God, who would otherwise be offended by human sin and would demand penalty for it.

What are the implications of such truth?

- If the death of Christ sufficiently and effectually removes the object of God's wrath thus placating His anger and satisfying His justice, then God can never be angry with us again.
- We will never face God's anger. God will never be angry with those who participate in the propitiating work of Christ before the Father.

Let us not fear such freedom, but let us tremble at the sheer joy of its glory as it is but a whisper of His voice and the hem of His garment.

IV. JUSTIFICATION

Because His person and work are so vast, God the Father can now declare and see those in Christ as RIGHTEOUS. (Rom. 3:22).

The word **JUSTIFICATION** means "to declare righteous." The Reformation was fought over whether or not it meant "to declare" or "to make." Protestants believe it means, "To declare."

"nevertheless knowing that a man is **not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus**, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified" (Gal. 2:16).

¹⁸ "so then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so **through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.** ¹⁹ For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous" (Rom. 5:18, 19).

"even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction" (Rom. 3:22).

"**being justified as a gift by His grace** through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24).

"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, **so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him**" (2 Cor. 5:21).

In a positional sense, we are what Christ is. The practical outworking of this is the putting on of the new and the putting off the old by the renewing of one's mind (Eph. 4:22-24). We only act on what is already true. Our action does not make it true. By so doing, our Lord is seen in our earthen vessels. Any righteousness in us, is His righteousness. This is what Ephesians 5:9 and Philippians 1:11 are referring. Our righteousness is actually the outworking of His righteousness in us. It is as we become aware of what He is that we are desirous of putting on those qualities that will reveal Christ to others through us.

Jerry Bridges shows the meaning of justification by comparing it to reconciliation with the following explanation.

God not only blots our sins from His record, He also remembers them no more. This expression means He no longer holds them against us. the blotting out of our transgressions is a legal act. It is an official pardon from the Supreme Governor. The remembering them no more is a relational act. If you have trusted in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation, you are both justified (a legal act) and reconciled (a relational act).¹¹

Justification by faith will always bring forth the fruit of righteousness (Rom. 2:13, 15). This is the argument of the Letter of James. It is not the works of the Law that justify, but a justifying faith that produces adherence to the Law. Faith alone saves, but saving faith is never alone. Only the justified can “keep” Law. **Yet the justified keep the Law only so far as Christ kept the Law. His Law-keeping kept the Law for us. Thus, in Adam, we were once idol-makers and law-breakers, but now in Christ, we are commandment keepers.** We do not have to because He did/does. It is the enabling power of God quickening us that equips us to fulfill His demands upon us (Rom. 8:10). Our conformity to the will of God is because of His conformity to the will of His Father. Our conformity is a result of His conformity. **We are because He is.** It is only as we understand the nature of God’s grace that we can live righteously (Titus 2:11-15).

What are the implications of such a thought?

- Practically, nothing changed. In justification, one is still a sinner, yet a saint. One’s acceptance by God rests solely on who Jesus is and what He did, not on who we are or will do.¹²
- If justification is seen in light of the context within Romans, then to be right with God is to be justified. It is impossible not to be right with God if one is justified.
- Justification or being right with God is not based on how we feel, but on who He is.
- “‘Justification’ is not permission to wait in an antechamber, it is admission to the inner presence of God.”¹³

Q6 – Is it possible for us through our actions to undo what Christ has done through His?

V. BLAMELESSNESS

God’s redemptive work justifies the ungodly and REMOVES FROM THEM ALL GUILT before His judgment seat (Rom. 3:19)

“Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable (guilty) to God” (Rom. 3:19).

Prior to the cross, we stand guilty. After the cross, such is no longer the case. We are blameless.

Listen to the language of the Apostle Paul.

²³ “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete [**holotelos**], without blame [**amemptos**] at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass” (1 Thess. 5:23, 24).

¹⁵ “**that you may be blameless and innocent**, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:15).

¹³ “**so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God** and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints {saints: or, holy ones, or, angels}” (1 Thess. 3:13).

God is the one who causes us to be blameless. This blameless standing before the Father is unachievable by human hands. Only Jesus, sent by the Father, can do such a thing for guilty sinners.

What are the implications of such truth?

- We will never be punished by the Father for our sin.
- For the Father to punish us for our sin would be to declare our Lord’s punishment inadequate.

Should a believer “feel guilty” when they sin against God? Absolutely, for sin has an intrinsic culpability. The feeling of guilt should make us glad. However, such guilt is not before the Father. The Father is not holding you liable and He will not extract from you the punishment intrinsic to the sin. Those who “feel” no guilt in sinning have many challenges facing them.

VI. IMPUTATION

The Father’s justice is able to be satisfied because He PLACES ON His Son the sins of the rebel and TRANSFERS TO the rebel His Son’s righteousness (Rom. 4:6-8)

In *How People Change*, Timothy Lane and Paul Tripp note the following in the chapter titled, “Married to Christ.”

This is what happens when we become Christians. **Christ assumes our liabilities and graciously gives us his assets.** This is God’s amazing grace.¹⁴

Positively considered, it means that we have the righteousness of Christ credited to our account (4:6). We are, because of Him, as righteous as Jesus Christ is. It is an **alien righteousness**. It is not indigenous to us. Because of the doctrine of imputation, we have all the necessary resources to meet any charge brought against us.

Negatively considered, God will never credit sin to our account (4:8). Romans 4:6-8 is a quotation from Psalm 32:1, 2. David longed to be this man though such an **experience** was foreign to him. He still felt God’s heavy hand against him. Truly, the man who was not credited with sin would be a blessed man.

Listen to the language of the New Testament.

“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, **so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him**” (2 Cor. 5:21).

“For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even **so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous**” (Rom. 5:19).

We have His righteous laid on us. It is His righteousness that is now seen by the Father.

What are the implications of such truth?

- New Testament believers are blessed. Though omniscience sees sin, **God will never credit it to their account**. God will never count or consider sin against the New Testament believer.
- God will always deal with us as righteous and He will never deal with us according to our sin.

Q7 – How does the Father see you when you sin?

VII. RECONCILIATION

By placating God's justice, the rebel is RECONCILED to the Father.

“For if while we were enemies we were **reconciled** to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been **reconciled**, we shall be saved by His life” (Rom. 5:10).

“Now all these things are from God, who **reconciled** us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of **reconciliation**” (2 Cor. 5:18).

“yet He has now **reconciled** you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach” (Col. 1:22).

“The word ‘reconciliation’ refers to the process of changing something thoroughly and adjusting it to something else that is a standard. For example, when you adjust your watch to a time signal, you are reconciling the watch to a time standard. Or when you reconcile your checkbook, the standard to which you match it is the bank's record of your account. On rare occasions the bank must reconcile its accounts to yours.”¹⁵

If propitiation is the negation of judgment, reconciliation is the positive embracing of the one pardoned. Reconciliation is a relationship word. It is because we have been reconciled to the Father, we now have fellowship with the Father. Reconciliation is possible because God's judgment against sin has been placated.

There is nothing we can do to undo what God has done.

VIII. NEW IDENTITY

What we once were IN ADAM has been swallowed up by what we now are IN CHRIST.

The New Testament believer is described as being in Christ. The term is synonymous with salvation (Rom. 8:1; 2 Cor. 5:19; Eph. 1:20 [the occurrences are too numerous to cite]). No one in Christ can be lost. The preposition “in” is a locative of sphere. To be in Christ is to be in the realm of His ownership, identification, association, fellowship, and presence.

“In Christ” is an expression of intimate interrelatedness, analogous to the air that is breathed: it is in the person, yet at the same time, the person is in it.¹⁶

The opposite is equally true. Not to be in Christ is to be lost. Not to be in Christ is to be in Adam. In Christ, we have justification. In Adam, we have condemnation. No one can be in Him and out of Him at the same time. Such a statement raises the question as to whether or not the Father ever sees us apart from His Son. The answer must be no. For Him to see us apart from His Son assures us of our lost estate. Our heavenly Father never sees us apart from being “in Christ.”

Self-righteousness shows itself in a search for one’s own identity apart from relationship. Identity is sought in performance, position, and success. But let’s face it, you will never have an identity except in your relationship with Jesus. In Christ, you are important. Outside of him, you are lost.¹⁷

Our identity before the Father is who we are in Christ, not what we do. What we do flows from who we are.

Reconciliation presupposes alienation. Whereas, once we were enemies, now we are allies and friends.

Q8 – There is a symbiotic relationship in all of these ideas. How would you go about describe what God in Jesus has done for His people?

IX. ADOPTION

As a result of God’s REDEPTIVE activity, His people are once more ADOPTED into His family.

“so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive **the adoption as sons**” (Gal. 4:5).

“**He predestined us to adoption as sons** through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will” (Eph. 1:5).

Adoption presupposes without parents.

Whatever existed prior to the fall is restored with a recognition that everything changed and is changing. The same idea of intimacy and purpose prior to the fall continues to this day. Adoption enables the alienated to participate in the inheritance.

CONCLUSION

This is the truth we are called upon to believe. We have drawn too sharp of a distinction between what we are in Christ and the continuing battle we have with the old nature. **We have allowed ourselves to make our failed experiences and submission to the old nature as our defining points.** This is woefully catastrophic. The purpose of this short study was to see that Jesus Christ is enough in this life and in the life that is to come. There is nothing and no one who can be for us what we are in Him. Who we are in Him is not determined by our activity or ability. There is nothing more that must be done for us to acquire what is already ours. Nothing can alter His opinion of us or His dealings with us. Why? Because He deals with us according to the merit of His Son and on the basis of grace alone.

Q9 – What was a big idea for you from this lesson?

Q10 – What thoughts did you find challenging or perhaps too much to believe?

NEXT LESSON – RG and the Christian Life

¹ James Moffatt, *Grace in the New Testament*, p. 214.

² James Moffatt, *Grace in the New Testament* (New York: Ray Long & Richard R. Smith, 1932), 85.

³ Moffatt, *Grace in the New Testament*, 88-89.

⁴ Larry Crabb, *The Pressure's On*, pp. 12, 13.

⁵ <https://steemit.com/life/@coolmoniker/the-shawshank-redemption-death-of-brooks-hatlen>

⁶ *Law and Gospel*, 61-62.

⁷ David Scaer, "Sanctification," *Concordia Journal*: Vol. 41: No. 3, Article 6.

⁸ James Moffatt, *Grace in the New Testament*, p. 213.

⁹ Jerry Bridges, *Transforming Grace*, 21.

¹⁰ <http://helpmewithbiblestudy.org/2JesusChrist/print/AtonementExpiationVsPropitiation.pdf>

¹¹ Jerry Bridges, *Transforming Grace*, pp. 41, 42.

¹² The idea expressed in this statement is to acknowledge that we are saved while sinners. Although everything does change in our relationship to God and sin, we are the same person after our conversion as we were before. It is a nod to the Lutheran phrase, "Simultaneously just and sinners." Listen to how R.C. Sproul explains the idea. "Perhaps the formula that Luther used that is most famous and most telling at this point is his formula *simul justus et peccator*. And if any formula summarizes and captures the essence of the Reformation view, it is this little formula. *Simul* is the word from which we get the English word simultaneously. Or, it means 'at the same time.' *Justus* is the Latin word for just or righteous. And you all know what *et* is. It simply means and. *Peccator* means sinner. And so with this formula Luther was saying, in our justification we are one and the same time righteous or just, and sinners." <http://www.ligonier.org/blog/simul-justus-et-peccator/>

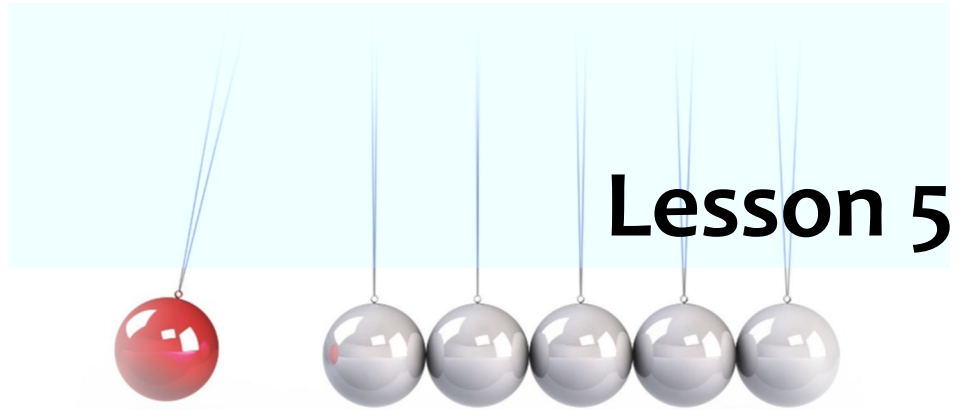
¹³ James Moffatt, *Grace in the New Testament*, p. 219.

¹⁴ [Emphasis added] Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp, *How People Change* (New Growth Press, 2006), 55. This is an excellent chapter on the believer's union with Christ.

¹⁵ <http://www.realtime.net/~wdoud/topics/reconciliation.html>

¹⁶ R. David Rightmire, "Union with Christ," in *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 789.

¹⁷ Hall, *Grace Works*, 87.



Lesson 5

RG and the CHRISTIAN LIFE

THE BIG PICTURE - THE Story

As noted in our last lesson, “The Cross,” the person and work of Jesus produces the Christian life. *There is no fruit if there is no root.* Again, as we begin, let us not forget to constantly work from and drive back to the gospel, for Jesus is the gospel.

The *Story* God told/tells is one of progression and movement. It begins with God in the Garden and moves toward the end where all things created will glorify Him in the final Garden. The Christian Life, broadly speaking, is the unfolding of the *Story* from its beginning with creation, rejection, redemption, re-creation, and toward its fullest expression in worship. This chapter notes the progression of the *Story* within the individual’s story. Just like the larger *Story*, so also the smaller story within the individual. God is moving each of us from creation, through fall, to worship.

“We are not struggling *for* our sanctification. We are struggling *through* our sanctification.” [Joe Herriges, 2020]. Sanctification is something we already have.

“I can only workout my sanctification, because God is working in my sanctification.”¹

INITIAL TRUTHS TO REMEMBER

It is important to see the link between THE CROSS (Cf. Lesson 4) and THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. The Christian Life grows out of the Gospel. They are not two different things, but two sides of one coin.

BASIC IDEAS:

1. The Christian Life from start to finish and everything in between is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.
2. Resting in the Finished Work of Christ is the means producing our sanctification.
3. The Christian Life is Christ’s Life.
4. The Christian cannot stop God from completing what He began (1 Thess. 5:23, 24; 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5).
5. What God gives to us [i.e. His life], He works in us and through us to those around us. Thus, Christians live righteous lives.

One of the reformer's summary statements reads as follows: "Faith alone saves; but saving faith is never alone."² The apostle James says as much in James 2:14-27.

Words like sanctification, good works, and discipleship might have their own distinct nuances, but they are working synonyms. If this is true, then it will shape how we look at each of these ideas.

OVERVIEW OF THE LESSON

In light of who we are in Christ, what does this look like in our daily lives? The answer lies in the area of, "Sanctification." Sanctification is the theological word for what we call the *Christian Life*. **It is the experiential side of the Christian.** For many of us, the idea or word "sanctification" appears foreign to our vocabulary. Yet it is a biblical word that needs explanation.

Before embarking on the study, we must remind ourselves never to lose sight of Him. First Corinthians 1:30 tells us that Jesus Christ is our sanctification.

²⁶ "for consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; ²⁷ but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, ²⁸ and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, ²⁹ so that no man may boast before God. ³⁰ **But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,** ³¹ so that, just as it is written, 'LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD'" (1 Cor. 1:26-31).

Because this is true, the sanctified can never boast in themselves. Sanctification as an action is God working Himself in us and through us to those around us. **Sanctification as such is not about us, but Him.** The Bible does not emphasize what we do for God, but rather what God does for us. It is essential that we never lose sight of this truth.

With this in mind, let us begin our study.

Q1 – Where [or What] is our focus in Sanctification?

I. What is Biblical Sanctification?

Sanctification is one of those thousand-dollar theological words that many use and few understand. This has led to ask the question, "What is sanctification?" However, before we can answer the question we need to provide some background material so the question can be asked in its proper theological context.

Salvation as an idea is broad, inclusive, and generic. We use it to describe what happens to an individual who trusts the finished work of Christ for his or her deliverance from sin's penalty

and inauguration/adoption into the family of God. However, the umbrella term “salvation” has under it several very exact and definite ideas such as redemption, forgiveness, propitiation, justification, etc. [Lesson 4]. The One who begins the process in our justification guarantees the outcome in our sanctification.

²³ “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Faithful is He who calls you, and **He also will bring it to pass**” (1 Thess. 5:23, 24).

Biblical sanctification recognizes the fullness of God’s work in behalf of His people as constant and unchanging. It speaks of who they are in Christ because of what He did in their behalf. **There is nothing done by them to secure for them what only He could do.** Moreover, nothing they do can change what He did. The New Testament describes sanctification (salvation) with three tenses: past, present, and future.³

- **Past Sanctification**

(1 Cor. 6:11; **Col. 1:13, 14**; 2:12-14; Heb. 10:10, 14
[justification {delivered from the *penalty* of sin}])

¹³ “He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,
¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:13, 14).

- **Present Sanctification**

(1 Cor. 1:2; Rom. 12:1-2; **2 Cor. 5:17; 3:18**
[sanctification {being delivered from the *power* of sin}])

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

- **Perfect Sanctification**

(**1 Cor. 15:52-58**, 1 John 3:2, Phil. 3:20, 21
[glorification {will be delivered from the *presence* of sin}]).

⁵¹ Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” ⁵⁵ “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain” (1 Cor. 15:52-58).

Each of the previous thoughts are all generated by God for His people. There is nothing done by the recipient except to accept what God has done. Our past sanctification speaks of our present perfect standing before the Father as we are in His Son. Our perfect future sanctification is what we will be experientially after the removal of our old nature. Our present sanctification is the outworking of what we currently are in the context of our dual nature (i.e., old and new [Cf. Lesson 3]).

“While we struggle with residual sin and unbelief as individuals, sanctification like justification is complete in the church as Christ’s body. Though from our perspective our good works are incomplete, from God’s perspective they are complete.”⁴

This movement from our past to our future happens in and through our present. This present is progressing, it is growing, and it is being transformed.

Q2 – Is our sanctification something we do or something He does? Please explain your answer.

Q3 – Can we rest in His finished work even in our sanctification?

II. What Exactly Does the Word “Transformed” Mean (Rom. 12:2)?

The word *transformed* in the Greek is our English word *metamorphosis*. It is used four times in the New Testament. Twice it is used with reference to our Lord’s transfiguration on Mt. Hermon (Matt. 17:2; Mark 9:2). In addition, twice it is used of the believer being transformed or changed (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18). It means, “To change into another form.”

“And was **transfigured** before them: and his face shone as the sun, and his garments became as white as light” (Matt. 17:2).

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be **transformed** by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom. 12:2).

“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being **transformed** into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18).

The change that took place in our Lord was not a change of essence but one of appearance. The transfiguration simply showed to others what was inside, what was already true. It was a reversal of the incarnation. The veil of flesh lifted and they saw what He was like in His pre-incarnate state. **So also, is our sanctification. It is a change in appearance.** It is not a change of essence. Thus, our sanctification does not change who we already are in Christ. In regeneration, there is not a changing of the old nature, but a giving of the new nature. Moreover, it is this new nature seen through our earthen vessels (2 Cor. 4:6-12).

At the resurrection, the believer’s transformation will be complete. He will exchange the perishable for the imperishable (1 Cor. 15:50-54). The old vanishes and the new is manifested

unhindered. At that moment “we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). In light of this, let us go back to the idea of sanctification.

Q4 – Does our sanctification change who we are in Christ?

Q5 – What part of us is changed in sanctification?

III. Revisiting the Idea of Sanctification

As noted earlier, salvation as a whole cannot be dichotomized and separated. Each part must be examined in light of the whole. When considering the area of justification, it must also include sanctification. The two, although distinct, are inseparably linked. This is equally true concerning the idea of progressive sanctification and perseverance. The sanctifying work of God in and through His people looks like the perseverance of the saints. The whole action rests in the immutable activity of God. Thus, **those whom God preserves persevere.**

Sanctification is the present outworking in and through our dual natures of what is true as to who we are in Him. The Bible makes sanctification a work of God in and through His people. If, however, sanctification is the work of God, then what do we do?

Q6 – Is it possible for the sanctifying work of God to fail in His people?

IV. What Part Do We Play in Our Sanctification?

The issue here is whether the idea of progressive sanctification is a monergistic act (i.e. work of one) or a synergistic act (i.e. to work with, the work of two). Before attempting to define the two ideas, let us preface our thoughts by saying **God’s work of sanctifying His people does not bypass their intellect, their volition or will, or their emotions or affections.** God works in the individual in order that the individual is fully working toward the divinely established goal of complete glorification. With this thought in mind, let us consider the two ideas of monergism and synergism.

• Monergism defined

Monergism is a compound word literally meaning “one work.” A monergistic work is the work of one. Evangelicals believe initial salvation (i.e. our justification) is the singular work of God. God works alone.

“Jesus is as much the doer of the good works as he is the recipient.”⁵

Even though initial salvation is considered a monergistic work, it still includes an expressed faith on the part of the individual as the agent or means of securing God’s provision. Yet, many within evangelicalism see the expressed faith as being sourced in God and energized by Him.

In justification, neither the intellect, will, nor affection of the individual are overlooked or bypassed by the Holy Spirit. The response of man to God is real and necessary.

- **Synergism defined**

Synergism means “work with.” A synergistic work is the work of two. Unlike initial justification, most evangelicals view progressive sanctification as a synergistic work whereby the believer *cooperates* with God and God works through the obedience of the individual for his sanctification.

Inside of a synergistic mindset, without obedience or the fruit of the Spirit, the individual would never be progressively sanctified. This raises the question as to whether or not obedience is optional or necessary. I will examine this idea thoroughly under the New Testament Commands (Cf. Lesson 7), but initially I would state that although obedience is not automatic, it is inevitable. By saying it is not automatic, it is implied that God’s sanctifying activity does not bypass the intellect, will, or affections of the individual. “Believers are thus both passive and active in their sanctification.”⁶ A concern we have with a synergistic sanctification is the division often created between our justification and our sanctification. If “our” faith was not a synergistic work in our justification, why would “our” faith/obedience be a synergistic work in our sanctification? In sanctification, neither the intellect, nor the will, nor affection of the individual are overlooked or bypassed by the Holy Spirit. **The response of man to God is real and essential, although not necessary.**

Regardless as to whether or not one uses the word monergism or synergism for either justification or sanctification, **the issue is on whom the emphasis is placed.**

“Self-sanctification, that is, somehow generating holiness by one’s own efforts, is an impossibility. We can no more self-sanctify than we can self-deify.”⁷

“Holiness is a 100% God thing and a 0% human thing.”⁸

Thus, in justification and in sanctification neither the intellect, will, nor affection of the individual are overlooked or bypassed by the Holy Spirit. The response of man to God is real and necessary, yet it is God who works both to will and to do according to His good pleasure and nothing man does or can do can stop God from finishing what He has begun.⁹

²³ “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ **Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass**” (1 Thess. 5:23, 24).

¹² “So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ **for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure** (Phil. 2:12, 13).

Q7 – Does God’s work of sanctification bypass our will?

Q8 – Is God’s work of sanctification dependent on our will?

V. The Means of Sanctification

Often, we view the New Testament imperative/command as the means of achieving sanctification or measuring sanctification (Cf. Lesson 7). This, however, is a misunderstanding of the imperative. Consider the following Biblical descriptions.

- Sanctification is said to be by God (1 Thess. 5:23, 24)

“We are not the active doers but the faithful recipients of the divine gift of sanctification.”¹⁰

“Sanctification is a Trinitarian act. God dwells in the believer in order to accomplish what He wants.”¹¹

- Sanctification comes from union with Christ (1 Cor. 1:2)

“Sanctification is first christological, that is, it is Christ’s own life in God and then our life in Him.”¹²

“Christ is as much our sanctification as he is our righteousness.”¹³

- Sanctification comes by the Word of God (John 17:17)
- Sanctification comes through the death of Christ and the shedding of His blood (Heb. 10:10; 13:12)

“The sanctified life constantly needs to be fully and only informed by Christ’s life and death or our personal holiness will soon deteriorate into a degenerate legalism and barren moralism.”¹⁴

- Sanctification comes through faith (Acts 26:18)

The emphasis cannot be on us, but always and forever on God. If the union with Christ and the life of Christ are not primary, then “it allows us to talk about the Christian life as something that we practice in fellowship with the Spirit, without really forcing us to pay attention to who we now are in Christ. In doing so, it allows key elements of the gospel to be assimilated, without our recognizing it, to a modern individualism that will always compromise our Christian growth. At some point, we must ask ourselves whether we are still playing the original tune or are, perhaps without recognizing it, playing something else, something different.”¹⁵

The New Testament command is the outworking of something that is already true. The believer does not work for his sanctification; he is working from his sanctification (1 Cor. 5:7).

“Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, **just as you are in fact unleavened.** For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed” (1 Cor. 5:7).

For the people of God, their justification, sanctification, and glorification are a sure work. God has rendered certain what He alone determines (Rom. 8). God has never wasted one moment, event, decision, or expenditure of energy. The means of sanctification show the singular story of Scripture with Jesus at the center.

Q9 – Are “means” necessary for sanctification?

CONCLUSION

God is working in us and through us, His perfect will. Every aspect of our lives is a reflection of a wise, gracious, and loving master artisan. Let us live our lives believing that He is finishing what He has completed. Let us see our obedience as a consequence of what is already true. Moreover, as always, let us continue to dance in the reign of grace!

Q10 – What did you find helpful from today’s study?

Q11 – What are some questions coming from this study?

NEXT LESSON – RG and the Law

¹ Chris Pofahl <chris.pofahl@gmail.com> **Sent:** Friday, March 19, 2021 5:59 AM

² John Calvin's *Antidote to the Council of Trent* (1547).

³ <http://www.ligonier.org/blog/3-tenses-gospel/> “John Stott has argued that when Paul reasoned with Governor Felix about “righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment” (Acts 24:25), he was pointing out the three tenses of salvation. The moment we drift away from the gospel, we perish. At every stage—justification, sanctification, glorification— we come with empty hands, seeking mercy from our heavenly Father. Even at the point of our obedience as Christians—we are to “work out [our] salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12)— we do so only because God works “in [us], both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (v. 13). And when we enter the Pearly Gates of heaven, wisdom will dictate that we show our empty hands and say with Edward Mote: On Christ the solid Rock I stand; All other ground is sinking sand.”

⁴ David Scaer (2015) “Sanctification,” *Concordia Journal*: Vo..41: No. 3, Article 6.

⁵ David Scaer (2015) “Sanctification,” *Concordia Journal*: Vo..41: No. 3, Article 6.

⁶ *New Dictionary of Theology*, s.v. “Sanctification,” by K. Bockmuehl, 614.

⁷ <https://www.1517.org/articles/what-is-sanctification-revisiting-the-old-testament-for-the-answer>

⁸ <https://www.1517.org/articles/what-is-sanctification-revisiting-the-old-testament-for-the-answer>

⁹ For perhaps one of the best articles written on this subject see <https://www.thoughtstheological.com/is-sanctification-synergistic-or-monergistic/>

¹⁰ <https://www.1517.org/articles/what-is-sanctification-revisiting-the-old-testament-for-the-answer>

¹¹ https://www.issuesetcarchive.org/issues_site/resource/archives/scaer.htm

¹² https://www.issuesetcarchive.org/issues_site/resource/archives/scaer.htm

¹³ David Scaer (2015) “Sanctification,” *Concordia Journal*: Vo..41: No. 3, Article 6.

¹⁴ https://www.issuesetcarchive.org/issues_site/resource/archives/scaer.htm

¹⁵ Grant Macaskill, *Living in Union with Christ*, BakerAcademic, 2019, pp. 4, 5.



Lesson 6

RG and the LAW

THE BIG PICTURE – THE Story

The GOSPEL, who JESUS is and what JESUS did, has a direct impact on how one is to view the LAW.

One of the tensions we have in considering this idea is what Law Paul references. There are three options.

1. There is **THE LAW**.
2. There is the law written in our hearts.
3. There are the laws established by governments.

The focus of this study is on **THE LAW**. And the question is, “What is our [NT Church] relationship to that Law [OT Israel]?”

From Lesson One we noted the difference between the ROYAL GIFT COVENANT and that of the VASSAL TREATY. Genesis 3:15 and 12:1-3 are the ROYAL GIFT. Exodus 20 and the Nation of Israel is the VASSAL TREATY. The Mosaic Code is the VASSAL TREATY. The ROYAL GIFT is unconditional and eternal. God does for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Our salvation is the ROYAL GIFT. The VASSAL TREATY is conditional and temporary. Its blessings and curses are conditioned on obedience.

This LAW has certain qualities.

- 613 Commands [The “10” represent]
- We speak of the Law as having three categories. Often, it divides into three categories: CIVIL, CEREMONIAL, and MORAL. Yet, no Jew would speak of it in this manner. We do so in order to understand its magnitude. Thus, James can say, “He who keeps the

BASIC IDEAS:

1. The LAW can never provide. It can only point.
2. The LAW points to Christ.
3. The Christian is no longer under the mastery or authority of the Law, but under the mastery or authority of GRACE.
4. In Adam, all are under the LAW. Thus, people are LAW BREAKERS.
5. In Christ, all are under GRACE. Thus, Christians are COMMANDMENT KEEPERS.

entire Law yet breaks one has broken the whole" (James 2:10 [the boast of the rich young ruler, "I have kept the Law; Paul does the same "blameless"]).

Q1 - Which covenant are NT believers under; the ROYAL GIFT or the VASSAL TREATY?

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Why is this area vital in our understanding of our relationship with God? Let us consider three. **First**, we can make it the means in our fellowship with God. **Second**, we can make it a litmus test in our fellowship with others. **Finally**, we can make secondary matters primary.

Common misconceptions concerning the Law are two-fold. We either consider the LAW as bad. Or we look at the LAW as a burden. Neither are true.

We will look at the Law as it occurs in Paul's Letter to the Romans. In Romans the issue centered on the believer's relationship to the Law. The question was, "Should we or should we not keep the Law?" There were two "OPINIONS" at that time. They centered on the eating of meats and the marking of days. Paul does not tell them to throw the Law out. Neither does He tell them to keep the Law. In fact, Paul still kept the LAW even after accepting Jesus as the promised Messiah (Acts 18:12, 13; 20:16; 21:17-28). He simply says, "You are not obligated to keep it. But do not think that if you do, the Law is the basis of your relationship with God." He is telling them **"keeping the Law does not matter in determining if one is or is not accepted by God."**

New Testament Jews kept the cultural aspects of the Law. They did not stop being Jewish simply because they accepted Jesus as the Messiah.

"If we can become used to seeing life through humble eyes, we will be able to see the law for what it is. It is not a laundry list of things we need to accomplish, it is a way we can communicate and see a clearer picture of Eden."¹

Q2 - Were Jews obligated to give up the Law when they accepted Jesus as Messiah?

Q3 - How were Jews to view the Law after believing Jesus as Messiah? Why would this be challenging?

INITIAL TRUTHS TO REMEMBER

It is clear in the Book of Acts that Paul continued keeping the Law as a way of life, but now he saw how the entire Law pointed to Christ and he believed Jesus was the fulfillment of the Law. The Law no longer stood as a means into God's Covenant Community or a means of maintaining good standing within the Covenant Community. All this and more are found solely in Jesus. It is clear the early church struggled with Law compliance for those who would believe (i.e. Acts 15).

“The centrality of this topic in Romans is evident from word statistics. From 195 instances of **nomos** in the New Testament, no less than 74 are found in Romans. This frequency is matched only by the shorter Letter to the Galatians, with 32 instances.”²

Let us note for a moment the placement of occurrences in the Book of Romans.

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Occurrences</u>
2	11x
3	6x
4	4x
5	2x
6	2x
7	16x
8	4x
9	2x
10	2x
13	2x

It becomes apparent the word itself falls primarily in chapters 2 and 7.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE LESSON

It is important to remember how the entire Old Testament is a shadow or type pointing to the substance or anti-type who is Jesus.

1. Jesus fulfills the LAW (Romans 3:27-31).
2. The Law protects the SEED, but the Law is not the SEED (Rom. 4:1ff).
3. The Law separated Israel *from* the Nations, so that they would become a blessing *to* the Nations.
4. Although we are no longer obligated to keep the LAW, this does not make the believer lawless (Rom. 6:15-23).
5. In Christ, the believer has died to the power/authority of the LAW (Rom. 7:1-6).
6. In Christ, the believer is no longer under the LAW and thus faces NO CONDEMNATION (Rom. 8:1-4).

If one were to place their hand print on a surface, the print of the palm is the TYPE. The hand that produced the print is the ANTITYPE. Christ is the REALITY that produces the shadow, the various types, the copies. The **Shadow** can only *point*, it cannot *provide*. **Everything** in the *Old Testament* is shadow pointing to Christ. “Christ is the goal the Law points to and when the goal is reached, the Law ends.”³

- ¹⁷ “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them” (Matt. 5:17).

- ²⁷ “Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. . . ⁴⁴ Now He said to them, ‘These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’ ⁴⁵ Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24:27, 44, 45).
- “Philip found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote--Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph’” (John 1:45).
- “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me” (John 5:39).

The entire *Story* points to Jesus, including the Law.

Q4 – Why would I “not” put myself under the Mosaic Code | VASSAL TREATY?

I. Jesus fulfills the LAW (Romans 3:27-31).

The LAW played a distinct role in the purpose of God. It had a beginning and an ending (Rom. 7:1-6; Gal. 4:1-7).

Jesus fulfilled the ROYAL GIFT as SEED PROMISE and also the VASSAL TREATY as the New Israel and the second Adam.

The LAW pointed to Jesus. God’s “substance” means of justifying sinners is in the person and work of Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:21-31). The Law was not opposed to justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone (Rom. 3:31; Gal. 3:21, 23, 24). Does justification by faith nullify the Law? **NO!** On the contrary, **IT ESTABLISHES THE LAW!**

- “Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, **we establish the Law**” (Rom. 3:31).
- **“For Christ is the end of the law** for righteousness to everyone who believes” (Rom. 10:4).
- ⁸ “Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for **he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.**
¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; **therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law**” (Rom. 13:8, 10).
- **“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill”** (Matt. 5:17).

Jesus is the fulfillment of the SEED PROMISE in the ROYAL GIFT and the completion of the BLOOD PICTURE in the VASSAL TREATY.

Q5 – If Jesus fulfills the stipulations of the VASSAL TREATY, why would I place myself under it?

II. The Law protected the SEED, but the Law is not the SEED (Rom. 4:1ff; cf. Gal. 3:19-29 Why the Law?).

The Law fulfilled its role as a revealer of Christ's sufficiency / God's Provision and a revealer of Humanity's inability / Humanity's Problem. The Law led to Promise, but the Law was not the Promise.

Part of the dilemma was man's attempt to make the Law do something it was never intended to do. Anyone attempting to keep the Law by an act of works would fail. The Law could only be kept by faith (Rom. 9:31, 32).

The Law also shows us hope and redemption through the sacrificial system. The Law had at its center an atoning sacrifice to propitiate God's wrath against the sinner. The believer delighted in the Law [i.e. sacrificial system] for it was God's means of being right with Him.

III. Although we are no longer obligated to keep the LAW, this does not make the believer lawless (Rom. 6:15-23).

Notice Paul's reasoning in Romans 6:15-23.

The Question (v. 15a)

"Are we Lawless?"

The Answer (v. 15b)

"May it Never Be!"

The Principle (vv. 16-18)

"We are Slaves"

The Contrast (vv. 19-23)

"Death or Life"

Shall we sin because we are not under Law but under grace? Paul does not negate the idea that we are no longer under the Law. We are not. What Paul does is explain what living under grace looks like. The idea of being lawless **means without a master**. It does not mean **WITHOUT LAW**.

Verse one asks, "Should we sin that grace might abound?" Here the question is, "Can we sin since graces abounds?" Paul's response to each is emphatic. Freedom *from* sin is *not* a freedom *to* sin. Grace does what the Law demands.

The liberties of grace are not in the horizontal, but in the vertical. The freedoms of grace are first *felt* in the vertical, then in the horizontal. Gospel liberty is never sinful. Gospel freedom shows itself in undefined acts of service toward others.

The Law cannot empower what it commands. The flesh cannot attain what it desires. The accusatory power of the Law lies in it being transgressed.

“The Law commands that we love perfectly. The Gospel announces that we are perfectly loved.”⁴

“Perhaps it is enough to say that the Law reveals that we need to be forgiven; the Gospel announces we have been forgiven. Full stop.”⁵

FREE FROM SIN

- “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1).
- “and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world” (1 John 2:2).

Freedom from **sin’s tyranny and slavery** is not so much absence, but **ADVOCACY**. I still sin, but **JESUS** is my **ADVOCATE**. The struggle you and I have with our old nature is not won through force of will. The battle is won by remembering who did what.

The question is not whether one will have a master, but which master one will serve. Serving sin, Paul shows, leads to death; serving God leads to life.

Q6 – Is the Christian lawless?

IV. In Christ, the believer has died to the power/authority of the LAW (Rom. 7:1-6).

Death breaks the power of the “MARRIAGE” covenant. The paragraph does not say the Law died, but you died in Christ. The Law is still operative, but not for you. Notice the language of our text: Jurisdiction (v. 1), Bound by (v. 2a [“knit together”]), Released from (v. 2b [3:3, 31; 4:14; 6:6; 7:2, 6]), Joined to (v. 3 [“married”]), and Free from (v. 3b [“unrestrained”]).

The illustration of marriage, death, and remarriage **is not the issue**. Paul’s intent is not to give a word about marriage. What Paul says is true, but it is not all that Paul says concerning marriage. He states a principle that everyone recognizes. When your spouse dies, the covenant between the two of you has been broken and you are now at liberty to marry someone else. What He began in 5:12, He continues throughout. You are no longer under the headship of Adam, sin, bondage, and death. You are now under the headship of Christ, righteousness, freedom, and life. For us to think we can be under grace and under Law at the same time is

adulterous [improper / illicit / unlawful]. We cannot have two masters **AND** we are not moving between the two.

Our death, burial, and resurrection in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (Rom. 6:1-14) severs our relationship to the Mastery of the Law. Because of this we are no longer under the Law, but under grace. Based on what has been said, in Christ your “marriage” to the Law has been broken and you are now free to be married to Him.

V. In Christ, the believer is no longer under the LAW and thus faces NO CONDEMNATION (Rom. 8:1-4).

There is no condemnation for the justified because the Law has been fully met. There is a new law in operation. It is the law of the Holy Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (v. 2). The Law was weak to justify and to sanctify. Yet the inability of the Law did not lie in it, but in us. This new law changes our relationship to sin.

In a life governed by the Law, striving for victory and fear of defeat loom over every endeavor. In a life governed by the Gospel, *nothing that needs to be done hasn't already been done*. Or as Martin Luther so famously wrote in thesis 23 of the Heidelberg Disputation (1518), “the law says ‘do this’ and it is never done. Grace says, ‘believe in this’ and everything is already done.” We have nothing to lose or gain, on other words. The pressure to self-justify has been removed, whether we believe it or not, and it has been replaced with freedom: the freedom to die and yet to live, to fail and yet succeed. The freedom to play, to serve, to love, to wait, to laugh, to cry, to sit idle – even to get busy.

Yes, judgements against us will persist just as sin persists, but the Gospel pronounces that these judgments have lost their bite. The law has been defanged. The condemnation we feel is simply a feeling, no more binding than any other. So, we may judge others, and they may judge us; we may judge ourselves, but God has gotten out of the judgment game. Christ is the final word on that score. This is not just good news. It is the *best* news.⁶

God had to do what He did. Had not God taken the initiative, we would be lost forever. The Law could not free us from sin and death. Because of this, the Father sent His Son to condemn sin in the flesh. The weakness of the Law did not lie in the Law but in our flesh. Because of our sin God did for us what we could never do for ourselves. Let us never forget this singular idea. In the absence of a reigning grace, we could never have merited what was needed.

Q7 – Do believers stand condemned under the Law?

Q8 – What did you find helpful from this study?

Q9 – What questions do you have concerning your relationship to the Old Testament Law?

CONCLUSION

THE Law enables you to see yourself for what you are, a law breaker under the judgment of God needing a Savior. The Christian is not under the Law. Therefore, they will not be held accountable before the judge. Jesus will do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. He keeps the Law for us thus making us commandment keepers.

For further reading see *Quarrels About the Law* by Patrick Griffiths available at www.waukeshabible.org.

¹ Taylor Collins, email on 3/7/21

² *The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Romans*, Klaus Haacker, 68.

³ Unknown reference

⁴ A Mockingbird Publication, *Law and Gospel: A Theology for Sinners (and Saints)*, p. 58.

⁵ A Mockingbird Publication, *Law and Gospel: A Theology for Sinners (and Saints)*, p. 60.

⁶ *Law and Gospel*, 62-63.

Lesson 7



RG and the NT COMMANDS

BASIC IDEAS:

1. The Bible reveals God's person and work for, in, and through His people.
2. The NT Commands are descriptive of the Christ Life lived in and through our earthen vessels (2 Cor. 4).
3. IN ADAM, we were idol makers and law breakers; IN CHRIST, we are commandment keepers.
4. The Holy Spirit lives out the NT Commands in and through His people.
5. Those commands are not burdensome, but easy and light.
6. No Christian will ever be fruitless. God will always complete what He began.

KEY VERSES

²⁸ "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. ³⁰ For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30).

¹ "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. ² By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. ³ For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:1-3).

Q1 - What are these passages telling us about the Christian Life?

THE BIG PICTURE - THE Story

It is important to remember how the energy from the first strike in Newton's Cradle carries over into the next object. The movement from the second ball comes from the movement of the first ball. If one were to remove the gospel, then the commands of the New Testament are empty and nothing more than **Sisyphus'** boulder. "In Greek mythology **Sisyphus** was the king of Corinth. He was punished for his self-aggrandizing craftiness and deceitfulness by being forced to roll an immense boulder up a hill, only to watch it roll back down, repeating this action for eternity. Through the classical influence on modern culture, tasks that are both laborious and futile are therefore described as **Sisyphean**."¹



Within the *Story* there are numerous commands describing what the people of God look like. A significant issue is how to view the commands and what role they play in the life of the individual. This lesson considers those two ideas. If the Christian life is anything other than what is described in Matthew 11:28-30, then something is wrong. The Christian life should not be burdensome or heavy, but rather one of rest for the weary.

Q2 – Why do you think people find a works-based acceptance and favor attractive?

INITIAL TRUTHS TO REMEMBER

Prior to our salvation “experience,” an impossible burden to bear weighed us down. There was nothing we could possibly do to undo what was done. Our **in Adam** condition damned us forever. God, however, stepped in and through His gracious act sent His Son to be our Savior. In grace, He saved His people from their sin. He lifted from us the burden placed on us by Adam’s fall and our own rebellion. Unfortunately, many who have been delivered from one burden [sin and death] are placed under another burden [the NT Moral Imperatives], the burden of a performance-driven acceptance and favor. In this case, salvation becomes a transferring of burdens. Once we worked for our *justification*, now we work for our *sanctification*. Both are wrong and both are bondage forming. This study seeks to free once more the freed. It is to Christ and His work that we are called and invited to partake.

Q3 – How do you think most Christians view the commands of the New Testament? Based on your own experience or observation, is this good or bad?

OVERVIEW OF THE LESSON

In light of what we considered in our previous study concerning “The Christian Life,” (Cf. Lesson 5) it is necessary to continue putting the various pieces together. This present study is a vital part of “connecting the dots.” How does the cross change our present?

New Testament Commands are of great concern for all New Testament believers. The Old Testament said, “Do this, and live.” Yet we must ask ourselves the question as to whether or not this is still true for us. What is the message of the New Testament? The Apostle John says, “Believe this, and live.”

In Mark 3, Jesus identified those who believed in Him as those who were doing the will of God.

³¹ Then His mother and His brothers *arrived, and standing outside they sent word to Him and called Him.

³² A crowd was sitting around Him, and they *said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You." ³³ Answering them, He *said, "Who are My mother and My brothers?" ³⁴ Looking about at those who were sitting around Him, He *said, "Behold My mother and My brothers! ³⁵ **"For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother."**

The Apostle John echoes this same idea in 1 John 3.

²² and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. ²³ This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.

If the Old Testament says, “Do this and live,” then the New Testament says, “Believe this and live.” In the New Testament, believing is doing and from the believing comes the doing. Let us unpack this thought.

Q4 – Why is believing a work?

TODAY’S LESSON

I. The Problem

Many people who are sincerely seeking to please the Lord find themselves in a mental dilemma and spiritual depression when it comes to the commands of the New Testament. Those who are honest with themselves find themselves completely unable to measure up to the New Testament ideal. Like the Mosaic Code [Law; Vassal Treaty], the standard with the New Testament imperative is perfection. In His “Sermon on the Mount,” Jesus tells His audience to be perfect as their Father is perfect (Matt. 5:48). Yet, our obedience falls far short of the mark and thus we will develop one of three reactions to the New Testament command.

- **First**, we will try to keep the command, note our terrible failure, and live with despair and defeat.
- **Second**, we will simply give up, and like the proverbial ostrich, live with our heads in the sand and simply deny the command.
- **Finally**, there is the group that has convinced themselves that they are keeping the commands and live in pharisaical self-deception.

“Hearers with a seared conscience may develop an attitude of self-righteousness, judging themselves as adequately living by God’s standards. Genuine believers with tender consciences may despair because they know they constantly fall short of God’s commands. In other words, preaching bare moral truths -- moralisms -- can drive people away from Christ. Such sermons are anti-Christian, even if the bare moral and ethical assertions are true.”²

What is one to do?

Q5 – What has been your experience with the New Testament commands?

II. What are the New Testament Commands Anyway?

Let us consider five statements that help to answer this question.

RG and the New Testament Commands

First, all commands are describing what Christ is like. Much like the entire Bible, they reveal to us who God is and who we are. They reveal Him. As such, we are not to see the command as a standard to be obtained, but rather as a reflection of Him.

“What God requires are descriptions of what we have become by faith. Imperatives or subjunctives are nothing less than the indicatives describing what we already are, what we are capable of doing, what we indeed do and what we must do.”³

“Sanctification is held out not as an abstract ethical code, but as Christ himself. Jesus is our sanctification.”⁴

Second, commands are describing something we work from, not something we are to work for. The admonition to be holy is because we are holy. We do not work to be holy; we work because we are holy. Please note the following passages.

“Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, **just as you are in fact unleavened**. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed” (1 Cor. 5:7).

“Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (**just as you actually do walk**), that you excel still more” (1 Thess. 4:1).

“If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for **the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are**” (1 Cor. 3:17).

“By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; **because as He is, so also are we in this world**” (1 John 4:17)

“I can only workout my sanctification, because God is working in my sanctification.”⁵

Third, the commands or imperatives work in the horizontal, not the vertical. Commands change our relationship to “one another” in the **horizontal**. They do not change our relationship to God in the **vertical**.

“On one level sanctification is about how Christians are to live, but it has a prior reality in what God has always done and specifically his giving himself in Christ for us. In our sanctified lives God extends his mercy to the distressed.”⁶

Fourth, commands are a different way of saying, “Keep, obey, fruit, and good works.” If such a grouping is not valid, then each one of the above describes a distinct act. This idea will be explored further in Lesson 8, “RG² and the Holy Spirit.”

Fifth, positively, adherence to the command does not make us anymore in line with God’s approval. Our obedience does not make us more “bless-able.” Our obedience does not put a smile on His face (if such language is permissible).

Unfortunately, we have defined a lifetime of obedience by individual acts. Nonetheless, such a focus is isolating the pieces from the bigger picture. Life is not defined by the individual pieces but by the larger pattern.

Because of our past instruction, our minds often think we are always working from a position of deficiency, rather than abundance. We have been conditioned to believe we are defeated and thus are trying to become victorious. Such thinking is unfortunate. We are not defeated in any sense of the word. We are always triumphing in Him (Rom. 8:37). Moreover, **we work from victory, not for victory** (Cf. Lesson 12).

Sixth, negatively, non-conformity to the command does not make us any more in line with God's judgment. Our disobedience does not make us more "condemned." Our disobedience does not put a frown on His face (again, if such language is permissible).

Whatever divine penalty rested against sin, it was carried out in full at Calvary (Col. 2:13). In a world that rewards hard work and achievement, God's standard of measurement is far different. **There is nothing we can do to measure up to His expectations. His standard is perfection. God's standard is so high that He had to send His Son to work in our behalf. To think we can do anything to fulfill His expectations is based on a faulty view of our ability and His benchmark. In such thinking, man's ability has been raised and God's benchmark has been lowered. Whether in obedience or in disobedience, our response is to be the same. We are simply to believe that He is enough in this life and in the life to come.**

By way of a summary statement, what can we note?

Q6 – What do you find different in the above section from your previous understanding?

Q7 – Why would the above information cause confusion?

CONCLUSION

First, in the pulpit ministry, calling upon people to change their behavior is to place "the cart before the horse." It is of little spiritual value to draw people's attention to the fruit and branch, when it should be placed on the vine (John 15:5).

Second, a profession of faith cannot be separated from a practice of faith. The two are inseparably linked. What one believes does express itself in how one behaves. "Faith without works is [a] dead [faith]" (James 2:14-26). We believe we do not have to work to bear fruit. We will bear fruit, but the focus should be on Him.

Third, every good tree does bear good fruit (Matt. 7:17, 18). Good soil *always* produces fruit (Mark 4:8). It is impossible for it to be otherwise. This does not mean that fruit or obedience will always be expressed in the same way and in the same quantity by different and diverse people. We do believe, however, that God is always working in His people. When we are not

bearing fruit or are disobedient, we have a tendency to assume that God is not working. Just the opposite is probably true. In these moments of despair, God is working deeply. We base this on 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24, and Philippians 1:6.

Fourth, obedience/good works are the natural outworking of one's pursuit of Christ. When we make the statement, "We do not focus on our obedience," We finish it by saying, "We focus on Him." Thus, our attention and energy is on Him, not on our obedience (Heb. 12:1, 2).

Q8 – If the keeping of God's commandments do not change God's opinion of you, then how do you stay motivated to obey?

Q9 – If what is said is true, then what changes in your life with others and with God?

NEXT LESSON – RG and the Holy Spirit

¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sisyphus>

² <https://erlc.com/article/what-god-has-joined-together-indicatives-and-imperatives>

³ David Scaer (2015) "Sanctification," *Concordia Journal*: Vo..41: No. 3, Article 6.

⁴ David Scaer (2015) "Sanctification," *Concordia Journal*: Vo..41: No. 3, Article 6.

⁵ Chris Pofahl, verbal comment 3/17/21

⁶ David Scaer (2015) "Sanctification," *Concordia Journal*: Vo..41: No. 3, Article 6.



Lesson 8

RG and the HOLY SPIRIT

KEY PASSAGE(S)

¹⁴ “For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (Rom. 8:14).

THE BIG PICTURE – THE Story

Living in *Story* forms the bulk of our immediate existence. Sanctification is the Christian life (Cf. Lesson 5). Walking in the Spirit defines the Christian life. Believers are led by the Holy Spirit, but sometimes we live our lives as if we have no sense of direction or guidance. Many have been taught the condition to being led by the Holy Spirit is Spirit-filling and the condition to Spirit-filling is Spirit-baptism. This again is unfortunate. **The Spirit filled and driven life is a fruit of the gospel.** It is nothing we can work for, but from. Our wondering whether or not we are Spirit filled should give way to wonderment at being Spirit filled. This is what the gospel produces in and through His people. Remember, always go back to the gospel.

We believe regular Christian teaching on this subject has made the Spirit’s leading more mysterious than it actually is. Does He lead and do we “feel” His direction? This study contends, yes, and it is in and through His Word. What does His leading look like in and through His people? It is the intent of this study to consider the answer to these questions.

Q1 – Is Spirit filling conditional?

INITIAL TRUTHS TO REMEMBER

- The Rule of God over and in all things renders certain the outworking of His will (Dan. 4:35; Ps. 135:5).
- He shall complete that which He alone began (Phil. 1:6; 1 Thess. 5:24).

BASIC IDEAS:

1. The Holy Spirit does for His people what they could never do for themselves.
2. He is working in them and through them the righteousness given to them.
3. Believers are to realize and enjoy all that is already true and believe He will complete what He began.

- Image-bearers have the ability to choose between multiple options (Josh. 24:15). Such options, however, are finite and governed by their nature.
- Their choices are the outworking of His rule (Phil. 2:12, 13). **A believer's life is the outworking of God's rule through his choices.**
- **Obedience, fruit bearing, keeping, working are biblical synonyms and mark a believer's life** because the purpose of God in and through His people will not fail (1 John 5:1-4). However, none of this is humanly possible, nor is **human effort the center/emphasis of the activity.**
- Disobedience is a temporal part of the process with a specific purpose. Though normal, it is neither obligatory nor acceptable (1 John 3:4-10).

OVERVIEW OF THE LESSON

In light of sanctification (i.e. the Christian life [Cf. Lesson 5]) and the New Testament commands (Cf. Lesson 7), the ministry of the Holy Spirit is spoken of but without real clarity.

The key to living in grace is found in Galatians 5:16-26. All of us love keys. We love the bottom line. In our passage before us, Paul gives us the key to grace living. He is about to unlock the door to this whole mystery of how to make the transfer from law to grace, from bondage to that of delicious liberty. How do we love everyone (vv. 13, 14)? How do we keep from biting and devouring one another (v.15)? What the Holy Spirit is for us is the result of the Jesus' work on the cross. This idea cannot be separated from what Christ did and is doing. All of this is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

Many believers have lost sight of positional truth (i.e. the cross [Cf. Lesson 4]) in their understanding of progressive sanctification (i.e. the Christian life [Cf. Lesson 5]). **They have tragically made progressive sanctification a decidedly performance-based means of approval and thus acceptance before the Father. Their emphasis on external conformity for religious spirituality is emphatically non-grace.** Paul's epistle to the Galatians is a correction of this bondage.

Without an understanding of what forces are at work within you, it is impossible to rest in the victory that is yours in Christ. Paul, very appropriately, describes the conflict and the two opposing sides. The intent of this lesson is to unpack Galatians 5:16-26.

Q2 - Is the Holy Spirit working in the life of His people?

Q3 - Is His working inevitable?

TODAY'S LESSON

I. The Principle of Grace Living (Gal. 5:16)

- ¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

RG and the Holy Spirit

Notice what Paul states. These two elements are so diametrically opposed to each other that to be in the one automatically excludes the other.

He begins with an imperative, “Walk in the Spirit.” Paul is speaking of a continuous habitual action. Why is Paul telling us to walk in the Spirit? We are to “walk in the Spirit” because we are “in the Spirit.” Before we go any further, **I would like us to attempt to understand the idea of “walking in the Spirit.”**

First, notice the following statements within the paragraph: “Walk in the Spirit (v.16),” “Led by the Spirit (v.18),” “Fruit of the Spirit (v.22),” “Live in the Spirit (v. 25),” and “Walk in the Spirit (v.25).”

I believe “walk” (v.16), “led” (v.18), “fruit” (v.22), and “live” (v.25), are synonyms in this paragraph. Based on the context in which we find ourselves, I would argue that the previous four phrases are in parallel and thus synonymous. To walk, be led, bear fruit, live, and walk are all saying the same thing. They are not different aspects or degrees of the same thing. They are the same thing. If they are distinct, then the passage does not make sense.

Believers, because of their position in Christ, walk, are led by, bear the fruit of, and live by the Holy Spirit. **As a consequence of their position in Christ, they manifest the work of the Holy Spirit in and through their earthen vessels.**

Second, we are invited to “walk by the Spirit” because we are “in the Spirit.”

Paul is asking us to do something that is already true. He is inviting us to be who we already are. This same idea is found in 1 Corinthians 5:7, Colossians 3:1-4, and 1 Thessalonians 4:1. The appeal to “act” is based on what is already positionally true.

The admonition of Paul in Galatians 5:25 is to live your position. He could just have easily said, “If you are justified, live sanctified,” or “Let the redeemed live like the redeemed.”

This filling is not in opposition to indwelling or His permanent residence in His people, but rather an invitation to be sensitive to His working in and through His people. **In many ways, the three ideas are synonymous concepts.** There might be some particular nuance between the three, but they are working synonyms. The filling of the Spirit produces the fruit of the Spirit.

Third, I believe Romans 6, 8, and Galatians 5 are parallel in thought.

Romans 6 tells me that as a believer united with Christ

- I am not to continue in sin (6:1)
- I am not to live in it (6:2). This is the same idea found in Galatians 5:21 and 1 John 3:4 and following.
- I am no longer a slave to sin (6:6, 17, 20)

- I am freed from sin (6:18)
- I am dead to sin (6:11)

Because this is true,

- I am not to let sin reign in my mortal body (6:12)
- If I choose to sin, I reap the consequence of its inherent demerit (6:16, 23).

Romans 8 teaches we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit (vv. 8, 9). Galatians 5 is running in parallel to all of the above.

The question is, “Does the Spirit of God dwell within you?” If yes, then what follows is true (Rom. 8:9, 10). If no, then you are an enemy of God and you are not pleasing to Him. There does not appear to be any condition between the two stated.

The passage is not suggesting disconnect between life according to the Spirit and putting to death the deeds of the body. **If you are living according to the Spirit, you are putting to death the deeds of the body.** This same idea is present in Colossians 3:1-4 and then verse 5.

Notice the language: Those led by the Spirit are the Sons of God. You do not become a Son by being led; you are led because you are a Son. You cannot have one without the other.

If someone is walking in the Spirit, they are led and are in turn bearing His fruit and following the Spirit’s promptings. You do not have one without the other three. In your choice, you might choose not to enjoy what is already true. Nevertheless, **your unbelief cannot make false what is true. Paul’s appeal is for us to practice our position.** Verses 18 and 25 make this clear. Both verses use what is called a first-class condition. Paul’s assumption is the saved are walking, being led, and bearing fruit because they are living in the Spirit. **Those who are not living in the Spirit are not saved** and thus still under the Law and manifesting the works of the flesh.

After the introduction of the commands he then uses the double negative. He says, “Those who are walking in the Spirit are **no never** fulfilling the lusts of the flesh.”

Fourth, by walking in the Spirit the lusts of the flesh shall never be fulfilled [Strong double negative with aorist active subjunctive]. You will not be characterized by sin. **If you are walking in the Spirit, the pattern of your life will be Son-marked and not sin-marked.**

By walking in the Spirit this pattern of death will no longer be fulfilled in your life. This is the same truth John brings out in 1 John 3:4-10.

⁴Everyone who **practices** (present active participle) sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. ⁵ You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. ⁶ No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. ⁷ Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who **practices** (present active participle) righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; ⁸ the one who **practices** (present active participle) sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. ⁹ No one who is born of God **practices** (present active indicative) sin, because His seed

abides in him; and he **cannot** (**ou dunatai**) sin, because he is born of God. ¹⁰ By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not **practice** (present active participle) righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother" (1 John 3:4-10).

What is the big idea? It is found in the word "practice." Throughout the passage, there is the constant emphasis of a pattern, habit, and lifestyle. **There is a big difference between a point in time and a pattern of life.** Because of our old nature the believer still sins, but because he is born of God, he is not characterized as a sinner (Cf. Lesson 9, Point II).

I believe his thought is to believe what God has done is true and enough. There is nothing more for me to do. **Yet his choice of language still causes the believer to wonder if he has ever "done" enough? And that is what each of the above cited resources suggest. We believe there is nothing we have to do to get it. ~~We got it, so do it. Moreover,~~ the doing believes that we already got it.**

The "doing" believes He does it. It is not something I do. It has been done. It is not something I can merit or maintain by works. It is all of grace.

As a Christian, we are walking, being led, and bearing fruit, because we are living in the Spirit. We are abiding in Him, thus we are not practicing sin. **Sin happens in the life of His people, but that is not going to be our focus. We have better things to think on than yesterday's sin, today's failure, or tomorrow's temptation.**

Q4 – What happens if we separate the idea of walking from filling, etc.?

Q5 – Does Galatians 5 explain the conditions to being led by or filled with the Spirit, etc.?

II. The Pressure Against Grace Living (Gal. 5:17)

- ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

The flesh is such a powerful adversary that without the Spirit's intervention and empowerment we are helpless against its forces. Make no mistake. The flesh is completely opposed to the Holy Spirit. **Yet what we once were in Adam, we no longer are, although we still have.**

We have within us a sin nature that hates God and is always standing in opposition to Him. This sin nature is non-redeemable and will be lost forever at death or the second coming of Christ. Our new nature is given to us by God and is as righteous and perfect as Christ Himself (Cf. Lesson 3). Grace is now reigning over "us." As a believer, we are to know, reckon, and yield/submit ourselves to this reign. This is the Romans 6 truth. It is as "we" yield to this reign that we begin to enjoy it. Make no mistake. Grace is reigning right now in our lives as believers. Our "know, reckon, and yield," is simply acknowledging what is already true. **Our non-yielding is not stopping the reign of grace and our yielding is not starting the reign of grace.**

It is already here. Whether or not we enjoy it lies in resting in His work.

The word “contrary” is translated with “oppose” and “adversary” in other passages. **The flesh is the adversary of the Spirit.** The tense usage suggests continual opposition. It is because of this truth that we conclude our flesh is non-redeemable and our new man is non-corruptible.

Q6 – Are the workings of the Holy Spirit and the workings of the flesh compatible?

III. The Promise for Grace Living (Gal. 5:18)

- ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

What has been Paul’s point in Galatians? As a believer, you are no longer under the Law. The Law cannot make you a member of God’s covenant community and the Law cannot keep you in the covenant community. Why does he make such a claim? It is because you are being led by the Holy Spirit.

Q7 – What is meant by not being under the Law?

IV. The Consequences of Spiritual Fruit or Grace Living (Gal. 5:23b-26)

There are four consequences from the following verses.

A. Grace living frees us from the weight of the law (v.23b).

- ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality,
²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions,
²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before,
that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.
²³ gentleness, self-control; **against such things there is no law.**

The expression of fruit in the life of the believer is as diversified as individual personalities and cultures and as limitless as our infinite God. Thus, we should stop trying to put people into our little boxes or conform them to our man-centered image.

B. Grace living frees us from the passions and desires of the flesh (v.24).

- ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus **have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.**

This crucifixion is probably referring to our initial salvation experience. See also Galatians 2:20 and Colossians 3:1-5.

Q8 – Are believers free from the power of sin?

C. Grace living is Spirit living (v.25).

- ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

Grace-living exhibits the fruit of the Spirit. Because I am living in the Spirit, I am also to be walking in the Spirit. Yet how do I “walk in the Spirit?” What must I “do?” What condition is given? Not-a-one except, “Since you already live in Him – Walk in Him.” The “condition” is to believe what He did and said is true (Rom. 6:1, 2; 8:4-9). The only “condition” to “walking” (practicing what is already true) is that you have functional legs and you know how (and both “conditions” are already true).

In Adam, we “acted” like descendants of Adam, and in Christ we “act” like descendants of Christ. Both actions come from our natures.

D. Grace living is selfless living (v.26).

- ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

The causation of loving the Lord leads to the consequence of loving one another. Law-living exhibits the works of the flesh.

CONCLUSION

The Spirit’s leading looks like the Spirit’s fruit. The Spirit’s leading looks like the Spirit’s gifting. When we are bearing fruit and exercising our giftedness, we are revealing His leading. The Spirit’s leading in and through His people looks like “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Gal. 5:22, 23). The Spirit’s leading in and through His people looks like “prophecy, service, teaching; exhortation; giving, leading, and mercy” (Rom. 12:6-8). Believers are filled with the Spirit as a consequence of being baptized by the Spirit who thereby manifest the fruit of the Spirit and this is what it means to be led of the Spirit.

Who I am	What I do automatically	How it’s done Or accomplished
Unbeliever – in Adam	Walk	According to the Flesh
A Believer – in Christ	Walk	According to the Spirit

Q9 – What difference does it make as to the Spirit's filling being conditional or unconditional?

Q10 – Are you walking in the Spirit?

Q11 – What is the one condition for the Holy Spirit to be working in your life?

FOR FURTHER STUDY: Romans 6 and Romans 8.

NEXT LESSON – RG and Personal Sin



Lesson 9

RG and PERSONAL SIN

The Gospel Centered Approach to Addressing Personal Sin

KEY PASSAGE(S)

¹ “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; ² and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world” (1 John 2:1, 2).

THE BIG PICTURE - THE Story

Like so many other areas of the Christian life, this area has suffered much at the hands of those who would remove the gospel from how one approaches this subject matter.

Remember, **Jesus is not only necessary, but He is enough.** The first strike in Newton’s Cradle has far-reaching and inevitable consequences. The only possible way **not to transfer** the energy from the first strike is to remove the ball from the trajectory. If, however, one keeps the ball in proper alignment, then the energy from the first strike will follow through to the succeeding objects. How we view the gospel impacts how we view our own sin (and the sins of others).

The cross of Christ conquered sin. The woman’s seed crushed the serpent’s head (Gen. 3:15). God has delivered His people from the penalty, power, and presence of sin. Victory is ours and the end is glorious. This study seeks to show and celebrate the believer’s altered relationship to sin.

INITIAL TRUTHS TO REMEMBER

1. What God does for us, He gives to us and works in and through us to those around us.
2. The cross changes forever our relationship to God and to sin.

BASIC IDEAS:

- 1² Sin is a defeated foe (cf² Lesson 3)²
- 2² We are dead to sin²
- 3² Sin no longer has dominion over us²
- 4² We are in Christ (cf² Lesson 3)²
- 5² We are over-comers (cf² Lesson 13)²
- 6² Confession, repentance, and putting off the old are all fruits of the Holy Spirit (cf² Lesson 8)²

OVERVIEW OF THE LESSON

In 1 John 2:1-2, John addresses sin in the life of the believer with this statement of fact:

¹ “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. **And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;** ² and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world” (1 John 2:1, 2).

God’s declared will is that we do not sin. Yet despite this clear statement, our experience shows otherwise. We do sin. What is to be the biblical response to known sin in the believer’s life? As those who are now living in Christ and thus “under grace,” what does such a relationship look like in the life of the believer on a moment-by-moment basis? Should grace impact the way we currently live the Christian life? Does grace matter? We will tackle this area of the Christian life by asking and answering the following five basic questions.

- Q1. What place does sin have in the life of the believer under grace?
- Q2. What are the implications of Calvary that impact our relationship to sin?
- Q3. What does our sin do to us?
- Q4. What does our sin do to God?
- Q5. What should we do with our sin?

TODAY’S LESSON

I? Question #1 - What place does sin have in the life of the believer under grace?

There are three responses to this question.

A?The reality of sin in us

Because of our old self (Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9), sin is always with us. There is a side of us that is always acting fleshly, natural, and unregenerate. Such a thought is clearly presented in such passages as Romans 6-8, 1 Corinthians 3, and Galatians 5.

“knowing this, that **our old self** was crucified with *Him*, in order that our **body of sin** might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin” (Rom. 6:6).

Romans 6:6 (see also Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9) tells us that our “old self” has been crucified with Christ. The grammar indicates that this is a completed past action where the old self is the passive recipient of the work of Christ that now makes it possible for “the body of sin” to be destroyed.

Every Christian is always capable of committing the most grievous and heinous actions. However, the Scripture is clear that such acts do not characterize the life of God’s people. No believer lives in a pattern of sin (1 John 3:9). Yet sin in the life of the believer still happens. John speaks to this idea in 1 John 2:1, 2.

B?The relationship of sin to us

Let us note three thoughts.

- First, sin is a **defeated foe (the penalty of sin [cf. Lesson 4]) - Justification.**

The death of Christ has defeated sin. Sin's defeat is viewed as a past fact. The penalty of sin has been removed from the believer.

"I am writing to you, little children, **because your sins have been forgiven you** for His name's sake" (1 John 2:12).

- Second, sin is **judicially dead (the power of sin [cf. Lesson 5]) - Sanctification.**

A believer's old self was crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6). The purpose of this co-crucifixion was "in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin." Our co-crucifixion is a historical fact. There was a point in time when our old self was crucified with Christ. At the cross, Jesus Christ did something to our old self.

"[Since] **you have died with Christ** to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees" (Col. 2:20).

Colossians 2:20 (see also Gal. 2:20), "You have died with Christ," also speaks of a completed and finished action. Thus, there is an element within us that had died and is dead in Christ.

- Finally, sin will one day be **permanently removed (the presence of sin [Rom. 8:17b-30 {cf. Lesson 13}]) - Glorification.**

The joy of this truth has already been noted. As believers who live lives of constant struggle and longing, it is essential we realize that victory has already been secured and we are now only waiting for its full implementation.

C?The rule of sin over us (see point 2 above)

Because of our standing in Christ, we are dead to sin. This is the truth claim of Scripture. What does it mean, "To be dead to sin?"

"Even so consider yourselves to be **dead to sin**, but alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 6:11).

We are no longer legally obligated to obey sin's dictates. No longer does sin hold sway over us. We now have the right and power to say no to its sinful demands. It no longer has dominion or authority over us.

This brings us to our second question.

II Question #2 - What are the implications of Calvary that impact our relationship to sin?

We will consider four responses to this question.

A We are in Christ (Rom 6:1-4)

¹ “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? ² May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Or do you not know that all of us who have been **baptized into Christ** Jesus have been **baptized into His death**? ⁴ Therefore we have been **buried with Him** through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so **we too might walk in newness of life**” (Rom. 6:1-4).

We are joint-heirs with Jesus (Rom. 8:17a). The Father has imputed to our account the very righteousness of Jesus Christ (Rom. 4:6). Because of being “in Christ,” we now have immediate and direct access before the Father (Rom. 5:1). Whereas there was once animosity and wrath there is now only peace and satisfaction (Rom. 3:24, 25; 5:1). By being in Christ we are beloved children in whom He is well pleased (Eph. 1:4-14).

B We are the dwelling place for the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:9)

“However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed **the Spirit of God dwells in you**. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him” (Rom. 8:9).

Such condescension on His part is an act of indescribable grace. How the infinite has chosen to reside in the finite, the Creator within the created, is truly an expression of the inexhaustible riches of grace. Yet we have within us all that God is in the totality of His being. What a shocking truth. **We have gone from Emmanuel, “God with us” (Isa. 9:6; John 1:18) to “God in us.”**

C We are the sure work of the Father (1 Thess 5:23, 24)

²³ “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ **Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass**” (1 Thess. 5:23, 24).

What we could not merit nor maintain, God Himself in grace will finish. The consistent message of Scripture is the work of God in us will not fail. The Bema Judgment is a universal declaration of God’s success and faithfulness in bringing to pass that which He had begun.

D We are commandment-keepers (Rom 8:3, 4)

³ “For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ **so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us**, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Rom. 8:3, 4).

Just as in Adam, all are lawbreakers and idol-makers, so also in Christ His people are commandment-keepers. Just as in Adam we were instruments of sin, so now in Christ we are instruments of righteousness. In Adam, one's identity as a lawbreaker was not determined by performance but by position, so also in Christ one's identity as a commandment-keeper is not determined by performance but by position.

Commandment keeping is not about rule keeping or good works. It is about believing and loving Jesus.

This brings us to our third question.

III? Question #3 - What does our sin do to us?

This question is always intriguing. When hearing someone say, "What happens when I sin?" our immediate response is to ask, "What does not happen when you sin?" In answering that question, the rest tends to answer itself. If as a believer our sin no longer separates us from God, then what does happen? The good news is all the consequences of sin are horizontal. **Nothing vertically!** So how might we answer this question? Let us note four thoughts.

A?There is a providential judgment against sin which is corrective?

God has chosen to establish natural laws against sin's expression. There are natural laws established by God that determine the reaping of what is sown (Gal. 6:7, 8). **There is an inherent demerit to all sin.** The Scripture tells us, "that the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23) and that "the soul that sins shall die" (Ezek. 18:4, 20). No one can sin and get away with it. Everyone shall pay the consequences for sin, whether in this life horizontally (for the believer and unbeliever) or in the life which is to come vertically (for the unbeliever).

B?There is a sense of disappointment for failed responsibility?

With reference to the believer, there is a sorrow that happens in committing sin or in the failure to meet divine expectations. The reality of human inability causes those who see Jesus to offer themselves up to Christ's work and that of the Holy Spirit to empower them for obedience on a daily basis. No one who knows their flesh ever puts any confidence in it to live the Christian life. **What hope the Christian has lies solely in Christ and His grace dealings with them.**

"Sin takes away potential, it removes opportunity."¹

C?There is an initial straining and potential severing of human relationships from expressions of sin?

There is always a straining of relationships when one has sinned against another. Such offenses need to be dealt with immediately. Each is to act toward the other in a gracious manner. Never should such a condition exist long term. Whether it is as simple as saying we are sorry, or where physical harm has been committed, the offending party needs to make sure that any necessary restitution has been made. As for the offended, forgiveness is to be offered immediately and unconditionally (Eph. 4:32). To act toward another in this fashion is to treat them in grace and to depend on God to meet the necessary needs.

There is the potential for unnecessary bondage to a pattern of sin

Christians are not to live in sin (1 John 3:9-11). Such is completely incompatible with their position in Christ. Yet some out of weakness to the flesh or because of Scriptural ignorance have fallen prey to a pattern of sin (Gal. 6:1). Such bondage is unnecessary. No Christian need live in bondage to sin.

Sin will always take us further than we wish to go, cost us more than we wish to pay, and keep us longer than we wish to stay.

No believer “living in sin” wishes to be there. Victory is not only possible; it is our right. How to gain victory over daily sin will be discussed later (cf. Q5).

Let us now consider our fourth question.

IV Question #4 - What does our sin do to God? Nothing

The Impassibility of God:

One of our difficulties in speaking to this question is understanding God’s “emotions” from a finite vantage point. God condescends to our finitude and uses human terms so that we might know Him. It is accurate to describe God as loving, wrath-filled, kind, displeased, etc., but we should use such descriptives cautiously and guarded for His ways are not our ways (Isa. 55:8). With this cautionary word, let us begin.

God hates sin. Such a simple statement can cause us to overlook the gravity of such a statement, but nonetheless God hates sin. **Our sin is serious enough for the Father to send His only begotten Son to be the Savior of the world. Regardless as to where it is found, God always hates sin.** Two thoughts are immediate. First, in the unbeliever, he is the object of God’s present wrath (John 3:36) and is simply waiting His future wrath (1 Thess. 5:9). Second, for both the unbeliever and the believer, there is a natural consequence to all sin. Though the believer will never experience the wrath of God against sin (1 John 2:2, 4:10), it does not mean it is any less serious.

Is grace therefore a license to sin? May it never be. That is an abuse of grace.

“For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” (Jude 4).

V? Question #5 - What should we do with our sin? Stop

One of the tensions when approaching this thought is making it man-centered rather than Christ-centered. Although you and I act, our responses to sin are fruits of the Holy Spirit. Thus, no such actions are possible apart from the working of the Holy Spirit. In addition, all such actions are natural and expected consequences of the believer's position in Christ (Rom. 6) and the indwelling Holy Spirit (Rom. 8).

Let us consider five responses.

A? Acknowledge sin by agreeing with God concerning it (1 John 1:9 [cf. Lesson 10])?

"If **we confess our sins**, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

B? Repent of it and thus put off its presence and pattern (Eph? 4:22)?

"Though crucified, we are still called upon to lay aside the old self" (Eph. 4:22).

"That, in reference to your former manner of life, you **lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted** in accordance with the lusts of deceit" (Eph. 4:22).

C? Make no provision for its future manifestation (Rom? 13:14) by mortifying its deeds (Col? 3:5)?

"But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and **make no provision for the flesh** in regard to *its* lusts" (Rom. 13:14).

"Therefore, **consider the members of your earthly body as dead** to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry" (Col. 3:5).

D? Seek to live in newness of life (Rom? 6:5) by knowing, reckoning, and yielding?

"For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection" (Rom. 6:5).

CONCLUSION

Sin no longer has any authority or legal right over you. When you make much of sin and your relationship to it, you are placing yourself under its dominion and authority.

Our relationship to sin is much like learning to drive a car or flying a plane. It is not a natural skill but one that is learned. For those who are just learning, it is very mechanical and unnatural. They are governed by the imperative (“how to”). In time, they no longer think about what they are doing. They think about the indicative (they just fly). In time, the act is no longer governed by “rules and regulations.” Those skills become natural and second nature. So also, with life in Christ. What begins as very mechanical, should become natural. We are teaching people to fly who are already flying. All they might see is “obedience” and “rules” but all we see as believers is JESUS.

Recognizing that it is His working in us and through us, we choose to stand in His Son. We choose to live in the fullness of His forgiveness. We choose to live in His limitless love. We choose to accept a more than abundant grace. We desire to live the Christ life.

We are free from condemnation because Jesus, through His death, condemned sin. If we must still face His wrath, then the death He died was insufficient. The law is powerless to condemn sin in the flesh. It is powerless to liberate the sinner from the power of the flesh. However, the incarnation enabled Jesus to condemn sin in the flesh. If this pardon from condemnation does not reach into our current practice, then we do not understand what it means.

“In spite of the fact that the Christian is in a continuing struggle with the law of sin in his members, there is no verdict of condemnation against him. There is no charge, no indictment, no judgment, and no penalty – because he is ‘in Christ Jesus.’ As A.T. Robertson comments, ‘This is Paul’s Gospel.’ This freedom from condemnation means freedom from past sins and pardon for future sins.”²

Until we see the shallowness of life lived apart from Christ, we will never see the sufficiency and satisfaction of life lived in Christ. May we hunger after all that God has already secured for us in Christ.

Q6 - What is to be a biblical response to known sin in the believer’s life?

Q7 - What does my sin do to me? What happens when I sin?

Q8 - What does my sin do to God?

NEXT LESSON – RG and Confession

¹ Brian Jensen, member of Waukesha Bible Church

² Clifton J. Allen, *Romans*, 86



Lesson 10

RG and CONFESSION

KEY PASSAGE(S)

⁸ “If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ **If we confess our sins**, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8, 9).

THE BIG PICTURE

God’s *Story* restores/reverses the Fall. It is not **from** work **for** work. It is from **work** to **rest**. If nothing we do can merit God’s favor **prior** to God’s fullest and final redemptive act, then nothing we do can merit God’s favor **after** His fullest and final redemptive act. Anything conditional in the Christian life is counter to the cross.

BASIC IDEAS:

1. The person and work of Jesus forgives the believing of all their transgressions (Col. 2:13).
2. Confession as a fruit of the Holy Spirit is a natural part of the Christian experience.
3. After an individual comes to God’s provision by grace through faith, His ongoing forgiveness is not conditional.

INITIAL TRUTHS TO REMEMBER

1. The cross secures a forgiveness for all sin, past, present, and future.
2. There is nothing I can do to undo what God has done.
3. The advocacy and intercessory work of Jesus and the Holy Spirit on behalf of His people is unconditional.
4. Christian victory is seeing His victory as being our victory.
5. The Holy Spirit works the fruit of confession and repentance in the life of His people.
6. There is nothing a believer can do to change their relationship to the Father.

OVERVIEW

For whatever reason, most Christians live in a state of perpetual bondage because of their inability to embrace a complete forgiveness from God and a full fellowship with God that is

merited by grace alone and maintained by grace alone. Most have tragically drawn a sharp distinction between their positional justification in Christ and their progressive sanctification (i.e. Christian life, growth, and experience) in the world.

TODAY'S LESSON

Through the years, many of us have encountered the following questions concerning forgiveness:

1. "Do Christians have to confess and ask forgiveness for the sins they commit after salvation?"
2. "Is the purpose of confession for our benefit to declare to God that we are going to turn from sin? If we are already forgiven then why does 1 John 1:9 say he will forgive our sins *if* we confess?"
3. "How does God's holiness fit in with the idea that our sin does not break fellowship with God? If He hates sin, how can we still have fellowship with Him if we are in sin?"

There are several issues involved in the answer. **First**, what is the idea of fellowship with God? **Second**, how full is the payment in the area of sins forgiven? **Finally**, what is the larger context of 1 John 1:9 and how does it affect my understanding of this idea? I am convinced if we examine the above thoughts, we can have a biblical response to the questions being addressed.

Closely tied to the idea of our forgiveness by God is our fellowship with God. Salvation establishes our fellowship with God (Cf. Lesson 4). Some would suggest our sin breaks this fellowship and can only be restored after our sin is confessed and hence forgiven. Some would equally suggest our fellowship with God is also contingent on a walk of faith or obedience or by being led of the Spirit or walking in the Spirit (Cf. Lesson 7). Because of the tie that binds fellowship with forgiveness, it is impossible to separate the two ideas. We will begin this study by noting our fellowship with God.

Q1 – Is my daily forgiveness from God based on my daily confession of sin to God?

Q2 – Does my personal sin break fellowship between God and me? If so, on what basis [what causes it] do I have this fellowship?

I. FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

Our challenge is to face a misunderstanding of such ideas as fellowship and forgiveness. Part of our initial problem is the basis from which we evaluate fellowship. Fellowship is often described as a "feeling." "I don't feel my relationship with God is right." If we can draw a parallel between the cutting of the marriage covenant and that of salvation perhaps we can understand where we've gone wrong. When one cuts a covenant with another, it is not based

on emotion. To be sure, emotion is involved, but the emotion is not the basis for the cut covenant. If the basis is emotional, then when one no longer “feels” in love they will break the covenant. Yet many of us see the folly of basing our relationship in marriage on emotion for such a basis proves unstable. So also, is it to be considered folly to assess whether or not we have fellowship with God based on how we “feel.”

Let us consider several thoughts concerning our fellowship with God.

First, our fellowship with God was lost when Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden. Prior to the Fall, Adam had unhindered fellowship with God. After the Fall, his fellowship with God was broken. God restored fellowship by offering up a blood sacrifice. If the fellowship after the blood sacrifice was temporal, it is only because the offering brought was temporal. This animal blood sacrifice was a temporal type of a future permanent antitype found in Jesus Christ. We will note this idea in the next section. **God not only completely pardons but equally accepts.**

Second, fellowship with God under the First (i.e. Old) Testament was contingent (thus tentative) on the offering of blood, whereas in the New Testament (i.e. Covenant) fellowship is permanent because of the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Third, because fellowship with God is a consequence of His cross work, nothing we do can break [i.e. undo] this fellowship. This is a point of Hebrews 4:14-16. Believers come with confidence to the throne of grace. Neither our obedience nor rebellion bars us from this throne. If justice marked the throne, then none would come. But it is a throne characterized by grace.

Fourth, we can fail to enjoy our fellowship with God by neglect or willful choice. If we can understand fellowship to be a synonym for salvation, then perhaps we can understand how we might fail to enjoy and appreciate our fellowship/salvation by neglect or willful choice. This enjoyment, however, does not break fellowship (i.e. lose salvation); it is only a failure to enjoy what is true.

Finally, if obedience maintains fellowship and rebellion breaks fellowship, then we will never rest from our work, since we will never know if we have done enough obeying or too much rebelling.

Q3 – How do Christians often define their fellowship with God? What kind of words do they use to describe this fellowship?

II. THE EXTENT OF OUR LORD’S DEATH

The second issue concerns the extent of our Lord’s death, “How full is the payment in the area of sins forgiven?” Why do so many believers still bear the burden of sin? It is not because they are sinners. That truth will not change until the loss of the old man. It is because they do not understand the full extent of Calvary’s work on sin.

Throughout the book of Hebrews, the intent of the author is to show the superiority of Christ as the fulfillment of all First Covenant shadows. One of those areas accented is that of His sacrificial work. Within the book there is constant reference being made to the *once and for all* nature of His sacrificial act (Hebrews 9:12, 26, 28; 10:10, 11, 12).

- “and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place **once for all**, having obtained eternal redemption” (Heb. 9:12).
- “Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; **but now once** at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Heb. 9:26).
- “so Christ also, **having been offered once** to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him” (Heb. 9:28).
- ¹⁰“By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ **once for all**. ¹¹Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; ¹²but He, **having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time**, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD” (Heb. 10:10-12).

Because this sacrifice paid for sin in full, the impact forgave *all* sin forever. This appears to be the clear teaching of Scripture. Consider the following passages as they relate to the impact of Christ's death on sin (Acts 13:38, 39; Col. 2:13; 1 John 1:7, 9; 2:12). Those who come by faith and appropriate the provision of Calvary for themselves have their sins forgiven: past, present, and future (Cf. Lesson 5 Point I; Lesson 8 Q1, Q2).

In fact, in eternity past when such an act was considered and then manifested in time, all of our sin was still yet future. **He died for our sin before it was ever committed.** The only thing lacking was an expression of our faith that would take God at His Word. If *all* sin has been forgiven, then for what sins are we asking to be forgiven? Instead, we should be thanking God daily for the fullness of His forgiveness. This does not negate the necessity to be forgiven on a daily basis, but it does negate the idea that such forgiveness is conditional or somehow breaks my fellowship with God.

The power of His forgiveness continues to this day. He is even now interceding in our behalf, providing a forgiveness that is unmerited and unconditional (1 John 2:1, 2; Rom. 8:34). Such a picture is beautifully acted out in John 13 when our Lord washed the feet of the disciples. Jesus told Peter that even with soiled feet he was *still* clean even though his feet were soiled (John 13:10). The stunning element in the story is how Jesus washed Peter's feet even though Peter *never asked!* Jesus washed his feet unconditionally, without being asked. If Jesus forgave us *only* when we asked, there would still be unforgiven sin in the life of the true believer. Such an individual, as identified by our Lord, “has no part with Him” (John 13:8). This person is not saved.

We can right now rejoice in a forgiveness that is full and sufficient. We can enjoy a forgiveness that is lacking in nothing. As a believer, we can rejoice in the fact that we are forgiven.

Friend, there is nothing about the cross that is tentative or partial. The cross is radical and exhausting. The cross work “spent” or “depleted” God’s sentence against sin. The work of Jesus is so thorough there is nothing left. You still sin, but God does not impute sin to your account. Sin has an intrinsic demerit placed in it by God, but He does not punish you for your sin. This He did at the cross.

Q4 – Do you have to ask God to forgive you in order to be forgiven?

III. 1 JOHN 1:9

Perhaps without exception very few evangelical Christians are unaware of 1 John 1:9.

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9)

Many have been taught how sin breaks fellowship with God and the only way to restore such fellowship is to confess their sins in order to receive His forgiveness and thereby restore their walk/fellowship with God. Our desire has been to consider the text of Scripture in its biblical context and what drove the author to write (i.e. historical context). I am of the opinion that 1 John 1:9 has been mishandled and thus misappropriated by the church at large. This mishandling and misappropriation instead of liberating the people of God has minimized the gospel and enslaved God’s people to senseless introspection, anxious uncertainty and a misguided defining of the Christian life.

First, with any text it is necessary to find what the author’s intended meaning is. Sometimes we come to a text with the wrong question. If we are asking the wrong question, then we will come up with the wrong answer. First John 1:9 is not providing the Christian with a formula for dealing with their sin/failure. As our study will show us, the context is not Christians confessing their sin to restore fellowship, but rather those who deny their sin and are unsaved without this confession of sin and Jesus as the singular Savior.

Second, John’s use of fellowship has more to do with the larger idea of God’s redemptive work and the resultant body produced by that redemptive work and one’s relationship to both. It is not addressing the sins of the confessor.

Third, saving faith recognizes one’s own sinfulness and the sole solution for that sinfulness in JESUS who is the INCARNATE CHRIST. This is biblical confession. Anything other than this is non-redemptive.

Fourth, once the believer confesses [agrees with God] JESUS as the INCARNATE CHRIST, he is placed in JESUS and thus lives/walks/practices JESUS.

Fifth, as a consequence of being IN CHRIST, His people walk, fail and agree with God concerning their sin and Jesus as their Savior. The good news in all of this is, “HE IS MY

ADVOCATE WHO SATISFIES (i.e. PROPITIATES) GOD'S JUDGMENT AGAINST ME AND MY SIN."

Let us consider this text in greater detail. The paragraph containing 1 John 1:9 runs from 1:5 through 2:2. Pastor John is writing to encourage the churches that he pastored. His big idea is found in 1 John 2:1, 2. He is speaking counter to a prevailing mindset concerning sin and Calvary. Thus, there are two groups of people identified. First, there is the "we" group (1:5-10). The second group are the "My little children" group (2:1, 2). One is either in the group who do not agree with God concerning sin and Jesus or one is in the group making up those who do agree with God concerning their sin and Jesus as their Savior.

Notice first John's thesis.

JOHN'S THESIS (v. 5)

- As the **incarnate CHRIST** (vv. 1-4),
 - He is **still without** darkness **AT ALL** (v. 5)

Then note his assumption.

JOHN'S ASSUMPTION

- **Just as** Jesus is without darkness at all, **so also** His people.
- If Jesus is the **INCARNATE CHRIST**.
 - You cannot walk in sin (v. 6)
 - You cannot say you have no sin (v. 8)
 - You cannot say you are not sinning (v. 10)

It is imperative we not forget certain truths.

REMEMBER

- **IN CHRIST** is the **cause**.
- **WALKING** in the **LIGHT** is the **consequence**.
- The flow is always (and only) one way. Being **IN CHRIST** changes one's walk. One's walk cannot change being **IN CHRIST**.
- Walking (v.7), confessing (v. 9), sinning (2:1) cannot change one's relationship to God; but one's relationship to God **IN CHRIST** changes one's walking, confessing, and sinning.

Throughout this paragraph, John contrasts the Gnostics with those who are in the local church.

APPLICATION/PROOF (1:6-2:2)

- 6 **GNOSTICS** – the error
 - 7 **THE LOCAL CHURCH**
- 8 **GNOSTICS** – the error
 - 9 **THE LOCAL CHURCH**
- 10 **GNOSTICS** – the error
 - 2:1, 2 **THE LOCAL CHURCH**

- Notice why 2:1, 2 complete the “**If/Then**” structure.
- Each falsehood is met with a direct response.
- Notice how it becomes intimate and pastoral (“My little children”).
 - Q - “I am one of the confessors and yet I still sin, what am I to make of this?”
 - A - John answers that question in 2:1, 2.

The answer to the sin issue is Jesus as our Advocate. It is not confession of sin.

The group identified as not agreeing with God is noted by their practice and their confession. John notes three things about this group.

- ⁶Walking in darkness; practice darkness.
 - ⁸“NO SIN” - We have no personal guilt, no principle of sin.
 - ¹⁰“NOT SINNED” - Perfect active indicative. This is a denial of any specific acts of sin.

IF we do not keep this text in its historical context, we run into significant problems. The sloppiness of verses 6, 8, and 10 are positions maintained by the Gnostics [i.e. the deceivers/liars]. The “attack” by Pastor John on the Gnostics is not directed at those within the local church. First John 2:1, 2 are the verses directed at those within the local church. Notice three key words: **Practice** (v. 6), **Deceive** (v. 8) and **Liar** (v. 10). The idea of **Practice** is synonymous in 1 John with walk, abide, keep and love. The **Deceivers** and **Liars** are those who **deny** Jesus as INCARNATE CHRIST (Deceiver - 1 John 1:8; 2:26; 3:7; 4:6 / Liar - 1 John 1:6, 10; 2:4, 22; 4:20; 5:10).

There are a series of parallel ideas in this paragraph contrasting the two groups. One is either in the deceiving and lying group or one is in the confessing and believing group.

The issue in 1 John is what group are you in. He boils it down by contrasting those who confess with those who do not confess.

- You either **confess** JESUS as the INCARNATE CHRIST
 - Or
 - You **reject** such a claim.
 - Thus, you are either **lost** without JESUS
 - Or
- You are **IN JESUS**.

Q5 - Who is John’s addressing in 1 John 1?

Q6 - Was the false teaching in the Church?

Q7 - What does John say is true of every believer?

CONCLUSION

Do you recognize who you are in light of who He is? You are a sinner in desperate need of THE SAVIOR. As believers we are not to sin . . . But when we sin we have an ADVOCATE and His name is JESUS. JESUS is the only one who can satisfy God's justice against us. In light of this, we should no more single out 1 John 1:9 than we would 1 John 1:7 or 1 John 2:1. Each of those elements celebrate a single truth. JESUS IS ENOUGH.

We often look at 1 John 1:9 as *the* verse for maintaining one's relationship with God, and to consider an alternative look is difficult. The desire is not to stir up controversy but to know truth. To see the magnitude of God's forgiveness and love and to understand His Word more intimately so that we might know Him more personally is the end of all Bible study. God has provided for us a salvation that is fathomless in scope. If we constantly have to monitor our sin, we have unknowingly shifted our focus away from Him to our sin. Moreover, such a focus is wrong. We are to be looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, not making checklists of sins committed.

Like many other passages, we have tried to make 1 John 1:9 say more than is there. The only way we can enjoy fellowship with the Father and His Son is if we are in the light. Calvary is the only way to become a child of the light. According to vv.6-10, there is really only one condition that must be met if we are to enjoy fellowship with God: we must be born-again. If we have not come to Him with the acknowledgement of our sin and thus receiving from His gracious hand full and complete forgiveness and as a result of His enabling ministry are now walking in truth, then we are self-deceiving liars and know not the truth. We are lost.

Q8 - What is your biggest take-away from this study?

FOR FURTHER STUDY: Matthew 6 - The Lord's Prayer

NEXT LESSON - RG and Chastisement



Lesson 11

RG and CHASTISEMENT

KEY PASSAGE(S)

“Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?” (Heb. 12:9)

THE BIG PICTURE – THE Story

Similar to many areas considered, this area often lacks gospel alignment. How one views this area receives significant shaping from how one views the gospel. If there is proper alignment with the preceding energy, this object will take that energy and transfer it to what follows.

God’s wrath against sin is notable. It is incapable of being answered by human effort. With sin’s immediate presence, God acted in judgment against it. Lucifer and his minions were cast from God’s presence. Adam and Eve were ashamed, an innocent animal was sacrificed, and they were driven from the Garden. All of the pictures and promises speak to a full and final judgment where God’s wrath would be met and His justice satisfied. God acted against sin at Mt. Calvary.

BASIC IDEAS:

1. Because of the person and work of Jesus Christ, the believing will never face any future judgment before God the Father for their sins.
2. Because the believer is IN CHRIST and clothed with His righteousness, the Father never sees them other than righteous.
3. Because Jesus took all our sin, those who believe will never face the wrath of God sin again.

INITIAL TRUTHS TO REMEMBER

1. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses me from all my sin (1 John 1:7; Cf. Lesson 4).
2. The cross took care of all the punishment my sin deserved (Col. 2:13).
3. The Father always sees me in the righteousness of Christ (2 Cor. 5:21).
4. The Holy Spirit causes me to see my sin for what it is and produces in me the fruit of confession and repentance (1 John 1:9; Cf. Lesson 7 and Lesson 9).

OVERVIEW OF THE LESSON

For His people, Calvary is the barrier standing between them and God. God does not transgress that boundary. From that point forward, His people never need fear His wrath against them. Calvary has forever altered the believer's relationship to the Father and to sin. There is, however, an intrinsic demerit to sin placed by God to keep His people from sin's destructive behavior. I believe understanding this truth is a watershed truth for the believer. If one understands this particular truth, they will be able to experience what it means to be free in Christ and to be walking in the grace of God.

We will consider eight statements in treating this idea. Some will be in the form of a question.

Before going any further, let us ask four initial questions.

Q1 - Does God punish His people for their sins? If God deals with me after my sin, what does this say of His Son's cross work?

Q2 - How extensive is the death Christ died in the atoning of my sin? What sin was addressed?

Q3 - When Christ died for my sin did He take care of every sin or are there sins I am still to be held accountable for before Him?

Q4 - How does the Father currently see His children?

TODAY'S LESSON

I. If God punishes us for our sins, what does this say of His Son's cross work?

The effectual nature of His work begun at Calvary continues to this day. God's work of forgiveness *in time* continues unimpeded. Emphasis is placed on *in time* because from His vantage point we are as forgiven now as we will ever be. This is the genius of John 13 as well as 1 John 2:1, 2. Christ, unconditionally and unsolicited, continues His work of forgiveness. Without such a work on His part in our behalf, we could never enjoy what He has secured. Jesus Christ is our advocate.

II. When Christ died for my sin, He took care of every sin (Col. 2:13).

- "When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, **having forgiven us all our transgressions**" (Col. 2:13).

When Christ died for our sin, did He take care of every sin or are there sins for which we are still accountable to God? The person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ removed the divine

judgment against sin. Thus, Christians will never face the wrath or judgment of God against them. God is not going to judge them for their sin in this life nor in the life to come.

When we speak of the death of Christ and the scope of its coverage, we say He forgave us of all our past, present and future sin. This is not a disputed issue in evangelical doctrine. There is no sin His death has not dealt with in full. There are a number of places where it says simply that He “died for our sins” or for us as sinners (Rom. 4:25; 5:60-8; 1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 1:4; 1 Pet. 3:17-18).

- “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that **Christ died for our sins** according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3).
- “**who gave Himself for our sins** so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father” (Gal. 1:4).
- “and **He Himself is the propitiation for our sins**; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world” (1 John 2:2).
- “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that **He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins**” (1 John 4:10).

Several passages address this issue (Acts 13:38, 39; 2 Cor. 5:19; 1 John 1:7, 9; Col. 2:13; Heb. 9:12, 26, 28; 10:10, 14).

- ³⁸ “Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that **through Him forgiveness of sins** is proclaimed to you, ³⁹ and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses” (Acts 13:38, 39).
- “in whom we have redemption, **the forgiveness of sins**” (Col. 1:14).

The death Christ died was and is sufficient to eliminate all of our sin debt. Such great theological words as justification, propitiation, and redemption all speak of this glorious truth (Cf. Lesson 4). God has declared us righteous and has imputed to us the righteousness of Christ. God’s wrath against us has been placated. The debt of sin we owed has been paid in full and cancelled. All of this is the substance of Romans 3:21-26.

The reason why many do not enjoy the power of Christ’s sacrifice is they do not understand what God did for them by means of Christ’s death. The benefits placed on those who believe are marvelous.

The effectiveness of the sacrifice is diminished when we believe God is still dealing with our sin issue. **If we have to answer for any sin, in any way, then we must answer for all sin.**

III. How does the Father currently see His children (Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 John 4:17)?

- “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but **Christ lives in me**; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Gal. 2:20).
- “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, **so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him**” (2 Cor. 5:21).
- “By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; **because as He is, so also are we in this world**” (1 John 4:17).

When God sees us, how does He see us? Does He see us in His Son? Does God even see our sin? This question is intriguing. Our identity is established in positional truth. God sees us as an individual with personality. However, our standing before Him is always based on the merit of Christ. This appears to be the message of Romans 6:3-4, Galatians 2:20, and Colossians 3:1-4.

When 1 John 4 speaks of “perfect love,” he says we have within us His perfect love and as a result of this perfect love, fear of torment is removed. Why is this so? “Because as He is, so are we in this world.”

God sees us just as He sees His Son. Why do we struggle with such a concept? Oh, what joy to embrace such truth; God the Father says of His children, “These are my beloved sons in whom I am well pleased.” How can such a thing be true? Because they are standing on the merit of His only begotten Son. We live in a world of constant fear. Fear of failure, fear of rejection, fear of being unwanted, unloved, and unaccepted. We fear the pain of missing the mark, of not measuring up, and of being different. We fear the failure of failed expectations and desires. Such fear has no place in our relationship with God. Such fear is fueled by a theology that believes our standing before the Father is based on our ability to persevere. Such thinking is man-centered and denies the power of the cross to both justify and sanctify. The only merit we have before the Father has been secured for us by His Son. This is the doctrine of grace. This is the Christ life.

IV. God never “punishes” the believer for his sin.

Often it is said God punishes us when we do wrong, even as we would punish our own children if they did wrong. Yet, think about it. If our child did wrong and was punished for it, why would we punish him again for that which he was already punished? The only reason would be if we somehow felt the initial punishment was not enough nor sufficient.

V. There is providential judgment of God against all sin, this does not, however, affect our relationship with God.

Calvary removed for us the divine penalty against sin. This does not mean that Calvary

removed for us the providential penalty against sin. Providential simply means the natural outworking of events without direct or immediate suspending of natural laws. If we were a drunk, or promiscuous, or a cheat, or a compulsive liar, or slothful prior to salvation and received Christ and are now delivered from the bondage of these things, this does not mean we will avoid the intrinsic consequences of those things – bad health, lost friends, legal troubles, etc. However, the judgment against those things will be providential and not divine. God will not “punish” us for our past transgressions.

Does God see our sin? God sees all sin and all sin grieves Him whether in the life of the believer or unbeliever. Nevertheless, such sin as it is found in the believer is never considered by the Father (Rom. 4:6-8). He never imputes to them its penalty or power. God the Father never reckons or “brings up” the sin of His children. He did it once and its “cost” Him His Son. He will never do it again.

Sin’s inherent demerit is death (Rom. 6:23). God has established providential laws concerning the judgment against sin.

- “For **the wages of sin is death**, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23).

Sin in the life of a believer is a failure to believe that God alone is enough. It is still there and nothing we do can make it less than what it is. Sin in the life of the believer fails to appropriate what is already ours in Christ. Sin is our failure to grab, not God’s failure to give. God has already provided all things in grace. Sin fails to appropriate all things because of greed. One’s obedience no more merits blessing as one’s disobedience merits judgment. Our standing in Christ merits the blessing and sin’s inherent demerit brings the judgment. Neither one is capable of affecting God’s “opinion” of us. Unfortunately, such truth appears startling; yet how tragic to continue living in a spiritual state of bondage.

VI. If God is not judging any of our sins, then can we sin without restraint?

Paul anticipates such a charge in **Romans 6:1, 2, and 15**. Romans 6:1-23 gives the triumph of grace over the power of sin. Verse 1-14 shows the freedom from sin’s tyranny (it is no longer my master) and verses 15-23 give the freedom from sin’s slavery (it is no longer my motivation). Some feel grace is a license to sin. Verse one asks, “Should we sin that grace might abound?” Here the question in verse 15 is, “Can we sin since grace abounds?” Paul’s response to each is emphatic. **Freedom from sin is not a freedom to sin.**

Paul answers this charge rather strongly in Romans 6:1-8. If anyone believes God is most glorified when they sin and thus the expansion of His glory liberates them to sin, then the damnation of such is just. Anyone who thinks grace is a license to sin is theologically amuck.

When one begins to comprehend the magnitude of God’s grace toward him, it can only result

in love. In addition, love always overflows into obedience (John 14:15, 21).

VII. What about the chastening of the Lord?

Hebrews 12 has always been looked to as a pivotal passage to “prove” God will chasten His people for their sins. Yet, in light of all that is found in the doctrines of justification, imputation, etc. and the exchanged life, how can this be? By looking at the larger context of chapter 11 and 12:1-4 it will be seen that the discipline being referred to is the hardship one will naturally incur by living a godly life in this world (John 16:33; 2 Tim. 3:12; Acts 14:22). All of the hardships we encounter are providential in nature.

Consider this truth in light of Hebrews 9:23-10:4. There are several points to consider.

- **First**, the death Christ paid the penalty for sin in full once and for all (vv. 25-27). No one would dispute this. Jesus paid the penalty against all sin both past, present and future. If Jesus paid the penalty for all sin, then for what sin are we being punished? If we say for the sin we commit today or that which will be committed, then we see the once and for all nature of the sacrifice as being insufficient.
- **Second**, when Christ does appear again, it will not be to deal with our sin (v.28).
- **Third**, the sacrifice Christ offers makes the recipients of it perfect (10:1).
- **Fourth**, those who are the recipients of His finished work have been cleansed once for all and no longer feel guilty before God for their sin (v.2).

How are we to look at Hebrews 12:1ff?

A suggested overview in light of the context:

10:23	Let us hold fast
10:32ff	Remember you endured a great conflict of suffering being made a public spectacle
11:36	Others experienced mocking, scourging, chains, and imprisonment
12:1	Therefore (in light of what has preceded) run the race. Do not give up in the face of persecution. In the midst of our affliction for righteousness' sake, let us “put off” the old man . . .
12:2	Fix your eyes on Jesus. Jesus is the perfect example of one who suffered at the hands of sinners, who did nothing wrong.
12:3	“So that you will not grow weary and lose heart (These echoes back to 10:23ff).
12:4	In your stance for righteousness and against sin, you have not yet been harmed.
12:5ff	Here begins the exhortation. Why the exhortation? I believe the intent of 12:5ff, is to let the people of God know that what they are currently enduring is coming from the hands of a loving Father.
12:12	Therefore, be encouraged

The Hebrews passage would read dramatically different if instead of the word chastening we

used the word instruction, admonition, or nurture. Yet, if we note the context, the idea of penal judgment seems foreign, especially in light of the previous statement of v.3. **The hardship, chastening, and instruction of vv. 5ff is the persecution endured for living a life of faith as noted in chapter 11.** This is consistent with the other New Testament passages.

CONCLUSION

If Christians can commit some type of sin that results in the judgment of God against it, then activity becomes subjective (for we never know when we cross the line), forgiveness is not full and finally, and His death was not sufficient. In the person and work of Jesus Christ, the Father has laid upon His Son His entire wrath against the sins of His people. Because of this act, no child of God will ever face the vertical consequences for their sin.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

For all the passages that deal with divine chastening, consider the larger context for each text. In addition, place the idea within the biblical framework of the one *Story* where Jesus is in the center. Many of our misconceptions about divine chastisement will fall away as we discover a proper interpretation within context.

1 John 5:14-17; Mark 3:20; Acts 5; 1 Corinthians 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-24; 1 Peter 4:17; Revelation 2 and 3

NEXT LESSON – RG and Our Victory



Lesson 12

RG and OUR VICTORY

KEY PASSAGE(S)

³⁶ “Just as it is written, ‘FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED.’ ³⁷ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us” (Rom. 8:36, 37).

THE BIG PICTURE – THE Story

God’s *Story* ends in victory. The cross is a victory bathed in blood and wrapped in resurrection. What happens between His resurrection and the great unveiling is not a limp along, try as you might struggle. How we define victory will color our understanding of the moment. Christ won, so thus have His people. His victory is our victory. This lesson explores why this is true and what this looks like.

BASIC IDEAS:

1. Because JESUS is victorious, those in Him rest in His victory.
2. The Christian life is not gained, but received.
3. There is nothing more to do that JESUS has not already done. Now His people are to rest in His finished work.

INITIAL TRUTHS TO REMEMBER

Here we wish to take the truth of Lesson 4 and “stuff” it into our present experience.

OVERVIEW OF THE LESSON

Where do we go from here? If what we have studied is true, then everything changes. The implications of positional truth are far reaching. It is the truth that makes us free (John 8:31-32). The Word of God is the active agent that Christ uses in delivering us from our bondage to whatever enslaves us (John 8:36). This is the mission of Christ (Gal. 5:1).

“and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (John 8:31).

“So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36).

“It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery” (Gal 5:1).

Almost without exception, everyone has heard of the theology of living the victorious Christian life. The idea paints a picture of those who enter into some kind of spiritual maturity where struggle, fatigue, and defeat are past. The victorious Christian is one who has learned to enter into His rest, whose life is marked by victory, not defeat. The idea, however, has a consequence that is wrong because of its ability to place the believer in a state of bondage and despair.

Tragically, this error is depicted as a “break-through” truth. The Church of God, without discernment, is swallowing such an ideology “hook, line, and sinker.” Regrettably, this falsehood is widely embraced within Evangelical circles. It is an error whose seed, when planted in the hearts of God’s people, will rob them of “the freedom that Christ set us free” (Gal. 5:1).

Yet, what is the victorious Christian life? The difference between what the Scripture teaches and what this common definition of the victorious Christian is proposing is not only in the outcome, but also in the journey. Though there is much good, the “error” is strong enough to lead the undiscerning back into the bondage of a performance-based acceptance, a merited love, a conditional forgiveness, and an unstable fellowship.

Such error makes a sharp distinction between what He is and who we are. Yet as understood from the Scripture, such a dichotomy is not to exist. In this study, we desire to note how **His Victory is Our Victory**.

TODAY’S LESSON

I. Jesus Christ is Victorious.

“These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Notice the context of this verse.

- The devil enters into Judas (John 13:1-4)
- The disciples are going to betray Him (John 13:21-27)
- Peter’s denial is announced (John 13:36-38)

The tone is ominous. He reiterates this darkness in 16:32 and then gives us verse 33.

Notice where our peace is to be found? It is found **in Him**. He promises us conflict, heartache, failure, tribulation, and depression, but then He adds, BUT. The “but” says, “Though all this is true, TAKE COURAGE! Despite the enormity of the burden you are confronted with, BE OF GOOD CHEER!” In every one of its occurrences the backdrop against which this exhortation is laid is dark and foreboding (Matt. 9:2, 22; 14:27; Mark 6:50; 10:49; Luke 8:48; John 16:33; Acts 23:11).

But why are we to take courage and be of good cheer in the midst of our crushing circumstances? Friend, the exhortation to take heart is not based on how we feel, but on who He is for us and who we are in Him. TAKE COURAGE. Why? BECAUSE WE HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD! CHRIST IS VICTORIOUS! Overcome is a perfect active indicative. The perfect speaks of an action that is completed, but the results of it continue to this day. All that needs to be done has been done. He is reigning. He is victorious. The expression of that reign in time will be fuller, but not the quality of it.

Q1 – What does the victory of Jesus look like for Him?

Q2 – Is the victorious Christian life something we “physically” enter into where all of our problems and troubles are resolved?

II. By our union with Him all that He is, is ours by right.

This is perhaps one of the hardest truths to embrace and realize.

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Gal. 2:20).

³**“For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory” (Col. 3:3, 4).**

The believer does not have two lives: His life is our life. This is not an arrogant statement. It is a true statement. We make no boast in ourselves of being able to secure all that is now ours. We did not do it; He did. We simply believe that what He has done and is doing is enough. Now, because this is true His victory is our victory.

Q3 – How might we wrap our minds around the idea that His life is our life?

III. Thus, His victory is our victory.

There is no victory apart from His victory. **Herein is the tragic misunderstanding as to what constitutes victory. What we are wanting is an experience that appears to be different than the one we have.** Yet we should see our experience as His victory.

“By the resurrection, God proclaimed His Son Victor over the whole realm of darkness, and the ground Christ won He has given to us.... For our part we need not struggle to occupy ground that is already ours. In Christ we are conquerors. In Him, therefore we stand. Thus today we do not fight for victory; we fight from victory. We do not fight in order to win but because in Christ we have already won. Overcomers are those who rest in the victory already given to them by their God.”¹

“But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us” (Rom. 8:37).

Consider the context of Romans 8:37. The chapter is one of tremendous victory. For the agitated, it soothes. Notice verse 37. Now notice verses 35 and 36.

- ³⁵ “Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ Just as it is written, ‘FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED’” (Rom. 8:35, 36).

What is the tone? After reading verses 35 and 36 how does verse 37 begin? “DESPITE” these things WE OVERWHELMINGLY CONQUER. How? “Through Him who loved us.”

The word “overwhelmingly conquer” means, “To vanquish beyond, to gain a decisive victory, to be more than a conqueror.” Verses 38 and 39 tell us how we can “be” this despite our emotional fallout and circumstantial hell-hole. We conquer by knowing this, “NO MATTER WHAT, JESUS LOVES US THIS WE KNOW.” And no matter how bad we blow it, nothing can change His opinion of us and dealings with us. He loves us, not because of our performance, but because of our position. Glory, Hallelujah!

Despite our circumstances, situation, experiences, feelings, and emotions, we are victorious in His victory.

It is interesting that God's Word never tells us to live any kind of “Christian life.” If you asked Christians to describe a “victorious” Christian, would their list look like 2 Corinthians 11:25-28? How about “despairing even of life?” (2 Cor. 1:8, 9) Would that make the top ten things victorious Christians do?

How about 2 Corinthians 4:8-10, “hard pressed, perplexed, persecuted, struck down?” Would those make the list of top ten things victorious Christians do? So God's victory must look very different from what we think it looks like, because He tells us He never is “losing a battle,” not even for a moment. He is leading us in triumph while we are despairing, perplexed, crushed...

We have victory because Jesus Christ **IS** our life. He will have the victory. So the issue in living the victorious Christian life is whether or not we will embrace the idea that Jesus Christ is doing exactly what He means to do in and through my life at every moment.

Conclusion

Let us conclude with several thoughts. As we continue to meet with people, we are always drawn back to the following eleven bedrock truths.

First, God is in control of the details (Isaiah 6:1ff).

Know God is in control. This forms the ultimate bedrock truth on which all of life revolves. The “problem” we are currently facing is part of God’s eternal purpose for our life. We must see God above all things. **Think of Isaiah 6.** It was in the year that King Uzziah died that Isaiah

saw the Lord “high and lifted up.” Never forget God is the author of the *Story*. We cannot always change our circumstances, but we can have rest and peace. Learn to focus on Him.

Second, *there is a purpose behind all the details that make up an individual life* (Gen. 50:20; Rom. 8:28).

Because God is in control, the events of our life are part of His eternal purpose (Gen. 50:20; Rom. 8:28). Never think somehow the events of our life and the choices we make are isolated or unconnected. Life is a continuous chain from start to finish and the various events within it are the individual links.

Third, *life is problematic* (Rom. 3:23; 6:23).

Sin has made every breath we take problematic.

¹⁶ “to the woman He said, ‘I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you will bring forth children; yet your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.’ ¹⁷ Then to Adam He said, ‘Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life’” (Gen. 3:16,17).

When we read the above description, it becomes apparent that we will not make it out of this life unscathed. Job, in light of his sufferings, “cursed the day of his birth” (Job 3:1). Jeremiah felt the same way in light of his circumstances (Jer. 20:14, 15). As long as we are abiding in our flesh, we will have woe. Failure, however, is not fatal. Do not focus on what appears to be the problem. Chances are what we think is the problem is a fruit and not the root.

Fourth, *God never makes a mistake or has an accident* (Rom. 8:28).

We are not a mistake. We are not an accident. Our choices have consequences that can be immediate and far-reaching, yet somehow God is working all things out for His glory and our good (Rom. 8:28). What we might deem as a “waste,” God is using to manifest His glory and grace in us and through us to those around us.

Fifth, *there is a dimension to suffering that is irreplaceable* (Job 5:17, 18, 23:10; 1 Pet. 1:6-9; Ps. 66:10; James 1:12).

There appears to be a consistent thread weaving various passages together strongly suggesting a divine providence in our present circumstances (Job 5:17, 18, 23:10; 1 Pet. 1:6-9; Ps. 66:10; James 1:12).

⁶ “In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, ⁷ so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ⁸ and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, ⁹ obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls” (1 Pet. 1:6-9).

Such truth teaches that nothing in life is being wasted. The difficulty we encounter is not part of His permissive will, but that of His perfect will. It is for this reason we have Genesis 50:20, Job 1:21, 13:15, and Romans 8:28. We often view life as either good or bad. In so doing we seek to determine what is considered successful and what would be termed failure. Yet, if our presuppositions are correct, then God is performing his perfect will.

Sixth, *perspective is everything* (Heb. 12:1, 2).

If we focus on our problem, we miss it by the proverbial mile. If we see God as being in control and if we keep our eyes on Jesus, then our problems become an opportunity for grace to be seen (Heb. 12:1, 2). It is only as we focus on Him that we can have contentment in the midst of our most grueling trial. Often in life we want something other than what we have, yet what we have is what God wants us to have. What we want is not something we will have this side of heaven. Again, it is a matter of perspective. How do you view the problem?

Listen to the following observation by Michael Wells in his work, *Sidetracked in the Wilderness*:

The enemy would never have us fighting the battle where the front lines actually exist; he will always bring something to our attention that has nothing to do with the real issue.²

Seventh, *God's grace is always sufficient* (2 Cor. 12:9), and *He will always provide a way of escape* (1 Cor. 10:13).

- “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it” (1 Cor. 10:13).

Do not ever think what you are facing is the end. Our lives and its circumstances are points in a line leading us to God.

Eighth, *declare your dependency on Him through prayer* (Matt. 26:39, 42).

- “Let this cup pass before me.”

Prayer is not an act of discipline as much as a declaration of dependency on Him. Prayer says, “God I need you.” God has chosen to work through prayer in the accomplishing of His will. Lean heavily on Him through this channel of grace.

Ninth, *read His Word* (Ps. 119:105; Prov. 6:23).

God’s mind and perspective are clearly stated in and through His Word. God gives wisdom freely, but we have to read His Word in order to hear His voice.

Tenth, be thankful for who He is, for what He has done, for what you have, for who you are, and for where you are (Eph. 5:20; 1 Thess. 5:18).

Ephesians 5:20 and 1 Thessalonians 5:18 reveal to us and through us the fruit of gratitude. If we choose not to be thankful, we will become bitter, angry, and critical.

Finally, there is always hope, healing, and wholeness in the finished work of Jesus Christ (John 16:33; 1 John 4:4; 5:4).

Never believe the devil's lie that all hope is lost. There is always an end to every trial encountered.

Application

Do not view these truths as a "magic formula" or a kind of "good luck charm." They are simple truths God wants us to know. Learn to rest in what is known to be true. Let us not allow our experiences to shape our theology. We must interpret our circumstances by our theology. We must see ourselves in Him and claim His victory. Rest knowing His will is our life.

When we give Him all we are, which is nothing, He gives us all He is – everything. That is called the exchanged life. He paid a debt He did not owe, for us who owed a debt we could not pay.³

Remember, Jesus Christ is enough.

Q4 - What is changing in your thinking?

Q5 - What does that freedom look like in our daily experiences?

Q6 - What is the victorious Christian life?

NEXT LESSON – RG and the Bema

¹ Watchman Nee, *Sit, Walk, Stand*, pp. 40-42

² Michael Wells, *Sidetracked in the Wilderness*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 179.

³ George, *Faith that Pleases God*, 214.



Lesson 13

RG and the BEMA

KEY PASSAGE(S)

¹⁴ “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:14-16).

THE BIG PICTURE – THE Story

If our understanding of God’s *Story* is correct, then the energy from the “first strike” has carried us to this point and beyond. The Bible teaches a final and full accounting. There is a tendency to look at this from a gospel-less perspective. If such is the case, then there is shame and condemnation. But if, however, we keep this in proper alignment with the gospel, there is joy and celebration for the BEMA is not about us, but about the faithfulness of God bringing about His victory to finish what He began.

God’s *Story* has six acts: God, Creation, Rejection, Redemption, Re-Creation and Worship. The *Story* ends with a final judgment where God acknowledges the last period on the last sentence. This chapter speaks to the final judgment of separation between the woman’s seed and that of the serpent.

INITIAL TRUTHS TO REMEMBER

The judgment seat of Christ in no way will be dealing with our sin. Many say the judgment seat of Christ will deal with our service and this is perhaps true. However, even here when judgment happens for the works done from a fleshly motive, the fire will consume them and treat them as non-rewarded. There is no sin assigned in any way to our account. Our account against God will be empty.

BASIC IDEAS:

1. At the BEMA, God reveals all that He chose to do in us and through us to those around us.
2. At the BEMA, every believer will have fruit to show.
3. The BEMA is a time of joy and celebration, not shame and judgment.

We should look on the judgment seat of Christ as an occasion of unprecedented joy and celebration. It is here the old nature shall finally receive its just reward. Here the removal of the old nature is final. It is here where one's practice will finally match up with one's position. In that glorious day, "when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2).

FACE TO FACE

Many Christians are already somewhat familiar with the thought of the BEMA judgment and what might happen at that moment. The impression left by much teaching on this subject is reflected in the following questions.

1. Is the Bema a time of remorse, regret, penal judgment, and personal shortcoming?
2. Is the Bema about you or is there something or someone else who will be receiving the spotlight?
3. Is it a time of reflecting back on failed opportunity and missed choices?
4. Is it possible for the believer not to be ruling and reigning with Christ in heaven?
5. How can we ever know if we have done enough?
6. Are we ever capable of really determining whether our actions (let alone our motives) have been pure?
7. If fruit bearing is the basis for evaluation, what exactly is fruit bearing?
8. Is it possible for the work of God to fail to such a degree that there is no reward-able act in His workmanship?
9. If our placement in heaven is based on our performance on earth, when is enough, enough?
10. If salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, why does sanctification and glorification demand a different standard?
11. How does a theology of future rewards from a man-centered perspective generate the kind of rest mentioned in Matthew 11:28-30? Is initial salvation the believer's only certainty concerning placement?
12. What exactly does the label "overcomer" mean?
13. Is there a legitimate distinction between entering the kingdom and inheriting the kingdom?
14. If all we need is in Christ, what more would we want?

Friend, there is a better way. This lesson will address and answer those questions.

OVERVIEW OF THE LESSON

The question of having to give an account can be immediately answered and in short order. There will be an accounting before God of every New Testament believer's life. The evaluation of one's life exists. However, in saying this let us make sure we have our presuppositions in place. Everything we have studied up to this point comes to bear on this one glorious and unprecedented moment when the work of Jesus is fully manifested and all creation bows before Him as King of kings and Lord of lords. In order to understand the BEMA as one of celebration and not anguish, let us consider several areas.

Q1 - Is the Bema a time of remorse, regret, penal judgment, and personal shortcoming?

Q2 - If my placement in heaven is based on my performance on earth, when is enough, enough? How can I ever know if I have done enough?

TODAY'S LESSON

I. If fruit bearing is the basis for evaluation, what exactly is fruit bearing?

In looking at the idea of fruit bearing, it is important to remember that fruit-bearing, good works, obedience, and the New Testament commands are all synonymous ideas. There is no distinction between any of these "actions." (Cf. Lesson 7)

If the underlying thought concerning fruit bearing is that a good tree can only produce good fruit, then why are we thinking about our bad fruit (Matt. 7:15-20; Luke 6:43-45)? A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, so whatever fruit is born that is bad is of no real consequence.

Ephesians 2:10 speaks of the believer being God's workmanship. The term "workmanship" says **we are the product of His hands**. **He is** molding the believer. **He is** designing us. **He is** doing the work in us and through us. This does not negate our will to choose, but it does source our will in His (Phil. 2:12, 13).

"Evangelicals see sanctification as living according to what they call 'biblical principles,' the ordinary things of life like marriage, family, business, finances, and diet. These principles do not define sanctification, lacking is the Christological dimension of living and dying for others. Who knows whether a life following biblical principles will result in success in business, marriage, and family, but this is not a life of sanctification, which cannot be measured by the quality and length of our lives."¹

If it is not a fruit of the Spirit, then it is a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-24). If it is a work of the flesh, it has no eternal value and will be consumed in the day of accounting (1 Cor. 3:15 [if 1 Corinthians 3 is to be used in this way]).

II. Is it possible for the work of God to fail to such a degree that there is no reward-able act in His workmanship?

Because of the certainty of fruit bearing, the work of God cannot fail. There is nothing like a so-called "fruitless" believer. The implication of this is every believer will be reward-able. This is the point of Romans 14:3, 4.

³ “The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, **for God has accepted him.** ⁴ Who are you to judge the servant of another? **To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand**” (Rom. 14:3, 4).

This is the point of 1 Corinthians 4:4, 5

⁴ “For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord. ⁵ Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, **but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God**” (1 Cor. 4:4, 5).

Often Matthew 24 and 25 are used to justify the belief that there are believers who are rewarded and those who are not. However, when studied in context, the scenario of Matthew 25 is clear enough. There are only two kinds of people, saved and lost. There is not a third category of saved lost people or dark light.

Many believers are under the impression hearing “well done” is an affirmation for earthly faithfulness to obedience. Its reception is tentative and uncertain. It is heard only by those who have “totally surrendered” to Christ. Because only the obedient receive it, some might not hear it. Yet, is this how we are to view the idea of hearing, “Well done?”

This block of teaching is in response to a question asked by his disciples. Jesus made a statement in 24:2 concerning the future destruction of the Temple. The question then asked was, “What will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?” (v. 3). In response to the question, He runs through a series of events preceding the end. He then says, “Then the end will come” (v.14). He speaks of the Tribulation of those days and the coming of the Son of Man (vv. 15-31). He also speaks of the days of Noah being like the days in which the Son of Man returns (vv. 36ff).

He then paints a picture of contrasts between those who are ready and those who are not ready. What follows is a table depicting the two contrasting groups.

Reference	Saved		Result	Unsaved	Result
24:40 Two men	One left			One taken	
24:41 Two women	One left			One taken	
24:45-51 Two servants	Faithful and Wise Servant		Blessed / Set over all His possessions (v.46, 47)	Wicked Servant (v.48)	Cut in pieces / weeping and gnashing of teeth (v. 51)
25:1-13 Two groups of virgins	Five Wise		Ready, went in (v.10)	Five Foolish	I do not know you (v.12)
25:14-30 Two kinds of servants	Faithful Servants		Well-done, good, and faithful servant. Enter into joy (vv. 21,23)	Wicked, Slothful, and worthless servants (vv.26, 30)	Talent removed, cast into outer darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth (vv.29, 30)
	Five Talents	Two Talents		One Talent	
25:31-46 Two nations	The Sheep		Right hand Blessed, inherit the kingdom(v.34)	The Goats	Left hand - Cursed into the eternal fire, go away into eternal punishment (vv. 41, 46)

If Matthew 25 can apply, then every believer will hear, “Well done my good and faithful servant.” If this is not true, then the alternative is tragically confusing (Matt. 25:30). Because of our understanding of fruit bearing (Mark 4; Gal. 5), every believer will have “works” that are “gold, silver and precious stone” (if 1 Corinthians 3 is to be used in this way). Joy and reward awaits all who appear in that day.

It appears His point would be, “Be ready so that when I come you do not find yourself unsaved.” If this is correct, then every saved person falls into the first category and every unsaved person falls into the second category. Because of the parallelism, every saved person rules over all His possessions, are ready, will hear, “Well done,” is good and faithful, will sit at God’s right hand, and will inherit the kingdom. This is consistent with 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24, and Philippians 1:6 and John’s usage of the idea of every believer being an overcomer. Not to hear well done is to find oneself in a place of eternal fire and punishment.

Every saved person will have service that is reward-able (1 Cor. 4:5). To be sure, this is but an initial attempt at answering an area that is large and complex. The answer is consistent with the doctrines of grace, one’s position in Christ, and the certainty of God’s rule over man’s will. It is not an exhaustive look, but it does provide “food for thought.”

Q3 - If fruit bearing is the basis for evaluation, what exactly is fruit bearing?

Q4 - Is it possible for the work of God to fail to such a degree that there is no reward-able act in His workmanship?

III. If performance determines placement, when is enough, enough?

(This will tie in with point four) Is it ever possible for the believer to know when enough is enough? If salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, why would sanctification and glorification demand a different standard?

Although, as Evangelicals we identify justification as being a monergistic work (Cf. Lesson 5), why have so many made sanctification and our ultimate placement in glorification a synergistic work? If we could not contribute then, why do we think we can now? John 15:4 and 5 clearly speak of not being able to do anything apart from Him. The cross swallows completely the “I” of self. This appears to be the point of Romans 6, Galatians 2:20 and Colossians 3:1-4.

IV. What does “overcomer” mean? Is there a legitimate distinction between entering the kingdom and inheriting the kingdom?

By far the author John dominates the New Testament usage of the word **nikao** (overcomer). His usage and our understanding of it are crucial. Of the 24 occurrences [of **nikao**]; three are used elsewhere (Lk. 11:22; Rom. 3:4; 12:21 [1 John 5:4 **nike** once in NT]).

- First, Jesus speaks of having overcome the world (John 16:33).

For us, our union with Him (see most of the above material) makes what He is ours (1 John 4:17).

- Second, John speaks of the believer having already overcome the wicked one (1 John 2:13, 14).
- Third, as a child of God we have overcome the spirit of the antichrist.

Again, this is true because of our identity being in Christ (1 John 4:4). This has nothing to do with performance or obedience.

- Fourth, it is our faith in Christ that identifies us as one who overcomes the world (1 John 5:4, 5).
- Fifth, the implication of not being one who overcomes is more than a failure to reign (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21).

The one who overcomes inherits all things (Rev. 21:7). Since we are sons and daughters, we are heirs (Gal. 4:7). In fact, we are joint heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17). Such talk to the contrary is unscriptural.

CONCLUSION

There are several observations.

- **First**, the coming of Christ is a day of great celebration and joy.
- **Second**, we should see the Bema Judgment as a time for removing forever the old nature.

The old nature will be the wood, hay, and stubble consumed on that day. Our old nature was judicially pronounced dead when we received Christ as our Savior. At the Bema, our old nature will be experientially removed for good forever.

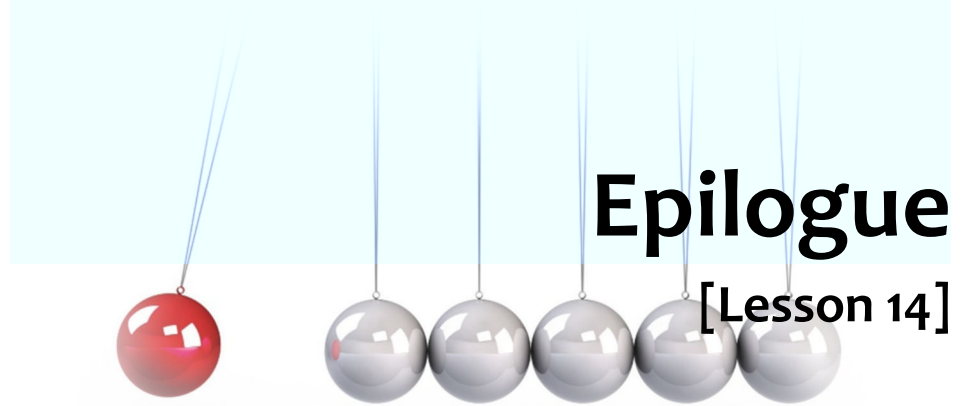
- **Third**, we believe every believer will receive in that day a reward for service (1 Cor. 4:5).
- **Fourth**, because we believe it is a day for the removal of the old nature we cannot help but believe it will be a day of incredible rejoicing.

Friend in that day we will lose forever our old nature. The idea we will be ashamed and downcast is a great disservice to the nature of the event and to the power of the gospel. May God open our eyes to the sufficiency of His work in our behalf. May we see the day of accounting as a day in which He receives His glory in the church.

Q5 - How does a theology of future rewards from a man-centered perspective generate the kind of rest mentioned in Matthew 11:28-30?

FOR FURTHER STUDY: 1 Cor. 3:10-15; Matthew 24-25; Romans 14; 2 Cor. 5:20

¹ David Scaer (2015) "Sanctification," *Concordia Journal*: Vo..41: No. 3, Article 6.



Epilogue

[Lesson 14]

RG and 10 GOSPEL TRUTHS

KEY PASSAGE(S)

¹ "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? ² May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:1-4)

THE BIG PICTURE – THE Story

Well, we have just worked through thirteen areas of application as it relates to the gospel. Sometimes our tendency is to view the gospel as something we come through and work from. As if to say, we move on from there. However, our premise throughout this study is to see the gospel as primary and all other fruits as coming from this one root. **If the root is lost, there is no fruit.** Thus, we must always keep the gospel as central. The Bible tells a single *Story* and at the center of this *Story* is JESUS. Newton's Cradle provides a good illustration of this concept. Our desire has been to see the gospel and then to align everything else about this world and the Christian life as emanating from the gospel. Everything receives energy from the "first strike." Perhaps a good way of remembering this is to place your hands parallel in front of you and move them from side to side mimicking NEWTON'S CRADLE. EVERYTHING comes from, is sustained by, and flows back to THE GOSPEL.

BASIC IDEAS:

1. Only the person and work of Jesus can free the believing from sin and death and give to them joy and glory.
2. The Christian life is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.
3. What the Christian receives by grace, he cannot maintain by works.

INITIAL TRUTHS TO REMEMBER

The person and work of Jesus Christ is so vast and of such limitless quality that all He does is lavish in its ability to cancel out the nature of the crime against Him by His people.

1. The believer is right with God.
2. The believer is debt-free before the Father.
3. The believer is no longer the object of God's displeasure, wrath, or anger.
4. The believer is no longer liable to punishment for their sins before the Father.
5. The believer has the imputed righteousness of Christ.
6. The believer is no longer in Adam but is fully and eternally in Christ.
7. The believer is no longer an enemy of God, but enjoys peace and access with the Father.

OVERVIEW OF THE LESSON

There are certain categories of belief that makes one an evangelical. We confess such truths. We believe our justification is the work of one—Jesus Christ. Because of His work, the believer is free. Unfortunately, believers often exchange one form of bondage for another. We believe the Gospel, and believe the Gospel creates an “atmosphere” of freedom. No matter how many generalizations one makes, it is still necessary to lay out just how free the believer is in Christ. For us, the gospel and grace are not mere words without definition. The weight of establishing and maintaining the Christian's relationship with God is all on our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He has done all the heavy lifting - the believer does none. The believer simply believes and lives from the firm foundation of that truth. He does not believe in order to establish it or to maintain it. The following is our attempt to define the atmosphere grace provides.¹

TODAY'S LESSON

1. **Nothing anyone does merits God's favor. This is equally true before and after they accept Jesus as their Savior from sin and death.**
 - Therefore, because of Jesus, God loves us without condition, accepts us without requirement, forgives us without limit, favors us without merit, and serves us without reward. This is grace and nothing less or more is required.
 - Therefore, **The Christian “Disciplines” are for joy.** They are not required or prescriptive. They describe the fruit of the JESUS SEED. They are “lollipops” to be enjoyed **by the believer** and not “paddles” to be used **against the believer**. When such activities produce guilt, they are misused.
2. **The person and work of Jesus is so thorough that the offering against sin brought by Him forever cancels any sin debt the believer had, has, or will ever have. God will never bring up their sin issue again.**
 - Therefore, the Father never deals with believers according to their sin in the present.
 - Therefore, the Father will never bring up a believer's sin in the future.
 - Therefore, the Father never chastens believers according to their sin.

3. The person and work of Jesus is so thorough that the offering against sin brought by Him forever forgives sin as a transgression.

- Therefore, there is now no condemnation by God for/on the believer.
- Therefore, God forgives believers of all transgressions past, present, or future.
- Therefore, because the basis of forgiveness is rooted in the person and work of Jesus, God forgives unconditionally.
- Therefore, after justification, no confession of sin is necessary for forgiveness.

4. The person and work of Jesus is so thorough that the offering against sin brought by Him satisfies the wrath of God against His people.

- Therefore, Jesus fulfills the demands of the Law and imputes His Law obedience to His people.
- Therefore, God never looks upon His people with anything other than complete joy and good pleasure.
- Therefore, His people never need worry about divine judgment because of non-conformity to God's Law.
- Therefore, it is not possible for Christians to cause God to become angry with them.
- Therefore, in the Day of Judgment the only work one must rely on is the work of Jesus.

5. The person and work of Jesus is so thorough that the offering against sin brought by Him forever declares the sinner righteous.

- Therefore, one's right standing before the Father is only possible in the person and work of Jesus Christ.
- Therefore, one's right standing is based solely on whom Jesus is and what He does/did and not on anything the believer has done, does, or might do.
- Therefore, what God declares right no one and nothing can make wrong.
- Therefore, only the unbelieving need to get right with God.
- Therefore, the believer need never get right with God.

6. The person and work of Jesus is so thorough that the offering against sin brought by Him forever removes any standing of guilt before the Father.

- Therefore, because Jesus receives all of our sin and we receive all of His righteousness there is never a time when the believer is culpable before God for His sin.
- Therefore, no matter what the believer does or does not do, he is never guilty before the Father.
- Therefore, although guilt does continue to operate in our horizontal relationships, guilt has no place in our vertical relationship with God.

7. The person and work of Jesus is so thorough that the offering against sin brought by Him forever imputes His righteousness to the believing.

- Therefore, God will never credit their sin to the believer's account.
- Therefore, God will never "chastise/discipline" the believer for their sin.
- Therefore, God will always look upon the believer in the very righteousness of Jesus regardless of what the believer is or is not doing.

8. The person and work of Jesus is so thorough that the offering against sin brought by Him forever reconciles the believer to the Father.

- Therefore, no believer can ever fall out of fellowship with God.
- Therefore, no believer is anything other than a friend of God.
- Therefore, such language as falling out of fellowship and confessing one's sin to restore fellowship is theologically inappropriate.

9. The person and work of Jesus is so thorough that the offering against sin brought by Him forever moves believers from their identity in Adam to who they now are in Christ.

- Therefore, God never sees His people in anything less than the very righteousness of Jesus.
- Therefore, God never deals with His people according to their sin.
- Therefore, the believer's identity is no longer "in Adam" ever again.

10. The person and work of Jesus is so thorough that the offering against sin brought by Him forever adopts them into the family of God.

- Therefore, those who believe are the children of God.
- Therefore, those who believe can call the Father, Abba.
- Therefore, those who believe are joint heirs with Jesus.
- Therefore, because of position and not performance all believers will receive the inheritance.

Jesus came to give life and to give it more abundantly (John 10:10). He came preaching good news to the poor (Luke 4:18, 19). Jesus never vacillates from His gospel. As noted by the apostle Paul, "It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore, keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery" (Gal. 5:1).

BREAKING IT DOWN EVEN MORE

A condensed reading of the above is as follows.

Because of how glorious and complete Jesus' Work is:

1. Nothing anyone does can earn God's blessing or merit God's favor in any way. This includes Christians. Because of our position in Christ and because of how thorough His work was and how powerful and gracious He is, no "performance" can earn us additional blessings, nor "failures" lose us the blessings purchased by His blood.
2. The Father never deals with a believer's sin in a "punishing" way; God never "chastens" us in His wrath, because Jesus took that for us. God is never angry with a Christian; God is always, only, pleased with them. Though sin affects our human relationships, it no longer, ever, forever, will affect our relationship with God.
3. Therefore, nothing Christians do earns additional favor(s) from God or absolves them of fresh sins. Believers do not need to continue to ask for forgiveness. They never need to "get right" or "get back into fellowship with God." They cannot "pray" or "obey" their way into extra blessings, since they can never reverse what Christ has already done.
4. Therefore, traditional Christian "disciplines" are given to us as grace, for our joy, not as a vehicle to "higher living" or "greater success." They must never be used as "paddles" -- against our own selves or against others.

SQUEEZING OUT THE JUICES

If I had to reduce it down to the specific, unique, peculiarities of our theology, it would be:

1. God never punishes Christians, ever.
2. Christians never lose fellowship with God (or need to confess sins in order to restore it).
3. Christians never earn blessings; obedience is the enjoyment of blessings purchased by Jesus.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: Rom. 3:21-26; 5:6-10

¹ For Scriptural study on all of the above see, *Christ Has Set Us Free - Nine Words Every Christian Should Know*, *Credo - I Believe*, *Five Gospel Fruits Produced by the JESUS SEED for the Christian to Enjoy*, and *Reigning Grace*. All are available through www.waukeshabile.org



Blood Picture

The Bible begins with blood (Gen. 3:21) and ends with blood (John 19:30). Bridging these two bookends is a stream of blood through sacrifice. Jesus completes the blood picture.

Grace

God designed us to know and experience the joy He has within Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. His will to share this with us is gracious in so far that we could never do for ourselves what can only be done by Him.

Hero

The Bible tells a single *Story* and at the center of this *Story* is Jesus. Jesus is God's Hero who saves His people from sin and death and for joy and glory. This joy and glory is the joy spoken of in our defining of GRACE.

Reigning

Romans 5:12-21 speaks of two realms. Sin and death mark one realm and the other is marked by light and life. Sin exists in Satan's realm. Life in that of Jesus. When one accepts God's rule, they dwell in a kingdom marked by life and light.

Seed Promise

When Adam and Eve fell, they were unable to save themselves. God gave them a promise in Genesis 3:15 telling them a "seed" from Eve would rise up and crush the serpent's head and his seed would bruise the heel of the woman's seed. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Seed Promise and the completion of the Blood Picture. This battle between the two "seeds" is traceable through the entire *Story* whose HERO is JESUS.

Story

Although there are sixty-six books in the biblical canon [Genesis – Revelation], they all tell a single *Story* and at the center of this *Story* is JESUS. See further HERO.

