



BEDROCK BELIEF DEFENDING OUR HOPE

Romans 1-8

Pastor Bob Froese & Ruth Froese



We are so glad that you have decided to read *Bedrock Belief: Defending Our Hope*. It's a study of Romans 1-8 that was designed for those not able to be involved in the 2009 –2010 FFC men's and ladies Bible studies. To get the most benefit out of each chapter, begin by reading the text from Romans, then read the two pages that comprise the chapter, and finally take your time and thoughtfully complete the personal study work. It is our prayer that *Bedrock Belief: Defending Our Hope* will be used by God to help you strongly, accurately and passionately defend faith in Jesus Christ.

Many served the Lord with gladness to put this study into your hands. The pages were checked for clarity and corrections by a host of people—to each of you we are very grateful. We made some changes after their work, and the errors that remain are ours. Brigitte Jourdian crafted the illustration on pg. 71 that helps clarify the point so well—thank you. Laura Sitzman created the cover—isn't it beautiful? We so appreciate Jenni Albrecht who makes these books available in the Resource Center.

Now, let's faithfully proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us into His marvelous light!
~Pastor Bob Froese and Ruth Froese

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” 1 Peter 2:9



Bedrock Belief

"In your hearts, regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame." 1 Peter 3:15-16

Chapters:

Pages:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 1. The Gospel Greeting | 4 |
| 2. Defending Faith with Facts | 8 |

Condemnation

- | | |
|---|----|
| 3. God Reveals His Wrath | 12 |
| 4. God Gives People Over to Their Desires | 16 |
| 5. Judge Yourself by God's Word | 20 |
| 6. Lips Will Lie, but Lives Won't | 24 |
| 7. Let's Face It, We Are Guilty | 28 |

Justification

- | | |
|--|----|
| 8. Christ's Imputed Righteousness | 32 |
| 9. An Old Testament Illustration | 36 |
| 10. The Grace in Which We Stand | 40 |
| 11. Rejoicing in Suffering and Trials | 44 |
| 12. Salvation Beyond a Shadow of Doubt | 48 |

Sanctification

- | | |
|---|----|
| 13. We All Desperately Need Jesus | 52 |
| 14. The Meaning of Sanctification | 56 |
| 15. Dead People Don't Sin | 60 |
| 16. Enslaved by Christ's Righteousness | 64 |
| 17. Death by Co-Crucifixion with Christ | 68 |
| 18. The War Within | 72 |
| 19. From Wretched to Rescued | 76 |
| 20. The Power of the Holy Spirit | 80 |

Glorification

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----|
| 21. Waiting for Jesus Christ | 84 |
| 22. Conformed to Jesus Christ | 88 |
| 23. Adopted | 92 |
| 24. God's Everlasting Love | 96 |

1. The Gospel Greeting



Romans 1:1-17

“When you know Romans 1-8 experientially, you’ll have no problem defending your faith because you’ll understand doctrine. You’ll be able to focus on loving the person while presenting the gospel rather than focus on a ‘program’ of witnessing.”

~Bob Froese

What is the gospel? The gospel is God’s response to our rebellion against Him. When people rebel against us we do not respond the way God does. Would we kill our only son to save those who rebel against us? No, never. But God did. This amazing gospel, which we desperately need, saves us.

God wrote down the gospel for us. It is His story, and those who believe it are being written into it. Our names are being entered into the “Book of Life”. God begins His story at the world’s perfect creation where He and man walked together in relationship. Quickly we chose to rebel, and sin entered the world, ushering in the darkness of death. Throughout the Old Testament (OT), God tells of a people He preserved for Himself, the nation Israel. He tells Israel’s story—historical narratives of nitty-gritty life in a sin-cursed world, passionate poems of the inner lives of the psalmists, and powerful sermons of prophets of truth. Israel’s hope was that while walking in the darkness of sin and death, they would see a great light (Isaiah 9:2-7). That light is Jesus Christ. He is the answer to Israel’s rebellion and ours, and the entire OT points to Him (Romans 1:2-3).

In the New Testament (NT), God culminates the story. He tells how Jesus came to earth, was killed on a cross by His wrath against sin, was buried, and then resurrected to overcome death (John 1:5-13). The result of the gospel is that all who confess their rebellion against God, who agree with Him about their sin (that separates them from Him) are forgiven. The gospel means that it’s possible to obey God in faith, instead of rebelling against Him (Romans 1:5). Our culture is suspicious of the gospel, because it is a culture that is suspicious of authority. The gospel is unimaginable without some concept of authority and recognition that we have rebelled against it. When we recognize and agree with God that we are self-focused and sin-cursed, in the midst of our rebellion, the gospel redeems and reconciles us with God and each other.

The gospel connects the human and the divine. In assuming humanity Jesus Christ left Heaven and joined “Team Earth.” In putting on the “Team Earth” jersey, He enslaved Himself to human flesh...skin, bones, muscles, heart-aches, pains, agonies, all our weaknesses and limitations (Romans 1:3). He put on the slavery that we are subject to so we could become slaves of God, no longer enslaved to the desires of our flesh (Philippians 2:7-8). In his humanity, Jesus descended from King David, but did not live as an earthly King himself (Matthew 1:6). He became a human being for the sole purpose of being tortured and killed for our rebellion against God (John 12:27).

Although He became human, Jesus Christ never took off the divine glory of God (John 1:14, Romans 1:4). The Father and the Son remained in perfect harmony, intimacy, and shared glory, except for one horrific time. That day on the cross, Jesus added our sin to Himself and the Father poured out His wrath, but

not on our bodies... on Jesus' body. Jesus died, was buried, and resurrected from the dead with the power of God. Then He was raised up to sit at God's right hand in glory, power, honor, and supreme rule forever.

This is the gospel we all need to hear every day: Jesus took on Himself the punishment for our sin, our rebellion. The first thing the gospel does is take care of our rebellion against God, to bring us from disobedience to obedience. Sometimes we think we need the gospel to fix broken earthly relationships. Sometimes we talk about the gospel as the answer for loneliness, disconnectedness, or discontent. Sometimes we tell people the gospel gives direction and purpose, or happiness. Although these things are a result of the gospel, they are not what the gospel is designed to do. The gospel solves our rebellion problem.

When we hear the gospel, we have an inner and an outer response. To check your inner response, ask yourself how you feel when you hear the command to give up every loyalty that stands in the way of being a slave to God. That any other allegiance is rebellion. It's fine in general terms, but when we're asked to give up something we want to keep, or we're asked to think in a way that is uncomfortable for us, we rebel. This inner response demands that we need the gospel.

You can check your outer response by asking yourself several questions: "What is the first thing people know about me? Do I portray an urgency to share the hope of Jesus Christ with others? Do I hold the gospel high by my obvious adherence to functional role differences for men and women? Do I evidence humility so that those closest to me would say I am quick to humbly confess my sin?" Our outer responses confirm that we need to grow in the gospel.

Faith is the beginning of believing the gospel (Romans 1:8, 17, Hebrews 11:6). Faith means that we're poor in spirit, admitting our spiritual bankruptcy. Faith relies on God, which doesn't mean we pray fancy prayers, but rather that we cry out to God for help in needy dependence. Faith results in obedient, faithful service to God.

The gospel puts a longing into our hearts for others to believe and be saved. When we respond to the gospel, we will serve God in His church (Romans 1:8-17). Others will see the unity and love of those in the church and be attracted to the gospel (John 17:21-24). When Christ's church lives in unity, encouraging each other, strengthening each other's faith, serving each other, and loving each other, we are sharing the gospel (Romans 1:11-15). God intends our life together as a local church to display His gospel to the watching world (Ephesians 1:22-23).

The power of the gospel results in bold righteousness by faith (Romans 1:16-17). This righteousness is not our own, but the righteousness of Jesus Christ. This righteousness is not a pulling up of our proverbial bootstraps and getting it done. Instead, the gospel so astounds us with the incredible love and power of God that it changes all who believe it and receive it. Our rebellion is very strong, but it is not stronger than the gospel.

"The entire Bible is a story of redemption, and it's chief character is Jesus Christ. The story reveals how God harnessed nature and controlled history to send His Son to rescue rebellious, foolish, and self-focused men and women. He freed them from bondage to themselves, enabled them to live for His glory, and gifted them with an eternity in His presence."

~Paul Tripp

Not only unbelievers, but also believers need the gospel, Sin is abhorrent to God no matter who does it! What hope do we have but Jesus, sent by God's goodness and love. His sacrifice is sufficient for salvation and everyday cleansing. We must preach the gospel to ourselves everyday, for we need a Savior not just for yesterday but also for today and tomorrow.

PERSONAL STUDY

1. The Gospel Greeting

Read
Romans 1:1-17

Let's get acquainted with Paul. He was a Roman citizen, writing the book of Romans to the Romans (Acts 22:27-28). As a child, he was raised in wealthy Tarsus and given the best Jewish education money could buy. His ability to effectively reason with both Greeks and Jews reveals his familiarity with the Greek way of thinking in which he was raised, and evidences his education under the most famous rabbi Gamaliel, a Benjamite who was known for scholarship and tradition. Paul eventually becomes a prominent Jewish leader, supervising the stoning of "rebels" like Stephen (Acts 22:19). Then, after his conversion, Paul surrendered his leadership skills in obedience to God.

Paul was also skilled in tent-making, and would have had no problems running a business that gave him the finances he was accustomed to. But after his conversion, he surrendered not only his leadership ability, but also his money making ability in obedience to God (Acts 20:33-35). In Romans 1:1, Paul describes himself three ways. What are they? _____

Why does Paul not list any of his credentials? He could have mentioned his quality education (in both Greek and Jewish philosophies), his success in business, his noteworthy ancestry and Roman citizenship, his successful church planting efforts, or listed his writings. He is introducing himself to people who have never met him. Why do *you* think Paul does not list his credentials? Wouldn't he want to make a good first impression? _____

Enslaved By Love For Christ

The first way that Paul describes himself in Romans 1:1 is as a bonds slave, a bond servant, or a servant (depending on your translation). The Greek word used is *doulos*. This word describes people who were in debt, and were sold to pay off their debt. We do not have an equivalent of this word in our culture, because people claim bankruptcy and carry on. But in Rome, *doulos* had no rights: they were not allowed to marry, they had no right to trial, and they could be killed at the whim of their owner (tradition says if the owners feet were cold, he had the right to slit the *doulos*' intestines and warm his feet inside them). By calling himself *doulos*, Paul identified himself with the lowest of low on the totem pole of the social pecking order in Rome. Certainly Paul is humble, but there's more going on. From the moment Paul was converted in Acts 9, he understood that he was a man under orders, a man who had a Master and Lord. Read the following verses and write down what you learn about your attitude towards God and serving Him:

Acts 20:24 _____

The passion of Christianity comes from deliberately signing away my own rights, and becoming a bond-servant of Jesus Christ.

~Oswald Chambers

Matthew 22:37-38, John 14:15 _____

Called by Christ

The second way Paul identifies himself is as an apostle. Apostles are those who had known the risen Lord personally, whom Jesus had appointed (called) and given authority. Paul's appointing as an apostle is found in Acts 26:16. You and I have not seen Jesus the way the apostles did, yet, we *are* called into relationship with Him, to be His disciples and make disciples. How did Jesus say people would know that we are His disciples?

John 13:35 _____

List ten of the ways we are commanded to treat other disciples:

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 _____

If you asked those closest to you if you treated them according to your list, which areas would they say you are lacking in? Circle those areas, and work on showing them love the way a disciple of Christ should.

Set Apart For The Gospel of Christ

Paul's third way of identifying himself is as "set apart" for the gospel of Christ. This means he was separated from everything else, he had an undivided interest in Jesus Christ. All other things were instrumental to and secondary to the gospel. Are we set apart for Jesus Christ like this? Spreading the gospel is not a romantic, grandiose job. It is lived out in the nitty-gritty of our day to day relationships and lives.

For example, marriage is a picture of the gospel. When a man sacrificially loves, sanctifies, and satisfies his wife; or when a woman loves her husband above her children, loves her children above her home or job or other activities, and keeps her home in obedience to her husband, the gospel is held high. We can teach Bible studies or hold great outreach events, but the work of truly spreading the gospel takes place in our daily life and friendships.

Read the following Scriptures, and write down what they teach about holding the gospel high in marriage relationships. Note that Paul, although not married, found this to be important teaching. Thus, if you are not married, please don't ignore this.

Titus 2:3-5 _____

Ephesians 5:22-33 _____

As a follower of Christ you are set apart to hold the gospel high in your day to day relationships, and to make disciples who do the same.

Prayer

2. Defending Faith With Facts



Romans 1:20

Faith or facts...do we need both?

Faith is not opposed to facts. If so there would be no gospel. Faith is, however, more necessary than facts, because it is required for salvation. Facts alone do not provide the faith necessary for salvation.

Believing is impossible without thinking. Faith has to be based on facts.

Faith believes without seeing, but not without knowing. Faith is not a gullible or non-thinking acceptance of something, but rather a belief in Jesus Christ as He is revealed in Scripture..

Why bother with facts? We might think to win someone over to the gospel with our brilliant discussion about facts. Yes, the facts may convince unbelievers of Jesus Christ, but that's not the main purpose of facts. God uses facts to strengthen the faith of believers. Jesus told the disciples to tell each other facts about Him (Luke 7:19-23). Jesus' disciples, Peter and John, encouraged believers by their eyewitness testimony of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:16-21, 1 John 1:1-4). By the power of the Holy Spirit, Paul used facts to introduce people to Jesus Christ (Acts 17:2-4, Acts 19:8-10, Romans 1:20). Even if it seems like no one cares, it is still worthwhile to state the facts that defend your faith in God (Matthew 12:38-40, Acts 17:22-34, Philemon 6).

Scripture shows us that faith in God is not blind, but based on facts. The Old Testament (OT) teaches us to use our minds to consider what God has done. We are not to be like ignorant animals, but to use our minds (Psalm 32:8-9, Isaiah 44:20-22, Isaiah 41:21-23).

The New Testament (NT) gives many examples of facts that testify to Jesus being the Son of the Living God, the promised Savior, and Lord of all. Jesus Himself tell us to believe the facts of His works as evidence that He is the Son of God (John 5:36, John 10:38). The disciples were eyewitnesses who point to the facts of His miracles (Acts 2:22-24, Hebrews 2:3-4).

Jesus addresses questions of doubt in different ways, depending on the heart condition of the one asking. When skeptical unbelievers doubted Jesus, He harshly rebuked them, calling them wicked and adulterous (Matthew 12:38-40). When Thomas doubted Jesus' resurrection, He mildly rebuked him, telling him that it is more blessed to believe without seeing than to see and believe (John 20:24-29). When Jesus' disciples doubted Jesus, He did not rebuke them, but simply told them to look at the evidence (Luke 17:19-23).

Let's consider Jesus' crucifixion. There is some response on our part. We respond by thinking of Him as either a liar, a lunatic, or Lord. If you view Jesus as a liar, you deny the evidence of multiple eyewitnesses. You prove that your rebellion is more of a reality in your life than the facts.

If you view Jesus as a perhaps a good man, but a lunatic, you ignore the fact that a mother would never stand by and watch her lunatic son die for his lunacy. Mary, the mother of Jesus, knew beyond a shadow of doubt that she was a virgin, and that her son Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. If Jesus had an earthly father, she would have begged them not to kill him, saying, "He's a lunatic. Don't kill Him!" However she stood by, knowing and testifying of the truth of who Jesus Christ is by her silence.

The only other alternative is to view Him as Lord. If you choose to deny

Him, you are choosing to side with Satan (Matthew 6:24). Those who choose Him as Lord will evidence a life of submission to Him and those He has placed them under the authority of. There are two words that are impossible to say together, “No, Lord.” If He is Lord of our lives, we will only say, “Yes, Lord.”

The resurrection is proof that Jesus is the Son of God, Lord, and the Christ. Without the resurrection of Jesus Christ from death to life, there is no such thing as Christianity (1 Corinthians 15:12-20). Eyewitnesses who testify to the resurrection include Luke, a Gentile physician, who records with accuracy that Jesus showed Himself by many infallible proofs for forty days after His resurrection. Thomas would not believe without personal visual proof. Jesus showed Him nail prints in His hands, the same nail prints that all of us who believe without seeing will spend eternity gazing at, with hearts overflowing in grateful worship.

God tells us that creation is evidence of His existence, and that He reveals His attributes through creation (Romans 1:20, Psalm 19:1). What God has revealed about Himself through creation is called general revelation. One aspect of general revelation by which God evidences Himself, is our consciences (Romans 2:14-15). Recently, *USA Today* ran a letter to the editor by a professing atheist who stated, “We all know what’s right.” He had part of it right, that our consciences differentiate between right and wrong, but he rebels against the One who gave Him that conscience. It is God’s standard of holiness, to which we must bow, not our standard of holiness.

How do we know God’s standard of holiness? God has not only given us general revelation, but also specific and special revelation. This special revelation is His Word, the Holy Scriptures, from Genesis through Revelation. Our hearts deceive us (Jeremiah 17:9), therefore God’s Word is needed to reveal what is going on in our hearts and show us the ways we rebel against Him (Hebrews 4:12). Then as we recognize our sin and rebellion, God’s Word provides everything we need to be saved and to live a life of godliness (2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:3-4). The life of faith in God is not some pie-in-the-sky ideal that we define for ourselves. The facts of faith and what a life of faith looks like are clearly defined by God in His Word.

In our feeling driven world, don’t let the facts take a back seat. The facts prove Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the Living God, the Lord before whom every knee will bow for eternity. The fact is, we choose now where we will spend eternity bowing. Will it be in Hell, with horrified weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth as you burn forever in your rebellious state? Or, will it be in Heaven, with gratitude for the glorious inheritance you’ve been given as God’s redeemed rebel, His adopted child?

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.”

1 John 1:1-3

PERSONAL STUDY

2. Defending Your Faith With Facts

A study of what we believe will not ignore evidences, since Scripture does not teach us to have blind faith. We must know with our minds, not just our emotions, what our faith is in. So this week, we'll be looking at evidence for God, evidence that Scripture is God's Word, and the evidence of sin in our lives.

God

Three of the evidences of God that we can consider are creation, our conscience, and our ability to know truth.

Creation: Read Romans 1:20. No-one is excused from knowing about the existence of God. Why not? _____

Read Psalm 19:1 What does creation tell us clearly? _____

Conscience: People do not argue about whether there are moral laws, because they are inside every created person. This can be seen by world-wide, cross cultural agreement that crimes such as murder, child abuse, and kidnapping are wrong. Read Romans 2:14-15. What do even the unsaved have written on their hearts? _____

The conscience within man reveals God. To read more about the moral argument that conscience proves God's existence, read Mere Christianity by C. S. Lewis.

Our ability to know truth: Thinking and knowing that you think proves God's existence. Without God's existence and man's creation in His image, it would be impossible for man to have thoughts or emotions. Read Genesis 1:26-27. In whose image is man created? How is that different from animals? _____

Read Genesis 2:15-16. What is the job given to Adam? _____

Read Genesis 2:18. What is the job given to Eve? _____

Adam and Eve were created with spiritual equality and functional differences.

Read Acts 17:27-28. What is God's purpose in creating us and in the events of our lives? _____

Read John 18:37. Why did Jesus come into the world? _____

Scripture

Archeology: Archeology verifies Old Testament events and locations as accurate. For example, archeologists were able to dig to find the city spoken of in 1 Kings 9:26 and 10:22 by following the accurate directions given there. Another example is Nineveh, which archeologists found in the mid 1800's, exactly as it says in Jonah.

Eyewitness Testimony: The gospel accounts of Jesus are based on eyewitness accounts, and are respected as such by scholars. The picture of Jesus presented by the four different gospel writers is basically the same, with different themes being stressed by each. Other ancient writers (Ignatius in 110 A.D. and Polycarp in 115 A.D.) refer to verses in the gospels as words of Christ. The original Didache (an early Christian article written in 130 A.D.) quotes portions from three gospels and recognizes them as Scripture.

Changed lives: The power of Scripture to change lives is evidence that it is reliable, to inform us of what we believe. The fruit of changed lives shows that faith in God's grace leads to good works, as described in Scripture.

Read 2 Timothy 3:15-17. What is Scripture able to do? _____

Your changed life is evidence that Scripture does what God says it will do. How has God changed your life to line up with Scripture? _____

Sin

Is allowing sin the same as causing sin? If a mother tells a child not to do something and the child disobeys, did the mother cause the sin? No, of course not. Allowing evil is not the same as causing evil. Those who question why God allows sin show that they believe in absolute right and wrong, because to recognize evil they must have an idea of good and wonder why good isn't happening in that situation. God placed the idea of good in the one who asks the question, so by asking the question they are admitting that God exists. The fact that evil exists in the world is the most frequent objection against God, but people who push this argument don't trust God even while they prove His existence with their doubt.

Read Romans 1:21 and 3:23. Based on these two verses, how does the Bible define sin? _____

While God allows evil, He also fights it, and He is glorified through the battle. Those who live for God's glory are instrumental in fighting evil. For example, in the Old Testament, farmers were to leave the corners of their crops for the poor. A New Testament example is seen through Paul collecting funds from a church that had enough food, for a church that was hungry. The battle against evil is ongoing, and not pretty, as described in Ephesians 6:12. However, we must remember that God is victorious.

Read Ephesians 6:10-11. What kind of attitude are we to have toward the battle against evil? _____

Do we live as if we are strong in the Lord? God's redemption plan in Jesus has gained victory over evil! Read Revelation 12:9-12, 17:14, and 21:5-8. Then write your prayer of praise to the Lamb for His ultimate victory.

Prayer

3. God Reveals His Wrath



Romans 1:18-20

“God’s righteous anger is the right reaction of perfection in the Creator toward perversity in the creature.The thing that would be morally doubtful would be for Him not to show His wrath in this way. God is not just—that is, He does not act in the way that is right, he does not do what is proper to a judge—unless He inflicts upon all sin and wrongdoing the penalty it deserves.”

~J. I. Packer

“We will never stand in awe of being loved by God until we reckon with the seriousness of our sin and the justice of His wrath against us.”

~John Piper

We like to think and talk about God’s love, and it’s true that God is love. However, it’s also true that God is holy, and God’s character is undividable. No aspect of His character is in conflict or at cross-purposes with another. God’s holiness flows out of His love, and God’s love meets the purposes of His holy righteousness. We are in desperate need of God’s righteousness, because He pours His wrath out on all unrighteousness and ungodliness (Romans 1:17-18).

What is righteousness? The gospel of Jesus Christ reveals the righteousness of God (Romans 1:16-17). There can be no human standard for righteousness, because righteousness is the will and character of God. Therefore, those who do right conform to the will and character of God, not their own will. Jesus said and did everything that God the Father told Him to say and do (John 5:18, 8:28-29). Righteousness means to be changed to do the will of God and reflect the image of Jesus Christ. One honest look at our lives reveals that can never humanly achieve the righteousness we need to escape God’s wrath. Indeed, the righteousness we need is only available in Jesus (Isaiah 64:6, Romans 5:8-9). Righteousness is never lived by effort, it is only lived by faith according to the grace of God (Romans 1:17, Ephesians 2:8-10, Titus 2:11).

What is unrighteousness? Unrighteousness is failure to relate to people in the right manner, as God would. What is ungodliness? It is failure to relate rightly to God, with reverence and fear (Job 28:28). Those who choose unrighteousness and ungodliness suppress and hinder the truth, rather than respond to it (Romans 1:18).

We must not ignore or downplay the fact of God’s wrath, since Romans 1:18 says that God’s wrath comes straight from heaven. If we don’t understand that God will pour out His wrath on unrighteousness for all eternity, we won’t understand our need for salvation (Hebrews 10:30). God poured out an eternity’s worth of His wrath on His Son Jesus at the cross to provide salvation, because of His great love for every human being (John 3:16). God’s love is motivated by His wrath.

Are those who have never heard the gospel excused from God’s wrath? No one is excused, because God has proved Himself and revealed Himself to everyone. God has revealed Himself in creation, which is evident to every single person on earth as they look around them at the sky, the scenery, the earth. Creation declares God’s glory without speech, and is plainly understood by all people of every nation and race (Psalm 19:1-6). No one can claim ignorance of God. The truth of God is plain enough for every person to clearly perceive it, because God has made it clearly visible (Romans 1:19). No one on earth can ever stand before God and say that He turned away from God because God never revealed Himself to them. All men have the revelation of God, and therefore are guilty

before God if they have rejected Him.

The problem is not that God has not revealed Himself, the problem is that man suppresses the truth and denies God's existence. Romans 1:20 says that ever since the creation of the world two things have been clearly perceived by every person. Every person clearly perceives God's eternal power, and every person clearly perceives God's divine nature.

Let's think about God's divine nature before we look at His eternal power. Again, the problem is not that God has not revealed Himself, creation reveals God's divine nature. The problem is that, as people are faced with the self-existent God upon whom they are dependant for breath itself and must bow before upon acknowledgment of, they are unwilling to give up reign of their lives. They are unwilling to worship God with their lives, preferring instead to be god of their lives. They are unwilling to repent of missing the mark of God's righteousness, unwilling to seek God as He has revealed Himself in His Word (Acts 17:29-30). His Word teaches that our salvation, our sufficiency, and our satisfaction are found in Christ. It teaches that the fullness of God's divine nature dwells in Christ's body, the church (Colossians 2:9-10, Ephesians 1:22-23). History proves that we much prefer to devise and plan and create personal systems of worship and religion based on humanly defined good works, than to seek the God who reveals His divine nature in His creation. Although every human being knows God's divine nature by creation, that does not mean you will be able to logically comprehend His ways. If you agree with God that His divine ways are higher than yours, that means you accept whatever comes into your life with gratitude and contentment (Romans 11:33-36).

All can see by creation that God is powerful. What does God's eternal power mean in our lives? First of all, and quite reassuring to us, is that God is a refuge, with everlasting arms that carry and protect (Deuteronomy 33:27). God's eternal power means that He is the everlasting place to dwell (Psalm 90:1-2). In His eternal power, God is an everlasting Father, Counselor, and Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6, 26:4, 40:26). God, who is eternal, without beginning or end, alone is wise (1 Timothy 1:17). An eternally powerful God is only served by those with consciences He has cleansed, this cleansing is only possible through the blood of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 9:14). Now we begin to understand why people don't want God's eternal power. They may want to run to Him for refuge in times of trouble, but dwell in Him continually, seek His counsel for wisdom, and have their consciences cleansed? No way. Other things on earth are more important to them than the eternal God. People would rather defend and justify their sin than confess to the eternal God, they would rather continue in their rebellion than be cleansed by the blood of His Son and changed by the power of His Spirit.

Have you heard the argument that there are people who would believe, except that they have not had the opportunity to hear God's Word? Rather than arguing, people who are focused on these thoughts need to go and speak God's Word to those who have not heard. God has generally revealed Himself to all people by creation, and all those who would believe the gospel respond to the special revelation of His Word in grateful obedience when they hear it.

"The vague and tenuous hope that God is to kind to punish the ungodly has become a deadly opiate for the consciences of millions. It hushes their fears and allows them to practice all pleasant forms of iniquity while death draws every day nearer and the command to repent goes unregarded."

~A. W. Tozer

The gospel encourages me to rest in my righteous standing with God, a standing which Christ Himself has accomplished and always maintains for me.

PERSONAL STUDY

3. God Reveals His Wrath

Read
Romans 1:18-20

To understand your need of salvation, you must understand God's wrath

If you think you are floating in smooth water, on a raft, in the hot sunshine with a nice cool lemonade in your hand, you will ignore the irritating lifeline that is being tossed at you. But if the wind is roaring and icy waves are crashing in on you while you are exhausted and drowning, you'll grab the lifeline. It is only when we know that we need to be saved from God's wrath, that we will choose salvation. All too often, it isn't until the weight of sin and God's wrath is upon us, that we cry out for God's mercy and salvation. How do the following Scriptures relate God's wrath?

Isaiah 33:12-14 _____

Isaiah 59:18 _____

Isaiah 66:3, 16, 23-24 _____

Habakkuk 3:2 _____

Matthew 25:41,46 _____

John 3:36 _____

Romans 9:22 _____

Revelation 19:15 _____

Revelation 20:14-15 _____

God will inflict His wrath for all eternity. However, we are not hopeless. God has already poured out an eternity's worth of His wrath on His Son Jesus Christ. We can look to Him for salvation from God's wrath. Let's consider God's amazing mercy to see how, in faith, we move from a position of condemnation and wrath to one of blessing and safety.

To be saved from God's wrath you must confess that you are a sinner

What do the following Scriptures teach about our sin and the mercy of God?

Romans 3:10, 23 _____

Romans 6:23 _____

1 John 1:9 _____

Jeremiah 31:33-34 _____

To confess means to agree with God that our thoughts, words, and deeds are sinful and do not line up with His Word.

To be saved from God's wrath you must acknowledge that God has the solution

What do the following Scriptures teach about how God has provided mercy?

Romans 5:8 _____

Ephesians 2:4-5 _____

1 Peter 1:3 _____

In God's mercy, He provided a way for us to escape what we deserve...His wrath.

To be saved from God's wrath you must turn from sin and trust Jesus Christ for His righteousness

What do these Scriptures teach about turning from sin to faith in Jesus Christ?

Romans 10:3 _____

Romans 10:9-10, 13 _____

Ephesians 2:8-9 _____

Acts 16:31 _____

Those who are saved from God's wrath live for God in reliance upon Him, in the power of the Holy Spirit

What do the following Scriptures teach about relying on and submitting to God?

Romans 12:1-2 _____

Romans 14:17-19 _____

Romans 8:13-14 _____

Ephesians 6:10-11 _____

Prayer

4. God Gives People Over to Their Desires



Romans 121-32

"Come and glorify God by confessing your sin. Come and glorify Him by accepting pardon through the blood of His dear Son. Come and glorify Him by asking His Spirit to renew your mind. Come, yield yourself to His sweet gospel."

~Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Whether people know God is not the question. God has clearly revealed Himself to all people. The question to be asked is whether people reject or accept God. How do we know when people reject God? Sin is evidence of the rejection of God. What is sin? Romans 1:21 offers a two-part definition of sin: To not honor or glorify God is sin. To not thank God is sin.

How can we honor God? We don't honor God by never sinning. Rather, we honor God by falling on our face, knowing we are nothing before Him, weeping over our sin, adoring His bleeding Son, accepting and reflecting His righteousness, trusting in His infinite compassion. We honor God when we raise other's opinion about Him by choosing to obey His Word so that they more accurately understand who He is. God is not honored when we are more concerned about other people's opinion of us than we are about their opinion of God.

What does it mean to thank God? Thanking God means we rest in His sovereignty under all that happens in our lives, we serve Him with delight for the opportunities He has given, we adore Him by enjoying Him, we trust Him by being worry-free and anxiety-free, and we worship Him with all the love of our hearts. If we are not resting, serving, adoring, trusting, and worshipping, we are not thankful. In our lack of thankfulness we despise God's Word, we dishonor the day He has created for us, and we trample the precious blood of Christ.

Rejecting what God has shown about Himself through creation stems from trying to reason our way out of responsibility to God. When people reject God, it is a deliberate act by which they ignore experiential knowledge of God based on creation. This rejection of God results in judicial blindness from God wherein He darkens the foolish hearts that have chosen to reject Him. In other words, God gives people over to what they want.

When people reject God, their darkened and blinded hearts manifest themselves in two ways. First of all, according to Romans 1:22, they have a wrong, lofty, and prideful evaluation of themselves. Secondly, according to Romans 1:23, they attempt to change the object to which they are responsible. Instead of choosing to worship the Creator, they worship something that has been created. It could be rules and regulations we have created for ourselves and others, it could be the affection of people, it could be materialistic gain or achievement...the list is as endless as our desires.

What do people actually do when they reject God? Romans 1 teaches that people do three things in rejecting God. First of all, they change the glory of God into idolatry (Romans 1:21-23). Anything we are willing to sin to get becomes an idol that is being worshipped.

The second thing people do in rejecting God is to call the truth of God a

lie (Romans 1:25). An example of a lie we have believed is the feminist agenda over God's perspective of roles. God's perspective of roles is equality in personhood of men and women, with role differences in function in the church and home. Another example of a lie we have believed is the lie of evolution, that death occurred in the world prior to sin's entry.

Thirdly, they evaluate what they know about God, and choose material or sensual things over spiritual or godly things (Romans 1:28). This is a perfect description of culture's existential focus. Experience, feelings, or a perceived "word from God" are given more credibility than God's Word. We must be careful not to listen to experience or feelings (material) rather than God's Word (spiritual).

We know several things about all the people in the world who do not have the salvation provided only in Jesus. We know that the knowledge of God was revealed to them (Romans 1:19). They knew it experientially by God's creation, but did not accept the knowledge that they had been given (Romans 1:21). We are also told that they understood the result of their rejection of God—death (Romans 1:32). The tragedy is that when they heard the gospel, they continued in their rebellion.

All the world is guilty. All have rejected the revelation of God (Romans 3:10-11). It is God who works to draw people to Him, so that we might feel our way toward Him and find Him (Acts 17:24-27). Those who accept Him are given His righteousness, available only by faith (Philippians 3:9). God loves every single person in the world so much that He sent His Son to be murdered in order to bear the wrath that is deserved by all who dishonor God and do not thank Him, and He gives Jesus Christ's righteousness to all who accept it by faith.

God gives people over to what they want. Rejecting God results in being delivered over to the natural result of unbelief. You see, when people follow the lies of Satan, they begin to conform to the lie they have believed. What does that conformity to Satan's lies look like? Romans 1 lists three ways God gives people over to the lies they have believed.

God gives people over to whatever form of uncleanness they choose, and the consequential lifestyle (Romans 1:24-25). The lifestyle that follows being given over to uncleanness is enslavement to the material. If you have a new car and you park it far away from any other cars, that's a small example of being enslaved by something material.

God gives people over to all forms of sexual deviation and the consequential lifestyle (Romans 1:26-27). Any type of sex that is not between husband and wife is followed by being consumed with it, not just externally, but internally. AIDS is one example of a consequence of sexual deviation, another is the rapid momentum by which pornography use becomes addiction.

God gives people over to a mind that will not retain Him in its knowledge, and the consequential lifestyle (Romans 1:28-32). The lifestyle that follows being given over to a mind that will not retain God in its knowledge is a life filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, coveting and malice, including envy, murder, strife, deceit. People who gossip, slanderer, hate God, who are insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless are well aware that these things deserve death. However, instead of repenting, they continue, and drag others along into their hopeless lifestyle.

PERSONAL STUDY

4. God Gives People Over

Read
Romans 1:21-32

Throughout the ages, God has always revealed Himself in creation, and He continues to do so. In His mercy, He always makes a way that reveals how people can walk in relationship with Him. With Moses and the Israelites, He looked for obedience, and gave them written law so they would know how to obey what He said. With the apostles and the church, He causes His grace to work in the lives of people who accept His Son, to bring about His righteousness by faith through obedience to what He says in the Bible.

God also chooses a people group to represent Him, to show the world what it looks like to walk in relationship with Him. In the Old Testament, God's people were the nation of Israel. In our day, God's people are those who make up His church, His body.

The Church—God's People

Read John 17:21. How do our lives show people who God is? _____

Read Romans 10:14. How will the world call upon God to be saved from His wrath? _____

Read 1 Peter 2:9. What are we supposed to do as God's chosen race, His royal priesthood, His holy nation, the people for His own possession? _____

Read Exodus 19:5-6. How does God describe His people in the Old Testament similarly to His people in the New Testament? _____

We must be warned against the voice in our culture that is speaking against the church as God's people, those who call themselves Christians, yet aren't part of a local church. They say the church isn't meeting their needs, or isn't getting the job done, and decide they can do it their way, ignoring God's clear command to not give up meeting together. Jesus is the One who instituted the church, and she is His body (Matthew 16:18, Ephesians 4:1-16). There is no other plan, Christ will return for the church, and those who rebel against His plan must be warned against.

The Bible—God's Word

Since Jesus came to earth and ascended to Heaven, we have not been left without what we need to live as God's people. The New Testament writers teach us specific aspects of how to follow Him in fulfillment of all that the Old Testament points to. They warn us against the futility of empty thinking that argues or questions what God has revealed about how to follow Him.

Read 2 Peter 1:19-21. How do we know Scripture is not just the opinion of the writer? _____

Read 2 Peter 1:3-4. In the great and precious promises of Scripture, what are we given?

Read 2 Timothy 3:15-17. What does Scripture equip us to do? _____

Those Who Reject God

For those who reject what God has revealed about Himself, His people, and His Word, we have read in Romans 1:24, 26, and 28 that God “gave them over.” Now that’s serious.

God gave them over to impurity: In Romans 1:23, the people exchange giving God glory for giving God’s creation glory. Then in Romans 1:24, it says that God gave them up to the lusts or desires of their hearts. What are some desires of your heart that you must guard against? _____

Read Ephesians 4:22. How does the old man grow corrupt? _____

Read James 1:14-15. What causes us to sin? _____

We must be aware of the desires of our hearts, for we are prone to worship them rather than worship God.

God gave them over to sexual immorality: In Romans 1:26, the people chose dishonorable passions. God gave them over to being consumed with passion for one another.

Read Colossians 3:5. How are we to deal with dishonorable passions? _____

Read Galatians 5:19-21. What is the end result of following our passions? _____

God gave them over to a depraved mind: In Romans 1:28, the people did not acknowledge God, and God gave them over to a debased, depraved mind.

Read Romans 1:28-31. On this list are sins we are all guilty of. Identify those that you have been guilty of: _____

In order not to be given over to a depraved mind, we must acknowledge God and deal with our sins according to His Word.

Read Daniel 4:30. Who does King Nebuchadnezzar acknowledge? _____

Read Daniel 4:31-32. How does God give him over to his depraved mind? _____

Read Daniel 4:34-37. What is the hopeful lesson of this story? _____

Following the pattern of King Nebuchadnezzar’s prayer in Daniel 4, write your own prayer of humble acknowledgment of God’s greatness.

Prayer

5. Judge Yourself by God's Word



Romans 1:1-20

“Criticism serves only to make you harsh, vindictive, and cruel. It leaves you with the soothing and flattering idea that you are somehow superior to others. There is no person you can despair of, or lose all hope for, after you discern what lies in you apart from the grace of God.”

~Oswald Chambers

Who will God judge? Everyone will be judged by God. Will He even judge the Israelites? Yes, God will judge even His chosen people. There were Jews who thought they would escape God's judgment (Romans 2:3). Jewish tradition taught that Abraham sat at the gate of Hell to prevent any Jew from entering. They were not ignorant about God, but about God's design to bring them to repentance through His goodness and patience (Romans 2:4).

It's time to stop looking judgmentally at others, and rather look judgmentally at ourselves, because we will all be judged. There are two things we must take note of regarding God's judgment. First, each of us must recognize our own guilt (Romans 2:1-2). What happens when we don't recognize our guilt? When we do not recognize and agree with God about our guilt, we will fall under God's wrath. Romans 2 speaks of two times when God's wrath will be poured out. It will be poured out in the day of wrath and revelation of God's righteous judgment (Romans 2:5b). And, it will be poured out in the day when God judges the secrets of men (Romans 2:16). There's a choice to be made. Either you accept the wrath that God poured out on Jesus at the cross, or you endure God's wrath for eternity. God judges rightly (Romans 2:2).

We must also each ponder the consequences of judgment (Romans 2:3-5, 16). When we judge without first looking at ourselves, we will be judged according to the standard by which we have judged others. We are to judge ourselves first, then we must watch others' actions so that we will not be deceived by their words (Matthew 7:1-6, 15-20, 1 Peter 4:17, Romans 16:17-18, Titus 3:10-11).

There is a controlling principle in God's judgment. Romans 2:6 makes it clear that God will judge according to deeds. That does not mean that we can do deeds to escape God's judgment. It simply means that God will judge according to deeds because deeds are solid proof of what is in hearts (Romans 2:7-10). God is patient to all who seek Him, but towards those who rebel and reject Him, He pours out judgment and wrath (Romans 2:7-8).

Righteousness is rewarded on the basis of faith, while rejection and rebellion are judged on the basis of works. God judges on the basis of works because He is impartial (Romans 2:11) and He is righteous and just (Romans 2:12, Ecclesiastes 12:14, Deuteronomy 32:4). We lie about ourselves with our lips, but we tell the true story with our lives. Our deeds reveal what we believe, and God judges according to our deeds, without partiality (Romans 12:13).

How can those who have never had the law, or read the Bible, do what is right? God is not partial, He does not play favorites. Romans 2:14-15 makes it clear that our consciences establish our conduct, and let us know when something is right or wrong, so a guilty conscience is sufficient grounds for condemnation.

Every human being is guilty before God because everyone suppresses the truth. God judges the secrets of the hearts. No one lives up to the demands of the conscience, never mind the law. No one is without guilt in the judgment of God. The Gentiles did not have the law as the Jews did, but their consciences accused them. The moral law of God was stamped on their hearts, and is likewise stamped on the hearts of all human beings. This should encourage us in our relationships with those who reject God. There is a deep point of connection between you and that person, so that when you speak the truth in love you can do so confidently, knowing that God has placed in them the same conscience He's placed in you. Do not despise them, or make excuses for them, but be willing to be used of God to speak His Word.

The Jewish mindset was that they were above being judged. As God's people today, the church can learn a lot by noting the similarities of our lives with the lives of the Israelites. We must be warned not to fall to the trap of thinking we are above judgment. We must not mistake favor for favoritism. God had called them to become Jews, and appointed them to be different (Genesis 12:1-3). We the church are also called, but if we assume our difference is simply on the basis of being called, it is a danger. The Israelites had the objective revelation of God's law, while the Gentiles only had their conscience, so Israel felt confident. Likewise, we have been given the revelation of God's word. God had revealed Himself to the Jews as their God, and they were the only nation to have this unique relationship. The church is likewise the body of Christ, the only organism to have this relationship. The Israelite nation had the privilege of specifically knowing God's will. Because they had been taught the law, they had instruction about God's will, and were able to discern right from wrong. Likewise, the church has been given pastors/elders who are able to accurately teach doctrine found in Scripture.

The Jews mistakenly thought they were guides and lights and instructors and teachers. They had God's guidance and should have been able to show others how to live for God by how they lived, but they didn't. They should have shone as lights in the darkness for those who did not have specific revelation from God, but they didn't (Isaiah 9:2). They had God's revelation and should have been able to correct those who did not live by it, but they didn't. They should have been able to teach young believers, but they didn't.

Why were the Jews so mistakenly persuaded? They were casual in approaching God's truth, and put the emphasis on religious rituals. They had an outward form of knowledge without heart reality. Here lies the danger of tradition. Here lies the danger of just getting back on the bus, and doing it again. As the saying goes, "Same old same old." We, the church, must be warned not to fall into habits and rituals that we allow to become dull and routine. As we worship God, our atmosphere should be one of whole-hearted gratitude and celebration. We must have hearts that "preach the gospel to ourselves every day." Remind yourself of the old hymn, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness."

Peter knew where judgment begins—at the house of God (1 Peter 4:17-19). We the church are warned to continually entrust our souls to our faithful Creator, while doing good.

*Moses knew the
wrath of God:
~ Deuteronomy
32:50-51
~ Psalm 90:7-14*

*When we begin to
grasp the truth of
God's wrath, then
we who believe and
receive will be hum-
bly, overwhelm-
ingly, and grate-
fully awed by His
great love.*

PERSONAL STUDY

5. Judge Yourself by God's Word

Read
Romans 2:1-20

"A spiritually minded person will never come to you with the demand—"Believe this or that;" a spiritually minded person will demand that you align your life with the standards of Jesus. Remember how God dealt with you—with patience and with gentleness. But never water down the truth of God. Let it have its way and never apologize for it. Jesus told us to make disciples, not to make converts to our own thoughts and opinions."

~Oswald Chambers

When wives are quick to judge and confront their husbands, they do more harm than they imagine. Wives are called to submit to and respect their husbands, and must first judge themselves.

JUDGING ACCORDING TO GOD'S WORD

In our culture, the one unpardonable sin has become the "sin" of judging others. Judging someone's beliefs, religions, or habits is considered cruel, unloving, and arrogant. People overlook sinful practices, and when a person's sin is identified, the common response is, "Don't judge me." Yet, the act of "judging" or forming opinions (both positive and negative) is something we all do. Only the naïve or hypocritical would say that we do not judge.

Sometimes people use Matthew 7:1, Romans 2:1, or James 4:12 to say that we should **never** judge. Those passages deal with **how** we are to judge. Critical spirits and opinionated mindsets are condemned. The question is not **if** we should judge, but **how** we should judge.

It is a tragedy when culture, instead of Scripture, forms our mindset. We must become Scripturally informed about judging, confess that we have been influenced by the world about judging, and then hold to Scripture's authority.

Creation: Read Genesis 1:27-28, Genesis 2:15, and Psalm 8:6-9. What is the task that man was given by God? _____

From the very beginning, man was given the task of evaluating and having dominion over creation. In this sense judging reflects God's image.

What did Jesus do: Read Matthew 23:13-24, and Mark 8:33. How would you describe Jesus' words in these passages? _____

In the above verses, we see Jesus denouncing and rebuking those who considered themselves righteous by their works.

The church: Read Matthew 18:17-20, and 2 Thessalonians 3:6. What are church leaders called upon to do? _____

As they administer church discipline, the elders must make a discerning and critical assessment of others.

All Christians: Read Leviticus 19:17, Matthew 18:15, Galatians 6:1. When another Christian sins against us, what are we to do? _____

We can't confront someone in order to restore them without a biblically constructive evaluation, and biblically correct vocalization of our observation.

Read 1 Peter 3:1-3. When a wife is sinned against by her husband, which is she to use in order to influence him, words or lifestyle? _____

We are commanded to judge what people say: Read Matthew 7:15, 1 Corinthians 14:29, and 1 John 4:1. What do these passages say regarding judging, testing, or evaluating what people say? _____

We are commanded to evaluate, test, or judge what people say. Once we have judged, what are we to do? Read 1 Thessalonians 5:21 and Galatians 1:9. _____

We judge knowing that as we do so, God judges us: Read Matthew 7:1-2, and James 2:12-13. What standard of judgment will be applied to us that we must also apply to others? _____

Read James 2:13. What triumphs over judgment? _____

We are to judge all things: Read 2 Corinthians 10:5 and Hebrews 5:14. What must we discern? _____

We are to judge only by the standard of the Bible: Read 1 Corinthians 4:4 and Romans 14:4. Who is the only Lawgiver and Judge? _____
When we judge on the basis of our own standards, God asks us who we think we are.

We are to judge ourselves before we judge others: Read Matthew 7:3-5 and Luke 6:39-42. How does Jesus describe those who judge without judging themselves? _____

We must gather all facts and interpret them with concern for God's glory before judging: Read Proverbs 18:17, 29:20 and Philippians 1:9-11. What do these passages teach about judging something that we do not know? _____

We must judge in a spirit of gentleness: Read Galatians 6:2 and 2 Timothy 2:24-25. When we correct someone, how are we to do it? _____

We are to keep many of our judgments to ourselves: Read Proverbs 9:7-8, 12:23, 29:11, Matthew 7:6, and Ephesians 4:29. Although we are to test all things, we don't need to always share the results. Ask these questions before publicly judging.

1. Is it my place or responsibility to do so? Would I be throwing holiness to a pig?
2. Is my motivation love and edification? Or do I want to humiliate the person or make myself look good?
3. Is this a public or private matter? Is this a good time to speak out?
4. Am I being overly critical? Love covers a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8, Proverbs 10:12), and quickly recognizes and acknowledges the good (Romans 1:8, 2 Timothy 1:5-6).

"It is a mark of intolerable self-conceit to be continually offering unsolicited opinions."

~William Plumer

Do I dislike having to confront people so that I excuse myself from the Bible's teaching about judging?

Am I afraid of how others will respond so that I only pick and choose those things the Bible says about judging that I prefer?

Prayer

6. Lips Will Lie, But Lives Won't



Romans 2:21-3:8

"When a heart is untruthful, when honesty has gone from it, then it is prepared to be the seed plot of every evil thing. Any crime is possible to a liar. He who is rotten with falsehood will break at the touch of every temptation."

~C. H. Spurgeon

Did you ever have a great idea, only to end up doing something completely different? In our present post-modern times, we often say one thing and do another (Matthew 5:37). When give verbal agreement that something is wrong, but do it anyway because we think our particular circumstance makes it right, that is called "situational ethics". We steal when it saves a life, while preaching against it (Leviticus 10:1-3). We commit adultery because of our situation, while speaking against it (Malachi 2:13-16). We act disgusted about idolatry, but are deluded by the attractions of the desires that we chase after (Isaiah 44:18-20).

In Christianity, we teach God's law of liberty from sin, but instead of living by it, we often create a personal law of rules and regulations (Jeremiah 23:14). Then we expect that we will be judged on the basis of what we teach and say. But before God, it is the inner man that counts, not what we teach or say. Righteousness is not what we say, but how we live (Romans 2:21-24). We can think or talk all we want about God, but it's no use if we fail to obey Him.

True righteousness stems from inward reality, not outward conformity (Romans 2:25-29). External conformities or outward practices are worthless. You could even be the son or daughter of a pastor or missionary, but your physical family has nothing to do with pleasing God. Internal realities are what matters. Your spiritual family standing is important to God, not your earthly family standing. Inner heart change matters to God, not an outward show in following rules and regulations (Ezekiel 36:26). It is God's evaluation that is all-important. When our evaluations or judgments don't line up with God's, they are worthless, for God will judge everyone, even the nation of Israel.

The nation of Israel had superior privileges that should have led to a lifestyle that glorified God's name, but instead they were cause for God's name to be blasphemed. Although they were identified by the outer symbol of circumcision, circumcision or un-circumcision weren't what God was looking for. God looks for the inner reality of hearts that bow before Him. When hearts bow before Him, He is glorified, because the external realities of that person's life line up with His Word.

In Romans 3, the word "circumcision" refers to the nation, not just the act, because it is used in the plural form, preceded by "the". So, when it says "the circumcision," we can read "the Israelites." Paul asks and answers three questions about "the Israelites," that lead to the conclusion that Israelites have no excuse for unbelief in Jesus as Messiah.

The first question is, "What has happened to all the Jew's promised advantages and privileges that we saw in Romans 2:17-20?" (Romans 3:1) The an-

swer is that nothing has happened to all the promised advantages and privileges...they still stand (Romans 3:1-2). All the promises to the Israelites pointed to the Messiah.

The second question Paul asks is, “Hasn’t the Jew’s unbelief cancelled out the advantages that God had given them?” (Romans 3:3-4) First Paul directly denies that God would ever cancel His promises. Then he sets out a principle: Let God be true, and every man a liar. He backs up the principle with Psalm 51:4: *That you (God) may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged.* What God says always proves true, and His judgments always overrule all of our ideas. God is sovereign.

The third question Paul asks is, “If sin brings more of God’s grace to the world, isn’t it OK for us to sin?” (Romans 3:5-8) Paul begins his answer with “I speak as a man.” He is using natural (human) reasoning, speaking as a man, when he asks if God could possibly overlook sin. The concept that God would fail to judge sin is unthinkable, for it is contrary to God’s character and revelation that He will judge the world (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, Romans 3:6). If God failed to judge sin, God would be subservient to rules and regulations created by man, and everyone would do as they pleased (Romans 3:7-8a). God always judges sin, and we cannot stand in the grace of God apart from confession of sin. Salvation is by grace apart from rules, regulations, and laws. Paul always taught salvation by grace apart from the law, but some people had slanderously reported that he taught certain works were necessary for salvation (Romans 3:8).

No human standard of righteousness will ever meet God’s demands for holiness. God’s judgment falls on everyone (Romans 3:8b, Ephesians 2:11-13). Apart from the blood of Jesus Christ the Messiah, everyone is without hope and without God in the world. There is no way other than the blood of Jesus Christ to escape the righteous and just judgment of God. God in His amazing love, provided that Jesus would take our sins on Himself, receive the judgment for them on the cross, deposit them in Hell, and be raised back to life. Unless you believe that fact, and accept Jesus’ action as payment for your sins, you have no hope. However, as you are crucified with Christ, there is inward reality that lines your life up with the power of His resurrection. In denying yourself, taking up your cross, and following Jesus by faith, you have absolute certainty of the hope of eternal life.

PERSONAL STUDY

6. Lips Will Lie, But Lives Won't

Read
Romans 2:21-38

We've learned from Romans 2:21-24 that true righteousness is not found in what is said, but in how life is lived. A person characterized by lying, or a person who defends lying is not interested in righteousness. This week we will study what God says about truth, and our responsibility in regards to truth.

The thing about lying is that it creeps up on you. You don't wake up and say, "Today, I think I'll lie." No, something happens and you respond from a desire to protect yourself from whatever consequence the truth will bring. There are many ways lying manifests itself. Direct untruths are usually easiest to identify, but half truths that don't fully disclose all the facts are equally a lie. Lies about self can be in the form of giving a better-than-true impression of yourself through exaggeration, boasting, or the hypocrisy of false spirituality and false humility. Lies about others are commonly spoken through flattery, slander, or gossip. Lies toward God through deceptive behavior that no one can identify except God, and through deceitful promises to God, reveal a lack of fear of God.

We're prone to the "victim mentality" that accuses others and holds them to a higher standard than ourselves. When we find ourselves accusing others of lying, it's a good time to take a look at what lying is not. Lying is not kidding for fun, making a mistake, fiction or figurative language (Jesus often used these to make a point). Lying is not the holding back of what is unnecessary or harmful, for another's sake (like the trustworthy person spoken of in Proverbs 11:13).

God and Truth

What do the following Scriptures teach about God and truth?

Deuteronomy 32:4 _____

2 Samuel 7:28 _____

Psalms 108:4 _____

Psalms 119:160 _____

Proverbs 12:22 _____

Jeremiah 5:1-3 _____

John 1:14 _____

John 14:6 _____

John 17:17 _____

Titus 1:2 _____

Man and Truth

What do the following Scriptures teach on the importance of speaking the truth:

Psalm 58:3 _____

Psalm 119:29 _____

Psalm 119:103 _____

Proverbs 6:16-17 _____

Proverbs 12:17 _____

Proverbs 12:19 _____

Proverbs 13:5 _____

Proverbs 26:28 _____

Proverbs 29:12 _____

Jeremiah 5:23-27 _____

Jeremiah 5:30-31 _____

John 8:44 _____

Revelation 21:27 _____

Revelation 22:12-15 _____

Prayer

Write your prayer confessing the sin of lying, and your response of praise to God for His forgiveness. Remember that it is Christ's righteousness imputed to you by which you are justified, not your own "good" works. As you are governed by the saving reality of Christ's righteousness, you will present your mouth and tongue as slaves of truth.

7. Let's Face It, We Are Guilty



Romans 3:9-20

"Once the fact of total depravity is accepted then God's sovereign grace is man's only hope. As long as this fact is rejected and man's fictitious goodness is exalted, men will merely find more ways to justify their rebellion to God and His revealed truth."

~John Reisinger

Who is guilty of God's condemnation, and who deserves His wrath? Every human being is equally guilty. Gentiles, meaning all those who are not Jews, are guilty. Jews, meaning all who descend from Abraham, are guilty. The Jew is no better or worse than the Gentile. Yes, the Jews did reject both God's revelation (Romans 2:18-29) and God's Messiah (Romans 3:1-8), but both Jews and Gentiles are alike in guilt because they are both **under** sin (Romans 3:9). The reference **under** sin refers to the sin nature, rather than to individual sin (1 John 1:8).

Who makes this judgment call of universal guilt? God is the judge, not man. Paul shows that he is not the one making this call by quoting Old Testament Scripture. Romans 3:10-12, which quotes Psalm 14:1-3, states that every one is affected by sin. Notice the words being used —"all, none, not one, they have together become, not even one." No human being is excused from being a sinner. Therefore, we must be careful about statements like, "I've always believed in God," or "I can't remember not believing in God." Statements like these may reveal an unwillingness to look at our sin (1 John 1:10).

In John 16:8-9, we read that the Holy Spirit convicts the entire world of sin, and that sin is defined as unbelief. Every time we sin, the basis is unbelief. We do what we do because we want what we want. We want what we want because we believe what we believe. Sin evidences belief in something other than God. So by saying we've always believed in God, we may be saying that we don't realize our need for a Savior. We may be evidencing that we think we can accomplish a relationship with God on the basis of our actions. Those who don't see their sin of unbelief, won't see their need of a Savior.

Sin is rooted in the depths of every human being. All the parts of our bodies manifest sin. Our throats are like open graves (Psalm 5:9). Our tongues are deceptive (James 2). Our lips are like venomous asps (Psalm 140:3). Our mouths are full of curses and bitterness (Psalm 10:7). Our feet are swift to shed blood (Proverbs 1:16, 3:15-17, Isaiah 59:7-8). We sin because every part of our body is totally depraved. We can't blame anyone but ourselves for our sin. Apart from God, we always choose not to honor God and thank God. We are totally incapable of making ourselves acceptable to God in any way (Romans 3:13-15).

The results of sin make an impact on our lives here on earth (Psalm 36:1, Romans 3:16-18). Sin is the cause of ruin, misery, and an inability to know peace. Sin removes the fear of God, thus removing wisdom (Job 28:28). If we continue in sin, without confessing to God and being forgiven, our sin causes problematic patterns in our lives. Proverbs 13:15 describes the way of the sinner as an enduring rut. Sin is the cause of difficulty in our lives. To put it plainly,

the life of the sinner is a hard life (Proverbs 13:15).

Yes, there are negative results of sin while we live here on earth, but that's not our biggest problem. Everyone will stand in judgment before God. No one is excused from accountability before God. This is our biggest problem because we are all guilty.

The Jews should have known better than to judge others and not themselves because they were the people who had been able to observe and evaluate the law that they had been given (Romans 3:19). There should have been no doubt in their minds that they were guilty of not keeping the law (Romans 3:20). The purpose of the law was to reveal the fact of sin to those to whom it had been given. The law never justified anyone, or declared anyone righteous. All the law did was prove to them that they were guilty. When we think that we can win God's approval by completing a list we have drawn up, keeping a set of rules, or following a program, we are deceived. We are desperately in need of God's righteousness, but it is not available through works. The law proved that.

Although everyone is guilty, we abound in hope because Jesus is the perfect fulfillment of the law. When we confess our sins, believing that Jesus took our punishment, we are granted repentance (Matthew 5:17). Then, we change by the power of the Holy Spirit who indwells us, to become like Jesus, whose righteousness is the fulfillment of the law (Romans 8:28-29). Jesus Christ is the solution for our guilt before God.

"Many people struggle with feelings of condemnation because they...don't see the depth of the sin that Christ bore in their place and so they can't comprehend the righteous fury He withstood for them, nor the riches of the grace they've been given. Fully embrace your sinfulness for one simple reason; so you can fully embrace the great exchange, our 'justification.'"

~Elyse Fitzpatrick

Paul has carefully made the case that we all are guilty and stand in judgment before God's condemnation. Notice that he has not blamed Satan. In repentance, we take full responsibility for our sin.

PERSONAL STUDY

7. Let's Face it, We are Guilty

Read
Romans 3:9-20

Thoroughly Guilty Fools

Read Job 28:28. What makes a person wise? _____

Read Malachi 3:5-6. What is God's warning for those who are not wise? _____

Read Proverbs 10:21. What is the end result of the fool? _____

In English, we just have one word for "fool" but in Hebrew, there are at least nine different words that are translated into that one English word. The thing we miss by only having one word for "fool," is that there are levels of foolishness, from less foolish to very foolish. Along the way, there's a point where the fool becomes so foolish, that he *cannot* turn and become wise. Exactly that is described in Romans 1, where God talks about giving them over to their sin.

Perhaps if we realize that the common denominator for every type of fool is that they do not welcome rebuke, we'll listen instead of becoming defensive. Let's take a look at four of the different types of fools the Bible mentions, starting with the "least foolish."

1. Kaciyl: Silly, thickheaded fool

Kaciyl (fool) looks for satisfaction from something other than God. Ecclesiastes uses *kaciyl* to describe the one who likes to be satisfied with wine. The *kaciyl* (fool) is attracted to addictive behaviors, which are closely followed by ruin and destruction. Addictive behaviors can include smoking, shopping, exercising, TV, internet use, telephone, overeating, undereating, any form of food control by careful regulation, chocolate, bingeing, purging, alcohol use, prescription drugs, illegal drugs, cutting, tattooing...

How is the *kaciyl* (fool) described in the following passages:

Proverbs 14:16 _____

Proverbs 17:16 _____

Proverbs 18:2 _____

Proverbs 23:9 _____

Proverbs 28:26 _____

2. **Pethi: Simple or sinister fool**

Pethi (fool) is simple, gullible or naïve. From *pethi* we must learn that there are sinister temptations which must be avoided through considering the consequences of choices and weighing decisions according to God's moral commands. If you are playing sinful games of emotional involvement with someone whether in reality or fantasy, you are a *pethi*.

Read Proverbs 14:15. What do you learn about the *pethi* (fool) who trusts people without determining whether they are wise or foolish? _____

Read Proverbs 22:3. What is the warning to those who do not consider the consequences of their choices? _____

Read Proverbs 7:7 and 9:13. How is the *pethi* (fool) easily tempted? _____

Read Proverbs 14:8. How does the *pethi* (fool) carry on in a downward spiral of sin? _____

3. **Kesil: Self-assured and self-confident fool**

Kesil (fool) is a big mouthed, self confident, stubborn person who must learn needy dependence on God. This is the fool who will let his boss down, while talking a big game. This is the fool who says she is a submissive wife, yet her husband knows she is manipulative and controlling. Yet Scripture warns this *Kesil* to change, so he will not be so set in his folly that he cannot change.

Read Psalm 85:8. What does the *kesil* (fool) do? _____

Read Proverbs 15:2, 14. How does this fool speak? _____

Read Proverbs 8:5. What is necessary for change to happen? _____

4. **Eviyl: Prideful, despising wisdom and instruction**

Now we've reached that frightening level of foolishness that seems impossible to change. *Eviyl* describes the fool who won't listen to instruction. The *eviyl* (fool) is fully committed to rebellion and the damage that follows. The children of Israel are described as *eviyl*, because of their commitment to following their own ideas, and their consequential fall into idolatry.

How is the *eviyl* (fool) described in the following passages:

Proverbs 15:5 _____

Proverbs 20:3 _____

Proverbs 29:9 _____

Proverbs 27:22 _____

Prayer

8. Christ's Imputed Righteousness



Romans 3:21-31

“Present the doctrine of justification by faith to the condemned unbeliever. There’s no point in discussing or bearing down on other doctrines in witnessing. The message of justification by faith (Christ’s imputed righteousness), is the only message needed by those condemned for wrath.”

~Bob Froese

God has to pour out His burning wrath on all unrighteousness and sin, because He is holy and He is love. Only righteousness escapes the wrath of God. The only one who is righteous is Jesus Christ. As unrighteous sinners, we are desperately in need of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Here’s the good news. The righteousness of Jesus Christ is available, through God imputing (or accrediting) it to us.

Religious people look to rules and regulations as right and good, but that is something completely different than God’s righteousness. God’s righteousness is only available in Jesus Christ. Nothing we do could ever meet His standard of perfection (Romans 3:21, Romans 10:3-4, Isaiah 64:6). It’s the deceit of Satan running rampant in our culture that depicts the attainment of righteousness as available through self-made standards. Working hard to do things right will never meet God’s standard. Attempting to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps and get it right is never the solution. Keeping all the rules and principles we are taught is not Christ’s righteousness. Arriving at some standard of beauty, cleanliness, or weight has absolutely nothing to do with Christ’s righteousness. Knowing people in top positions, or name dropping even the highest connections is useless. Achieving financial gain, reaching career goals, earning academic standings, none of these have anything to do with Christ’s righteousness. What we need is Jesus Christ Himself.

Christ’s righteousness is not a nice option to add to our lives. We have all inherited Adam’s sin nature, and so we continue to practice specific sin. All humans are under condemnation, all equally desperately in need of Christ’s righteousness. Try as we might, we don’t honor God and give Him thanks always. How then, can we get the righteousness God requires? God’s righteousness is possible only for those who put their faith in Jesus Christ, and is attained only by those who put their faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:22-23). When we truly come to terms with the agony of what Jesus did on the cross because of our sin, and put our faith in Him with anguished brokenness for our sin, God not only forgives and cleanses, but also gives or imputes Christ’s righteousness (Colossians 2:14).

Have you recognized your desperate state, and trembled with belief before the God who justifies instead of condemns? When in faith you look to the cross upon which God poured out His wrath for sin, God justifies you (Romans 3:24-26). In justification, two things happen. God *sees* your state as clean, as actually righteous, and God *declares* your state to be clean, actually righteous. This righteous standing before God is based solely on the righteousness of Jesus, not yours. Your righteousness is accomplished completely by the work of Jesus Christ, which is imputed onto you freely, without cause, by God’s unmerited favor and grace. Justification is more than the canceling of your unrighteousness, it is also

the imputation of Christ's righteousness onto you.

When God imputes His righteousness onto you, He releases you from bondage to Satan through His redemption plan that pays the ransom price. The ransom price is the blood of Jesus. God's demands for righteousness are satisfied by Christ's death. Christ's death was not accidental, it was the deliberate purpose and work of God the Father (Colossians 2:13-14, Isaiah 53:11). By faith in Christ's blood as the ransom price, you are crucified with Christ, and then His righteousness proves effective in your life (Hebrews 9:14, 10:14, Psalm 7:17). This is justification by faith.

Why is justification by faith God's plan? Why not give us something that makes sense to our legalistic minds, something that gives us some form of control over the justification process, something that includes rules and regulations we can keep? God totally excludes boasting from His plan (Romans 3:27-28). There is no room for pride. There is no possibility for self-accomplishment. There is no need for ability or skill or self-righteousness. Works are completely and thoroughly excluded from God's justification plan. Even on our best days of victory and usefulness, we relate to God only on the basis of Jesus Christ's righteousness.

We are justified by faith plus nothing. All you bring to God is your total depravity. By faith, God imputes Christ's righteousness onto you, freeing you from the task of attempting to gain or maintain a justified status before Him. In that freedom, you devote whatever ability or skill He has given you to His glory, as your response of love to God for what He has done. With a heart full of love, you fight ferociously against anything and everything in your life that is not a reflection of the righteousness of Christ., and you are broken-hearted and contrite any and every time you don't live up to that righteousness.

There is only one God (Romans 3:29-30). He cannot author two different and contradictory systems of justification. Justification is not a different system from the law, it is the fulfillment of the OT law. Anyone familiar with OT Scriptures should not have been surprised that God's righteousness was revealed in Jesus Christ. The OT law and prophets pointed to Jesus Christ (Galatians 5:24-25, 1 Peter 1:10-11). Faith in Jesus Christ does not overthrow the law, it upholds it. Christ's righteousness does not break but exceeds rules, regulations, and laws. His righteousness is an unattainable holy standard that human actions can never reach. Only a legal declaration of justification could ever be the means of attaining Christ's righteousness. This is encouraging, because on your worst days of sin and failure, the relentless righteousness of Jesus Christ is yours through faith in Him, by His blood as you confess your sin (Matthew 7:20, 1 John 1:9).

Justification by faith is the only way you can perform Christ's standards of righteousness to which the law could only point (Romans 3:31, Matthew 5:17-20, Matthew 5-7). As your justifier, Christ not only cancels your guilt but also imputes His righteousness onto you. Attempting to keep rules to satisfy God only adds heaviness to our lives. Justification by faith adds liberty. You no longer bear the heavy burden of rules and regulations, rather you depend and rely on Christ's righteousness by His Spirit to fulfill God's law. By God's grace alone, through faith alone, you receive Christ's imputed righteousness, then by the power of the Holy Spirit you kill your own standards and live out the righteousness that God has imputed to you (Romans 8:13).

Justification is the judicial act of God in which He pardons all the sins of those who believe in Christ, and accounts, accepts, and treats them as righteous in the eyes of the law. In addition to pardon of sin, justification declares that all the claims of the law are satisfied in respect of the justified. The law is not relaxed or set aside, but is declared to be fulfilled in the fullest sense; and so the person justified is declared to be entitled to all the advantages and rewards arising from perfect obedience to the law (Romans 5:1-10).

~Easton's Bible Dictionary, PC Study Bible.

Pop cans have a redemption plan...they can be redeemed (bought and paid for) with a nickel. God has a redemption plan...we can be redeemed (bought and paid for) with Christ's blood.

There's only one way to be declared justified and to be redeemed...by receiving Christ's imputed righteousness by faith in substitute for our sin.

PERSONAL STUDY

8. Christ's Imputed Righteousness

Read
Romans 3:21-31

Let's come to understand three words about Christ's redemption plan: redemption, justification, and imputation.

Redemption: The sovereign plan of God whereby He intentionally sent His Son to receive the wrath we deserve, to receive the payment required by our sin, and rescue us from eternal damnation.

Have you seen the depths of your depravity, the scuminess of your sin, the horror of your heart? If not, you haven't been awed by God's redemption plan. Without His redemption plan we would choose pride, selfishness, deception, and/or blame shifting every time. No seemingly righteous act ever has anything but a self centered motivation behind it unless it flows out of Christ's righteousness. Even the most apparently decent and kind person you know, without Christ's redemption, is motivated by selfishness and pride. Only as Christ's righteousness is imputed to you, are you acceptable to God. His undeserved redemption plan will humble your heart, awaken mercy in you, and make you recognize it's preciousness when it restores you to relationship with God.

Read Isaiah 53:6. Why does everyone need God's redemption plan? _____

Read Isaiah 64:6. How does God describe a humanly "righteous" person? _____

Read Isaiah 53:5, 1 Peter 2:24. What is your redemption price? _____

Read Isaiah 53:10-11. What is God's will that satisfies Him? _____

Justification: The judicial act of God whereby He *declares* the sinner, to whom Christ's *righteousness* has been given, to be as *good* as He.

Why is justification necessary? What do the following verses teach that God demands because of Who He is?

Genesis 17:1 _____

Leviticus 11:44-45 _____

1 Peter 1:15-16 _____

Justification is necessary in order that we not to fall under God's wrath, for we all fail to meet the righteous demands of the character of God.

Read Romans 3:24. What is the source of justification? _____

Read Romans 5:18. What leads to, or is the basis of justification? _____

Read Romans 3:25. What is the means by which justification is received? _____

Read Romans 4:25. Why was Christ raised from the dead? _____

Read Romans 8:30-32. What guarantees justification? _____

Read the following passages and note the results of justification:

1 John 1:9 _____

1 Corinthians 12:13 _____

Romans 2:13 _____

Romans 3:31 _____

Imputation: The imparting of Christ's righteousness whereby one is reconciled in relationship to God, glorifies God, and is ultimately glorified.

Even if you try with all your might to do everything right, you'll only become discouraged. You see, it's not in you because you aren't righteous. However, Christ imputes His righteousness to you when you believe. Because Christ's righteousness is imputed to you, God declares you righteous. Actually, there's a double imputation, because at the cross, your sin is imputed onto Jesus Christ. He takes your sin and you get His righteousness. What an exchange. In Christ, His followers respond with grateful obedience that changes them to become like the One whose righteousness has been imputed to them.

Read the following passages and note what you learn about Christ's righteousness and how it affects you.

Colossians 2:9-10 _____

Colossians 3:3-4 _____

2 Corinthians 5:21 _____

2 Peter 1:2-4 _____

What is the ultimate result of the imputation of Christ's righteousness?

Revelation 21:3-4 _____

Prayer

9. An Old Testament Illustration



Romans 4:1-25

“Faith is not a leap in the dark, but a response to the revelation of light. If faith were grounded on nothing more than raw authority, the Bible would not have been written the way that it is, and the history of redemption would not have been planned the way that it was. Faith is not a response to raw authority, faith is a response to the revelation of spiritual light (2 Corinthians 6:4-6).”

~John Piper

Where would we go for proof that faith alone is the only way to be justified (declared righteous)? We’d go to God, and what He’d said all along in the Old Testament (OT). For instance, look at Abraham, the father of Israel. If Abraham were justified by **works**, his story would **refute** the teaching of faith alone. But, if he were justified by **faith**, his story would **enforce** the teaching of faith alone (Romans 4:1-2).

Abraham is one of the few people in the Old Testament who are spoken of as justified (Genesis 15:6, Romans 4:3). Yet, Abraham did nothing except receive a promise from God which he never wavered from believing. God dealt with Abraham on the basis of his belief. The example of Abraham leads to only one conclusion—that there is only one way to be justified, through faith. We are justified by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

Wages are earned, they are not a manifestation of grace. If we trust in works to earn salvation, we remove grace from salvation. It is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone that we are justified, that we are counted as righteous. That does not mean that faith has any value in and of itself. It is God who “counts” or assigns the value of His righteousness to the faith that believers exercise (Romans 4:4-5).

God provides a righteousness that is not our own (Romans 4:6). Faith looks away from our own actions because they are a hopeless way to be justified. Faith looks to Jesus Christ alone as the basis for God crediting to us an alien righteousness that we in no way, shape, or form earn or deserve. In justification, not only does God credit Christ’s righteousness to us, but God also mercifully does not give us the condemnation we have earned. Almighty Holy God, Spinner of atoms, Creator and Sustainer of our universe and all galaxies, stooped to offer mercy to worthless and wretched rebels. Instead of automatically pouring out the burning condemnation we deserve, God crushed His Son as the offering for our salvation.

Justification by faith completely apart from works is the consistent teaching of the Old Testament (2 Timothy 3:15). Just look at the first and second most esteemed men in Israel...Abraham and David (Romans 4:5-8). These leaders of Israel understood and agreed that it was not their actions that counted them as righteous. Abraham did nothing to earn his justification apart from faith. David recognized that YAHWEH God would not count his sins against him (Psalm 32:1-2).

What is the relationship of rituals (ordinances, or law) to faith, and justification by faith? In the OT, the ritual of circumcision was observed by the Israelites. If justification is by faith alone, why was Abraham circumcised? The Apos-

the Paul, in Romans 4, proves that Abraham's circumcision was apart from his justification, by pay attention to the sequence of events. In Genesis 15:6, Abraham was justified because of his faith. In Genesis 17, Abraham was circumcised as a testimony of his faith. Circumcision was a sign and seal of a fact, not the basis of it (Romans 4:11). Similarly, today, the ordinances of baptism and communion follow justification. Baptism obediently shows a watching world that followers of Christ identify with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. The observance of communion reminds followers of Christ that the punishment for our sins were inflicted on Christ's flesh and covered with His blood.

Justification is by faith apart from rituals/law, because God's promises don't originate with the law. They were given to Abraham 430 years before the law was given. The law merely added to the promises until Christ came to fulfill it (Galatians 3:17-19). The purpose of the law was give us a backdrop against which sin is unquestionably demonstrated. By the blatant failure to do what the law says, we can see that God has no option but to pour out His wrath. Old Testament history proves that Israel could not keep the law, not even the sacrificial animal sacrifices that God's grace provided to show us that there is forgiveness by blood. Instead of turning His face at failure to keep the law, God spilled out the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ as the sacrifice for the sins of those who believe and receive. Our only way to the righteousness of God is by faith in Christ's work on the cross to bear the punishment for sin. Faith in any other does not have the right content, nor is it placed in a valid object. It is what we have faith in that justifies us, Jesus Christ (Romans 4:17-22).

Justification is by faith apart from rituals/law because the principle of justification that was valid for Abraham is also valid for us. We, like Abraham, believe in the same God...the God of resurrection (Romans 4:23-24a). Both the promises to Abraham and the promises to us for our justification depend on Christ's finished work of crucifixion and resurrection (Romans 4:24-25). That work has been accomplished. In it we who are justified rest secure.

*Look at the cross
and see your justifi-
cation accom-
plished. Look at the
tomb and see your
justification ac-
cepted.*

*"Faith is the gaze of
the soul upon a sav-
ing God."*

~A. W. Tozer

*When Paul wants to
show that salvation
is by grace alone
through faith alone
in Christ alone, he
goes to Genesis 15.
All of Scripture, Old
and New Testament,
points to God's
amazing redemption
plan.*

PERSONAL STUDY

9. An Old Testament Illustration

Read
Romans 4:1-25

Romans 4 provides an Old Testament illustration of faith...the life of Abraham. This week's homework looks at 7 characteristics of the faith Abraham displayed. Abraham is called the father of all who share his faith.. As his daughters, we will be growing in exhibiting these characteristics.

SEVEN CHARACTERISTICS OF FAITH (Romans 4:17-22)

1. Faith must be based on accurate content

Read Romans 4:17a and Genesis 17:5. What does Paul quote to show us that faith must be based on accurate content? _____

Read 2 Timothy 3:14-15. What must our faith be based on? _____

We aren't just "people of faith." Our faith must be in God as He has revealed Himself to us, "As it is written." Our faith must be based on Scripture.

2. Faith must have a valid object

Read Romans 4:17b. How is the object of Abraham's faith identified and described? _____

Read Hebrews 11:6. In what two things must our faith be? _____

The object of faith must be God, and it must be an accurate view of God. God makes us alive (what a reward for those who seek Him). God is the essence of His and our existence.

3. Faith is contrary to hope and yet rests in hope

Read Romans 4:18a. Against hope, what did Abraham believe in? _____

Read Hebrews 11:1. How does this verse describe faith? _____

Hope has no element of uncertainty. Although Abraham was old and did not see how God would give him and Sarah a son through whom blessing would come to all nations, he was *certain* that God would.

4. Faith has a purpose

Read Genesis 12:1-3, and Romans 4:18b. What was the purpose of Abraham's faith? _____

Just as Abraham's faith had the purpose of realizing the promises given to him, so does our faith have the purpose to realize the promises of God to us. God's promises to us have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ's finished work on the cross and His resurrection, and will culminate in our resurrection.

5. **Faith produces works**

Read James 2:14-26. How does James describe faith without works? _____

James lists several works that faith produces. What are they? _____

Read Romans 4:19-20. Four of the works that faith produces are:

- Faith defeats weakness. Read 2 Corinthians 12:9. How does faith defeat weakness? _____
- Faith defeats hesitation. Read Hebrews 11:29-38. What are some examples of faith without hesitation? _____
- Faith strengthens the believer. Read Luke 17:5-10. How did Jesus tell the disciples to strengthen their faith? _____
- Faith glorifies God. Read 1 Corinthians 10:31. How are we to glorify God? _____

Prayer

6. **Faith must have knowledge**

Read Romans 4:21. To what extent was Abraham convinced or persuaded? _____

Abraham's faith was not based on "maybe" or "perhaps", but on knowledge.

Read 1 John 5:13. What does John write that we know? _____

Read 2 Peter 3:16-18. How does Peter warn us regarding this aspect of faith? _____

7. **Faith results in justification**

Read Romans 4:22. Because of Abraham's faith (which was characterized in the above ways), God imputed righteousness to Abraham's account. Purposeful faith in God, with knowledge that is based on Scripture and rests in hope, produces God-glorifying works and results in justification.

Read Galatians 3:5-9. Who can be justified? _____

Read Galatians 3:11. How are we justified? _____

10. The Grace in Which We Stand



Romans 5:1-4

“Jesus, write me into Your story, whisper it to me, and let me know I’m Yours.”

~Rich Mullins

“All the saving events and all the saving blessings of the gospel are means of getting obstacles out of the way so that we might know and enjoy God most fully. Propitiation, redemption, forgiveness, imputation, sanctification, liberation, healing, heaven—none of these is good news except for one reason; they bring us to God for our everlasting enjoyment of Him.”

~ John Piper

That God imputes Christ’s righteousness onto those who believe is exciting, electrifying, and empowering! The facts of justification move our hearts from broken hearted contrition to eager anticipation of how God will change us. Thus, when we gather as Christ’s church, the atmosphere should be celebratory, startling, and lively as opposed to than funeral, routine, and dull. God’s grace results in our justification! “Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.”

What does the grace in which we stand, by which we have been justified by faith, mean in our every day lives? First of all, we have peace with God (Romans 5:1). We might think that the basis of peace with God is some action on our part, such as prayer, faithfulness to serve in the church, or consistent devotion to the Bible. No, the basis of peace with God is justification by faith, only available through Jesus Christ. Peace with God is an end of the hostility between us and our Lord Jesus Christ, because He has justified us. Peace *with* God is not a feeling *in* us, it is God’s perspective *of* us. Those whom God has justified He no longer considers His enemy. On our part, Jesus Christ is Lord of our lives, thus, as a result of justification by faith we pray, faithfully serve in His body, and are devoted to studying and obeying His Word.

Because of the grace of God, we have access to God through prayer (Romans 5:2a) We boldly come to God in prayer because He has justified us by faith (Hebrews 4:16). The people whose God is the Lord rejoice because they have access to His presence (Psalm 144:15).

Because of the grace of God, we exult in and find our joy in the glory of God (Romans 5:2b). God’s purpose in creating and calling us is to give Him glory. The only way to be fulfilled or satisfied in life is to give God glory (Isaiah 43:1, 6-7). We are to give God glory in everything we do (1 Corinthians 10:31). Being justified by faith means Christ rules our lives, and as a result people can observe that we are like Christ. By this, God is glorified (Matthew 5:14-16). Would you like a definition of how to glorify God? Glorifying God means that out of grateful hearts, we act and respond to all circumstances in ways that biblically raise others opinion about God.

Because of the grace of God, we rejoice in the trials of life (Romans 5:3-4). In the next chapter, we’ll look more intently at how joy in trials works. Like the line says in one of our worship songs, “What a joy to know the grace of God!” The grace of God brings joy in trials.

What does being justified by faith, as a result of God’s grace, mean in the big picture of God’s glorious redemption plan? All too often we read Scripture in a segmented manner, approaching it as if it were an encyclopedia or dictionary.

Yet Scripture has been given in such a manner as to best reveal God's sovereign plan that has been in place from eternity past to eternity future. To grasp the incredible grace of God, consider the various aspects of Scripture (vignettes, epic narratives, prophecies, epistles, etc.) as if it were the unveiling of the Master Architect's plan.

God created the world in perfection, without sin. He created man and woman in His image, and they enjoyed perfect relationship with Him in their home, the Garden of Eden (Genesis 1-2). Then Satan attacked God's words by casting doubt on them, denying them, and distorted them. (This is still the program Satan follows to deceive mankind—he attacks the Bible.) When Adam and Eve rejected God by choosing sin over relationship with Him, the world became fallen. Since that day, the world is in a state of decay, despair, destruction, depravity, and death. Since that day, people relate like Adam and Eve by hiding, covering, and blame-shifting (Genesis 3).

Men's hearts continued to be evil, so God sent the flood. Noah, the one obedient man, was spared together with his family (Genesis 6:9-9:29). The people sought a name for themselves, so God dispersed them and confused language at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9).

As we follow along in God's sovereign plan of grace, we can see a people whom God chose to be His own through whom the world would see His glory. God determined to make Israel a great nation to proclaim His Name to the world. He covenanted with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to make them a great nation who would proclaim Him to the world and bless the world. Jacob had 12 sons, one of whom was Joseph. Through Joseph, the nation of Israel was brought to Egypt, where they came under captivity. Moses and Aaron led them in the mass exodus out of Egypt. The grace of God gave Israel the law. They were also given a land, religious leaders, and eventually a political kingdom. After Kings David and Solomon, the kingdom divided into north and south, repeatedly rejecting God's grace and breaking covenant with God. Out of the south remained the remnant Israel.

Through the nation of Israel, God sent the Savior, Messiah (Isaiah 53). Jesus Christ came to earth and fulfilled God's plan of salvation for all peoples, through His work on the cross. Jesus Christ fulfilled the law and established the church, saying, "I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18-20). Upon Jesus' return to Heaven, He left the Holy Spirit to indwell all who would believe and become part the church, God's chosen vehicle for the fulfillment of His sovereign plan of grace (1 Peter 2:9).

God's sovereign plan includes His return. Jesus said, "I will come again" (John 14:3). The church will be raptured as the bride of Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Christ will return to reign in fulfillment of all prophecy regarding the church and Israel.

What is our response to God's sovereign plan, the grace in which we stand? We rest in God's sovereignty knowing that whatever has come our way is part of His plan. We rely on His grace, knowing that it is sufficient in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). We rejoice in redirecting all glory to Him.

God's story should thrill us! We should be so familiar with it, and excited about it that we can tell it often, and tell it well. The question is, are we more interested in telling our own story than in telling God's? A danger of the church today is the focus on "sharing our story." Are we thrilled to be written into God's story more than we are thrilled about our own story?

"Grace is but glory begun, and glory is but grace perfected."

~Jonathan Edwards

PERSONAL STUDY

10. The Grace in Which We Stand

Read
Romans 5:1-4

“Every time you love your enemy, you are resting in God’s sovereignty. Every time you speak lovingly and softly in the face of someone else’s anger, you are choosing to rest in God’s sovereignty. Every time you resist the temptation to win an argument at all costs, you are resting in God’s sovereignty.”

~Paul David Tripp

Are you glad that the Bible is not an encyclopedia? God didn’t write it as a self-help book for us to “google” a problem and wait for the answer to pop up. No, God is about relationship, not rules and regulations. Our problem is bigger than individual sins we commit each day, that lead to complications in life, for which an encyclopedia would try to state a solution. Our problem is that we seek our identity outside of God’s story of redemption. In the Bible, God reaches out to us with His grand and glorious plan of redemption through every story (be it gruesome or agreeable), every prophetic warning, and every instructive epistle.

Only Christ can change us and write us into God’s story, the Bible. In the Bible we find certain foundational and interdependent themes, backbone concepts that we must never forget. These important themes are repeated over and over throughout the Bible. We will look at three of those this week, and how God calls us to respond.

God’s Sovereignty

Write down what you learn about God’s sovereignty from each passage:

Deuteronomy 10:14 _____

1 Chronicles 29:11-13 _____

Daniel 4:34-35 _____

Acts 17:24-27 _____

God has immanent, complete, and total control over every circumstance. He is sovereign. Nothing ever happens apart from His sovereignty. He has not only the power and position of sovereignty, but also a plan. Do you believe that? Then, even when bills consume every penny, the pantry is empty, life is spinning out of control, husbands are unfaithful, prodigal children rebel, or doctors give a life-ending diagnosis, we can rest in God’s sovereignty. He will fulfill His plan, and nothing can thwart that. Even when we agonize, we can rest, knowing that God has allowed our trials in His sovereignty. What is God doing? Accomplishing His plan.

Response: Will you stop trying to control the situation, and rest in God’s sovereignty, allowing Him to have complete control? Identify areas where you attempt to control:

God's Amazing Grace

Write down what you learn about God's grace from each passage:

Romans 5:2 _____

Romans 5:20-21 _____

2 Corinthians 12:9 _____

Hebrews 4:16 _____

God's response to our rebellion is grace. God's grace justifies, adopts, enables and empowers us to do what we could not do on our own. God's supply of grace is abundant, and is most powerful and effective in our moments of greatest need. When we recognize and believe what God's Word reveals about His abounding grace, we can and *will* rely on it, and our lives will be transformed. Self-reliance, self-righteousness, and a lack of grace towards others who sin against us are all signs that we are not relying on God's grace. Did you catch that? If we aren't extending grace to the person whom we consider to be a problem, we aren't relying on God's grace.

Response: Will you give up self-reliance, and self righteousness, and rely on God's abundant supply of grace? Are you relying on God's grace today? In what areas do you need to confess sin, receive forgiveness, and extend grace to others (forgive as you've been forgiven)? _____

God's Glory

Write down what you learn about God's glory from each passage:

Isaiah 43:7 _____

1 Corinthians 10:31 _____

Matthew 5:14-16 _____

Life is not about us, it's about God. God is glorified by our lives as we live in such a manner that other people's opinion of God is raised. God has a higher agenda for our lives than we do, an agenda found in the Bible. As we study it, He reveals what must be changed in our hearts, and then in our lives (Hebrews 4:12). We must stop seeking self-glory and seek God's glory, which only happens as we redefine our lives by God's Word. The question is, will we submit and surrender to God's Higher Agenda, and allow our lives to be characterized by His love, joy, and peace for His glory?

Response: Identify the area in your life at this point in time, where you have been convicted that you need to change. How will you stop resisting by running, hiding, or blame shifting, and submit to giving God glory rather than seeking your own? _____

Prayer

11. Rejoicing in Suffering and Trials



Romans 5:3-5

"I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church."

Colossians 1:24

The only way to be a Christian is to choose a way of life that accepts suffering, if the Lord wills. "Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good."

1 Peter 4:19

I nourished my soul there, and I say without hesitation, "Bless you, prison, for having been in my life."

~Alexander I. Solzhenitsyn

How quickly trials, afflictions, and sufferings overshadow the spiritual reality of justification. At first thought, justification appears irrelevant to the family who has lost husband and father in a plane crash, to the parents whose child has committed suicide, or to the nursing mother who is diagnosed with fatal liver cancer. Yet Romans 5:3 tells us that because we are justified we rejoice in suffering, affliction, or trial.

How is it possible to rejoice in tough times? Fortunately, Paul goes on to explain the progression by which we rejoice in sufferings, afflictions, or trials. The suffering forces us to make the choice to endure or persevere. We gain stick-to-it-ivity when we act in obedience to God through the trial even though we can't see the good it will do. This grows our character. We prove that we have faith in God by our obedience to his Word. Like Christ, we learn obedience in suffering as we suffer like He did (Hebrews 5:8). As we endure and character grows in us, hope is produced. We have absolute certainty of God's love because we have been subjected to the experience of it in the face of trial. God has poured out His love into our heart by the Holy Spirit, leaving us full of hope. We then have no room for doubt, regardless of the intensity of suffering, affliction, or trial.

Joy comes because of the hope that suffering helps us to obtain. No matter what the source of suffering—be it persecution, illness, natural disaster, or problems caused by another person's sin—if we are obedient, we are suffering with and for Christ (Hebrews 4:15, John 15:20). The call of Christ is a call to a life of sacrifice, loss, and trial (Philippians 3:7-8, 1 Corinthians 15:29-31). For followers of Christ, suffering is a good gift to be embraced (James 1:17). You see, the important lessons of life that shape us to be more like Christ are not learned in times of happiness. God uses suffering to chip off us, or add to us, what we need to better reflect the image of Jesus Christ (James 1:2-4, Romans 8:29-29). When we are mistreated, we must realize that God has sent heavenly sandpaper to shape us into the likeness of Christ.

So, the progression of suffering to joy begins with perseverance, includes growth in character, and results in hope. Words that are so easy to read, but so incredibly difficult to live. Yet, to borrow a phrase from the title of one of C. S. Lewis's books, we are "Surprised by Joy." This joy that arises out of suffering is only available to those who are justified by faith. Joy in the face of suffering is one aspect of Christ's righteousness that is imputed to those who are justified (Hebrews 12:2).

Now that we've looked at the progression of suffering to joy, let's look at purposes of rejoicing in suffering. Christians rejoice in suffering because it weans us from self-reliance to God-reliance. God uses suffering to cast us onto

Himself. At one point, Paul's suffering was so great that he despaired of life, and God used it to cause him to rely on God (2 Corinthians 1:8-9). Our hope is not in this life, but in eternity.

In suffering, we come to know and rejoice in God's preciousness and sufficiency. In choosing suffering, Moses proved that the reproach of Christ is greater than earth's greatest comforts (Hebrews 11:25-26). Satisfaction found in God far surpasses the agony of suffering (Isaiah 58:11).

In suffering, satisfaction is found from giving God all the glory. The sufficiency of God's grace shows His power in our weakness, giving us a chance to raise others opinion of God (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). Suffering teaches obedience and provides opportunity for obedience to what God has created us for, His glory (Hebrews 5:8, Philippians 2:8, Isaiah 43:7).

Suffering fixes our gaze onto eternity, helping us realize that we are on the pathway to being with Jesus. Suffering, which will end, causes us to look ahead to the things that will not end (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). Suffering helps us to get the right perspective, fixing our eyes on what will be revealed in Heaven (Romans 8:18, 1 Peter 1:13). Jesus left the glory of Heaven to come to earth. He told us to rejoice in persecution and inconvenience because the weight of the suffering is light in comparison to the glory of Heaven, and He would know (Matthew 5:11-12, Luke 6:22-23, Luke 14:14).

In our suffering, we present Christ's suffering to the watching world. Paul says the suffering of the church fills up what is lacking in Christ's affliction (Colossians 1:24). Love is what caused Christ's affliction, and we make the suffering love of Christ real to people when we bear suffering with joy (John 3:16). Paul called his scars, "the marks of Jesus." In them, people could see the powerful love of Christ (Galatians 6:17, 2 Corinthians 4:10-12).

Joy in suffering provides a platform to bring others to Christ. Paul rejoiced to suffer so that others would come to faith (Philippians 2:17). Those who suffer with joy are an example to other Christians (1 Thessalonians 1:6-7). In Revelation 5:9, God praises those whose blood is spilled in bringing people to Christ (martyrs).

Trials, suffering, and affliction bow to the purposes of Almighty, Holy God, sovereign over all and all glorious.

"Everything I have learned in my seventy-five years in this world...has been through affliction and not through happiness. This, of course, is what the cross of Christ signifies, and it is the cross more than anything else, that has called me inexorably to Christ."

~Malcolm Muggeridge (Homemade, July, 1990)

"When we suffer to show others the love of Christ and the worth of Christ, we rejoice because every new convert that stands firm in faith is a new, unique prism for refracting the all-satisfying glory of Christ."

~John Piper

"They who dive in a sea of affliction bring up rare pearls."

~Charles Haddon Spurgeon

PERSONAL STUDY

11. Rejoice in Suffering and Trials

Read
Romans 5:3-5

“There is nothing—no circumstance, no trouble, no testing—that can ever touch me until, first of all, it has gone past God and past Christ right through to me. If it has come that far, it has come with a great purpose, which I may not understand at the moment. But as I refuse to become panicky, as I lift up my eyes to him and accept it as coming from the throne of God for some great purpose of blessing to my own heart, no sorrow will ever disturb me, no trial will ever disarm me, no circumstance will cause me to fret—for I shall rest in the joy of what my Lord is—that is the rest of victory.”

~Alan Redpath

This week we'll be looking at thirteen reasons given in Scripture as to why God allows trials and suffering. In each case, consider whether this may be a purpose of God in allowing the trials of your life.

1. Read 1 Corinthians 11:30, 2 Kings 5:15-27. Why did suffering come about in these passages? _____

Is there sin in your life that God wants you to confess? Keep in mind that Job's counselors thought sin was the only reason for his suffering, and God's anger burned against them (Job 42:7).

2. Read Psalm 119:67, Hebrews 12:5-11. In these passages, what is the purpose of suffering? _____

Could God be using suffering to lovingly disciple you? _____

3. Read John 15:2, 2 Corinthians 1:3-9, 2 Peter 1:5-8. The grief of trials is a pruning process God uses to change us in ways that increase our usefulness. What are some ways in which this happens? _____

4. Read Genesis 3:18-19, Romans 8:20-25. Trials help us realize that we are depraved, and live in a fallen world that isn't heaven. What do trials make us long for? _____

5. Read Proverbs 5:22, Galatians 6:7-8. Why are trials sometimes the natural result of our sin? _____

6. Read 2 Corinthians 1:8-11, 12:7-10. Suffering and trials can help us recognize our weaknesses, so that we will depend on God. Identify a time of trial in which you became less self-reliant, and more dependent on God. _____

7. Read 1 Peter 1:13, Hebrews 6:19. Suffering helps us realize that we have placed our hope in something other than God, or have spread it out between God and self or circumstances or people or possessions. Sometimes we don't even know it until God allows a trial to come and reveal it to us. What is our hope to be fixed fully on? _____

Have you placed your hope in some thing(s) that is(are) not sure and steadfast?

8. Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-9. Name four ways in which suffering enlarges our appreciation of God's sufficiency: _____

9. Read 1 Peter 1:6-7, 4:12. Suffering tests and strengthens what aspect of our lives? _____

How have trials in your life tested and strengthened your faith? _____

10. Read Philippians 1:12. What opportunities does suffering create for us? _____

11. Read James 1:2-5. What kind of character does suffering develop in us? _____

12. Read 1 Corinthians 12:25, Romans 12:15, Galatians 6:2. Suffering causes us to recognize our need of one another in the body of Christ. As a result, it draws us closer to one another. Name one way you can care for someone in the church who is suffering, and when, and how you will do so. _____

13. Read John 9:1-7. God always bring glory to Himself. What avenue of suffering did He use to do so in this passage? _____

14. Read Psalm 119:71. What does suffering drive us to? _____

How has suffering driven you to God's Word? _____

Write a prayer of response thanking God for the trials in your life (James 1:3).

Prayer

12. Salvation Beyond a Shadow of Doubt



Romans 5:5-11

“Take heed, then, to embrace...the love and kindness of God...[and to] daily exercise faith therein, entertain no doubt of God’s love and kindness.”

~Martin Luther

“The holiness God works in us is based on agonizing repentance, a sense of inexpressible shame and degradation, and also on the amazing realization that the love of God demonstrated itself to me while I cared nothing about Him.”

~Oswald Chambers

None of us want to be put to shame. Justification by faith guarantees us that when we are in the presence of God we will not be put to shame (Romans 5:5, Colossians 3:3-4). That’s an amazing hope! But we are sinners, so how is it possible that we will not be put to shame when we see God? How can we be assured of such a thing? When we recognize that God’s love has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, and we love others with a love that exceeds our ability and makes no earthly sense, we are assured. How can we love others? Loving others flows out of receiving God’s love for us (1 John 4:19). If we sing about loving God or talk about loving God, that doesn’t cut it. We love God only by confessing our sin and receiving God’s love, then obeying Him and being a conduit of His love onto others as the object of His love (John 3:16, 14:21). We do not stand alone in a relationship with “just me and Jesus.” We love God only as much as we love each other (1 John 4:7, 20).

Another assurance that we will stand in God’s presence without shame comes as we recognize that we are totally incapable of standing there on our own. The only thing we bring to God is our sin. In place of our sin God accepts Christ’s blood. Christ’s death for us is our only hope, and it is in His death that we boast (Romans 5:6-7). In ourselves there is no hope to do what Christ did in dying for us.

A third assurance that we will stand in God’s presence unashamed is God’s love for us. His love transcends our rebellious self-sufficiency, independence, self-righteousness, self-improvement, self-promotion, self-love, self-worship. It is in believing and responding to God’s love that we have eternal relationship with Him. God’s love for us is proven in Jesus’ death for us (John 3:16). God did not send Jesus to condemn us, rather to save us (John 3:17). It is our own sin that condemns us. While we were in that state of condemnation, God loved us so much that He crushed His Son so we can be saved from the wrath we deserve, and changed from rebellious enemies into obedient children (John 12:27).

Not only are we guaranteed that we will stand unashamed in God’s presence, we are also guaranteed that we will be delivered from the wrath of God yet to come (Romans 5:9). Why should we, who are dead in trespasses and sins, not hang on a cross? Why should we, who are deserving of wrath, be made alive in Christ’s resurrection? Why should Jesus, who knew no sin, become sin so that we could have all the benefits of His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21)? The answer is found in God’s everlasting loving-kindness, the richness of His mercy, the fullness of His grace (Ephesians 2:2-6). Our sinful record became Jesus’. He suffered our punishment and we could get His perfect record.

That afternoon when Jesus hung on the cross, it pleased God to pour out

an eternity's worth of His wrath upon His only beloved Son (Isaiah 53:10-11a). Although we are fully deserving, God will not pour out His wrath upon those who have been justified by faith in the blood that flowed from Jesus that day (Isaiah 53:11b). We never need to say, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me?" Because on that afternoon, God forsook His Son, He now says to us, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Matthew 27:46, Hebrews 13:5). He disciplines us for our good because He loves us to sanctify us, but justification by faith saves us from the punishment of wrath (Hebrews 12:4-12, Romans 8:1).

We are delivered from God's wrath, and we are guaranteed reconciliation with God. The relationship with God is restored. We have peace with God! We have access to Him in prayer! We rejoice in suffering! We love others with His love! We are saved from His wrath! The amazing thing is that the relationship is restored while we are God's enemies. God is the initiator, the One who invites (calls) and determines the relationship (Exodus 6:7, Acts 15:17, Revelation 21:3). Our reconciliation with God affects every aspect of our lives until we are finally glorified with Christ in eternity.

One aspect of life that our reconciliation with God affects is our relationship with fellow man. Because God loves us, and went to the most extreme lengths to restore our relationships with Him, we are now willing to go to great lengths to restore fellowship with others. As a result of being restored to God in the power of Jesus' blood, we imitate Christ in being reconciled with others. The ministry of Jesus Christ is one of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:14). We forgive not because it makes sense to forgive, but because Jesus forgave us (Colossians 3:13). We must be reconciled with our brothers and sisters in Christ before we can worship Him (Matthew 5:23-24).

As if all the above guarantees, assurances, and reconciled relationships were not enough, we have another incredible bonus. Our relationship with God is characterized by rejoicing in God through Jesus (Romans 5:11). As we taste the sweetness of relationship with God, we go down deeper than death to self, deeper than crucifixion of our sin. We come blessedly to relief from the futility and emptiness of self-glory. In relationship with God we find the truly freeing streams of living water that Jesus talked about (John 4:10-13). We are ravished with a taste of God's glory as revel in breath taking, total admiration of God (2 Corinthians 5:9). True and pure joy is ours.

"Faith....is simply a believing that there is a God who loves us, in spite of the poison of sin coursing through our soul. It is a believing that He loves us even though, like the Israelites of old, we have nothing to bring Him but malignancy, wretched sickness, and grumbling misery. It is believing that He invites us to look to Him, to rely on Him, and to trust Him to do what He has said."

~Elyse Fitzpatrick

PERSONAL STUDY

12. Salvation Beyond Doubt

Read
Romans 5:5-11

“Paradoxically, we strive to enter the kingdom from inside the kingdom.”

~John Piper

Are you assured, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that you are saved? Have you cried out to God from the depths of your heart, “I am yours, save me. I have sought Your Word” (Psalm 119:94)?

Eternal Life Beyond a Shadow of A Doubt

Read Matthew 19:29. What are you guaranteed when you put Jesus above all others?

Read John 5:24. Who has eternal life? _____

Read John 10:27-29. What picture does Jesus give to assure you that you have eternal life? _____

Read Luke 15:11-24, 22:32. Prodigal sons who were truly saved, always confess their sin, and are forgiven and granted repentance. Jesus knew Peter would sin, and that he would turn back from his sin.

Read John 17:11. How does Jesus pray for us? _____

Read John 8:42-44. If God is your Father, who do you love? _____

Read John 6:37. For those who love Jesus, is there any chance they will not be saved? _____

Read John 14:15, 21. How does a person love Jesus? _____

Our Fight is Not to Earn Salvation, but to Cherish and Rejoice In It

Read Matthew 11:28-30. What is our struggle? _____

Read Luke 10:20. What is our joy? _____

Read John 15:11. Why did Jesus speak these things? _____

John 16:22. Can anyone steal your joy? _____

“God is glorified not only by His glory’s being seen, but by its being rejoiced in.”

~Jonathan Edwards

Rejoicing in God is Essential for the Christian

Until we come to the point of child-like faith that rejoices in what God has done, and rejoices to obey, we will struggle. We must not look for some new revelation or experience, but rather look at what God has done, and rejoice in it. The fact is that we have been perfected (which means it is guaranteed that our sin nature will be removed in Heaven) if we are being sanctified (Hebrews 10:14). If you doubt salvation, confess your sin. Christians must believe and rejoice in the fact that God poured out His wrath on Jesus and, as a result, all who believe are justified. The trouble is, we look in all the wrong places, we chase after our desires. Nothing but our own personal sin stops us from exalting and enjoying God. If you have a desire for something other than God, you must confess it as idolatrous sin. Pursue delighting and rejoicing in God. In Him you will find deep, heartfelt, eternal satisfaction...no lesser pursuit will ever satisfy, and will leave you doubting. Joy is an act of obedience, we are commanded to enjoy God and rejoice in Him.

What do the following Scriptures teach about rejoicing in God?

Deuteronomy 28:47-48 _____

Psalm 37:4 _____

Psalm 43:4 _____

Matthew 5:11-12 _____

Philippians 4:4 _____

1 Thessalonians 3:9 _____

James 1:2 _____

Revelation 19:7 _____

"It is a Christian duty for everyone to be as happy as he can."

~C. S. Lewis

What is man's chief end? Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

~Westminster
Catechism

Prayer

Steps Toward Enjoying God

If you are struggling with enjoying God, realize that feelings are part of it, but obedience is not dependent on feelings. Affection for God and rejoicing in Him is not optional. Begin by confessing sin, since sin will hinder joy. You must also confess the sin of joylessness. Then pray earnestly using Psalm 51:2, asking God to restore the joy of obedience. Diligently meditate on joy by writing out the above verses on joy, and reading them several times each day. Finally, no matter what your feelings...do joy! Smile and say something thankful to every person you speak with, whether you *feel* like it or not.

Often we thank God for the blessings He has surrounded us with. Such focus may reveal that we do not consider the relationship with God our greatest blessing. When we have tasted the sweetness of God, all else will be ruined for us. Other pleasures will fade. As you confess sin, ask to taste the sweetness of relationship with God, that all else be ruined in comparison to the joy of His salvation.

13. We All Desperately Need Jesus



Romans 5:12-21

Babies may be cute and cuddly, but every single one of them is a dirty, rotten, wretched sinner (and eventually they'll prove it).

It is not the heredity of sin that God holds a person responsible for... condemnation comes with the realization that Jesus Christ came to deliver us from the heredity of sin and from our rebellious refusal to let Him do so. "This is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light..." John 3:19.

Long ago and far away there was a beautiful garden, unspoiled in every way. We can only say it was picture-perfect because we have never seen a rival garden in reality. In that garden lived a man and woman who had a perfect relationship with the garden's owner. The man in the garden directed and protected the garden, and the woman helped him. The garden contained many trees of life, and one tree of death from which the man and woman could **not** eat in order to live in the garden. Tragically, the man ate from the tree of death, and the man and woman knew death of relationship with the garden's owner and death of their lives.

Since Adam's sin, no human can avoid sin and death (Romans 5:12-14). Everyone naturally sins, inherited from Adam through our parents. The entry of sin into the world is traced to its human source (we are all children of Adam), and hence we are always sinners. Sin entered the world first, then death. This fact single handedly refutes the evolution lie. Sin entered the world not by Satan, but by man. Eve, who had been given the job to help Adam, helped him into sin (Genesis 2:16, 3:1-6). Adam, who had been given the job to lead, was held responsible (Genesis 3:9, Romans 5:14).

God did not create the world with death. Death's method of entering the world was Adam's sin. All death, despair, devastation, and destruction can be traced back to sin. Those who blame God, or ask Him why, are attributing to God the work of sin (Malachi 2:17). Sin and death reigned universally even before the law was given, evidenced by the fact of death for everyone from Adam up to Moses (Romans 5:13-14). The law was given to provide a backdrop against which we can see the horror of sin. It reveals that human righteousness is impossible. The law shows us that we all desperately need Jesus.

Since Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, no human can avoid the opportunity to avail themselves of His righteousness (Romans 5:15-17). His righteousness is available by justification, by being declared righteous by an Almighty Holy God upon belief in His Son Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Justification does not work the same way sin does. It is a free gift, not a getting of what is deserved—like death is deserved by sinners. Justification is available to all by grace through faith.

Three amazing contrasts highlight the differences between choosing Adam's sin and Jesus' righteousness. The first difference is in the **state** of the person. The one choosing Adam's sin is in a state of being condemned to death. The one choosing Christ's righteousness is in a state of justification. The second difference is in the **standing** of the person. The one who chooses Adam's sin stands before God in judgment and condemnation. The one who places faith in Christ's righteousness stands before God being judicially declared to be in the

state of Christ's righteousness. The third difference is in the *rule* of the person. Death rules in those who remain under Adam's sin. Life rules in those who receive Christ's gift of righteousness. All who are under Adam's headship are under condemnation. All who are under Christ's headship are under His righteousness (Romans 5:18). We all desperately need Jesus.

The differences in state, standing, and rule will manifest themselves in how life is lived. The effect of Adam's headship differs from the effect of Christ's headship (Romans 5:19). Adam's headship results in many being disobedient sinners. Not only is Adam's disobedience part of every human being, we also choose sin (1 John 1:8, 10). We choose sin because we are sinners. Christ's headship results in many being made righteous. It is not our obedience that makes us righteous, it is Christ's obedience that makes us righteous. We are only righteous because we have been given Christ's imputed righteousness.

The standard of Adam's headship differs from the standard of Christ's headship. Adam's headship is characterized by the standard of law, which results in sin (as proved by the Old Testament). Christ's headship is characterized by the standard of superabundant grace. Grace is a gift that cannot be earned, but has been bought at the expense of Christ's blood which purchased freedom from the penalty and power of sin (Ephesians 2:8-9). Grace is unmerited favor that God bestows on sinful human beings (Romans 5:8). The great thing about grace is that even when sin reigns, grace is always more abundant (Romans 5:20). Grace and mercy always trump sin.

The power of Adam's headship differs from the power of Christ's headship (Romans 5:21). The power of choosing Adam's headship is shown when sin reigns. The power of choosing Christ's headship is shown when grace reigns, with everlasting life as the ultimate result. God's grace reigns forever!

Every man, woman, and child born into the world is born under Adam's headship. Every man, woman, and child born into the family of God is born under Christ's headship. But, every man born under Adam's headship will not automatically come under Christ's headship. That is limited to those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness (those who believe in the person and work of Christ).

~Paul R. Fink

Mercy always trumps sin.

PERSONAL STUDY

13. We All Desperately Need Jesus

Read
Romans 5:12-21

Poisoned and Dying

Read Numbers 21:1-3. There had been quite a battle. The attackers came down hard, then captives were taken. But the end result was utter destruction of the enemy... only possible at the hand of God. Israel had prayed. God had answered. Spiritual victory!

The victorious conquering nation moved on, but the people became impatient and tested the God who had just given them victory. Read Numbers 21:4-9 and 1 Corinthians 10:9. In their wretchedness and misery, how did they put God to the test?

What did God send to chasten the Israelites? _____

Imagine how fearful the Israelites must have felt, helplessly watching their children or grand-children die as fiery serpents slithered in and out of tents, play areas, and beds, injecting their deadly poison.

The people who had been so quick to speak against him, were humbled and went to Moses to ask for help. What did they recognize and confess about themselves (Numbers 21:7)? _____

Moses prayed and answered them with God's Word. What was the remedy for the people's sin (Numbers 21:8)? _____

Now, imagine the confusion, the sinking feeling, even the anger that must have moved through the camp as they heard the strange remedy. How could it possibly help them to look at a home-made bronze serpent on a pole? Read Numbers 21:9. What happened when someone who had been bitten by a serpent looked at the bronze serpent? _____

Wouldn't it have been amazing to watch people who had been poisoned by the serpents die, see the pole go up, and then watch other poisoned people look at the pole and live? We can only speculate as to whether anyone rebelliously refused to look at the pole.

God's Great Love

Every person who didn't have faith to look at the pole, as instructed by God, would die. Like the Israelites, our response to God (even after spiritual victory) is often complaining, wretchedness, and misery. But by believing in God's great love for us that lifted His own Son on the cross, as we recognize and confess our sin, we can also look and live.

Jesus, the Remedy for Poison and Death

Jesus uses this story from Numbers 21 in instructing a religious man, who comes and asks questions. This man, Nicodemus, had placed his security in rules and regulations, which Jesus shatters. Read John 3:3, 5. What does Jesus say is necessary in order to see the kingdom of God? _____

Jesus rocks this young man's world by telling him he can't possibly do it on his own. Only the Holy Spirit can accomplish what is necessary (John 3:6-8). Academics and religion only leave us helpless. Read John 3:14-15. Where does Jesus take Nicodemus for help? Now, put yourself into Nicodemus' shoes. He knows the story in Numbers 21. Is Jesus telling him that he is like those who complained in the wilderness? That he's been bitten by a fiery serpent? But there's no bronze serpent on a pole for him to look at and live....not for another three years. Read John 19:38-40. After Nicodemus watched Jesus being raised up on the cross, how did he respond? _____

Imagine Jesus' words in John 3:14-15 echoing through Nicodemus mind as He watched. Nailed to the cross, His body wretched and torn, broken and bruised, Jesus turned Nicodemus' eyes to the pole to look at Him and stop the poison of sin from killing him.

Read John 3:14-18 and John 6:40. What are the results for those who behold and believe in the One whom God raised as the remedy for sin, for the poisonous bites of the serpent? _____

Gazing at God

As we look to Jesus, we not only gaze at Him, but we are also crucified with Him. Jesus said we must deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him.

Read 1 John 1:9. What is necessary for us to be cleansed from our sin? _____

Read Colossians 3:1-2. If we have looked to Jesus on the cross, and taken up our cross, what must we focus our thoughts on? _____

God calls us to confess our sins and fix our eyes on Jesus, instead of wallowing in our sinful poisons. The following verses invite you to fasten your eyes on Jesus and be saved. Rewrite them in your own words, and then write a response of praise to God for raising Jesus Christ for our salvation.

Micah 7:7 _____

Galatians 3:1-2, 5 _____

Hebrews 12:3-4 _____

Prayer

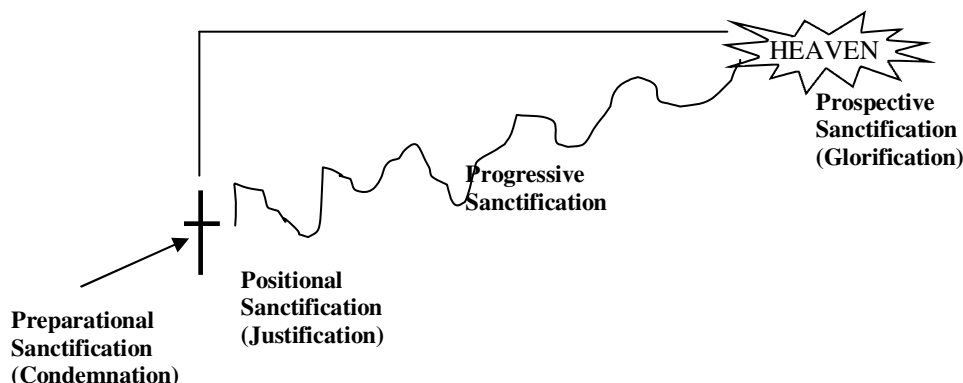
14. The Meaning of Sanctification



Romans 6:22

Justification legally credits me with Christ's righteousness, and adoption puts me into God's family. I have a full and complete relationship with God. In that relationship there is a lifelong process called sanctification wherein I joyfully surrender myself to Christ's righteousness. As I do whatever this righteousness directs me to do, God makes me what He has legally declared me to be...holy.

In Romans 1-5, Paul has covered the doctrinal teaching of condemnation and justification. Now he moves to sanctification, and in doing so, he does not separate, but builds on the doctrines of condemnation and justification. What is sanctification? We will begin to answer that question by looking at the basic meaning of sanctification. Then we will consider four aspects or elements of sanctification which are referred to in Scripture. These four aspects are illustrated in the diagram below.



The basic meaning of sanctification is “to set apart,” therefore sanctification means being set apart from the unholy for the holy. God is holy. Holiness defined is Christ-likeness. As we are sanctified, we look more like Jesus Christ. We are conformed to His image (Romans 8:29). As mirrors, we reflect the light of Jesus Christ to this sin darkened world (Ephesians 5:1).

Preparational sanctification occurs prior to looking to Jesus Christ for salvation. Preparational sanctification prepares us to be set apart for God, and takes place prior to salvation and justification. The preparational dynamic of sanctification prepares a person to come to believe the truth and become obedient to Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:13, 1 Peter 1:2). The Bible gives us the example of God using believing spouses and parents to preparationally sanctify unbelievers in their homes (1 Corinthians 7:14, 16).

Positional sanctification takes place upon justification. At the point of looking to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, in contrition and confession of sin, we are justified, declared legally righteous by Almighty Holy God. Thus, believers are set apart from enslavement to sin into enslavement to Christ's righteousness. Positional sanctification occurs at salvation (Ephesians 2:1-7, Titus 2:11). Posi-

tional sanctification is the work of God in our lives. There is absolutely nothing we can do to be positionally sanctified.

Progressive sanctification sets us apart from the practice of sin to the practice of righteousness. Progressive sanctification is biblically referred to as growing in godliness (Titus 2:12). It refers to the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer and the perseverance of the believer to be changed. Progressive sanctification begins at salvation and is the lifestyle of the believer until death. By God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit, the believer constantly battles to grow (1 Thessalonians 4:3). It is in this aspect of sanctification that the believer has responsibility. While responsible for growth, the believer cannot be credited for growth. It is the work of God to conform the believer to Christ-likeness. It is the work of the believer in the power of the Holy Spirit to press on, to wrestle, to work hard.

Finally, prospective sanctification separates us from the presence of sin into the presence of Christ. This occurs when we are at home with the Lord, either upon the death of a believer, or upon the return of Christ (glorification) (1 John 3:2, Titus 2:13). This future aspect of our sanctification is our greatest encouragement in life, for it is here that we will no longer battle with our sin nature.

Let's go back to progressive sanctification. What's going on in the ongoing journey of progressive sanctification? Note the squiggly line in the illustration earlier in the chapter. Why doesn't it go straight? The line goes up and down irregularly to illustrate how the battle goes. There are times of failure. Yet notice also that the general direction of the line is upward. Those who are being sanctified are growing. We are being set apart from the practice of sin, but it is not an instantaneous occurrence, it is a gradual process. None of us have arrived (Philippians 3:13). We are to walk and keep walking (Galatians 5:16).

Followers of Jesus Christ grow in progressive sanctification because the Godhead is actively working in our lives. The Father purges and disciplines us (John 15:2, Hebrews 12:5-9). The Son is the head of the church we are part of, wherein He washes us by the Water of the Word (Ephesians 5:26). The Holy Spirit convicts and teaches us as we see Christ's face in the mirror of His Word (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Progressive sanctification is not a passive process in which we "let go and let God." It involves great expenditure of effort. We must work hard in bringing our body into submission (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). We must put to death our old sinful deeds (Romans 8:13). We must spiritually exercise ourselves (1 Timothy 4:7). We must discipline ourselves to walk righteously (Ephesians 4:1, 17). We must flee sinful practices and pursue righteousness (1 Timothy 6:11, 2 Timothy 2:22). We must wrestle, fight, and destroy our sinfulness (Ephesians 6:10-12, 2 Timothy 4:6-7, 2 Corinthians 10:5).

We cannot actively work to grow in godliness or sanctification, unless the Word of God is active on our minds, actions, and habits. Our inner man (heart and mind) must be renewed by God's Word (Romans 6:11, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Romans 12:1-2, Ephesians 4:23). When our heart changes, our behavior will follow (Romans 6:12, Ephesians 4:22-24).

"Learning obedience does not mean switching from disobedience to obedience. It means growing deeper and deeper with God in the experience of obedience by experiencing depths of yieldedness to God that would not have been otherwise demanded."

~John Piper

"We separate justification from sanctification in order to understand them better, but in experience, they are inseparable. He whose justification does not lead to practical sanctification has never been justified, and he who attempts to earn or keep justification by means of sanctification knows nothing of the free and sovereign grace of God that justifies."

~ John G. Reisinger

PERSONAL STUDY

14. The Meaning of Sanctification

Read
Romans 6:22

Those of us in relationship with God (by His justification and adoption) will undergo radical changes in our lives (by His grace). That change is the process of “progressive sanctification,” also referred to as “growing in godliness.”

The evidence of God’s grace changing us always takes place within relationships. God’s first step in changing us is to draw us into relationship with Him. Then, He changes the manner in which we relate to others. We have a new desire to treat others differently, that only He can give. Our earthly relationships are part of God’s plan to transform us. They do not belong to us, they belong to Him, and He has a higher goal for our relationships than our personal happiness. Since relationships are the context God uses for the change He wants to work in us, consider relationships as change agents. How does God want to use the relationships that He has given you, to change you?

Sanctification Means We Trust and Obey

As Christians, Jesus is our Master. We trust and obey our Master because we love Him. When we deviate from trusting and obeying, we need to confess it as sin and receive forgiveness. Christ has dealt with our sin by His work on the cross. Because of sin, life in Christ is a life of repentance.

This week we will look at what it means to trust and obey as those enslaved to Christ’s righteousness. Trust means that we entrust the relationships and circumstances that are out of our control to God. Obedience means that we are faithful and responsible to obey His commands, despite these circumstances.

Areas of Trust

Problems arise when we attempt to take control of areas about which we are concerned, about which we can do nothing, and which we are not responsible for. For example, consider a child’s teacher. The child’s parents must trust that God has put their child under authority who is to be obeyed, and not attempt to manipulate the teacher’s rule over the child. Another example is a husband. A wife must trust God to grow her husband, and not attempt to change him.

Are our problems too big for God? Can not the One who created us carry us through the world He created?

Read Isaiah 50:5-10. Whose job is it to vindicate for wrongs done (vs. 8)?

Read Romans 13:1 and 1 Peter 2:13-15. What do these verses say about those in authority over us? _____

Read 1 Peter 3:1-2. What do these verses say about husbands and wives? _____

Identify what you are trying to change that is not your job. Write down the areas you should be entrusting to God, but are choosing to attempt to control instead. _____

What will you do to entrust that area to God instead of trying to control it? _____

Areas of Obedience

We cause problems in relationships by not trusting, and by not obeying in areas where obedience is our responsibility. We will be studying Romans 12:14-19 and Colossians 3:18-24 for a few practical ways in which God's grace empowers us to obey in the area of relationship with others.

Read Romans 12:14. We are to bless those who persecute us. How and to whom will you bless today? _____

Read Romans 12:15. God calls us to be tender and compassionate (caring enough to act) towards people in general. Whom will you rejoice with or weep with today? _____

Read Romans 12:16a. We are to be committed to harmony in relationship with other people. How will you live in harmony with others today? With whom? _____

Read Romans 12:16b. What are we not to be? _____ How and to whom will you humble yourself today? _____

Read Romans 12:18. How are we to live with others? _____ How will you live in peace today? _____

Read Colossians 3:18. Wives, identify how you need to obey. _____

Read Colossians 3:19. Husbands, identify how you need to obey. _____

Read Colossians 3:20. Children, identify how you need to obey. _____

Prayer

15. Dead People Don't Sin



Romans 6:1-14

Habitual sin:

This week's Scripture addresses the question, "Should the believer habitually practice sin?" The answer will be found in our identification with Jesus.

Occasional sin:

Next week's Scripture addresses the question, "Should the believer practice sin occasionally?" The answer will be found in our enslavement to righteousness.

You cannot die or go to your funeral in a mood of excitement. Death means you stop being, you agree with God and stop being the intensely striving person you have been. Have you yielded to death?

~Oswald Chambers

How do we deal with the problem of sin in our lives as believers? Paul addresses the prevalent mindset two thousand years ago, a mindset that is still in evidence today when we'd rather talk about grace than confess our sin. He asks the question: "Since God's grace is so abundant, should believers keep on sinning so grace may abound?" Then he answers his own question, first of all, by directly and emphatically denying that sin is OK, using the Greek word "Meganito." It is a word that Paul uses 65 times in his epistles, an expression of unthinkable horror when an idea is too repugnant to think about. It means...God forbid, perish the thought, may it never be, don't even think that way.

Then Paul asks two questions to confront us in the ways we try to defend our sin. These two questions are very relevant in our postmodern world, where man is invited to define truth. As definers of our own truth we set our own standards, and what God calls sin is explained away as disease, or disorder, or considered to be a norm and not a problem.

Paul first asks, "If we're dead to sin, how can we live in it? (Romans 6:2). It is obviously impossible to live in something we are dead to. The next question he asks is, "Don't you know that if we've been baptized into Christ, we've been baptized into His death?" (Rom. 6:3). Christ's death is how our obligation to our sin nature is broken (Romans 6:3-4, 1 Peter 3:21). Unless we are immersed into Christ's death, we can't be immersed into Christ's life. We do not have a dead Christ on the cross, but a living, resurrected Lord who gives newness of life to those who identify with His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:4, 2 Corinthians 5:17). Therefore, if we've been crucified with Christ, we live every day manifesting resurrection life, free from sin's control. When we sin, we confess it and receive forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Our new walk is possible because we not only have been planted together with Him in death, but we've also been planted with Him in resurrection (Romans 6:5).

How can we have victory over sin? There's only one way: co-crucifixion with Christ (Galatians 2:20). (Before continuing to read, it would be a good idea to identify an area where you need victory over sin so you can apply what you learn about crucifixion with Christ to it). Your old man, who was alive and well back when you were under Adam's headship, has been crucified (Romans 6:6). From God's point of view, crucifixion with Christ destroys the obligation to the sin nature (it is not gone, but crucified). Therefore, crucifixion with Christ means you don't serve sin, it is no longer your master. Co-crucifixion with Christ produces transformation, freedom from the effect of your sin nature (Romans 6:7). Crucifixion with Christ means that resurrection life is regenerating you, because your identification with Jesus' death also identifies you with His resurrection (Romans 6:8). Jesus' resurrection frees you from death forever (Romans 6:9).

Just as Adam's sin led to assured death, Jesus' righteousness leads to assured everlasting life. As a result of co-crucifixion with Christ, your desire is to live for God, not yourself (Romans 6:10). Death to sin's control is once for all, never to be repeated (Revelation 12:11). Living for God is continual, never to be ended. However, you do not live for God in your own strength, you do so in the power of Christ's death and resurrection.

As one who has been crucified with Christ, you are commanded to continually consider yourself dead to sin, and alive to God (Romans 6:11-12). Sin is your enemy, and you must stop letting your sin nature have mastery over you. You are commanded to stop presenting your body to your sin nature, because you have made an irrevocable presentation of your body to God (Romans 6:13-14). You yield yourself to God as one alive from the dead. Rather than going ahead and sinning because of the abundance of God's grace, by the abundance of God's grace you confess your sin and are granted repentance. Battle sin not from the position of working towards victory, but from the position of victory, the victory secured by Christ's death and resurrection!

There are many practical areas wherein we must consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God instead. Often for ladies, the desire to be called "beautiful" results in sin in the area of how they view their body. There is discontentment regarding the body God has created that results in under-eating. On the flip side, there is over-eating. Those tempted by sin in this area must continuously look at Jesus' beautiful body on the cross, and consider their own bodies to have hung there with Him. Instead of dwelling on appearance or comfort, by God's grace you can wrestle with the sin nature. By His Spirit's empowerment as you reflect the righteousness of Christ that God has imputed onto you, you use your physical body to help others instead of indulging yourself or hurting your body (you smile, you laugh, you bring a meal, you lend a hand or give a hug). You believe all things, bear all things, hope all things, always looking for what God is doing in the lives of others instead of focusing on their sin.

Marriage relationships is another area where we must consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God instead. Often we are focused on the sin of our spouse, convinced that our spouse is our enemy. No, Satan is the enemy. Wrestle with your sin nature and by God's grace extend to your spouse the forgiveness God has extended to you. Reflect Christ's righteousness as you train in ways to bless and enjoy your spouse (1 Peter 3:8-10). By the abundance of God's grace, you can kill the sin of thinking negatively regarding and as a result criticizing your spouse.

Wrong views on how to get "victory over sin":

- * **Eradication:**
You still have your old nature, it's not gone.
- * **Suppression:**
You can't "just say no" and hold your old nature down.
- * **Self-crucifixion:**
It's literally impossible to crucify or forgive yourself.
- * **Lordship:** *You can't make Him Lord of your life or Lord of anything....He IS Lord.*
- * **Deeper Life:** *You are either a child of God or not, there are not varying levels of sanctification.*

Do you look in a mirror with discontent every time you pass it? Are you grateful for how God has fearfully and wonderfully made you?

~Psalm 139:14

PERSONAL STUDY

15. Dead People Don't Sin

Read
Romans 6:1-14

Jesus loved us so much that He voluntarily submitted to death on a cross. His command is that wives are to submit to their husbands. Submission to husbands provides wives a unique opportunity to imitate Jesus. Wives are being like Jesus when they crucify their desires to be in control.

Have you ever pictured yourself at Calvary? Where would you have stood? Do you think you could have stayed to watch Jesus suffer? Perhaps you would have run away like the disciples did. Perhaps you would have been standing with the women, miserably weeping as you watched His pain. That afternoon, everything we need in order to be able to live for eternity flowed down the ripped apart and bleeding body of our Savior, trickling over the rough wood until it was sticky and soaked. Drip by agonizing drip, Jesus' blood poured out. Because of that blood, when Satan presents God with the reality of our sin, Jesus speaks for those who have believed and received Him. He covers our sin with the payment of His blood. Read 1 John 2:1-2 for a description of how that looks. The brutal work was fully completed by Jesus Christ. Yet, Romans 6 makes it clear that we don't just think of ourselves as kneeling under that dripping blood, rather we are united with Christ on that cross. We must be co-crucified with Jesus, sharing in His sufferings.

Co-crucifixion

When we come to faith in Christ, a death takes place within us.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17. How is the believer described? What has happened to the old things? _____

Read Romans 6:5. How are we united with Christ? _____

Read Romans 6:6. What has happened to our old self? _____

Read Romans 6:8. What have we done with Jesus? _____

Read Colossians 3:3. What is the result of being dead? _____

Have you made the decision that sin must be killed in you? This is different from deciding that it must be restrained or suppressed. It must die in you, just like Jesus died. First of all, identify sin that is ongoing in your life. Name it specifically.

Think about sin as a dimension of life, or a characteristic. The believer is not characterized by sin. We cannot remain in sin the way we did before we were co-crucified with Jesus. Read the following passages and identify how we are to kill sin.

1 John 1:9 _____

Galatians 2:20 _____

1 John 3:8-9 _____

Now take some time alone with the Lord to identify with Him in His death, and ask the Holy Spirit to empower you to put to death the sin in your life. _____

Co-resurrection

Followers of Jesus Christ have not only died with Him, but we are also made alive in newness of life. What comes out of the grave is totally different than what goes into the grave.

Read Romans 6:4b. On the believer, what is the effect of Christ being raised from the dead? _____

Read Romans 6:5. What are the two ways in which we are united with Christ? _____

There are many ways Scripture describes the newness of life that a believer receives as a result of Christ's resurrection. Read each passage and describe what is new for you as a follower of Jesus Christ.

Psalms 40:3 _____

Ezekiel 36:26 _____

Galatians 6:15 _____

Ephesians 4:24 _____

Revelation 2:17 _____

Prayer

Dead to Sin and Alive to God

Paul does not refer to an automatic change. He says "you are....so now become what you are." He does not say, "Since Christ died, you are sinless." The New Testament is full of commands that direct us to participate in the process of living as those alive to God. It does not automatically happen, we must work at it

Read Romans 6:2. How are we to think about ourselves in relation to sin? _____

Read Romans 6:13. How are we to act in relation to sin? _____

Read Romans 8:13. What must we continually be doing to sin? _____

Read Romans 12:2 and Ephesians 4:23. What is to be done to our mind? _____

Read Psalm 119:104, 169. What can renew our mind? _____

16. Enslaved by Christ's Righteousness



Romans 6:15-23

The righteousness of God, credited to me through Christ, is not merely something I rest in, but it is also the premier saving reality by which God governs me.

~Milton Vincent

Everyone is a slave. We choose whom we are enslaved to, either sin or righteousness. Enslaved to sin means we are ruled by thinking or doing or feeling things that don't glorify God/give Him thanks. What does it mean to be enslaved to righteousness? Paul asks a question to get us thinking about righteousness, "Don't we have the right to sin once in a while?" As soon as he asks the question, he recoils from it. He uses the emphatic word "Meganoito" to deny any possibility that followers of Christ might have the right to sin. Then Paul gives us instruction on two topics that relate to being enslaved to righteousness. The first topic is the Master of those enslaved to righteousness, and second is the changed position of those enslaved to righteousness.

Those enslaved to righteousness have a new Master, and a master demands service (Romans 6:16), as Jesus pointed out in Luke 17:7-10. Who is our master? Whomever we serve. If our sin nature is our master, we'll base our thinking on our feelings and experiences, and we'll do unbiblical things. If our new nature (Christ's righteousness) is our master, we'll think biblically, do right, and rejoice always. Which master are you presenting yourself to serve?

Those enslaved to righteousness have a changed position (Romans 6:17-18). God calls us *out* of slavery to sin while we are *in* slavery to sin. He does not however, receive us in the state of slavery to sin, He receives us in Christ's crucifixion. When we are justified by faith as a result of Christ's crucifixion, then serving sin was our first and previous condition, but is not our present condition. On the day we were converted, the righteousness that God credited to us became our master. We are now in the position of being enslaved to righteousness under Christ's headship. Sin no longer rules, it is our choice. We can never blame anyone for our sin. For example, we can't say, "You make me so mad." We are no longer in the position of being enslaved to sin, it is our choice to sin.

We present ourselves as slaves to one or the other: sin or righteousness (Romans 6:19). Formerly, when we were enslaved to sin, we were unable to do anything consistent with God's character. Even when we appeared to be doing good things, we were not doing them with what God accepts—Christ's righteousness. Presently, because we are enslaved to Christ's righteousness, we are pronounced to be righteous and holy.

There is an observable difference between those enslaved to sin and those enslaved to Christ's righteousness, because consequences for choosing slavery to sin are different than consequences for choosing slavery to Christ's righteousness. Slavery to sin results in lawlessness, impurity, toxicity, poison, darkness, imitating Satan, and then doing it all over again. Slavery to Christ's righteousness results in sanctification, righteousness, purity, holiness, light, imitating Jesus Christ, for growth in godliness (Romans 6:20-22).

SLAVES TO SIN

Lawlessness
 Impurity
 Toxicity
 Poison
 Darkness
 Mirror Satan
 More lawlessness

SLAVES TO CHRIST

Sanctification
 Righteousness
 Purity
 Holiness
 Light
 Mirror Jesus Christ
 Growth in godliness

Those who choose to be slaves to sin get what we deserve and earn—guilt and shame resulting in death. The ultimate result is physical, spiritual, and eternal separation from God. Those who choose to be slaves of Christ's righteousness do not get what we deserve. We get freedom, holiness, life, and eternal union with God.

Don't miss the connection between the words sanctification, holiness and everlasting life. Sanctification is necessary for holiness, and holiness is necessary for everlasting life (Hebrews 12:15, 1 Corinthians 6:9). Sanctification is God's work in us under Christ's headship and slavery to His righteousness. This fact throws us desperately on God. We cannot possibly be sanctified by our own efforts (Philippians 1:6, 2:12-13, 1 Corinthians 15:10, 2 Corinthians 3:18). Progressive sanctification is the lifelong process by which we are given Christ's righteousness and then joyfully surrender ourselves to it, and choose to be governed by whatever His righteousness directs.

If we got what we deserved, all of us would be dead forever. All sin is punishable by death. However, a gift is offered (Romans 6:23). Jesus offers the gift of taking the punishment of our sin upon Himself. But that's only half of the gift, the gift also includes everlasting life. We who receive Jesus Christ's free gift will spend eternity reveling in joyful gratitude to Him. Those who reject Jesus Christ and His offer will agonize and wail without any comfort as they burn alone in Hell's sulfurous lake of fire...for eternity.

"...if you contemplate yourself, that is sure damnation. But since Christ has been so imparted to you with all His benefits, that all His things are made yours, that you are made a member of Him, indeed one with Him; His righteousness overwhelms your sins; His salvation overwhelms your condemnation; with His worthiness He intercedes that your unworthiness may not come before God's sight. Surely this is so: We ought not to separate Christ from ourselves or ourselves from Him. Rather we ought to hold fast bravely with both hands to that fellowship by which He has bound Himself to us."

~ John Calvin

PERSONAL STUDY

16. Enslaved by Christ's Righteousness

Read
Romans 6:15-23

Enslaved to Jesus Christ

Jesus will never force you to be captured as His slave. The only kind of slave He accepts is one who chooses to be enslaved to Him by love. Those whose heart He has captivated, are His slaves for life....eternal life.

Read John 14:15, 21-23. What is the basis for obedience to Jesus? _____

We do not merely resist sin and grudgingly obey the Bible. That would be a dreary kind of slavery. No, we whose heart Jesus has captured have been acquired by a different method of captivity than the enemy could ever dream of. We have heard the sweetest song ever, the song of His love. We have known the overwhelming joy of intimacy with Him. We become acutely aware of the preciousness of communion with Almighty God. We experience the freedom of having absolutely no eternal guilt, forgiveness for every one of our horrendous sins. We have been enraptured with the love of God by Jesus Christ and are mere responders to His indescribable love that compels and draws us to Him. We have tasted the goodness of God. This week we will look at our life as love slaves of Jesus Christ.

Eternal Life in Jesus Christ

Love slaves live in hopeful expectation of eternity together with the One they love. The problem is that many of us are obsessed with our lives on earth. It's time to stop living for the moment, and become obsessed with eternity.

Read 1 Peter 1:13. What is our hope or expectation to be founded in? _____

Read 2 Peter 3:12. What is to be our attitude regarding the day Jesus returns? _____

Read Titus 2:13. What are we waiting for? _____

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11. What is the best way to build up and encourage someone who is going through a trial? _____

The Righteous Work of Jesus Christ

As love slaves, don't look at obedience apart from the work of the One we are enslaved to. Look at what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross. This is not about what Jesus will do, but what He has already done! It's His righteousness that is changing us. It's in the power of His blood that we are justified. We hear these words, but often don't grasp the reality that there can be no change in our lives apart from their truth. Love slaves obey their master, but not apart from His redemption of them. We can't separate the process of change in our lives from the work Jesus Christ has done.

Read Hebrews 12:1-3. What are we to look at so we don't grow weary and lose heart? _____

Read 2 Peter 1:3-4. Why can we have confident expectation that we will change to become more like the one we are enslaved to? _____

Read Romans 3:23-25. Whose righteousness is demonstrated in our lives? _____

Read Isaiah 64:6-8. We can do *nothing* of righteousness, apart from Jesus Christ. Describe how the righteous work of Jesus Christ is manifested in your life: _____

Union with Jesus Christ

As a love slave of Jesus Christ, we must recognize our union with Him. We live "in Christ."

What do the following verses teach us about what it means to be "in Christ?"

Ephesians 1:3 _____

Ephesians 1:4 _____

Ephesians 1:7 _____

Ephesians 1:9-10 _____

Ephesians 1:13 _____

Ephesians 1:19-20 _____

Ephesians 2:13-14 _____

Ephesians 2:20-22 _____

Write a prayer of thanks to God as a love slave of Jesus Christ.

Prayer

17. Death by Co-Crucifixion with Christ



Romans 7:1-13

Paul's illustration is perfect. The only way to be free from a marriage union is by the physical death of one of the partners. The only way to be free from our union with our sin nature is for a death to take place. The sin nature does not die—it will be removed in heaven. The believer dies by co-crucifixion with Christ and is legally joined to Him. If marriage could be broken by divorce then the illustration would not work because it's impossible to divorce ourselves from our sin nature.

It's often easier to recognize the deadliness of the gruesome idol worship common to Old Testament culture than the equally deadly grip of daily sin common to our culture. Women worry, manipulate, complain and attempt to control situations that aren't theirs to control, and think they're doing the right thing. Men devote themselves to their work, neglect biblical leadership of the home and church, and pat themselves on the back for earning money. Children are characterized by disobedience and disrespect, and think they're cool. How can these deadly holds of sin be broken? There's only one way—death by co-crucifixion with Christ (Romans 7:1).

When something is absolutely constant and consistent, it becomes a law (a principle). Gravity is a law. Sin is a law. The only way a law can be broken, is by death (Hebrews 9:15). In Romans 7:2-6, Paul illustrates the principle that death by crucifixion with Christ is necessary in order to break the law of sin. He uses the example of the law of one-flesh for those who are married (Genesis 2:24). A woman is married to her husband as long as *he* lives. Only when he dies is the grip of her responsibility of one-flesh with him broken. A woman whose husband has died is free from the law of one-flesh with him. After her former husband has died, she is free from the law of one-flesh, free to remarry. A woman who remarries while her husband lives, has not been freed from him—she is now an adulteress, a polygamist. However, remarriage and adultery are not the point of the illustration. The point of the illustration is that death is necessary for the law not to be in effect. How does this illustration help us see that death by crucifixion with Christ is necessary? Just like the law of one-flesh does not die, neither does the law of our sin nature. Just like a spouse dies to the law of one-flesh, we die to the law of sin. The instrument of our death is Christ's body.

The purpose of our death is to be joined to Christ. We are joined to Christ not only in His death, but also in His everlasting life. It's necessary to die to the sin nature because otherwise it will kill us, it will remove all hope of life. There is no way that our sin nature can possibly please God or be reconciled to Him, but in death by crucifixion with Christ, we have been rescued from the law of the sin nature. How are we rescued? We are dead (by crucifixion with Christ) to that which gripped us. This is the only way we can be rescued from the law of our sin nature that rebels against God. Then we serve God in the new life of the resurrection power of our risen Lord, Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17, Colossians 3:10).

After Paul gives this illustration that death is required to break a law, he addresses any who might have concluded that specific Old Testament (OT) law is sinful. He asks whether the OT law is sin, and answers the question with direct denial (Romans 7:6). Then, he shows that the law is not sinful by tracing sin to

it's source, the sin nature. Remember, the law of the sin nature can only be broken by death.

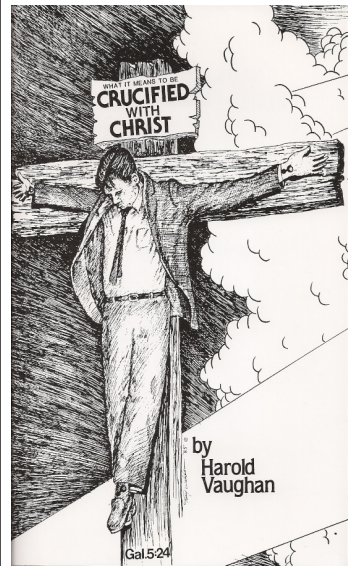
If the sin nature can only be broken by death, then what does OT law do? Is there any use for it? Yes, there is (Romans 7:7-11). The OT law clearly reveals the fact and power of sin. Paul shares his personal example. He did not learn OT law until he was 12 yrs. old, but then he says it worked death in him, revealing the presence of his sin nature. Paul's sin nature twisted the purpose of OT law, to the point where he was able to justify killing Christians. God meant OT law to regulate Paul's life by showing him his sin, but his sin nature used it to deceive him.

What is the proper conclusion regarding OT law? It is not sinful, but holy and good (Romans 7:12-13). The OT law, which is good, did not produce death. The sin nature produced death, perverting the holy law. Perversion of the holy and good law causes us to look to the Redeemer (Galatians 3:24). We see that we are helplessly controlled by the sin nature and desperately in need of Jesus Christ, the only one who can help us (John 14:6).

Because of our sin nature, we will pervert what is holy and good. We will serve in the church for a pat on the back. We will twist portions of Scripture to suit our intents and purposes. We will criticize music that praises God because it does not give us pleasure. We will impose personal expectations on pastors and elders. We will assume positions that are outside of God's plan for roles. Apart from crucifying our perversions of what is holy and good, we will produce death. Christ invites us to share in His crucifixion, and in Him, as we join in His crucifixion, He will produce hope and life.

At the point of becoming followers of Jesus Christ, double imputation happens. Our sins are imputed onto Jesus Christ through our co-crucifixion with Him (Galatians 2:20, Romans 6:3). Crucifixion is necessary, otherwise we will continue to live in the sinfully perverted patterns of dealing with life that we have become comfortable with (Romans 6:2). Also, Christ's righteousness is imputed onto us (Romans 3:24-26). It is Christ's righteousness, not our own, that we now reflect, that we train in, that we are discipled in (Isaiah 64:6, Isaiah 53:11, Philipians 3:9, 12). We strive to attain no other standard than the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ that was imputed onto us when God saved us. When we fail, in brokenness and sorrow we confess our sins and receive forgiveness and cleansing because of Christ's crucifixion (1 John 1:9, Hebrews 10:12-14).

Because of God's great love toward those who fear Him, He crushed His own perfect Son for our sins and repaid Him according to our iniquities (Psalm 103:10). When we catch a glimpse of our bleeding, suffering Savior on the cross, and truly become aware of what it took for God not to deal with us according to our sins or repay us according to our iniquities, we can gratefully say, "I am crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me."



"In Christ," I have all the resources of Christ. In His death, I die to my sin nature. In His resurrection, I rise to new life. By His Spirit in me, I can choose to go where He leads rather than where my passions and desires lead (Galatians 5:16-25).

"Repentance unto life is a saving grace whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, does, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of and endeavor after, new obedience."

~Westminster Shorter Catechism (Q87).

PERSONAL STUDY

17. Death by Co-crucifixion

Read
Romans 7:1-13

"Our sin needs to be crucified with Christ; painfully torn out of our heart like a weed from soil, extracted in agony, and bloody like a tooth from the jaw. Sin must be expelled from our soul by violence, as Christ expelled the money changers from the temple. We can not part with our sin that we cherish without inward bleeding. Root from our hearts all those things which we have cherished so long. Then and only then, can we rest in the delight and peace of having Christ reign without rival, and having our sinful lust crucified with Christ. Then He will be the sun and reign without the darkness of night."

~A.W.Tozer

Our sin must be crucified with Christ. Make a visual picture of this in your mind. But, don't just place yourself under the cross so that drops of blood cover you, think of yourself on the cross, crucifying your sin.

If we are not careful, we can say, "I just have to 'put off' the old and 'put on' the law." This can lead to faking, or a secret life of fleshly deeds. We must understand that it is in our heart/mind where the process of change begins. Change is not possible on our own. A Christian must work in dependence upon the Holy Spirit, by means of the Word of God, within the context of a body of believers. Let's look at each of these aspects and how they work to produce change in our life as our fleshly deeds die by co-crucifixion.

Inner man = Heart/Mind

Read Jeremiah 17:9. What do we know about our hearts? _____

Read Matthew 12:34b-35. Why can't we just change our outward actions? _____

Read Joel 2:13a. What does God want us to change? _____

Word of God

Read Hebrews 4:12. What does the Word of God reveal to us? _____

Read 2 Timothy 3:15-17. What fully equips us for every good work? _____

Dependant Upon the Holy Spirit

Read Philippians 2:12-13. We must make a choice of our will (obedience) in conjunction with whose work? _____

Read Romans 8:13. What is required in order to put to death the deeds of the body? _____

God's People, the Church

Read Ephesians 4:15-16. How is the Christian to grow? _____

Read Hebrews 10:24-28. Why must we not desire to be "Lone-Ranger" Christians? _____

Spiritual Disciplines

Read 1 Timothy 4:7-9. How are we to approach the process of growing in godliness? _____

Read Philippians 2:16. What type of effort we are to expend in crucifying our sin nature? _____

Love

Read Matthew 22:37-38, John 14:21. What emotion are we commanded to discipline ourselves in? _____

Devoted to God's Word

Read Psalm 119:11, Joshua 1:8. How is the Bible part of training in spiritual disciplines? _____

Confession of Sin

Read Psalm 139:23-24, Luke 24:47, 1 John 1:9. These verses teach the discipline of confession. Confession of sin is our spiritual breathing. What sin have you confessed today? _____

Serving God

To serve is to encourage the body. It is only due to God's grace, that we surrender to God and submit to one another out of reverence to Him. The result will be adjusted lives in attitudes and actions (Ephesians 5:18-6:9).

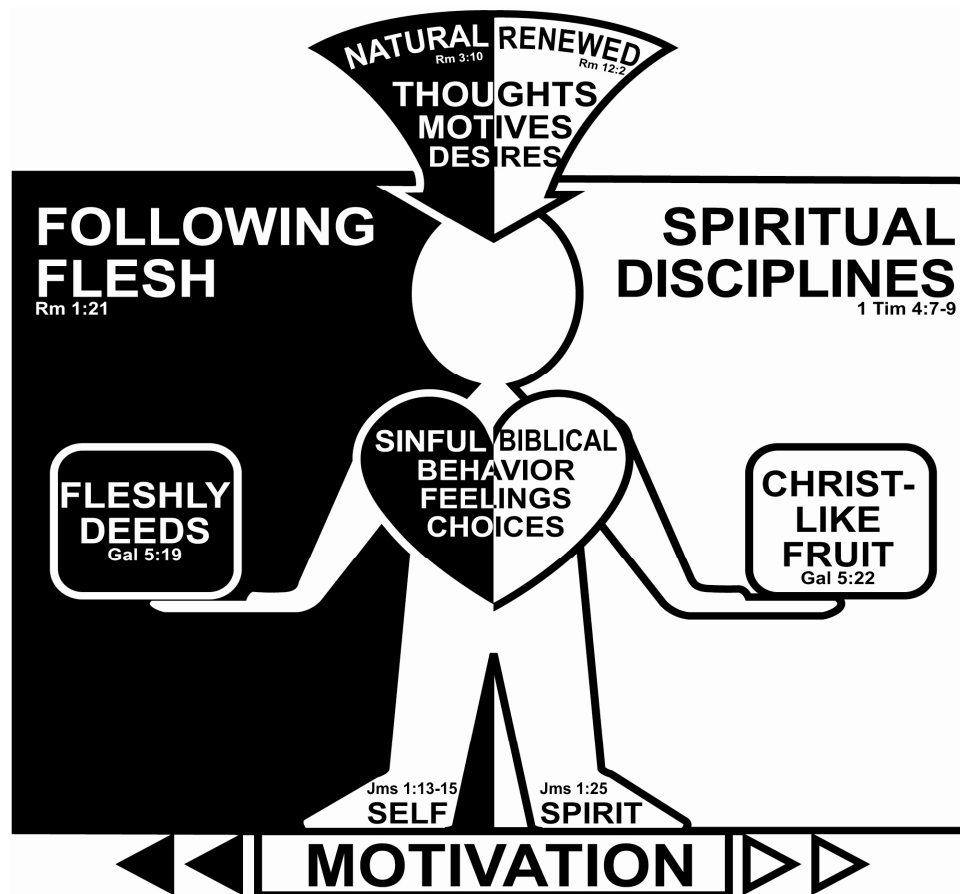
Read Galatians 5:13. How are we to discipline ourselves in the body of Christ?

Prayer

Read Hebrews 4:16. The discipline of prayer (communicating with God) grows us in dependence on God. How does God want us to approach Him? _____

- * We work out what God has worked in.
- * Work in = conviction
- * Work out = obedience
- * Our responsibility, God's resources.

~David Jeremiah



Prayer

18. The War Within



Romans 7:14

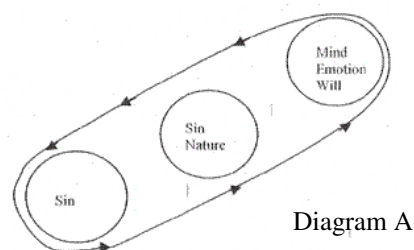
"This is the most mature, spiritual Christian there could ever be... who sees so clearly the inability of his flesh against the holiness of the divine standard. Show me a person with this kind of brokenness, a person agonizing in the depths of his own soul because he can't do everything written in the law of God, and I'll show you a spiritual person. The more spiritual you are, the more likely you are to say this."

~John MacArthur

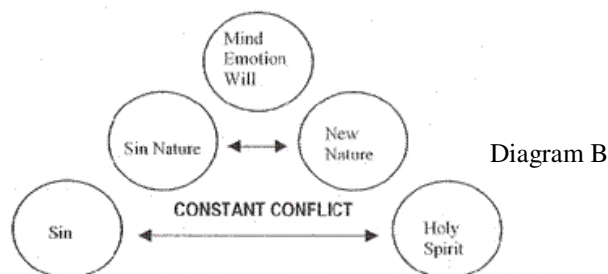
The maturing Christian will not look for excuses or loopholes in the standard of God, but will be grieved by even his slightest breaking of it.

There's a big problem. We desire co-crucifixion with Christ, but an undeniable war is going on. The big problem is that we fight co-crucifixion all the way. Our natural man, our sin nature which is driven by sin, is the source of the war. On the one hand, we know that as believers, Christ's righteousness is ours. We are slaves of righteousness, we are dead to sin. On the other hand we are enslaved by our sin nature, we are of the flesh, we are sold into the bondage of sin.

"Of the flesh" comes from the Greek word *sarkinos* which means pertaining to the body (as earthly and perishable material), fleshly, consisting of flesh, composed of flesh, wholly given up to the flesh, rooted in the flesh. The believer is a slave to his sin nature. We prove it every time we sin. Paul passionately shares the grieving lament of his own life as proof of the fact that we are at war (Romans 7:15-24). The natural, unsaved man has no choice but to be controlled by sin. Even his good deeds are not motivated by the glory of God (1 Corinthians 2:14, Galatians 5:19-21, Romans 1:21). Refer to "Diagram A".

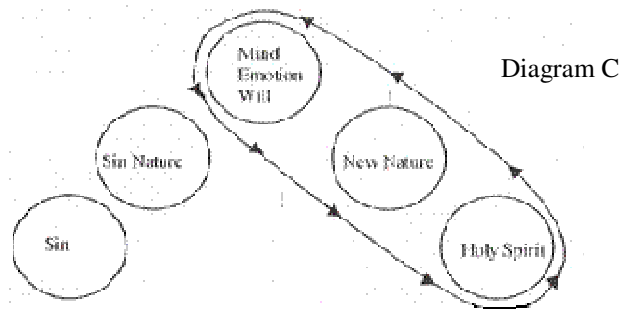


In the believer, there is constant conflict, a war that wages at all times. The war only rages in Christians, those who delight in God's law, who love God's commandments and long to obey (Romans 7:14). The more we grow as Christians in knowing the mighty power and wisdom of God, the more acutely we become aware of the sin that we indulge in, and the more we hate our sin. The conflict that rages is the direct result of our own desires. The battle stems from within, as we heed the desires of our sin nature instead of walking in the Spirit according to our new nature. Refer to "Diagram B".



Victory is attainable and certain, but while we are on earth, the follower of Christ constantly holds the two extremes in tension. Temporarily, we are in this world of flesh and blood. In us dwells the capacity for the most horrific sin. We can all engage in the darkest possibility. Eternally, we have passed from death to life, we no longer walk in darkness but in light as we share in Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Clearly, we also have in us the divine nature, the capacity to walk in light as new creations in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

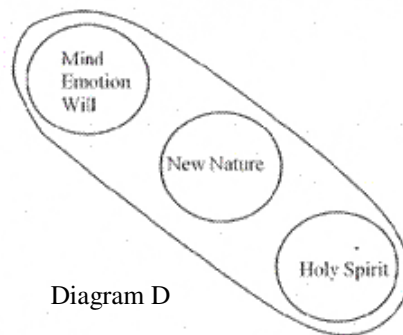
Both the old sin nature and the new nature are present in the believer, but our tendency is to be controlled by the flesh (sin nature), and perform acts of sin. Because we have tasted the beauty of God's holiness, we now hate the horror of the sin. The only release from sin is confession (1 John 1:9). By surrendering to the Holy Spirit, the spiritual nature has victory over the sin nature (Galatians 5:16, 22-24, Romans 8:1-17, 1 Corinthians 2:15-16). Refer to "Diagram C". The more victory we have as we mature in Christ, the more we will recognize the sinfulness of sin and find ourselves identifying with Paul in Romans 7:17-25.



"The more seriously a Christian strives to live from grace and to submit to the discipline of the gospel, the more sensitive he becomes to the fact that even his very best acts and activities are disfigured by the egoism which is still powerful within him, and no less evil because it is often more subtly disguised than formerly."

~Charles Cranfield

In heaven, the old nature will be removed and only the glorious new nature will remain. Refer to "Diagram D." The glorification of the believer is so sure that God speaks of it in the present tense (Romans 8:29). The outcome of our salvation, that we will spend eternity with Jesus without a sin nature, is just as certain as the fact that we are saved (1 Corinthians 15:53-57). Are you thankful? Are you jubilant? Are you overflowing with joy? Hallelujah, death's sting has been removed!



*In the life of the Christian, this ongoing battle **must** be waged. There is no second one-time experience such as "sanctification by faith," or "finding inner light," or a "zapping of the Holy Spirit" by which the war ends. The Christian life is the life of confession and repentance. All our lives on earth, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we put to death the flesh (Romans 8:13). However, in death, the battle ends and glory wins.*

PERSONAL STUDY

18. The War Within

Read
Romans 7:14-23

The Old Testament is full of stories of mankind's failures. The New Testament epistles address issues faced by sinful mankind. While the Bible is full of examples of sin, it never makes excuses for, or justifies sin. All of the stories and examples in the Bible open our eyes to the fact that we desperately need a Savior, we need Christ's imputed righteousness, we need to be justified. The problem enters when people stop at justification. You see, the Bible doesn't separate justification and sanctification. Every Christian is in the process of being sanctified. Every Christian's purpose (by God's foreknowledge, predestination, and calling) is to be changed to Christ-likeness, which gives God glory. That means every Christian is always in the process of changing. In doing so, we fulfill the purpose for which we were created.

Read Isaiah 43:1, 7. What is the purpose for which we were created? _____

Read Romans 8:28-29. God uses every situation in the Christian's life for good, because it changes him or her. In what way did God foreknow and predestine that we would change? _____

Change is Not Optional

Christians are becoming Christ-like...it's not an option. Carefully consider the following verses and write down how, as a Christian, you are being changed to Christ-likeness (being sanctified).

John 15:16 _____

Romans 12:1-2 _____

2 Corinthians 5:17 _____

Ephesians 1:4 _____

Ephesians 2:1-2, 10 _____

2 Thessalonians 2:13 _____

2 Peter 3:14 _____

1 John 2:3-6 _____

It is not optional for a Christian to be in the process of changing to become more Christ-like. Rather, it is absolutely necessary.

Read Hebrews 12:14. What must the Christian pursue in order to see the Lord?

The War Inside Us

Most of us agree that we need to change, because we are looking at the struggles in our lives....pain from the past, problems in the present, or fear for the future. However, that's not the reason change is necessary. Change is necessary because we are corrupt, we have evil desires in our hearts, we have a sin nature and we choose to sin. We choose sinful responses and then, instead of looking at ourselves, we blindly blame other people and situations. We do not want to take the difficult journey within to look at our own thoughts, desires, and choices.

Read 2 Peter 1:4. Why is there corruption in the world? _____

Peter says the corruption in the world stems from our own lusts or desires. We are so quick to blame Satan....when it's really our own fault.

Read James 4:1-2. Why are there quarrels and conflicts? _____

Read 2 Peter 1:3-4. What is the solution to the war inside us? _____

Read James 4:6-10. What is the solution to ongoing conflict? _____

Humanly, Change is Not Possible

In our own strength, desire, or power, we will never become like Jesus Christ. Our sin nature within us fights it with every decision along the way. However, the Holy Spirit, who is stronger and more powerful, works within every believer. What do these verses teach about the Holy Spirit's work in you to change you?

Galatians 5:16 _____

Romans 8:5-6 _____

Romans 8:9 _____

Romans 8:13 _____

The War Winner

Read John 16:7-11. Why did Jesus send us the Holy Spirit? _____

Read John 16:13. What will the Holy Spirit guide us into? _____

Read John 16:14. What is the end result of the Holy Spirit's work? _____

Prayer

19. From Wretched to Rescued



Romans 7:14-25

“It is not just that we are rebels and fools. Sin makes us moral quadruplegics. We are fundamentally unable to do what is right.”

~Paul David Tripp

We are wretched. We always choose sin. Over and over, we are unable to be like Jesus. Over and over, we don't look like the righteousness that God declares to be ours.

Why do we always choose sin? Because of our sin nature. It pushes us like a relentless slave driver. By the vice of our sin nature, sin is the stuff we are made of, not just the activity we perform. When we become a Christian we are made a new creation and we have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, but our bias is always to be controlled by our flesh. So we have the old fleshly sin nature, motivated by indwelling sin, and we have the new nature, motivated by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Sin does not originate in our new nature, because our new nature desires to do the things we cannot possibly do.

We can take it on the Word of God (Romans 7:14) that this information about two natures is true, but one glance at any of our lives will remove any doubt. We do things without even recognizing their true character. We don't do the things we want to do. We do the things we hate. We are like Paul who points to his own life as evidence of the sin nature. He says that there is nothing good in him (Romans 7:15-17), and has no doubt that the sin he does is because of his own sin nature.

Sin nature. Flesh. Body of death. Do we tremble? Our ongoing sin reveals that our new nature is powerless before our sin nature. It's as if our muscles (that would move us to do what is right) have been atrophied, leaving us unable to do any good. When we do good, it could not possibly come from our sin nature, because our flesh is powerless to do the good we want to perform (Romans 7:18).

Not only do we not do the good we want to do, we do the evil we don't want to do (Romans 7:19-20). Sin has an effect on our minds, causing our thoughts to be flawed (Romans 8:5, Psalm 119:11, Joshua 1:8). Sin originates in our old sin nature, beginning in our minds and expressing itself through our physical body. Sin does not begin with the action, it begins in the mind.

Every believer in Jesus Christ experiences an ongoing battle—constant conflict with sin. We experience this conflict so regularly and predictably that it can be described as a law. It is a law that our nature will never choose righteousness. The will or determination to do good is never strong enough. It is a law that no matter how much our new nature delights in God's law and wishes to act, our sin nature (flesh, members) resists it and demands obedience to sin (Romans 7:21-22). There is no way to escape this law. We cannot do what is consistent with the character of God. We fall short of the glory of God.

This constant conflict with sin creates a war. The war it creates is a

costly, painful, gory mess. My sin nature is not neutral or passive, but busy making a bloody war of things. As a Christian, I approve the law of God, but I cannot obey it because of the law of my sin nature. The war is ongoing and will not end until my sin nature is finally removed in heaven.

It's bad enough that there is a law of constant war going on, but that's not enough. I am held captive in this war. My old nature actively wars against my new nature, and hold me prisoner of the sin nature which is in my mind and body. I am imprisoned and powerless to do the deeds of my new nature. I obey the law of sin as a captive prisoner of war, all because of the sin nature that dwells in me.

What a wretch I am. To say that I am frustrated by the result of this war that takes me captive because of the law of my sin nature would be gross understatement. When I sin, I am a wretched, distressed, humiliated, miserable human being. The longing of my heart is to be rescued from the law of sin that creates a war that holds me captive and makes me wretched. I cry in agony, "I am a wretch, all I can do is sin. Deliver me from this body of death."

Deliverer. Jesus Christ. We cry out to the Creator of law. We cry out to the One victorious over war. We cry out to the liberator of captives. We cry to the One who turns the wretched into the rescued. Jesus Christ.

When we are discouraged over our constant conflict with sin, we are in good company. Similar discouragement and conflict is described by Paul as his own experience (Romans 7:22-24). Unless such conflict describes our experience as a follower of Christ, we are liars (1 John 1:8,10). However, we do not wallow in the discouragement. Deliverance from constant conflict is possible through Jesus Christ, who comes to rescue us from ourselves (Romans 7:25).

Yes, the new nature (mind) of the Christian always serves the law of God while the sin nature (flesh) always serves the law of sin. While the flesh never quits with its horrendous serving of the law of sin, there is a rescue plan. The rescue plan from the wretchedness of our sin nature, the answer for discouragement over sin, is provided by God through Jesus Christ. We need Jesus to come to our rescue. There is no where else to go. His amazing grace saves us from the most deceptive and aggressive enemy...ourselves.

Our only response when we are rescued from the law of sin is gratitude. Praise! Thanks! A new song! Rescued from sin—praise His Name. Delivered from self—hallelujah to the Lamb. Mortification of the flesh—thank you Jesus. Crucifixion of this body of death—You are the victorious Savior.

"God, give us the hearts desire to fulfill all Your good law and to see sin defeated. We know that comes when we walk in the power of the Spirit, yielded to Him, tasting the sweetness of victory until the day when Jesus comes and frees us from the body of this death and we become all that we should be in Thy glorious presence."

~John MacArthur

PERSONAL STUDY

19. From Wretched to Rescued

Read
Romans 7:14-25

The Christian is not perfect, but rescued. We are heavily involved in a faith war, empowered by the Holy Spirit and joyfully confident of being justified by Christ's righteousness. The battle against sin is a vicious one, that's clear. So, should we ever relax and say, "I give?" Absolutely not. We cannot make peace with our sin, we must make war on our sin. Like Paul, no Christian lives in constant victory. Defeat is part of the experience of the Christian, but defeat does not characterize the Christian.

When we fail, Romans 7:14-25 is the normal way for a Christian to react. We don't lie and act like we are perfect. We don't deceive and act hypocritical. We don't pose and pretend we've got our act together. We don't impress others with our ability to look "Christian." That's not the job of the church. The church is to be real about our sin, with the honesty, candor, and humility displayed in this passage by Paul.

How Does A Christian Respond to Being Wretched?

Read Romans 7:15. What is our reaction to our sin? _____

Read Romans 7:24. How do we feel about ourselves in times of sin? _____

Read Romans 6:6, 8:13, 1 John 1:9. What must we do with sin? _____

In Romans 7:14-25, as Paul evaluates the actions of his life, he constantly goes back to God's law. Compare the following verses to see how love for God's law and confession of sin go hand in hand.

We love God's law

Romans 7:14a. How do we consider God's law? _____

Romans 7:16. Why do we agree with God's law? _____

Romans 7:22. What is our feeling as we concur with the law of God? _____

Romans 7:25b. What is our response to the law of God? _____

We confess our sin

Romans 7:14b. How do we view our sin? _____

Romans 7:20. What is the result of our indwelling sin? _____

Romans 7:23-24. How does it feel when sin takes us captive? _____

Romans 7:25c. What is our response to the law of sin? _____

God's Word

Christians love and delight in the law of God. The law defines sin. The law is not wrong, we are. The problem in Paul's day was that people were blaming the law. Today we blame anything rather than blaming our own indwelling sin. It is the indwelling sin nature that causes our defeats, not the other things we want to blame. We are rescued by Jesus Christ and His righteousness. In Him, we must fight! We will win the war against sin, because Jesus defeated sin. In the meantime, God has given us His Word as the weapon to wield against sin.

Read Joshua 1:7-8. What is necessary for success? _____

Read Psalm 119:9-11. How can you be protected from sin? _____

Read Hebrews 4:12. What reveals sin to you? _____

Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17. What is Scripture useful for in your life? _____

Read Ephesians 6:17. What is the weapon by which we aggressively fight? _____

Read Matthew 4:3-4, 5-7, 8-10. How did Jesus use the weapon of God's Word to fight Satan? _____

How Does A Christian Respond to Being Rescued?

Sometimes a newspaper will feature a story of someone who has been rescued. The rescuer is presented as a hero, and the rescued one expresses extreme gratitude. We have been rescued by Jesus Christ. He is our hero. We must thank Him, and tell others how grateful we are to Him.

Read John 1:29. What did Jesus come to do? _____

Read 1 John 5:18-20. How are we rescued from the evil one? _____

Read 1 Peter 1:18-19. Consider the cost at which we have been rescued. _____

Read 2 Corinthians 4:6-7. Paul calls himself an earthen vessel. What does he have inside the vessel? _____

Read Matthew 13:44. How are we to respond? _____

Have you treasured Jesus Christ today? Treasure is a verb, an action whereby we see Jesus Christ as most valuable. Have you told Him how grateful you are to have been rescued? Have you told anyone else what He's done for you, and how you treasure Him? Think of three people whom you will tell of being rescued from your sin by Jesus Christ. Name them, and put the date on which you talked to them next to their name: _____

Prayer

20. The Power of the Holy Spirit



Romans 8:1-17

“Power for producing mature, equipped believers doesn’t come from the individual’s effort but from the Holy Spirit.”

~Bob Froese

As we cry out to Jesus Christ to rescue us, He delivers. He has conquered the enemy. There is a breathtaking phrase in Romans 8:1, “no condemnation,” that echoes sweetly in the ear of Christians rightly related to Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. We are delivered from the nemesis law of sin as we identify with Christ in His death.

When Romans 8:1 speaks of “no condemnation,” it is not a reference to eternal condemnation. It is in reference to the condemning guilt experienced upon conviction of the Holy Spirit when a Christian does sinful things he should not have done or falls to the sin of good intentions by not doing things he should have done (Romans 8:1, 7:14, John 16:11). Even while we are incarcerated by this sinful body, the Holy Spirit can be relied upon to empower and control our new nature.

The Holy Spirit is called the “law of the spirit of life” because He produces **victory over** sin and death, with the regularity and consistency of a law. The body we live in with its sin nature is called the “law of sin and death” because it produces sin and death, with the regularity and consistency of a law. Catch this, it’s important—it is not our lack of sin that delivers us. Lack of sin results in pride and self-righteousness. It is the Holy Spirit’s control that delivers us from the fleshy imprisonment of our bodies of death.

Deliverance from the law of sin is established by the Holy Spirit, and is the work of God. The stories of Israel’s failure all through the Old Testament prove that no law can control the sin nature, not even a law directly given by God. The sin nature is not destroyed or controlled by what the Father did to Jesus Christ on the cross, the sin nature is condemned by what the Father did to the Son on the cross. Once for all, God’s damnation was righteously poured out on sin, only it wasn’t on you and I who deserve it. It was instead poured out onto His own Son on the cross in our place. Jesus Christ fulfills the righteous requirement of God in His followers who are all controlled by the Holy Spirit and thus perform the things of the new nature.

For followers of Christ, being delivered from the law of sin and death by the Holy Spirit is not optional (Romans 8:3-8). We have two possibilities: either to be controlled by the flesh (sin nature), or to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. If we are controlled by the flesh, thinking the thoughts of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21), the result is death. If we are controlled by the Holy Spirit, thinking thoughts of the new nature leading to life and peace, the result is life and peace. Now this is not merely an idea or abstract concept. It is a concrete fact from which the practice of our lives flow. Recognizing it helps us identify the tools being used in the war that holds us captive and makes us wretched. Anytime, in any situation, when there is not joy and peace in our lives, we are involved in stinkin’ thinkin’,

a negative mindset, defeated thinking, wordly thoughts, lusts of the flesh—sin. When we are not characterized by peace, we are not controlled by the Holy Spirit, but we are controlled by the sin nature.

It's impossible for non-followers of Christ to please God, because no matter how hard they try, they are controlled by the flesh. Even when they perform extremely good deeds, the motivation is not the glory of God, but an act of pleasing the flesh (Romans 8:8). However, all followers of Christ have in them the potential to be empowered by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9). Those who do not have this potential by the Holy Spirit, are not Christ's. But followers of Christ are empowered to confess their sin and evidence the repentance Jesus came preaching. This is exciting! Even while we are imprisoned by our sinful bodies, by the power of the Holy Spirit we are being sanctified (made holy). Have you ever heard a parent or employer say, "He has great potential." Well, that's true of Christians. We have new potential, amazing potential. Our old potential was living under control of the sin nature, with the result of death (1 Corinthians 5:5, 1 John 5:16-17, Hebrews 12:5-11). Our new potential is to live by the Spirit and put the flesh to death by the Spirit, with the result of life.

Life. The power that raised Jesus from the dead will resurrect all those who have His Spirit, and apart from Christ's return prior to our death, we will all experience physical death. But followers of Christ are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and thus have the same power by which the Father raised the Son (Romans 8:10-11).

Followers of Christ also have a new possession—the Holy Spirit. In possessing the Holy Spirit, no longer does our stinking, deadly flesh drag us into sin, but we mortify, we put to death, we kill our sin (Romans 8:12-13). As well as potential for sanctification and power for everlasting life by our new possession, the Holy Spirit, we have a new position. Our position is that we are adopted children of God (Romans 8:14-16). Children of God are led by the Spirit of their Father, and thus look more like their new family day by day. The Holy Spirit removes fear, as He reassures our spirits that we are part of God's family (Romans 8:15-16, 2 Timothy 1:7).

The Holy Spirit empowers us with incredible power, the power that raised Jesus from the dead. Nothing is too great for the Holy Spirit to overcome, not the strictest law, the gravest war, the most tightly chained captive or addict, or the most miserable wretchedness. He gives encouragement and assurance greater than any suffering that may come our way as a result of being in Christ Jesus. By the power of the Holy Spirit we endure the trials of this life together with Jesus Christ in the same manner in which He suffered. We will also share the glory of eternal life together with Him. When we suffer, the Holy Spirit assures us that we will be rewarded as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ—glorified together forever.

"Why doesn't God reveal Himself to you? He cannot—because you are in the way as long as you don't abandon yourself to Him in total surrender. Once you do, God witnesses to Himself. If you had received the witness of the Spirit before the reality and truth that comes from obedience, it would simply result in sentimental emotion. As soon as you abandon your own reasoning and arguing, and stop the disrespectfulness of debating with God, He gives His witness, His Spirit bears witness or testifies with your spirit."

~Oswald Chambers

PERSONAL STUDY

20. The Power of The Holy Spirit

Read
Romans 8:1-17

“The Christian does not order the Spirit. While He gave the truth, brought the Bible into being, and has chosen to work through it, the Spirit is neither a force nor a machine. He is a Person who works when and where and how He pleases. To us has been given the Bible. We ask God to be pleased to make our use of it effective by His Spirit and then move out in obedience to its truth. The results and whole outcome belong to God.”

~Jay Adams

Holy Spirit and God's Word

Before Jesus left earth, He prayed for the Father to leave us help so we would love each other. He knew we'd need it! John 14-17 records Jesus' last conversation with His disciples, and His parting prayer for them and for us.

Read John 14:15-17. Jesus asked the Father to give us a Helper the same as Himself, His Spirit. What does Jesus tell us to do when He assures us He will send help to do it? _____

Read John 16:8-11. How does the Holy Spirit help the whole world? _____

Don't ignore conviction in your life. When the Holy Spirit convicts you, it's time to agree with God and confess sin. God grants repentance to those with godly sorrow.

Read John 16:13-14. What will the Holy Spirit guide us into? _____

Read John 17:17. What is the truth into which the Holy Spirit guides us? _____

Read John 14:25-26. What would the Holy Spirit enable the disciples to recall? _____

When the disciples recorded Scripture, the words were perfect and error free.

Read 1 John 4:6 and 1 Corinthians 2:12-16. What do those who know God accept? _____

Man cannot understand the things of God apart from the Holy Spirit. God is truth, His Word is truth, and the Holy Spirit speaks Scripture. When people say the Holy Spirit has spoken to them apart from God's Word, we must not assume they are listening to the voice of God. The Holy Spirit is our constant teacher according to the Word of God, convicting us and prompting us to conform to the truth of the Word of God. When people claim additional truths directly from God, their statements are affected by personal experiences, feelings, or desires. What do the following Scriptures say regarding how serious God is about not adding to or taking from His Word?

Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32 _____

Proverbs 30:5-6 _____

Revelation 22:18-19 _____

Holy Spirit and the Church

The Holy Spirit works through humans according to the Word of God, in the vehicle of Christ's body on earth, the church. He gives gifts to build up the church and present to the world a picture of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit works in tandem with the

proper exercise of the gifts He has given to the church. His gifts are not for personal use, but to build up the church, as clearly taught in Ephesians 4:7-13.

Read Ephesians 4:16. How is the church to build itself up? _____

Read John 15:8-10 and 17:21. How did Jesus tell us to show Him to the world, so that the world would believe in Him? _____

Read Galatians 3:1-3. How are people who attempt some other method of following Christ described? _____

Holy Spirit and Union with Christ

Just hours before His crucifixion, in John 14:18-19, Jesus told his disciples He was leaving earth. He told them that the world would no longer behold Him, but that they would instead.

Read John 14:18. What is the promise Jesus gives? _____

Read Matthew 28:20. What did Jesus promise to disciple makers? _____

Jesus indwells us with His Holy Spirit, and so He is with us always, and we “behold” Him. All Christians are joined in union with Christ by the Holy Spirit.

Read 1 John 4:12-13. How do we know that we abide in Him and He in us? _____

It is through the Holy Spirit that Christians are one with Jesus Christ, and it is through the Holy Spirit that Jesus Christ lives in us. Christians operate in a different realm or dimension, because we are alive to the spiritual realm. Jesus Christ is in us, through the Holy Spirit. We are in Christ Jesus through the Holy Spirit.

Read 1 Corinthians 2:16. What do we have that unbelievers do not? _____

Holy Spirit and Holiness

Ever wonder why we call the Spirit whom Jesus left us the Holy Spirit? He is the source of holiness. There is no other source of holiness in us. All holiness stems from the Holy Spirit’s activity in our human lives.

Read Romans 1:4. How is the Spirit described? _____

Read Hebrews 12:14. How important is holiness (sanctification)? _____

Read Ezekiel 36:25-27. What is the work of the Holy Spirit in us? _____

Read 2 Corinthians 3:18. Christians are being transformed into the glory of Jesus. Where does the growing change come from? _____

Read Romans 8:13. What is the means by which we kill whatever is not holy in us? _____

Read 1 Corinthians 6:17, 19-20. Who has the permanent presence of the Holy Spirit living inside them? _____

Union with Christ

We are in Christ~

- * 2 Corinthians 5:17
- * Philippians 3:9
- * Ephesians 2:10

Christ is in us~

- * Romans 8:10
- * Galatians 2:20
- * Colossians 1:28

Our union with Jesus Christ~

- * John 15:4
- * 1 John 4:13

Prayer

21. Waiting for Jesus Christ



Romans 8:18-27

The world stands under the judicial sentence of God upon a rebellious and sinful mankind—a sentence of universal futility and corruption. And no one is excluded, not even the precious children of God.

~John Piper

Hope...the personal perception of all pending possibilities with positive presuppositions.

We ended the last chapter on the given fact that we will suffer on earth. Some more than others, but since we live in a fallen world, no human beings are excluded from suffering. Christians, however, suffer *with Christ* while on earth, knowing that they will spend eternity free from suffering. Our perspective on suffering is different. As we contrast our present torment with the glory of eternity, the weight of eternity's glory causes our present torment to appear light. Indeed, when the glory of God is revealed, all the suffering of our time on earth will hold *no* negative value.

Presently all of God's creation, including the earth itself, waits expectantly for God's glory to be revealed. This earth has been ruined by sin, it is subject to futile and useless devastations and disasters that torment the human body to death. No one can deny that germs, famines, floods, volcanoes, earth quakes, tidal waves, plagues, car accidents, and all kinds of diseases touch our lives.

Recently Clarence Center NY, less than 4 miles from Faith Fellowship Church, was the scene of the crash of Flight 3407. Within seconds, 51 people went from putting on seatbelts in anticipation of meeting friends and family as they stepped off the plane, to a tragic ending of life as the plane crashed, enveloping into the basement of one home. Life as they knew it came to a crashing halt for parents, spouses, friends, the community. While the agony of the situation was the focus of many reporters, there was also speculation that ice had built up on the wings of the plane, contributing cause to the crash. Now ice did not participate willingly in the fall, however it is the effect of the fall. Romans 8:22 describes the earth as groaning with the intense pangs of a mother giving birth, in the pain of being set free from the present bondage to decay and suffering.

Not only does man suffer physical ruin, in our fallen state we are enslaved to spiritual ruin by our sin natures. Flawed perceptions, misconceived goals, misinformed emotions, desire for personal glory, spiritual numbness, separation from God—all of us suffer the incarcerating effects of our bodies of death. We are cursed.

In the future, God will deliver His creation from death. Earth knows this, it is not resigned to the devastation, but waits with eager longing for the glorious liberty that is coming. In that day redeemed man will have no more sin nature, never again to fall under the curse of sin. In the present, every plant, animal, and human being is involved in suffering. We look back with groaning over the pointlessness of Adam's sin which made the earth and all in it subject to the curse of sin. But at the same time, followers of Christ look forward, eagerly waiting for the time when the curse will be lifted. Our eagerness has the intensity of birth pangs.

The present suffering in the life of Christ's followers is different than the suffering of the unbeliever. We have the down payment of the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of what is to come, we have the "first fruits" of the removal of the curse. So do we suffer? Yes, we groan within ourselves because of the constant, ongoing conflict with our sin nature. Christians know no greater agony than that caused by their sin. When we agonize over our sin, guilt and hopelessness of ever getting it right replace the joy of walking with God by power of the Holy Spirit. Upon confession of our sin (confession means agreeing with God), God forgives us and grants us repentance. We strive and work and labor and wrestle in the sanctification process all of our time on earth. But we know that the agony, the conflict, the labor ends. We eagerly wait for the answer, knowing that it is coming...our adoption and redemption. All our distress and misery will end when Jesus Christ delivers us by the resurrection and glorification of our bodies.

In the meantime, as we eagerly wait for the glorious day, God has saved us (Romans 8:24-25). We have absolute certainty—hope! Although we have not yet experienced it, deliverance from our sin nature is absolutely certain (Philippians 3:20-21, 1 Corinthians 15:52, Revelation 21:4). We must have patience as we wait (Psalm 119:71,75).

We have special assistance amid our sufferings, amid our waiting to be delivered—we can pray directly to God. But not too many of us understand how prayer works. We think that we see a problem, tell God about it, and then God acts on the problem if we pray in faith. This is a totally erroneous and self glorifying view of prayer. In reality, there are no problems that God hasn't put in place and got a plan for. Our sin nature affects us so that we cannot even pray without being affected by our weakness.

Because of the decay of the earth, and the presence of our own sin nature, we cannot pray to God as we should. In our weakness, we have the help of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26-27). The Holy Spirit specifically helps by interceding our prayers on a level that cannot be expressed in words, in groaning. His groaning is not affected by the decay of the earth, nor by sin. Although we do not hear Him groaning, He is intervening our prayers. He searches our hearts, and knows where our prayers need to be adjusted to line up with God's will. He is always successful in His intercessions for us, because He intercedes according to God's will, which cannot be thwarted. As followers of Christ pray in faith, prayer changes us to line up with the Father's will instead of our own. Yes, prayer changes things, but it does not change the sovereign and perfect will of Almighty God. It changes the one praying. Even in the midst of the suffering we are praying about, as we pray we become more like we will be when we no longer suffer.

Six points about suffering~

- * *Creation, and our bodies have been subjected to futility and enslaved to corruption.*
- * *Jesus Christ came and died to purchase our redemption, because of God's great love for mankind.*
- * *God controls who gets sick and who gets well, and all His decisions are best for His children.*
- * *We run to God and pray for help both to heal and to strengthen faith while we are unhealed, and we depend on the Holy Spirit's intercession.*
- * *We always trust in the power and love of God, even in the darkest hour of suffering.*
- * *Someday all those who endure to the end in faith will be set free from all pain and sickness.*

PERSONAL STUDY

21. Waiting for Jesus Christ

Read
Romans 8:18-27

“For man without faith, hope is covered with uncertainty and cramped by unpredictability, retarded by fear, and spurred by longings of human subjectivity – rather than faith in the objective reality of the immutable promises of God who cannot lie.”

~Jeffrey Forrey

How can you be hopeful when you are in the throes of a problem? How can hopefulness characterize you when you get a diagnosis of serious illness? How can you eagerly look ahead when trials seem too incredible to endure? Hope comes from a relationship with a loving Heavenly Father, who is working out His purposes in the midst of what you are going through. In any and every situation, no matter how horrific or difficult, hope always makes sense for God’s people.

Hope—Based on God’s Character and Promises

The problem is that we base our confidence on a change in the situation or circumstance. That’s not hope, that’s wishful thinking which is foolish! Hope is confident expectation *not* that the situation will change, but that God will be faithful to His promises. Hope is in the reality of the promises of God who cannot lie.

Jeremiah:

Read Jeremiah 29:11. What does God promise? _____

Read Jeremiah 29:1-4 To whom is the letter holding this promise written? _____

At the time of the writing of this letter, Israel is in captivity in Babylon. Jeremiah is writing to the Jewish leaders of the people who have been taken captive, held in exile.

Read Jeremiah 29:7. What is God telling them to do for the Babylonian government? _____

Jeremiah 29:15-23 describes the prophets telling the people things about their exile that God had not said. God warned them to pay attention to His words, with the promise that their penitent prayers and changed hearts would result Israel’s return.

Read Jeremiah 29:10. Given that people lived about 70 years in the time of Jeremiah, would the people reading this promise ever see a change in situation? _____
Hope is not based on a change of situation, but on God’s faithfulness to His promises.

Abraham:

Read Romans 4:18-21. Abraham did not waver regarding God’s promise, because he was fully convinced about something. What was he confident that God would be able to do? _____

Hope transcends our humanity. Abraham continued to hope beyond reasonable human expectation, transcending what humans can expect.

How does Romans 4:18-19 show that hope is beyond human expectation? _____

How does Romans 4:21 show that hope transcends human expectation? _____

Hope—Confident Expectation and Patience to Wait on God’s Timing

When we feel hopeless, we need to be reminded of the character of God as revealed in Scripture. God is sovereign, that means He has total control. Read Acts 17:24-27. What does this passage teach about God’s control in your life? _____

God is omnipotent—all powerful. Read Matthew 19:26. What is the extent of God’s power? _____

God is a loving Father, even in allowing trials. Read Luke 15:20. How does Jesus describe a father? _____

Hope longs to experience God’s promises based on His sovereignty, power, and love. Often we do long for this, but we just don’t keep longing. We do the right thing, but not long enough. Read Romans 8:25. How are we to wait? _____

Patience is an important aspect of hope. Learn the progression of hope Paul teaches in Romans 5:3-5.

Vs. 3a. What’s going on? _____

Vs. 3b. What does the suffering produce? _____
(We act in obedience to God even though it makes no sense)

Vs. 4a. What does our stick-to-it-ivity prove? _____
(We prove that we have faith in God)

Vs. 4b What do we experience? _____

So, if you feel hopeless, look back and see if you’ve patiently endured in obedience, thus proving that you have faith in God. You must have faith that nothing touches your life that isn’t first filtered through the Father’s hands of love. You must not impose your time frame on God’s fulfillment of His promises.

Hope—Views Current Trials with an Eternal Perspective

By focusing not so much on what’s happening today, but more on what will happen in the future, we can orient our lives in connection with God’s promises. Read Romans 8:19. How does creation wait? _____

This forward looking perspective, rooted in what hasn’t yet been experienced, is not natural for us. We often listen a lot to the voice of experience, rather than to God who tells us He has a plan for our future. That future is not going to happen in our own homes or in America or in Babylon. It’s a future, eternal plan.

Read Romans 8:23-24. What do we have confident expectation will happen in eternity? _____

Read Psalm 46:10. What can we know will happen to God? _____

Read Colossians 3:1-4. What should we be thinking about? _____

When we are more concerned for our present happiness and comfort than we are about living for the glory of God, we feel hopeless. Romans 8:28-29 teaches us that trials are a good thing because they change us to look like Jesus. When living for God’s glory alone is our purpose for existing, then neither disappointment, discouragement, decay, nor devastations will take us off our game plan of giving God glory.

“Christians who expect miraculous healing on earth give the impression that the quality of faith can be measured by whether or not a miracle of physical healing takes place. Yet, in the New Testament, quality of faith is reflected in the joy and confidence maintained in God through suffering.”

Prayer

22. Conformed to Jesus Christ



Romans 8:28-30

“The glorious work of God in Christ in Romans 8:29 is not just incidental information; it is the revelation of who God is, how God acts, how God loves and saves and keeps. The point of it is to display the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in Christ. Rivet your gaze on the glory of God in the acts of Romans 8:29-30”

~John Piper

God is immense and awesome, powerful beyond comprehension. Whatever God wills or brings to pass is good. Everything, even trials and troubles, bow to God’s sovereign rule and are good for *those who love Him*. God works every imaginable situation to be good for those who love Him, but only those who love Him can appreciate that fact, because they love Him no matter what (Job 13:15). God’s sovereign purpose and will is the unmistakable divine aspect of this equation, for He has called us *according to His purpose*. At God’s call you become His as He had purposed. Nothing can deter God’s plan.

You and I are not the ultimate end of God’s plan. Rather than our glory, the gospel is all about **God’s** glory. God’s purpose is to bring us to His glory, and everything in our lives contributes toward preparing us for being glorified in His glory. Even the most difficult tragedies we encounter have the purpose of illuminating the great beauty, brilliance, splendor and excellence that is only God’s. However, we get upset by the events of our lives because we attempt to define what is good for us. What is good is what God has willed, and what God has willed is always good. As a follower of Christ, you need to know that whatever happens, there is a way for God to be glorified in it. God’s glory is always your good.

Nothing stops God from conforming us to the image of Jesus Christ, bringing us to glory (Romans 8:29). In every situation, by the Holy Spirit’s power, we can choose to respond like Jesus did. When we respond with Christ’s righteousness, we are fulfilling what God called us for even before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). As we respond in Jesus’ righteousness, we are giving God glory by representing Him as He actually is. When people see us respond like Christ, we are raising their impression of God to a more accurate biblical view and this fulfills the purpose for which we were created. God is glorified (Isaiah 43:7).

At no time is your life spinning out of control at the hands of others. When you respond in recognition and acceptance of God’s sovereignty in situations that would otherwise result in becoming upset or off kilter (even terrible situations and grim trials), you fulfill the purpose for which God created you. What stops us from understanding trials as a good thing? Pride. It is in pride that we think our definition of good is more important than God’s (John 5:44, 12:27, 12:43).

Do you want proof that **God** is in control of your life? We’re going to look at five proofs. First of all, Romans 8:29a talks about God’s foreknowledge of you. Foreknowledge means God determined from eternity past to bring certain ones into a special relationship with Himself. God knows who are His. “Know” is not in the sense of being acquainted with, but in the sense of bringing into spe-

cial relationship (Genesis 4:1, Amos 3:2, John 10:14, Matthew 7:23). “Fore” does not alter God’s act, simply dates it and makes it in eternity past. When you consider the cosmological aspect of it, foreknowledge gives you great comfort. The God who spins galaxies while keeping His hand on the control knobs of history always knew that you would become His child.

A second proof that **God** is in control of your life is seen in the word predestination (Romans 8:29b). Predestination is God’s marking out of those He has determined in eternity past to bring into a special relationship with Himself. “Pre” makes it eternity past. “Destinate,” from which we get our word “horizon,” is a circle around us beyond which we cannot see. In eternity past, God “drew a circle around” those He had determined to bring into relationship with Himself. He holds you in His hand, and you choose to be there.

To help us understand predestination, God gives us a picture of Himself as our Heavenly Father. Fatherhood is always the prerogative of the Father. In our sin nature, we could not muster up what it takes to decide to become His child (1 Corinthians 2:14, 2 Corinthians 4:4). Let’s not rebel against the Father by questioning Him regarding predestination. The gospel brings our rebellion into obedience. People don’t go to hell because God didn’t choose them, they go to hell because they reject the gospel (John 3:18). God’s goal in predestination is not to leave some out of the circle, but to have all in His family, with Jesus first in preeminence and prominence, and all of us looking like Him.

A third proof that **God** is in control is God’s calling (Romans 8:30a). It is God’s work (summons, invitation) which brings those He foreknew and predestined in eternity past into relationship with Him. Calling is foreknowledge and predestination realized. When you realize that you respond to God in faith only by His call, your only response can be one of overflowing gratitude and love that desires to obey Him. How can you know you have been called? Ongoing conviction of sin, followed by confession and obedient change is reassuring evidence that leaves you with unshakable confidence. You revel in the delight of God’s call on your life.

A fourth proof is the way you entered into relationship with God—justification. There was nothing you could do to get into relationship with God. **God** is the one who justified you. God not only foreknew, predestined, and called you, He also legally declared you to have the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Remember, the only ones who are not foreknown, predestined, and called are those who reject the gospel by their rebellion. God so loved the world—Jesus has been raised—all are given the opportunity to look to Him and be justified (John 3:16).

The final proof that **God** is in control is that you are glorified. Glorification is the present ongoing work of sanctification in your life and the future eternal removal of your sin nature in Heaven. Glorification hasn’t happened yet, and won’t until we are in Heaven, but Romans 8:30c uses the present tense. It is an absolutely certainty that all those whom God foreknows, predestines, calls and justifies are glorified. Not one follower of Jesus Christ will be lost.

We can’t look at these proofs apart from the context of Romans 8, where Paul envelopes these proofs of God’s sovereign control with an emphasis on His love. God’s adopts as His own children all who look to Jesus Christ for salvation, and absolutely nothing can ever separate them from the love of God. As you read on, let the fact of God’s love ravish and overwhelm you.

“Do you ask whether God’s program of glorification violates man’s free will? The answer is NO! To ask such a question shows that you do not understand what free will really is. Free will is not the ability to choose to do whatever you want with no restraint whatsoever. God Himself does not even possess such a free will for He cannot sin or do anything contrary to His own attributes. Free will is the ability to respond without conscious compulsion. When you come to the knowledge of Christ, you are totally unaware of the fact that you were foreknown of God and predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son. Of your own free will you take Christ as your personal Savior, unaware that He foreknew, predestined and called you, without which you would never have come to accept Him. God justifies you, and in the future your sin nature will be taken away and you’ll be like Jesus. You find out it was God who did it ALL!!! The God who can guarantee this success can certainly work ‘all things for good.’ The proof is complete.”

~ R. Fink

PERSONAL STUDY

22. Conformed to Jesus Christ

Read
Romans 8:28-30

There is an amazing declaration in Romans 8:29-30, but we are so self-focused that we often miss it. When we read Romans 8:28 with anticipation for the good God will bring to us, we fail to see what really matters, God's purpose. God's purpose is that all who believe will be glorified. The Almighty, Holy, Sovereign Ruler of all universes loves you and me with such enormity and intensity, prevailing over Satan for us at the great cost of His one and only Son. This is too great to comprehend. Why would He do that? Well, there's a little phrase in these verses telling us that it is because Jesus desires to be our big brother. God is changing us to become glorified so that Jesus would be the firstborn among many brethren. The aim of God's plan since before time, is our likeness with Christ.

Read Isaiah 43:7. What is the purpose for our creation? _____

Read John 17:4. What does Jesus say He did while He was on earth? _____

Read John 17:22. What does Jesus give to us? _____

Maybe a sports analogy will help us. Let's use hockey. In the 1980's, there was a hockey player named Wayne Gretzky who got a lot of glory, so much so that they called him "The Great One." When he was on the ice, he would make great plays happen. Whether defensively or offensively, he made everyone on his team look better because he was so good. And talk about winning, his NHL team won four championships! We could say he was glorified. Ok, what if the General Manager (GM) had the power to influence and change the lives of all his players. He would work out everything in their lives so that all the other players would be glorified too. All of them would look like Gretzky, the first among many who play like him. What a glorious team that would be! Now, what if the GM were Gretzky's father, and the only way to change the other players meant Gretzky would have to be murdered..... Here is when the analogy breaks down, because in hockey the motivation is not love. God's motivation *is* love. Can you see how it gives God glory that Jesus is the firstborn of many who look like Him? And how it is our good to be like Jesus? When the rest of the team plays like the best player, it gives the GM glory and it is good for all the team. Similarly, when we look like Jesus, God is glorified and it is good for us. God's glory and our good are the same thing.

Read Colossians 1:17-18. Who is the true "Great One"? _____

All players have to train hard to be like "The Great One". Christ died and rose as the firstborn of many so that we would see and enjoy His glorious greatness. If we want to see and savor the wonder of Christ, we must have his character and likeness. Is God's goal your goal? Do you desire to look more like Jesus today than yesterday?

Let's look at some of the ways we must train to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, remembering that He is the firstborn among many.

Pray Like Jesus

What do the following passages teach us about how we should pray?

Matthew 14:23 _____

Luke 18:1 _____

Respond like Jesus

In His responses, Jesus constantly used the phrase, "It is written." Read these passages to note how He interacted using Scripture.

Luke 2:46 _____

Luke 10:25-26 _____

Submit Like Jesus

1 Corinthians 11:3. In what way is a wife similar to Christ? _____

John 5:19, 8:29. How did Jesus submit to His head? _____

Suffer Like Jesus

How did Jesus respond when others caused Him to suffer?

Isaiah 53:7 _____

1 Peter 2:23 _____

Trust Like Jesus

Jesus evidenced complete trust in God and His Word. How did He do this?

Luke 18:31-33, 22:42 _____

All about Jesus

Our likeness to Christ for our personal glory is not the goal here, that would just be more self-absorption and self-exaltation. Our goal must be the exaltation and glorification of Jesus Christ. Are you pursuing your own glory or Christ's glory?

Ask yourself these questions:

- * Do I want to be strong like Christ so that **I** will be admired as strong? Or, do I want to be strong so that I can battle any enemy that becomes more attractive to me than admiring **Jesus Christ**?
- * Do I want to be wise like Christ so that **I** will be admired as wise? Or, do I want to be wise so I can discern and admire **Jesus Christ's** wisdom?
- * Do I want to be holy like Christ so that **I** will be admired as holy? Or, do I want to be free from unholy desires so I can admire **Jesus Christ's** holiness?

Prayer

23. Adoption



Romans 8:23-30

"Before God adopted us, we weren't appealing, we were slaves to sin."

~C. J. Mahaney

God your Father loves you. Be certain of it. He loves you personally and passionately. His love results in adoption (Romans 8:23,30). Adoption is not your choice. God is the one who wants it that way, so you can be absolutely certain that it is going to happen (Galatians 4:4-5). He has always known that we would be His adopted children. He even had Jesus murdered so He could adopt us, and He will bring it to pass. Remember the proofs of foreknowledge, predestination, justification, and glorification (Romans 8:29-30).

One of the rich inheritances of adoption as God's children is being Christ's brothers and sisters. In adoption, we not only gain son-ship, but also brotherhood (Matthew 6:9). Part of our sanctification process is constant change toward Christ-likeness. We change to become more like our firstborn brother (Romans 8:29). The comprehensiveness of our adoption includes our other brothers and sisters...those adopted are part of Christ's body on earth, the church (Ephesians 1:5, 22-23). In our culture today there is a mindset that Christ can be followed autonomously, apart from His body, His church. But God says that part of our adoption is that we gain the inheritance of the church, which He identifies as being led by pastor or elders (1 Timothy 3:1-15, Hebrews 13:17, Peter 5:1-5). Rebellion against the church, God's family, is a tragedy. It is rebellious refusal to take part in God's inheritance.

How are we adopted? Adoption is from God through Jesus Christ. Our adoption was predestined by God before He created the world (Ephesians 1:4-5). God's love for us reaches back to eternity past. His adoption of us has no basis in us, but is firmly grounded in God's eternal plan of love and mercy and grace. There is no uncertainty or fragility to adoption. From eternity past, God saw that we would be sinners, and He planned the death of His Son to bear His wrath so that we could be forgiven by Jesus' blood sacrifice and so that we could be adopted into His family (Ephesians 1:5, Hebrews 9:22). God's purpose is not complete with our redemption, it culminates in our adoption. God makes slaves of sin into sons.

Not all people are God's adopted children. Jesus' blood is required to become God's child (Romans 3:25). Those who do not believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord remain in rebellion against God. You were not a cute little orphan who touched God's heart so that He decided to take care of you. You were God's enemy in rebellion against Him. Your adoption is based on His great love that poured out His righteous wrath for sin on Jesus at the cross (Romans 5:6, 5:10). Only those who look to the cross for salvation are saved and adopted (John 3:16-21).

The goal of our adoption is God's glory. God adopted us to show how great His grace is, so that His glory would be recognized and praised (Ephesians

1:6). Our adoption is centered in God, it glorifies God, it exalts God. God's glory and exaltation are inseparable from what is good for us. God's seeking to glorify and exalt Himself through our adoption is evidence of His love for us—love that works out what is best for us, love that desires our souls to be satisfied. Nothing but an eternity of admiring and exalting God will ever satisfy our souls. Those who have had just a taste of the sweetness of God know that there is nothing else that satisfies.

If God does not glorify and exalt Himself so that we can admire and enjoy Him forever, the purpose for which we were created is not met, and life is futile and meaningless (Isaiah 43:1-7). When you try to seek meaning in life apart from God's glory, your pursuit of self-glory results in emptiness and despair. However, when you pursue God's glory, you will be satisfied and fulfilled.

Your duty as sons and daughters is to love and obey the Father and the Son. If you do not obey God, Jesus said that it shows you do not love Him (John 14:15, 21, 23). You must repent and rekindle the first love (Revelation 2:4-5). How? By loving others, particularly your adopted brothers and sisters (John 15:12-17, 17:21). As you offer humble, patient, gentle, forgiving love—Christ's love—you must never communicate that sin is OK. We have a responsibility **not** to stand in the way of the Lord's work in the lives of His people. If we say, "You're OK," to a professing Christian who is choosing self glory over God's glory, then we are not loving them.

God's grace begins with justification and culminates in adoption. Justification is the beginning of God's work that always leads to sanctification (Titus 2:11-12). We cannot separate our justification from our sanctification—they are two parts of the undividable work of redemption that surely results in adoption. As adopted children, our lives will most certainly evidence growing obedience.

We've looked at the goal or purpose of our adoption—God's glory, and we've considered our duty—to love and obey. Now let's understand a few aspects of the experience of being adopted by God.

- * At conversion, we are given a thrilling new way of crying out to God. Instead of trembling before Him as our Judge, we cry out to Him as, "Abba, Father, Daddy" (Galatians 4:6). Have you experienced God's love for you as your close, affectionate, helpful, and generous Daddy?
- * God is personally merciful, gracious, slow to anger, steady in His love for His children (Psalm 103:8-14). Do you perceive God as close? Are you attentive to His nearness?
- * God personally counsels us, hears and answers us, shelters us and gives us refuge (Psalm 16:7, 17:6, 18:2)? Do you have a sense of the affection God has for you? It is so sweet that just a taste is needed (Psalm 34:8).
- * As adopted children, we do not face life alone, but with a Helper. Almighty, Holy, Sovereign God personally understands all that we face and provides our help. Do you run to Him as your unending source of help and comfort (Psalm 54:4, John 14:16-17, Hebrews 13:5b-6)?
- * Gratefulness must be part of our experience of adoption. We dare not take for granted the precious blood that flowed as Satan was battled and defeated to purchase our adoption (Galatians 4:1-5). Do you appreciate God's generosity toward you? Have you thanked Him today?

"You may conclude with absolute certainty, that God loves you if you love God."

~Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Suggested reading:

- * *Children of the Living God*, by Sinclair Ferguson.
- * *Adopted into God's Family*, by Trevor Burke

PERSONAL STUDY

23. Adoption

Read
Romans 8:23-30

Those with no family long to be adopted, but the truth is that no earthly family can satisfy the longings of the lonely, or fulfill the cravings within us. Yearning for God is the only passion that can be satisfied. And how He satisfies it. He takes care of our loneliness forever by adopting us! He doesn't just start a relationship, He takes it all the way, makes it legal, makes us heirs.

There have been families who teased foster children with talk of adoption, in what is probably the cruelest of tricks to play on a trusting child. God doesn't just talk about it, what He says happens. Look at creation for proof...God spoke and life was created. Nothing God says will not come to pass, and that includes the adoption of the believer.

What is Adoption by God?

Adoption refers to the act of God whereby He places the believer into a new, legal relationship as a son and heir.

Read Galatians 4:4-5. Why did God send His Son to redeem us? _____

Read Romans 8:29-30. In the lives of those who love God, we are told that He foreknew and predestined the things that happen so that we will be conformed into Christ's image. Why does Christ want us to be conformed into His image?

Read Galatians 4:6. What does the Spirit cry in our hearts? _____

Read Galatians 4:7. What is the privilege of a son, whether by birth or adoption?

Read John 3:3. What is necessary to see the kingdom of God? _____

As adopted children of God we become heirs of God, yet birth is required for us to see the kingdom of God. Read John 3:8 and identify the type of birth that is necessary for adoption by God. _____

The Logistics of Adoption by God

Adoption by God does not happen because God decides He wants a child. It happens because it is part of His eternal plan.

Read Ephesians 1:4-5. When is adoption by God determined? _____

Read Galatians 3:26. How does adoption take place? _____

Read Romans 8:23. What happens to our bodies when adoption by God is fully complete? _____

The Results of Adoption by God

Read Galatians 4:3-5. What does adoption by God deliver us from? _____

Read Romans 8:14. How are those adopted by God led? _____

Read Romans 8:15-16. What assurance do those adopted by God have? _____

Read Ephesians 1:5-6. What is the result of adoption for God? _____

The Significance of Adoption in Relationships with People

Each of these verses teach something significant that adoption gives us in our relationships with other human beings. Write down what each passage teaches:

Read 1 John 2:9-11 _____

Read 1 John 3:1 _____

Read 1 John 3:14-17 _____

Read 1 John 4:20 _____

Read 1 John 5:1 _____

The Significance of Adoption in Relationship with God

Adoption is also important in the realm of our divine relationship with God.

Read 2 Peter 1:4. As adopted children, what are we *partakers* of? _____

Read John 16:27. As adopted children, what are we *objects* of? _____

Read Matthew 6:31-33. As adopted children, what do we *receive*? _____

Read Hebrews 12:6-11. As adopted children, what will be *given* to us? _____

Read 2 Corinthians 1:4. As adopted children, what are we *assured* of? _____

Read 1 Peter 1:4. As adopted children, what are we *obtainers* of? _____

When we consider the amazing reality of our adoption by God, our only response can be to run into His arms of love, desire to obey Him, and praise Him with gratitude forever. Write a prayer of praise to God for adopting you.

Prayer

24. God's Everlasting Love



Romans 8:31-39

For eight chapters, Paul has so painstakingly laid out careful arguments of doctrinal truth, that even after a few readings you might miss the passion of his relationship with Jesus Christ. But here in these verses, pause and become aware of the intensity of Paul's understanding of God's love.

Nothing can possibly stop God's plan to bring believers to glory...not even the worst enemy. No matter how formidable our foe, it cannot hurt us. When we fathom that God has already defeated our ultimate enemy, sin and death, we are comforted and assured. God gave Jesus over for our judgment, instead of us. This work is completely finished, it has already been accomplished (Romans 8:31-32). God will also, in the present and in the future, graciously provide all that is necessary to bring those He saves to glory.

Jesus' work provides salvation for all the people spoken of in Romans 8:29-30, whom God foreknew and predestined to love Him. At the same time, Jesus' work can provide salvation for all people in the world. All may believe, but not all do believe. Salvation is effective for all, but is not provided for all, because tragically many reject God and His salvation plan (John 3:16, 2 Corinthians 5:19).

However, those who choose to follow God, will find that He uses whatever it takes to bring us to glory. Discipline might be needed (Hebrews 12:3-13). Trials might be needed to chip off of us what doesn't look like Jesus (James 1:2-18). He might send someone who rubs us the wrong way, a kind of "heavenly sandpaper" to smooth our rough edges. He might send someone to break us apart, more like a "heavenly chisel" to carve us into Christ-likeness.

But nothing that we face along the way can harm us. Not only can our enemies not harm us, not even the Highest Court with the Highest Judge can possibly harm a disciple of Christ. Followers of Christ cannot be condemned because there is no defendant and no prosecutor (Romans 8:33-34).

What, you say, no defendant? But I know I'm a sinner. Yes, we are all sinners, but it's not about us, it's about God. God is the one who would bring the charge of unrighteousness. God is the one who chose us, and already gave us the righteousness He requires (remember....we are foreknown, predestined, called, justified, glorified). So, we cannot be charged as a defendant. There is nothing to defend ourselves against.

What, you say, no prosecutor? But doesn't God condemn all sin and pour out His wrath against all sin because He is just and holy? Now, think this through, and catch a glimpse of the amazing love of God. Christ is the only one who could prosecute you, for He is your Creator (Colossians 1:16). The Father's amazing plan is that the Jesus Christ would die, rise again, and sit at His right

hand. There He does not condemn, but intercedes for you. Picture the scene in your mind's eye. Satan, the enemy, stands up before Almighty, Holy God who cannot look at sin, and points his accusing finger at you. Your heart sinks for you know Satan's accusation is correct. But then Christ stands up to Satan, and says, "I already took care of it. I already died exactly for that sin." So, you cannot be prosecuted. The penalty for what you would be prosecuted for has been paid.

If you are a follower of Christ, you can not be harmed eternally. As God's adopted child, your everlasting dwelling place is Heaven, made possible by Christ's love (Romans 8:35). Because of Christ's love, eternity holds only promise - promises of weighty, rich inheritance - next to which your worst problems look slight. Because of Christ's love, nothing can separate you from the inheritance of everlasting life in Heaven.

Trials, illnesses, loss of jobs, loss of homes, loss of loved ones cannot separate us from Christ's love. The unshakable love Christ has for us is not even quivered by our distress, by internal stress, or by anxiety caused by our circumstances. Persecution by governmental or terrorist reaction against God's people don't loosen the grip of His love, rather they tighten it. Famine, hunger, scarcity of food don't disturb the depth of Christ's love. Nakedness or any form of not having the necessary provision for the protection of the body, doesn't move us even one iota away from Christ's intense love for us. Peril, physical dangers, or hazardous situations that might kill us, including the sword of capital punishment, only cause us to experience the depth of Christ's love for us.

The work is done, Christ paid for our sins because He loves us. But until the day we behold the face of God and experience the tender gaze of His loving eyes, we live with internal conflict. All day long, we are being put to death. Our sin nature is being crucified, mortified (Romans 8:36, Psalm 44:2). Be encouraged, this internal conflict with sin is for God's glory. It is constant and it is ordained of God. When we struggle with temptation, and agonize because we have failed (again), be assured. The battle is good, it is not a sign of failure. It is a sign that the Spirit is at work, that we are spiritually alive and engaged in the sanctification process, with the certain result of glory.

We engage in daily battle from the position of victory, as "over-comers" (Romans 8:37-19). Trials, distresses and all the problem of life are our friends because they facilitate God's program for our glory. Victory is ours, not that we fight so hard and win so well but that Christ's love is so great that it has already won the battle and assured our eternal victory (Romans 8:37-39). Don't let this be a matter of fact concept that you read and turn away from, rather, let His love surge through you. His precious blood flowed unsparingly and magnanimously for you, at the great cost of His unspeakable agony.

Nothing in eternity can separate you from God's love through Christ...*neither death nor life*. Nothing created can separate you from God's love through Christ...*neither angels, principalities, nor powers*. Nothing in time can separate you from God's love through Christ...*neither present nor future*. Nothing in space can separate you from God's love through Christ...*neither height nor depth*. Nothing in any possible sphere can separate you from God's love through Christ...*not any other creature*. The hymn-writer said it well, "Were every stalk on earth a quill, and were they sky of parchment make, to write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry, nor could the scroll contain the whole though stretched from sky to sky."

How are you going to scare me with heaven?

The meaning of glorification changes depending on who is being glorified. If God is glorified, we are worshiping Him, exalting Him, raising Him to His high status by giving others a biblically accurate opinion of who He is.

When we glorify God by our lives, we decrease so that He may increase. When others encounter a Christian who glorifies God, their opinion of God is raised and they perceive His glory. As Christian, we will not be fully glorified until our sin nature is removed, in eternity.

PERSONAL STUDY

24. God's Everlasting Love

Read
Romans 8:31-39

You can have complete confidence and assurance that you will spend eternity in glory with your Savior. This is God's plan from eternity past. You will spend eternity with your Heavenly Father and His perfect, precious, spotless Son because He loves you. No force is great enough to stop God's plan from being carried out.

Our lives here are so far from glory that we find it hard to imagine. We only have glimpses of God's holiness and righteousness here, and those glimpses are tainted by our sin nature. Let's have a look at how Scripture describes this glory.

Inner Beauty of Holiness

In Christ's righteousness, we are given the inner beauty of holiness. It's not "seeing is believing," but "seeing is becoming." This begins on earth by sanctification, and is completed when we come into the presence of Jesus. How do these verses describe the inner beauty we are being given? How is that beauty manifested in a woman?

2 Corinthians 3:18 _____

1 Peter 3:4 _____

Guaranteed Holiness

How wonderful that God imputes Christ's righteousness to His followers. What do these Scriptures say about the necessity of holiness?

1 Corinthians 6:10 _____

Galatians 5:21 _____

Hebrews 12:14 _____

Sanctification is the Connection between Justification and Glorification

The process of sanctification connects our justification and final glorification, as the ongoing process between the moment of conversion and the moment of seeing Jesus' face. All of it is a work of God. Conversion is a work of God, and sanctification is a work of God. What do these passages teach about how God is at work in the lives of Christ's followers?

Jeremiah 31:33 _____

Ezekiel 36:27 _____

1 Corinthians 1:8-9 _____

1 Corinthians 15:10 _____

Galatians 2:20 _____

Philippians 1:6 _____

Philippians 2:13 _____

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 _____

Hebrews 8:10 _____

Hebrews 13:20-21 _____

1 Peter 5:10 _____

A Glorious Body

We will receive a new and glorious body, with no more pain, frustration, weakness, weariness, or disease. We will all be strong and radiant with Christ's beauty. How do these verses describe the glorious body we will receive when we are glorified?

Romans 8:23 _____

1 Corinthians 15:42-43 _____

Philippians 3:20-21 _____

Prayer

Sharing in the Glory of Jesus

Best of all, we share in the glory of Jesus. We are granted the indescribable privilege of beholding His beauty and becoming like Him. In John 1:14, the disciple John describes the glory of Jesus as being full of grace and truth, glory that could only come from the Father. What do the following verses describe about sharing in the glory of Jesus?

Colossians 3:4 _____

1 Peter 5:1 _____

Romans 5:2 _____

Romans 8:17 _____

Notice that we both suffer *and* are glorified *with* Him. Even so Lord Jesus, come.

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