

New City Fellowship

**Sonship
2010**

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Sonship Lesson 1 Orphans vs. Sons

I. The Heart of Reconciliation: Declared to be "God's Sons"

"But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir." *Galatians 4:4-7*

A. Being a Son

At the very center of power for living the Christian life, there exists:

Freedom - to function on a daily basis with the confidence that we ourselves, despite all of our sins, struggles and areas of brokenness are now sons of God through faith in Christ

John 1:12; Romans 8:15-16; Ephesians 1:3-5; Hosea 1:10; Isaiah 19:19ff

Calling - to see God's kingdom advance in this world with all the full rights and privileges which that Sonship status brings as members of God's family.

Reconciliation with One Another *John 10:16; Galatians 3:26-29; 1 Peter 2:9-10*

The Present Manifestation of God's justice-righteousness and redemption in this broken world *Gen 12:1-3; Mt 28:18-20; Luke 4:18-19; Mt 6:9-13; Col 1:10-1; Romans 5:1-5*

Hope which comes from the confidence that Jesus Christ has been vindicated as the Messiah of God through the resurrection and that we will inherit his eternal kingdom – the new heavens and the new earth, the home of righteousness *Acts 2:32-36; Romans 8:18-25; 2 Peter 3:10-13*

Promise - the sure knowledge that we have the *promise of the Spirit* to empower us for the outworking of God's righteousness/justice/blessing/shalom in this world through an intimate relationship with the Father and the Son.

Luke 3:16; 11:12; John 16:5-15; Acts 2:1-4, 16-21

All of this is ours to experience as we learn to boast only in the **Cross of Christ** and the good news of the Gospel - all this righteousness of God as a gift through the work of Christ in a context of grace.

Galatians 2:20; 6:14,15; Romans 1:16, 17, 5:1,2; Phil 3:7-11

B. Being an Orphan

At the core of failure and emptiness in the Christian life there exists an **Orphan Spirit-**

- functioning on a daily basis as if we do not have a *Sovereign, loving Father...*
- being Christians but left on our own, apart from the family of God, to pursue our own agendas...
- without the assurance of the Spirit to empower, comfort and direct us.

We experience this to the degree we put our confidence in anything other than the Cross of Christ.

C. A contrast between Sons and Orphans

The difference in your understanding, faith and experience of these two mindsets is seen in the following contrasts:

Son-

Confidence that God loves you and is at work in your life personally, leading you increasingly into the fulfillment of His purposes. *Romans 8:28-30*

Orphan-

Existing with a vague idea that God is somehow at work in a general way, but with little or no confidence that he specifically has his hand on you to direct every aspect of your life to fulfill his will. *Jeremiah 20:7-18*

Son-

Freedom to step out in faith in new areas of obedience, as you grow in your understanding of God's kingdom purposes, with the assurance that God will guide. *Psalms 23:1-3, John 16:12-15 cf Phil 3:15,16*

Orphan-

Being stuck under the oppressive feeling that nothing you might attempt to do will make any difference anyway, because Christ's kingdom reign is inadequate. *Psalms 73*

Son-

Honesty and free repentance in dealing with your sin that results in the knowledge of God's forgiveness, which in turn leads to seeing sin defeated. *1 John 1:8-9*

Orphan-

Feeling the need to cover up or deny sin because of a fundamental sense that "still dealing with sin" is unacceptable, and the unspoken fear that your sin is more powerful than the Gospel's ability to set you free. *Psalms 32*

Son- The joy of the Lord as your strength for doing his will. *Neh 8:10; Zeph 3:14-17*

Orphan-

A deadening weight of obligation that you must muster up the energy to live the Christian life. *Mt 25:24ff.*

Son-

Forgiveness as a lifestyle that advances God's kingdom in the hearts of others. *Luke 15:11ff, Ephesians 4:32*

Orphan-

Judgementalism of those who wrong you or don't live up to your expectations, with an increasing sense of hopelessness about life. *Gal*

II. The Galatian Mindset: A daily faith that believes a different, non-Gospel

"I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel-- ⁷ which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! ⁹ As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!" *Galatians 1:6-9*

"All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." ¹¹ Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." ¹² The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them." ¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." ¹⁴ He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit. *Gal 3:10-14*

- A. Boasting in the Law (self-generated righteousness) leads to living as an orphan with God, one another and the world

Characteristics of the Galatian Church

1. Relying on *Law*fallen from *Grace* Galatians 5:2-4
2. A return to *slavery that leads to alienation* Galatians 4:8-11, 17
3. A loss of *joy in one another* Galatians 4:15
4. A sense of *confusion* about grace and about each other Galatians 5:7-10
5. A *critical/gossiping* spirit Galatians 5:13-15
6. A *powerlessness* over the flesh as we relate to others Galatians 5:16-26
7. An *empty boasting* in outward appearances Galatians 6:12-14

The major issue/failure Paul is addressing at Galatia is the practical lack of freedom the believers had to embrace one another as equally accepted/reconciled members of the body Gal 2:11-14. Their perspective on their own relationship with God- based on Christ/faith/grace vs. self/law/performance – completely affects the freedom of the Gospel in embracing one another in reconciliation and undermines the whole outworking of the Gospel.

B. The Galatian Mindset in me: a personal illustration

1. Becoming a “radical” Christian
2. Dying under the Law

III. The Gospel Mindset: A daily focus of faith on the work of Christ alone

Boasting in the Cross leads to the confidence of living as Sons
completely reconciled *Galatians 4:4-7*

A. Jesus Christ, our Legal Foundation

1. Saving us from a hopeless responsibility *Galatians 3:10-14, 19-25*
2. Giving us the authority to be called Sons

B. The Holy Spirit our Intimate Relation

1. Calling out *Abba* to God Almighty *Romans 8:15-17, 26,27*
2. Making us full heirs *Eph 1:15-22*

C. The Personal Good News

1. Good News: You are worse *than you think*
A severe honesty with ourselves: we fall short of God's kingdom
righteousness on every level *Romans 3:9-20*
2. Good News: God loves sinners
A severe honesty with the Gospel: Christ came to justify the wicked
Romans 4:1-5
3. Good News: Simply believe the promises
A severe boasting in the Cross: turning from every other hope to Christ
Romans 9:30-10:4

What does an orphan look like?

1. Has the spirit of being all alone
2. Has a preoccupation with self
3. Has an independent spirit
4. Is distrustful of others
5. Has high expectations for performance of self and others which are never met
6. Will always be critical and judgmental
7. Feels isolated
8. Fears and anxieties control his life
9. Needs strength in himself to complete a task
10. Is under the law instead of grace
11. Doesn't know how to love
12. Doesn't know how to bring others to Christ because he or she doesn't know how to go to Christ for themselves
13. Has lost confidence in Christ's ability to breach the gap between God's demands and man's sinfulness

What motivates an orphan?

1. Is motivated by a survival mentality
2. Has a view of himself as being unacceptable
3. Has an unwillingness to expose himself in areas of sin or weakness - or is willing, but will not listen to counsel
4. Sees his worth as determined by what he is doing (a driven person)
5. Is motivated by law-keeping
6. Need to be in control

How does a son act?

1. Believes his life is controlled by a sovereign God whose will is good, acceptable and perfect
2. Believes his many sins are forgiven and is thereby enabled to forgive others
3. Accepts his position as a son without condemnation
4. Knows that the power of the flesh, if given into, will bring internal conflict with himself and others
5. Believes in the power of the Spirit to change himself and others
6. Lives in freedom from the bondage of the law and self
7. Believes he now has the Spirit's power to love his neighbor
8. Understands there is a warfare with the flesh, the world, and the devil, but they are not greater than Christ
9. Is learning to go to his Heavenly Father in prayer to settle problems and have needs met

	An Orphan's View	A Son's View	Mixed Up Orphan/Son View
God	Stern Judge Sense of Disapproval	Loving Father who accepts and approves	Grandfather/ understanding/ Detached
Sin	Guilty/Powerless/ Depressed/ Penance/ Defensive	Forgiven and righteous Free to repent/ change	Better than others/ Resigned to failure/ Lowers the standard
Prayer	Difficult/Results based on performance	First resort/Asks Father to fulfill His will	Vague/Unfocused unanswered
Others	Judgmental/ Controlling Distrustful	Free to Love/Confident Of Spirit's Power	Self-centered/ Self-protective
Obedience	Self-righteous/Basis of God's discipline/ Determination/ Unlimited Obligation/Joyless/ Must look good at all cost	Joyfully confident of the Spirit's power to enable through grace	Weakness/ Partial and rationalized/ Self-indulgent/ Careless
Ministry	Independent/Self-reliant/Driven and Burned Out/ Boastful	Believe God's Spirit works through Teams to advance His kingdom	Evasive/Unable to endure
Suffering	Good=blessed Bad=punishment	Believes God orders life to transform into Christ-likeness	Survival/Numb or Run
Motivation	Success-Failure/Reputation/ Law-Keeping/Approval	Grace/God's Undeserved Love	Feelings/ Desires/ Pleasures

The way back to being a "Son" in these areas is to believe the good news of the Gospel, to boast in the Gospel: that you are loved, forgiven and accepted as righteous in God's sight in each of these areas by one means only - as a gift through Jesus Christ and his work on your behalf~

We will unpack the meaning of living out of this power of the Gospel more fully in the weeks ahead. For now, if you recognize areas of an "orphan" spirit, ask God to open up your heart and teach you what it means to be "Son".

Testimony To Sonship - Rose Marie Miller

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

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

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

I remember an experience back in the sixties which typified my attitude. Jack received annual invitations to speak on "Skis and Skeptics", evangelistic weekends in the Pocono Mountains. Jack approached the events with typical enthusiasm, earnestly seeking to win every skeptic to Christ. Me? I loved the skiing and at night slipped up to my room with my favorite Agatha Christie novel under my coat. While Jack fought for the lives of the skeptics downstairs in the lodge, I unraveled the mysteries of Agatha snuggled under the covers. Only the skiing and Agatha made these weekends bearable. Actually, I used to pray that no money would come in so that I would not have to go. Nowhere in me could I find the wisdom and the compassion needed to reach out to these college

students. I felt that I didn't have anything to offer anyone. I felt as if I barely knew Christ as a real person myself. The more I thought about it, the more I was paralyzed. "What to say? How to say it. When to say it?" and then afterwards, "Did I say it right?"

But it was hard to get Jack to hear how I felt. I often complained to him, "You don't listen." But all I gave him to listen to were problems of my own and those of the people we lived with. Worse yet, I expected Jack to act as Holy Spirit and solve these problems. Jack, for his part, didn't listen to the deeper struggles of my heart. The pressure built inside me until July 1978 when we vacationed in Tennessee, taking with us one of the troubled young people living in our home. One evening walking by the lake, I blurted out, "I feel like I am walking under a dark cloud. God seems far away and I don't even know if I believe He exists." Up to this point Jack usually had ready answers, but now he was shocked into silence.

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

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

But the Lord had something better to cover me with than all my ready excuses. Sunday morning during a communion service, Jack broke a large loaf of French bread to be passed around. In the crack of that bread, I suddenly saw Jesus broken for me. And finally I understood what Luther was saying, that Jesus'

righteousness covered all my own unrighteousness. And what did I need to do to get it? Just accept His work for me. As I sat there with tears streaming down my face and one small kleenex to stem the tide, I saw that trip down the mountain as a picture of my record of self-righteousness. I was struck by the obvious fact that I hadn't needed to go down the mountain the way I did. The other way was to enjoy a cup of tea on the mountaintop restaurant and go back down on the gondola, admitting that for me the skiing down was an impossibility. I suddenly saw the past as so much self-effort that had produced "good things," but could not deal with failure or defeat. Now I understand that Christ's righteousness covered all of that. All my excuses were gone and I accepted Christ's perfect record as what I needed. All my self-righteousness made me a spiritual paralytic, but Christ's righteousness brought peace. God reached into my life and dealt with my fundamental sin.

About a year later we were invited to speak together at a church. What happened in Switzerland was still very real to me, but other than telling women about it, I had trouble seeing how it could help them. So I decided to teach them about women of the Bible. After I spoke, a young woman came up and said, "I have to talk to you." As we sat talking in her home, with her children playing under our feet, she confessed. "I hate my husband, I hate my kids, I hate being a pastor's wife." Several years earlier I would have told her how to discipline her kids or how to submit to her husband, but the how-to's had never worked for me. They always seemed to involve me again in the vicious cycle of self-sufficiency, self-effort leading to failure, and self-accusation. All I had for her now was what Jesus had done for her. "You have to yield to the righteousness of Christ," I said. "Is that all?" she wanted to know. "Yes, that's all. She knelt down to pray and confessed that her life was filled with her own righteousness, that now she wanted Christ's, and she came off of her knees different, with a heart to love her husband, children and her work. She then told all the women in the church about the change and they too wanted to know about how to be different. I told them the same truth - and they experienced a change too.

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

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

filled with my problems, rather I had things to share with Jack about how the book of Galatians applied to my needs and to those around me.

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

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

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

I knew he was right. All I could say was, "Lord, I am sorry, please teach me how to be a daughter. In Uganda I had seen lots of orphans. One had tried to steal my purse as we knelt to pray in the market place. They would kill almost as quickly as steal. Because they had no father to look after them they made sure they took care of themselves: lying, cheating, stealing, and deceiving to get along. I had been acting like them, as if I had no father, as if I didn't have His authority, His power, His spirit, His heart and His ear. Although I knew I was justified by faith, I still thought that obedience was more or less up to me. I now began to discover that I could rely on God's promise, and, by "faith working through love," do my work. During this time I began to study the book of Galatians. I no longer asked, "How can I study this to help other people?" It was

life and breath for me, food and drink. I had to understand how to live a Christian life and be on the front lines with my husband without always collapsing. I also began to study the book of Romans, another book that for years I had avoided because I couldn't understand it. Now it too was a delight to read, study and teach.

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

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

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

“Saturday mornings I have the primary responsibility for teaching Galatians to our students in our Leadership Training program. Rose Marie also takes key lectures and gives a vivid account of the meaning of Galatians in relationship to her own life. By this time we know each other so well that a few months ago, when I was called out of a Saturday morning session, Rose Marie completed the lecture on Galatians that I had just started. The students told me afterwards, “It was an excellent presentation. We would have been sorry to have missed it. Her uniqueness is that she lays a sound theological basis in justification by faith and sonship - for all that she presents. She has a wealth of superb illustrations from her struggles and triumphs with the people who have lived in our home, and from the country of Uganda.”

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

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

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

So deep is my sense that God accepts me just as I am, that I can live free of the expectations of others. As I talk to pastor’s wives and women in ministry from different parts of the country, they tell me about what others expect of them: to be the model wife, mother and housekeeper, as they also minister in the church.

I know that the expectations of others can be overwhelming and where I do give you a list of practical helps on how to be the perfect pastor's wife, it might only add to the pressure you have. Instead I tell women involved in team ministry that they don't have to be perfect, because Another is perfect for them. Women in ministry respond with such wonder and joy, that I'm convinced that this is the overwhelming need today: for Christians to hear the gospel.

Sonship Lesson 2

The Passive Righteousness of Faith: Relying on the Righteousness of Christ

“For in the gospel [of the kingdom] a righteousness from God is revealed; a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by [God’s faithfulness].’”

The righteousness of God and his commitment to justify (righteousfy) includes at least these four things:

- Vindication of Christ as the Messiah and Lord of the world
Rom 1:1-4, 1Tim 3:16
- Personally setting us right with God as his child John 1:12
- Corporately setting us right- reconciled- with one another
Rom 4:16-18, 1 Pet 2:9-10
- Unleashing Righteousness over this world by the people of God living out the kingdom of God, culminating in the nations becoming the kingdom of Christ and the establishment of the new heavens and the new earth
1 Cor 15:20-25; Psalm 2; Acts 2:32-26

I. The Need for this Righteousness (versus our own self-generated righteousness) as a gift from God’s faithfulness

Habbakuk 2:4, cf 2:9-14

A. God’s Good, Right, Proper and Never Ceasing Level of Expectation and Commitment to His people:

“You be holy, as I am holy.” 1 Peter 1:15,16 quoting Ex 11:44-45

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.” Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18

*“You are the salt of the earth...You are the light of the world.... Let your light shone before men that they may see your good works and praise your Father in heaven.”
Mt 5:13-16*

All this, despite the problem of the sinfulness of men; even the sinfulness his own people struggle with.

Why this is promise of righteousness is such good news:

While many people wrestle around the question of where they will spend eternity (and that is certainly a crucial valid question), every person wrestles with the questions of the brokenness of this world- “why all the pain and suffering and brokenness and injustice?” – and their place in it- “What’s the meaning and purpose and fulfillment of life (and my life) in the midst of all this?”- as part of the larger question of “eternity.”

God’s faithful commitment is to bring his holistic salvation to the earth and its people -and to us personally- as a gift through Christ’s death and resurrection and Spirit, received by faith.

B. Obedience: the Fruit of Receiving Christ’s Righteousness in all these areas as a Gift

Don’t rely on your own efforts of “law-keeping” as the means for seeing this salvation/righteousness of God come to expression in yourself, with one another and over the earth; believe in Christ and his faithful commitment secured for you through the Cross, Resurrection and the Spirit.

Galatians 2:11-21 The destructiveness of turning to self-directed efforts at keeping the Law demonstrated in division in the church.

Even as Christians (even as an Apostle), a return to Law, in the sense of trying hard to serve God out of our own self-directed efforts at keeping the Law, instead of a focus of faith in Christ, actually promotes more sin, because it allows/forces us to reduce the Law to manageable terms, while covering up our real responsibilities

Gospel-produced obedience begins with believing the gift of righteousness in Christ first, and then flows in a movement of Holy Spirit, grace-produced, grace-bathed obedience, which, though we acknowledge sin is still present in us, is nonetheless transforming us and is acceptable to God because it is offered in Christ.

1 Peter 2:4 ff

C. The human impossibility of attaining this righteousness in ourselves or in the world

1. We don't start from a neutral position. This all goes against our "sin nature."

Galatians 5:16, 17; Romans 7:14-20; James 4:1; Colossians 3:5

2. The end result: any form of relating to God that has its foundations rooted in our self-directed attempts at keeping the Law will always end up at the same point: death, not life; despair, not joy for others; bondage to destructive patterns, not freedom; emptiness, not abundance; isolation, not fellowship; judgment of others, not mercy – that essentially affects all these four areas - our view of Christ, of ourselves before God, of one another, of hope for the world. We can never fulfill the law on our own and our conscience can never be free enough before God based on our own merit to receive the love and promises he offers *Galatians 3:10-12; Deuteronomy 30:11-14, cf Romans 10:1-13*

Side note: this is all very discouraging to our flesh; and the more you are actually tied into a self-performance-in-relationship-to-the-law-based relationship with God, the more outrageous this will seem. But all of this is intended to help us be the most realistic people of all, and drive us to the Cross of Christ as our only hope

II. God's Solution: the Righteousness of Christ is Our Righteousness as a Gift

A. The great good news of the Gospel is this: through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ we receive, through faith, both the forgiveness of our sins and the gift of Christ's righteousness as our position of standing before God and the promise of the righteousness of God (in all these above-mentioned areas) coming to expression in our lives by the power of his Spirit producing this righteousness of God in us as a gift.

2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:7-9; Romans 1:16, 17, 3:21, 4:1-8, 5:1-5; 8:1-4; 9:30-10:4

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

2. Your entire Christian life - your maturing in following Christ, your obedience, your confidence for God's blessings, your experience of seeing the Holy Spirit's power at work in your life and the lives of others, the redemption of the world, your joy, your freedom to forgive and enter into the love of God- is meant to be nourished, fed, increased and flow out of a constant and ever deepening focus of faith on Christ Jesus and this gift of salvation - the good news of his gospel - that you are freely forgiven and freely declared to be righteous in God's sight, and that the Spirit will empower you as sons of God. The application of the Gospel to the believer- (Romans, Ephesians, Hebrews, I Peter) is not presented as a presumptive principle - but a living fountain of grace.

B. Jesus Christ - Our God Appointed Representative *Romans 5:12, 18-21*

Jesus Christ, and our faith in him, guarantees us both the standing of righteousness and the outworking of righteousness because he is our legal representative, in the same way, by negative contrast Adam was our legal representative who guaranteed us sin and death.

The death of Jesus Christ counts as the payment of our sin and the securing of all our blessedness from God.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ counts as our guarantee of the never ceasing life of God working his will, love and purpose in us. *1 Peter 1:3 ff; Romans 6:5-11*

C. Righteous Sons / Heirs of God: Expecting God's Grace and Blessing
(more than a life of gratitude)

Trusting in the righteousness of Jesus Christ as our own - as the gift of God's grace -

1) Gives us the confidence to believe God for all his promises to be our very own.

*2 Corinthians 1:18-22; especially for the Spirit
Galatians 3:1-5, Luke 11:11*

2) Grants us the freedom of conscience to pursue obedience by faith
Romans 6:12-14; 8:1-4; Ephesians 4:22-24

3) Gives us the freedom to see others as "righteous" and live with hope for them

II Corinthians 5:16 ff

4) Gives us a secure hope for the future, that more grace and blessing is on its way

Romans 5:1-11

MARTIN LUTHER'S ARGUMENT OF THE EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL TO THE GALATIANS

(Paraphrase In Modern English by Bill Slack)

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

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

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

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

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

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

On the other side, Satan, taking advantage of our natural weakness, increases and fires up those thoughts in us. Then our consciences are more troubled, terrified and confused. For it is impossible for a man’s mind by itself to find comfort, look for God’s grace, or reject Satan’s argument about works just because he feels sinful and is disgusted by it. These things are far above man’s strength and ability; in fact, it’s even beyond the power of God’s law. It is true that God’s law is the most excellent thing in the world, but it is not able to ease a man’s troubled conscience. Rather, it increases his fear and causes him to despair; ‘That through the commandment, sin might become utterly sinful.’ (Rom. 7:18).

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

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

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

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

A faithful and wise preacher or teacher of the Word will give out the Law in such a way that it is kept in perspective. The man who teaches that people are justified before God by obeying the Law gives the Law much more power than it has, and mixes up 'passive' righteousness with 'earned' righteousness, he is a bad teacher because he misunderstands the Word. On the other hand, he that uses the Law to cause a man to see his sinfulness and convict him, and who also shows how God forgives sin (by 'passive' righteousness) when the man repents and turns from that sin teaches the Word well, for the man that does not know Christ must be shown the Law and works. The new man (one who knows Christ) must be affirmed in God's promises and mercy. So when I see a man that is bruised enough already, burdened by the Law, terrified with sin, and thirsting for relief, that is when in truth it is time to take the Law and 'works' righteousness out of his sight and show him by the Gospel 'passive' righteousness (Christian righteousness) which offers the promise of Christ without the Law, that Christ *came for* the hurting and for *sinner*s. Then the man is raised up and has good hope, he is no longer under the Law but covered by grace. How is he out from under the Law? Because he is a new man to whom the Law does not apply! For the Law does not reach past Christ as Paul says, 'For Christ is the end of the Law.' (Rom. 10:4). Since Christ has come, Moses' Law ends, circumcision ends, the sacrifices, the Sabbaths, yes, even all the prophets end.

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

This I say so that no man thinks we reject or forbid good works as the Papists falsely accuse us, because they don't understand what they are saying themselves or what we teach. They only know the righteousness of the Law ('works' righteousness). Yet they pass judgment on the doctrine of 'passive' righteousness which is above the Law and which no carnal man is able to judge. That is why they are offended; they can't see any higher than the Law. Whatever is higher than the Law then is a great offense to them. But we see in our minds two worlds, one heavenly, the other earthly. We put these two kinds

of righteousness ('works' and 'passive') in these two worlds being set *far* apart from each other. The righteousness of the Law (works) is earthly and has to do with earthly things, and by it we do good works. But just like the earth does not bring forth fruit unless it is first watered and made fruitful from above, even so by 'works' righteousness, by *doing* many things, we do nothing, and in obeying the Law, we do not really obey it unless first without deserving it or working for it, we are made righteous by the Christian (passive) righteousness, which has nothing to do with 'works' righteousness of the Law or to earthly righteousness. But this righteousness is heavenly; which as we said, we do not do it ourselves, but receive it from heaven. We don't work for it, but by grace it is given to us, and we get it through faith. It takes us above all the Law and works. So, as we have looked and acted like, the earthly Adam, as Paul says, let us now look and act as the new man. This new man has: a heavenly image in a new world where there is no Law, no sin, no guilt or pain in our conscience, no death, but perfect joy, righteousness, grace, peace, life, salvation, and glory.

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

You see then that sin has no place here, so there can be no painful guilt, no fear, no weight on our shoulders. That is why John says (I John 5:18) 'He that is born of God cannot sin.' But if there is any fear or our conscience is bothered, it is a sign that our 'passive' righteousness is 'withdrawn' -- that is, grace is hidden from us, and Christ is darkened out of our sight. But when we truly see Christ, we have full and perfect joy in the Lord with peace of mind, and we certainly think: 'Although I am a sinner by the Law and under condemnation of the Law, still I don't despair, still I don't die, because Christ lives, who is both my righteousness and my everlasting life.' In that righteousness and life I have no sin, no fear, no guilty conscience, no fear of death. I am indeed a sinner in this life of mine and in my own righteousness, as a child of Adam; where the Law accuses me, death controls me and eventually would destroy me. But I have another life, another righteousness above this life which is in Christ, the Son of God, who knows no sin or death but is eternal righteousness and eternal life; by Him this body of mine being dead and turned to dust shall be raised up again and freed from the chains of the Law and sin and shall be made holy together with the Spirit.

So we have both these (the old man and the new man) with us while we are here. The flesh is accused, tempted, weighed down with sorrow, bruised by the 'works' righteousness of the Law; but the Spirit reigns, rejoices and is saved by this 'passive' and Christian righteousness, because our spirit knows that it has a Lord in heaven at the

right hand of His Father who has done away with the Law, sin, death and has conquered all evil, captured it, and triumphed over it Himself. (Col. 2:15).

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL **THE STRUGGLE TO KEEP OUR REPUTATION**

Another aspect of this struggle for righteousness is the fight for reputation. We are all reputation-conscious. Some of us have a reputation--it may be for piety, efficiency, leadership, preaching, housekeeping, anything! Others of us wish we had a reputation... Once acquired, or assumed, it can haunt us, dog us, browbeat us, wear us to shreds. Bondage to reputation can be sheer slavery, and yet did we but know, it is only a form of struggle for our own righteousness. We are unwilling to be known as failures along any line.

THE STRUGGLE FOR APPEARANCE

The struggle for righteousness consequently becomes the struggle for appearance which simply means that somewhere we end up with being dishonest about our selves. I once heard a man speak to children about eggs. He had three of them with labels attached. One egg was stale and it told us it was not what it used to be. The second was half-hatched and it announced it was not what it hoped to be. But the third was rotten and although it looked good, was honest enough to tell us it was not what it seemed to be.

Is it not true that we seem to be what we are not? Like the Jews whose struggle for righteousness led them inevitably into hypocrisy? The trouble with success is that we dare not be failures for if we are to keep our reputation we cannot admit ignorance or sin. That would be to collapse the sand castle before the tide had even come in. It is better to struggle on even to breaking point than admit some need that would mean others knowing us as we really are.

The tragedy of all this is the idea that we find favor with God by reaching standards. This is precisely where we are wrong. Again Phillips translation helps us in Romans 10. verse 5: 'The man who perfectly obeys the law shall find life in it' which is theoretically right but impossible in practice. If we could attain God's standard we should be blessed. But we cannot. So we end by being cursed. The very, law that was designed to give us life has become the means of death, not because there is anything wrong with the standard itself, but because we sinners are unable to reach it.

CHRIST - THE END OF THE STRUGGLE

What a relief it is when we see Christ as the end of all this. He is the end of the struggle for righteousness since He not only fulfilled the law for us, but was cursed for us as well. He has not only attained our perfection but atoned for our imperfection. There is nothing more to struggle about, for He has done all for us and God asks nothing now but our repentance and faith.

All the fitness He requireth
Is to feel your need of Him.

How beautifully Joy Davidman puts it: “The only way to get rid of sin is to admit it, for without honesty, repentance, forgiveness and grace are impossible. The Christian does not go around all the time feeling guilty. For him sin is a burden he can lay down for he can admit it, repent and be forgiven. It is the unfortunate creature who denies the existence of sin in general and his own in particular who must go on carrying it. The way to freedom consists in honest confession and repentance that can open our hearts to the Comforter. To open our souls to God’s grace means He not only saves, us from being the people we are, but changes us into those we ought to be.

How easy it is! The only way to get rid of sin is to admit it! Why is this so hard? Surely because it means letting go our own righteousness which is the very thing we do not like doing. Yet how can we have Christ’s perfect robe of righteousness if we insist on keeping our own? It is impossible.

Jesus is our perfect righteousness. When we come to Him we need no other. The struggle for righteousness is over and He becomes our reputation and glory. We need not fear to come to the sinner’s place, for when we do, it is to cease from our own works, to stop trying to be what we are nor and admit instead what we are. At that point we accept Christ’s own righteousness, we are justified before God and enter into peace. This is God’s basic blessing for us, and the only true way of peace and joy.

Cast your deadly doing down.
Down at Jesu’s feet.
Stand in Him, in Him alone.
Gloriously complete.

REFERENCES

¹ *Memoir and Remains*, p.252

² Romans 10:3.

³ *Smoke on the Mountain* - Joy Davidman,

Sonship Lesson 3 Justification and the Gift of the Spirit

I. The Promised Spirit *Galatians 4:4-7*

A. Jesus Christ - The Anointed One

Jesus Christ came to usher in the kingdom of God that would be marked not by empty religious ceremony and the traditions of men, but by the establishment of God's justice on behalf of the oppressed, his mercy for sinners in need of grace, and the fellowship of His presence as the delight of His children. All this would be started and brought to completion through the anointing and power of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus Christ, and through him, poured out upon his people. *Matthew 3:16*

Through the anointing of the Spirit, Jesus would

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

The way into the kingdom of God is itself the greatest demonstration of God's mercy, justice and Presence- Jesus Christ takes upon himself our sin, gives us his standing of righteousness, and presents us to the Father as his "brothers", sons of the living God *Hosea 1:10*

B. Our Anointing

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

What does it mean to call out “Abba” (Father).

Gen 6; Psalm 82; John 10

The false “sons of God” are presented in Genesis 6:1ff as those ungodly rulers who took a false divine-authority to themselves and used their “pseudo-god” position to oppress and do violence, including the arbitrary, forceful taking of women. This kind of mindset was reflected in Pharaoh of Egypt when Abram traveled there with Sara, and was a real, oppressive threat (*Gen. 12:10ff*). God addresses these kings who claim to be “gods” but use their authority for injustice in Psalm 82. He debunks their image when he declares, “I said you are gods; you are all sons of the Most High. But you will die like mere men; you will fall like every other ruler,” Psalm 82:6,7. In contrast, God establishes his True Son on his throne (Psalm 2), who rules with justice, righteousness and compassion (*Isaiah 9, 11*). When Jesus is accused of blasphemy “because you, a mere man, claim to be God”, he appeals to the demonstration of his God-like character of doing justice and performing miracles of compassion as proof that he is in fact “God's Son” (*John 10:31-38*). Everyone who puts their faith in Jesus is given the authority to be called children of God (*John 1:12*). We “participate in the divine nature” (*2 Peter 1:4*) and are truly God-like, not in substance, but in image. We use our status to pursue the same justice, righteousness and mercy that God commits Himself to. Jesus is in fact the “first-born of many brothers” (*Romans 8:29*) who will carry the family image.

The “Spirit” is the Spirit who leads us to call God, “Father;” the Spirit who is also the Spirit of Holiness or the Holy Spirit.

Through the Spirit, we are also enabled -

-to put sin to death and yield our bodies to do righteousness *Romans 8:9-14*

-to fellowship with the Father- calling Him “Abba”, without fear
Romans 8:15-16

-to proclaim the Word of God boldly, with the presence of God's power
Acts 4:31

-to perform deeds of mercy, compassion and justice *Acts 3:1 ff , 4:32 ff*

-to see Satan defeated *Romans 16:30*

-to endure whatever sufferings following our King may bring
Romans 8:17, 15:13

II. The Promise of the Spirit: Through Faith Alone In Christ Alone *Galatians 3:1-5*

Just like our acceptance as sons, God grants us the Presence of the Spirit, not on the basis of our performance, but on the basis of the finished work of Christ - the forgiveness and righteousness which is ours in Him - and our faith in him

A. As a son of God, you have the Spirit

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

B. As a son of God, you need to ask for the Spirit's presence to be made known

Acts 4:23-31; Ephesians 5:18

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

1. Exclusively on the basis of Christ's finished work

Gal 3:1-5

2. For God to fulfill his kingdom purposes

Luke 11:5-13

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

A. The example of David

II Samuel 11, 12 Psalm 51

1. Psalm 51

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

- He relies on the free/undeserved mercy of God
- He is totally honest about his sin
- He asks God to freely give him the joy of knowing his sin/guilt has been removed (blot it out)

and give him a pure heart and steadfast spirit to serve the Lord

and to restore his joy in God Himself through the confident presence of the Spirit

and to give him the opportunity to share the love of God and teach others

and to prosper the work of the people of God

2. II Samuel 12, 15

This presence of the Spirit allowed David to:

- accept God's discipline as the hand of His loving Father
- seek God's mercy to reverse His decision
- worship God in the midst of the consequences
- receive God's further blessing on his life
- return to his responsibilities as King and totally trust the Sovereign hand of God to fulfill His will - in whatever that required in David's life *15:25; 16:12ff*

The Exchanged Life
J. Hudson Taylor

A letter from Hudson Taylor to his sister, Amelia. reprinted from 'Biography of James Hudson Taylor' by Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor.

Chinkiang
October 17th, 1886
My Own Dear Sister,

So many thanks for your long dear letter. I do not think you have written me such a letter since we have been in China. I know it is with you as with me—you cannot, not you will not. Mind and body will not bear more than a certain amount of strain, or do more than a certain amount of work. As to work, mine was never so plentiful, so responsible or so difficult; but the weight and strain are all gone. The last month or more has been, perhaps, the happiest of my life; and I long to tell you a little of what the Lord has done for my soul. I do not know how far I may be able to make myself intelligible about it, for there is nothing new or strange or wonderful and yet, all is new! In a word 'Whereas I was blind, now I see'.

Perhaps I shall make myself more clear if I go back a little. Well, dearie, my mind has been greatly exercised for six or eight months past, feeling the need personally, and for our Mission, of more holiness, life, power in our souls. But personal need stood first and was the greatest. I felt the ingratitude, the danger, the sin of not living nearer to God. I prayed, agonized, fasted, strove, made resolutions, read the Word more diligently, sought more time for retirement and meditation, but all was without effect. Every day, almost every hour, the consciousness of sin oppressed me. I knew that if I could only abide in Christ all would be well, but I could not. I began the day with prayer, determined not to take my eye from Him for a moment; but pressure of duties, sometimes very trying, constant interruptions apt to be so wearing, often caused me to forget Him. Then one's nerves get so fretted in this climate that temptations to irritability, hard thoughts and sometimes unkind words are all the more difficult to control. Each day brought its register of sin and failure, of lack of power. To will was indeed present with me, but how to perform I found not.

Then came the question. Is there no rescue? Must it be thus to the end: constant conflict and, instead of victory, too often defeat? How, too, could I preach with sincerity that to those who receive Jesus, "to them gave he power to become the sons of God" (i.e. God-like) when it was not so in my experience?

Instead of growing stronger, I seemed to be getting weaker and to have less power against sin; and no wonder, for faith and even hope were getting very low. I hated myself; I hated my sin; and yet I gained no strength against it. I felt I was a child of God: His Spirit in my heart would cry, in spite of all, Abba, Father: but to rise to my privileges as a child, I was utterly powerless. I thought that holiness, practical holiness was to be gradually attained by a diligent use of the means of grace. I felt that there was nothing I so much desired in this world, nothing I so much needed. But so far from in any measure attaining it, the more I pursued and strove after it, the more it eluded my grasp; till hope itself almost died out, and I began to think that perhaps to make heaven the sweeter, God would not give it down here. I do not think I was striving to attain it in my own strength. I knew I was powerless. I told the Lord so, and asked Him to give me help and strength; and sometimes I almost believed He would keep and uphold me. But on looking back in the evening, alas! there was but sin and failure to confess and mourn before God.

I would not give you the impression that this was the daily experience of all those long, weary months. It was a too frequent state of soul; that toward which I was tending, and which almost ended in despair. And yet never did Christ seem more precious, a Savior who could, and would save such a sinner!.... And sometimes there were seasons not only of peace but of joy in the Lord. But they were transitory, and at best there was a sad lack of power. Oh, how good the Lord was in bringing this conflict to an end!

All the time I felt assured that there was in Christ all I needed. but the practical question was how to get it out. He was rich, truly, but I was poor; He strong, but I weak. I knew full well that there was in the root, the stem, abundant fatness; but how to get it into my puny little branch was the question. As gradually the light was dawning on me, I saw that faith was the only prerequisite, was the hand to lay hold on His fullness and make it my own. But I had not this faith. I strove for it, but it would not come; tried to exercise it, but in vain. Seeing more and more the wondrous supply of grace laid up in Jesus, the fullness of our precious Saviour--my helplessness and guilt seemed to increase. Sins committed appeared but as trifles compared with the sin of unbelief which was their cause, which could not or would not take God at His word, but rather made Him a liar! Unbelief was, I felt, the damning sin of the world, yet I indulged in it. I prayed for faith, but it came not. What was I to do?

When my agony of soul was at its height, a sentence in a letter from dear McCarthy was used to remove the scales from my eyes, and the Spirit of God revealed the truth of our oneness with Jesus as I had never known it before. McCarthy, who had been much exercised by the same sense of failure, but saw the light before I did, wrote (I quote from memory):

'But how to get faith strengthened? Not by striving after faith, but by resting on the Faithful One.'

As I read I saw it all! 'If we believe not, he abideth faithful.' I looked to Jesus and saw (and when I saw, oh, how joy flowed!) that He had said, 'I will never leave you.' 'Ah, there is rest!' I thought. 'I have striven in vain to rest in Him. I'll strive no more. For has He not promised to abide with me, never to leave me, never to fail me?' And, dearie, He never will!

But this was not all He showed me, nor one half. As I thought of the vine and the branches, what light the blessed Spirit poured direct into my soul! How great seemed my mistake in having wished to get the sap, the fullness out of Him. I saw not only that Jesus would never leave me, but that I was a member of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. The vine now I see is not the root merely, but all, root, stem, branches, twigs, leaves, flowers, fruit: and Jesus is not only that: He is soil and sunshine, air and showers, and ten thousand times more than we have ever dreamed, wished for, or needed. Oh, the joy of seeing this truth! I do pray that the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened, that you may know and enjoy the riches freely given us in Christ.

Oh, my dear sister, it is a wonderful thing to be really one with a risen and exalted Saviour; to be a member of Christ! Think what it involves. Can Christ be rich and I poor? Can your right hand be rich and the left poor? or your head be well fed while your body starves? Again, think of its bearing on prayer. Could a bank clerk say to a customer, 'It was only your hand wrote that cheque, not you', or 'I cannot pay this sum to your hand, but only to yourself? No more can your prayers, or mine, be discredited if offered in the Name of Jesus (i.e. not in our own name, or for the sake of Jesus merely, but on the ground that we are His, His members) so long as we keep within the extent of Christ's credit--a tolerably wide limit! If we ask anything unscriptural or not in accordance with the will of God, Christ Himself could not do that but 'If we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: and...we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

The sweetest part, if one may speak of one part being sweeter than another, is the rest which full identification with Christ brings. I am no longer anxious about anything, as I realize this; for He, I know, is able to carry out His will, and His will is mine. It makes no matter where He places me, or how. That is rather for Him to consider than for me; for in the easiest positions He must give me His grace, and in the most difficult His grace is sufficient. It little matters to my servant whether I send him to buy a few cash worth of things or the most expensive articles. In either case he looks to me for the money, and brings me his purchases. So, if God places me in great perplexity, must He not give me much guidance; in positions of great difficulty, much grace: in circumstances of great pressure and

trial, much strength? No fear that His resources will be unequal to the emergency! Arid His resources are mine, for He is mine, and is with me and dwells in me. All this springs from the believer's oneness with Christ And since Christ has thus dwelt in my heart by faith, how happy I have been! I wish I could tell you instead of writing about it.

I am no better than before (may I not say, in a sense, I do not wish to be, nor am I striving to be); but I am dead and buried with Christ, aye. and risen too and ascended; and now Christ lives in me, and "the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me". I now believe I am dead to sin. God reckons me so, and tells me to reckon myself so. He knows best. All my past experiences may have shown that it was not so; but I dare not say it is not now, when He says it is. I feel and know that old things have passed away. I am as capable of sinning as ever, but Christ is realized as present as never before. He cannot sin; and He can keep me from sinning. I cannot say (I am sorry to have to confess it) that since I have seen this light I have not sinned; but I do feel there was no need to have done so. And further-walking more in the light, my conscience has been more tender; sin has been instantly seen, confessed, pardoned; and peace and joy (with humility) instantly restored; with one exception, when for several hours peace and joy did not return from want, as I had to learn, of full confession, arid from some attempt to justify self.

Faith, I now see, is "the substance of things hoped for, and not mere shadow. It is not less than sight, but more. Sight only shows the outward forms of things; faith gives the substance. You can rest on substance, feed on substance. Christ dwelling in the heart by faith (i.e. His word of promise credited) is power indeed, is life indeed. And Christ and sin will not dwell together; nor can we have His presence with love of the world or carefulness about "many things".

And now I must close. I have not said half I would nor as I would had I more time. May God give you to lay hold on these blessed truths. Do not let us continue to say, in effect. "Who shall ascend into heaven? that is, to bring Christ down from above". In other words, do not let us consider Him as afar off, when God has made us one with Him, members of His very body. Nor should we look upon this experience, these truths, as for the few. They are the birthright of every child of God, and no one can dispense with them without dishonour to our Lord. The only power for deliverance from sin or for true service is Christ.

Your own affectionate brother,
J. Hudson Taylor

Sonship Lesson 4 Justifying Faith

I. Definition and Focus of Biblical Faith

Saving Faith is simply turning from reliance upon anything else, and believing (resting, trusting and relying upon) the person of Jesus Christ and His saving work for us alone as the basis of our hope for salvation.

A. Saving Faith involves *turning from idols to the living God*
1 Thessalonians 1:9

Whatever we tend to trust in for our salvation is the root problem of idolatry. That is why this is the first issue God addresses in the Ten Commandments:

- 1) No other gods
- 2) No shaping God after your own image

Idolatry takes the shape of anything we are trusting in: our education, our good morals, our own zeal for God, our sincerity, pleasure of whatever form, financial security, our sense of our own ability to manage, control or understand life

Real faith involves a turning from everything else to Christ alone. The reason so many people in our culture have a 'powerless faith' (they profess to believe in Jesus Christ, but it makes absolutely no difference in their lives) is because they do not have an exclusive faith in Christ alone. They are like Hindus, who have countless gods and are more than happy to add Jesus Christ to the list, but reliance is not on Christ alone.

The snare for the true believer that Paul so vehemently warns against in Galatians is the trap of shifting the focus of our faith from God's grace in Christ exclusively, to Christ plus our works. *This **is** the core issue* that will do more damage to the Christian life and experience than anything else the child of God has to deal with. (Cf. Galatians 1:6ff.)

So then, *Faith in Christ alone* is the source of confidence for God to bless and empower and lead us vs. *Faith in Christ plus Works* (in any form)

is something the true child of God must guard against, and be disciplined in throughout the Christian life

B. Saving faith involves reliance upon the **Person** of Jesus Christ

1. Our faith is not in a set of Christian principles or even doctrinal truths

We are not believing Christianity as a system or a set of factual statements.

The very heart of saving faith involves a personal relationship with Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus says, 'whoever believes in Me will inherit eternal life.'

2. Saving faith is meant to be intensely personal. At the heart of saving faith is the belief that Jesus Christ, the living Son of God loves me, paid for my sins, gave Himself for me.

Faith means you appropriate Christ for yourself Gal. 2:20

You believe Jesus did all this for you with full acknowledgment of your sin.

C. The nature of Saving Faith constantly involves a humbling of human pride

1. Unbelief

a) rooted in pride (Christ is not enough; I must bring my works to the table)

b) My word is true / God's Word is not true (I won't believe Christ is enough) Cf. Romans 10:3

2. Belief (faith)
a) rooted in humility (I have nothing to bring before God but Christ alone)

b) My word is not true / God's word is true (I won't trust my own false thinking) Cf. *Romans 10:6-10*

D. The nature of saving faith involves an expectant hope of God's blessing

'This believing expectancy is most crucial.faith without expectancy is an empty shell, mere mental assent which means nothing before God. But faith filled with humble confidence in God's character and promises is the mark of the kingdom's presence and power.'

Jack Miller Powerful Evangelism for the Powerless

II. What it *feels like* to exercise saving faith in the grace of Jesus Christ

A. Removing the half-truths: what faith in the Gospel is not:

1. Faith is not self-determination

"I am determined to do something about my situation"

2. Faith is not a spiritual energy that you muster up

"I am really going to believe hard."

3. Faith is not good intentions

Trying to impress God with sincerity.

4. Faith is not success

"If I truly believe, I won't have problems.

I am having problems, therefore I must not have faith'

5. Faith is not obedience

"If I truly believed I would not sin again."

6. Faith is not an emotion related to either joy or despair

7. Faith is not the power of positive thinking

Faith in the Gospel is simply a resting upon the promises of God for you in Christ Jesus.

B. "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" *Hebrews 12:1*

- faith exists in a context that "naturally" promotes unbelief

1. Negative feelings that often come with the exercise of faith in the Gospel --

a. Faith often feels like you are denying the real truth

God says "I am free from my sin, free to obey" / we feel the real truth is: "this sin **is** the real me"

-- The opposition: God's word just isn't true in my circumstance

-- Gods' truth: the inability to save yourself from your sin is exactly the reason Jesus came to save you

b. Faith often feels like you are denying responsibility

God says this is a totally, free, undeserved gift/ we feel the real truth is that nobody can excuse such behavior without penalty

--The opposition: God can't "justly" bless me

--The truth: The finished work of Christ has always been your only hope

c. Giant steps feel small

"God says my obedience in faith will change my life and the lives of others, but the real truth is, there is so much sin here that my faith is of no real value or significance"

--The opposition: why bother

--The truth: what feels like a small, insignificant step is in fact the first giant step in God breaking the power of sin

d. Growing faith can feel like "no faith" at all

I am supposed to believe God but everything in circumstances and life says 'no', and as I try to exercise faith it feels like there is no faith

--The opposition: you don't have faith

--The truth: if you believe what God says is true, even over your sense of unbelief, your faith is actually alive and deepening, because you are learning to trust less in any circumstance or feeling, but only on the Word of God.

C. The need for faith "over against" unbelief

1. Abraham *Romans 4*

Abraham had to believe this gift of God's salvation over against all the physical evidence. Note how he 'faces the facts'. Real faith doesn't ignore the facts - it takes an honest look and says, 'Recognizing this, I still believe God for His promise.' And then his faith was strengthened.

Now, especially note how Paul applies this to us believing the message of the gospel. *Romans 4:23-25*

2. The necessity of believing the promise of the Gospel for others

If you don't believe the 'gift' of acceptance before God through the righteousness in Christ for others - especially at that very point where their sins are an offense to you- you will thwart your own freedom to believe and walk in the Gospel for yourself. Why? Whatever measure you use will be measured back to you.

Luke 6:37, 38; James 1:12-13

III. The Refining and Development of Our Faith

A. God uses trials as a means of refining our faith - so that we become increasingly focused on Christ alone as our hope and the joy of our 'sonship' increases.

1. Nobody naturally, all the time, keeps a focus of faith in Christ alone and lives constantly as a 'son' (versus an orphan)

We start the Christian life with a sense of our need for Christ to save us, but we also bring a tremendous amount of baggage with us. We have no idea how strong the 'flesh' really is, or, how many hidden idols we may cling to.

When God saves us, he makes a commitment to us *to shape our faith so that we learn* to actively believe our Lord Jesus Christ and our Father for all he is and all he promises. Out of that context of faith alone in Christ alone, new obedience arises. Through continued faith, we learn to persevere in that obedience and our very character is changed. Trials are the means God uses to accomplish that growth in our faith.

James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:3-7 Hebrews 12:1,2

2. That means growing in your faith in Christ alone will not (indeed, can not) take place in some kind of mental vacuum. It always involves embracing the hope of the Gospel in whatever the current trials of following Christ and of life in general brings our way, and allowing yourself to be trained and matured by those difficulties.

Hebrews 12:4-11

B. God especially reveals his power through our weakness in order to build our faith in how the Gospel works

1. That is the entire point of the birth of Isaac; the Exodus; crossing the Red Sea; the walls of Jericho; David and Goliath; Daniel in the lion's den; Peter at Pentecost; Paul in prison -- None of these events occurred because the human beings involved had anything, in terms of human power or strength, to bring to the table. They were all events that had to be resolved by the free outpouring of God's power.

God loves to make his power known in our weakness because it is an exclamation point to the Gospel -- that God freely saves those who could never save themselves.

2. That means growing in your faith in Christ alone will be substantially aided as we learn, like Paul to 'boast' in our weaknesses.

The reason God's power is not demonstrated at the point of our strength is because it tends to move away from an active looking to Christ alone, and in its place, we begin to build a spiritual pride.

3. The opportunity for boasting in our weakness emerges constantly, because no matter what we do, human weakness has a tendency to break out all over the place.

It is through these two daily realities of life - the presence of trials and the presence of human weakness - that God intends to grow our faith. So then, rather than avoiding trial, or avoiding weakness - or, rather than waiting until we think we have enough 'faith' to face the questions of life pressing in upon us, God's encouragement is to see his promise that he will use these very difficulties to actually deepen our faith in Christ alone and realize more fully our adoption as sons.

Sonship Lesson 5 Defeating the Flesh

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

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

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

I John 1:5-2:2

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

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

righteousness that comes through Christ as a gift, and not on ourselves, the more we will be susceptible to these doubts.

These doubts, in turn, can lead us away from “believing Christ” and his receiving his righteousness as a gift, and feed the thinking that we have to work hard to bring God a good performance in order for him to delight in us and truly bless us. With this mindset, the exposure of sin will be seen as a hindrance, a major setback, a defeat; something we will tend to cover up. But what God really intends for us is the freedom of knowing we are his loved children by faith in Christ, and that this fundamental relationship will never change, so that even the exposure of sin is not a basis for fear but a further opportunity for growth.

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

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

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

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

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

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

There isn't anything you, or others, aren't capable of..... Cf. Romans 1-3, Matthew 5-7cf, David, and Peter- both in Garden and in Galatia

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

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

That's why you need the Spirit to search you (Psalm 139:23)

That's why others see your sin first and you see the sin of others better

If you don't recognize this, you will be all the more susceptible to its control

The most dangerous person is the one who knows he is right - doesn't see himself as a sinner (versus declared righteous - only as a gift of grace)

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

This is not to say you must be ultimately defeated and give in to sin without struggle

It is however, a humble, bold recognition (that only the Gospel allows you to accept) that you will still struggle with sin.

It also strips away all pretense of turning repentance into penance, or by assuring God or yourself that your confidence for forgiveness is that you will never sin again

It also explains how sins can be so habitual

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

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

A. Romans 5:12, 18-19

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

You are now 'free' from the condemnation and power of sin, and are instead born into righteousness and will receive all the effects of it because of your identity with Christ

B. Romans 6:1-14

That identity with Christ is defined both in terms of his death, and his resurrection.

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

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

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

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

IV. Believing the Gospel for the depth of sin - Romans 7:14 - 8:4

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

Every true child of God experiences this at different times. When that happens, the important question is this: Do you give up in defeat? Or do you, like Paul, run back to the good news of the Gospel?

(For those who are not used to believing the Gospel, but keep striving for a righteousness of their own to offer God, this chapter presents incredible moral dilemma.)

V. Believing the Gospel for the Spirit - Romans 8:5-17

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

Jesus has come to set us free *from the power of sin and death* and free to *become*.

The Importance of Being Broken for Others

By F. Kefa Sempangi

Walking in the Light

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Are you repenting?'

'Are you walking in the light?'

'Are you being broken?'

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

I remember when I walked into my first Revival Fellowship meeting. It was a Friday afternoon. The hall was almost packed, and the people were singing and praising God. Most of the songs were about the blood of the Lamb that

was slain. Different people stood up one after another confessing their sins. When a brother stood up and confessed openly his sin, I noticed that the rest of the people were not paying much attention to the sin confessed. Before a sister would finish her confession, they would burst out in songs of praise.

Even though I was a little shaky, I finally stood up too. I confessed about my past unfaithfulness to my creator and how that had damaged my life. Before I finished, people started to sing praises for the blood of the Lamb. When I resumed my seat, one brother came and embraced me; I could feel the warmth in his hand as he said to me. 'This is victory, brother.'

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

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

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

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

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

When a body of Christians begins to walk in the light together, there is no room left for gossip. Walking in the light puts gossip out of business. Nothing needs to be talked over in secret which is already in the light. Gossip is converted into efforts to seek solutions together. Instead of majoring on a

brother's weakness, we can defend him where he is weakest and promote him where he is strong.

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

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

When we cannot be a light, we cannot walk in the light. When we cannot walk in the light, we pile sin upon sin. There is anger and resentment instead of reconciliation. There is lust instead of love, contention instead of contentment, concealment where there should be confession, and bitterness where there should be forgiveness.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

When Jesus fed the five thousand, took the five loaves of bread, blessed them, broke them, and gave them to disciples to give away (Matthew 14:1). One brother of the Revival read this verse and then looked at me. 'Until God breaks your will, he will never use you,' he said. 'You will only remain a nice loaf of bread.' What Jesus did in feeding the multitude was very symbolic of what was going to happen to his body. To his own disciples he said, 'This is my body which is broken for you.'

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

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

terms of his function in the body, we see our identity in how we are different from the body and opposed to it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

In that giving we are broken again. We are broken by a renewed sense of our own inadequacies, and we are broken by the very people we are trying to help. In 1971, with the help of Mrs. Hans Rookmaaker, I opened up an orphanage home in Uganda. It was always a discouraging and humiliating experience to go to a village and pick up an orphan. As I would drive away, ten other orphans would be chasing behind me until they gave up, exhausted.

It then began to hurt...'Lord, why am I taking one when there are ten others? Can't you give me a chance to save them all?' But then in the deep

silence of my frustration, I would feel the conviction of the master saying, 'It is this one I wanted you to take.'

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sonship Lesson 6 Pursuing Obedience: The Love Offensive of the Gospel

'The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself in love' *Galatians 5:6*

Sanctification: the process of growth in becoming like Christ

In the previous lesson we said: 'Jesus has come to set us free *from the power of sin and death* and free *to become righteous* - people who look like Christ - who pursue justice, love to show mercy, and walk humbly with God. The Gospel is itself God's power for unleashing that life of the Spirit of God in us, to see sin more and more defeated, and growth in true righteousness more and more practiced.

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

In this lesson we will deal with the second issue - the freedom to pursue righteousness.

I. Pursuing Righteousness: Understanding Where the Gospel is Taking Us

A. Avoiding the Pitfalls of 'Jesus for Me'

Everything we have said about the Gospel so far...

--that God has called us to be His 'sons,' loved and accepted and secure in Christ

--that He has given us both the forgiveness of our sins and the righteousness of Christ as the definition of our standing with Him

--that the promised Holy Spirit is ours, and will be with us forever, even while we struggle through sin issues and learn to love God

--that the Father's commitment to us includes the maturing of our faith so that we increasingly learn to look to Christ alone, and, enter into the joy of sonship.

--that God is not shy about dealing with the reality of our sin nature, but has told us the means of dealing with sin includes freedom to honestly, repeatedly confess it and receive more grace

All of this can turn 'sour' for us, if we try to 'use' the Gospel to make us feel good about ourselves and God, and, ignore where God is taking us with all this good news, love and mercy. *James 4:1-4*

So where is the Gospel taking us?

B. "From that time on Jesus began to preach, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.'" *Matthew 4:17*

"Through Christ and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the nations to the obedience that comes from faith." *Romans 1:5*

1. God's purpose in the Gospel is not to forgive, declare us righteous, accept us, love us unconditionally in order that we can look at our lives and say, 'O.K., I'm good with God. Now, what do I want to do with my life?' Instead, the Gospel is the good news that God, in his great love, has come to redeem a people for himself, through the work of Jesus Christ, who will be set free from their bondage to sin and enabled through the gift of his Spirit to become a people of justice, mercy and a humble walk with God in every area of life; a people who will live under the authority of God as their king and pursue his kingdom agenda, as man was originally created to live.

Jesus is *the Christ*. Christ is not his last name. It is his title. He is the Anointed One of God who has come, as the sovereign King, to establish this 'kingdom of God' - his rule and reign on earth. The Gospel is 'the Gospel of the Kingdom'.

Isaiah 9:6, 7; 11:1-5; 42:1-4

'Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching **the good news of the kingdom....**' *Matthew 4:23*

'For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. Boldly and without hindrance he preached the **kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.**' *Acts 28:30-31*

'For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into **the kingdom of the Son he loves**, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins' *Colossians 1:13, 14*

'To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us **to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father** - to him be the glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.' *Revelation 1:5, 6*

2. Christ has come to set you free to be a member of his kingdom, a truly righteous person, by grace - by means of a life of faith in Christ through believing the message of the gospel

But what exactly does 'righteousness' mean? What does becoming 'like Christ' mean?

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

-The Ten Commandments *Exodus 20*

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

 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart....and your neighbor as yourself'

-The 'New Command' *John 13:34*

 'Love one another...as I have loved you.'

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

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

To act justly:

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

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

To love mercy:

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

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

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

To walk humbly with our God:

To not pursue this lifestyle from a position of arrogance, superiority or condescension, but from a humble walk with God. A humility that trusts Him to do his will, his way -- no matter what others may think, Satan may say, or our own hearts may speak: a humility that means we will not rely on human sources of strength, but on the Spirit's power, (*Zechariah 4:6*) even boasting in our weakness (*2 Cor 12:9ff*) .

That humility will stem first from seeing our own need for, and reception of God's mercy and favor in our lives through the Gospel, so that the deeds of justice and compassion will not be marked by a motivation of making ourselves feel good or important, but they will be done as a true expression of the love of God, with careful concern for the person's true need, and 'quietly' - without drawing a lot of attention to ourselves *Isa 42:1-4*

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

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

II. Seeking obedience in the context of exercising faith in the Gospel

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

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

You can and are called to yield yourself to righteousness, because even though sinful attitudes or thoughts or traits may mark your obedience, it is acceptable because it is covered by the righteousness of Christ.

Romans 6:12-14; 1 Peter 2:4-12

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

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

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

Yesterday's faith, or the faith of an hour ago will not give you God's power for the immediate need to love, act justly and walk humbly with God.

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

(Note: our flesh doesn't like such a life of dependency; it shows in our lack of willingness to listen and learn from others. Enablement, to our 'flesh' = gaining independence)

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

Your progress in sanctification is directly tied to your resting in your justification

Your need to grow will require you to believe the Gospel. The 'I can't/won't' of the 'flesh' asserts itself; the accusations of the Accuser hit hard; the temptations of the world and the cares of life pull us away.

The believing of the Gospel- that we are free in Christ- is the *focus of faith* we need to continue to grow.

As we learn to actively believe the Gospel- to freely ask for the Spirit; to fellowship with the Father and lose your will to His, we will see increasing freedom to seek obedience

II. Action Steps for Obedience

A. Let the Law Guide You *Romans 3:31*

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

B. Let the Gospel Empower You *Galatians 5:1-6* Promise vs. Performance

C. Seek the Spirit's Wisdom in How to Love *Eph. 3:14-19* Sanctification is about learning how to practically love.

Look for immediate/practical expressions of that - the 'Kingdom is within you'

Jesus' & Paul's exhortations always include a great emphasis on the immediate

D. Let the Hope of the Gospel Determine Your Outlook on Others *II Cor. 5:16ff*

Either as new creations, or as potential new creations

1. Exercise forgiveness as a lifestyle
2. Know that God is in the business of changing people's lives
3. Keep the real enemy in view -- whenever tempted not to love

E. Be Full of Courage - Risk or Rust *Romans 12:1, 2; I Peter 1:13-15*

1. Remember: God is with you -- see every command as a call backed by the promise of God's grace to enable you to do his will

2. Remember what Jesus Himself taught us to pray: 'Your Kingdom Come'

F. Learn to Endure in Love *Galatians 6:7-10*

1. Expect opposition/conflict -- from within; with others
2. Expect trial
3. Don't take rejection personally - people are really battling with God

Lesson 7 The Gospel and Prayer

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

I. Understanding Prayer as 'Meeting with the Father' – to know Him, to fellowship with Him and be filled by Him for doing his will.

A. What makes prayer so powerful is that it is the means of conscious fellowship with God as our Father, who wants to bless us, through communion and fellowship with the Father, Son and Spirit to understand and fulfill the righteousness of the kingdom of God in this world.

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

All these promises of God answering our prayers are in the context of recognizing the Father's love, the love of the Son, the blessing of the Spirit and the doing of God's will,

John 14:15-21; 15:9-12; 16:12-15

2. This is the "discipleship" prayer Jesus taught us in the Sermon on the Mount

Mt 6:9-15; Luke 11:1-11

3. This is the kind of praying Paul models for us in his letters- Col 1:9-14, and is evident in the lives of the Old Testament people of God *Dan 9:15-19*

Wisdom, obedience, strengthening, delighting in God - all go hand in hand in prayer.

B. Prayer is not powerful because it is the fulfillment of a religious duty. People often put faith in their prayers instead of faith in God - this is what Jesus warns against in being like the hypocrites, or the pagans

Matthew 6:5ff

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

C. The Gospel gives us the freedom to pray to God as 'Father'

You can and *are meant to* pray as a Son or Daughter of the King because the righteousness of Christ is your source of acceptance....

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

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

2. You know you have the Spirit who calls out Abba, Father. If you have Christ, you have the Spirit and the promise of the kingdom

Galatians 4:4-7, Luke 11:11ff

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

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

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

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

- Needs prayer for faithfulness in opposition *Romans 15:30 ff*
- Prayer as the source of meaningful deliverance *II Cor 1:8-11*

- Prayer for the Spirit to communicate the greatness of God's salvation; prayer for the Presence of Christ to increase; prayer for effective warfare *Ephesians 1:15 ff, 3:14 ff., 6:18-20*

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

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

This was the significance of the morning and evening sacrifices in Israel; Daniel's praying three times a day and David calling out to God in the Psalms early in the morning, all day long and even through the night

-You are not an orphan casting feathers in the wind, but are meant to be confident of God's Fatherly presence and power

John 14:15-21; Romans 8:15-17

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

-You can come with all kinds of prayers and all kinds of issues - but come.

Jeremiah 20:7ff; Psalm 22; Eph 3:14-21

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

John 14:23

- As you seek to do God's will, pursue justice and mercy and humility with all people in all circumstances of life, you may feel like you are naive, foolish, easily led astray - but, as you learn to come to your Father in

prayer you will learn more and more that you can trust God to lead you into paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

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

2. You are in Partnership with God

- He has the resources for all you need for today, tomorrow and beyond

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

-You do not have to approach God's will as an alien - strictly from the viewpoint of your wounds; but from the confidence of his grace sustaining you

-You can get up each day - not filled with negative chemistry - but bathing in the Gospel

-You can pray confidently for God to fulfill his will

a. Determine if your ambitions and desires are the Lord's - are they about justice, mercy and love? Are they about doing God's revealed will - loving your spouse, children, neighbor, the widow, the oppressed, the immigrant, your enemies? Then, pray expectantly for the blessing of God *John 15:5*

b. Repent of anxiety and worry, which hinder our fellowship with God throughout the day. Anxiety reveals self-centeredness.

-It makes plain that the kingdom of self is raging and reigning. It reveals we have ambitions, desires, dreams, demands, expectations and more that we are keeping to ourselves for our self.

-It shows a decided lack of faith in God's ability to provide

-It is focused on self instead of God.

3. Remember that prayer mirrors the Gospel (God has determined to display his glory and presence through the means that do mirror -and therefore reinforce -the Gospel)

We come to God at our point of need. We recognize God alone is the Central Actor who can fulfill his purposes. The results are always a gift.

Lesson 8 Engaging in Constructive Conflict

“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not be conceited, provoking and envying each other.”
Galatians 5:24-26

I. Conflict as a healthy, necessary part of spiritual growth

A. The ministry of Jesus:

The Pharisees; the Parables: pokes and cultural shocks

B. Blessed are the peace ‘makers’

Big difference between peace “keepers”. The child of God knows life is a struggle, and as a servant of Christ you must fight as never before: Both to fight more than you have before, and fight unlike you did before

II. The Marks of Constructive Conflict

A. The Glory of God as the chief concern

-not the glory of self;

-Glory: about the revelation of God's grace; i.e. the measurable difference between what you would naturally do and what has been done because of God's grace

B. Mounting a love-offensive

How do I make the love of God known? Can we win the person without winning the point?

C. Dealing openly with differences without judging attitudes
James 4:11,12

D. Inquire about the issue, don't focus on the personality

Personality is often a code word for predetermined view of a person; can't/won't change

Begin reacting to that personality before we even know the issue.

E. Listen to Concerns, instead of moving to accusation

F. Reject Gossip and go directly to the other person

III. The Causes of Destructive Conflict

A. A cannibalistic use of the tongue

Rooted in "superiority"

B. Failure to ask for Wisdom in Trials

Trials expose sin

Need the joy of the Sovereignty of God's love.

C. Unexamined Character Flaws

D. Deception of Pride, unbelief and self-righteousness

IV. Who is qualified to engage in constructive conflict?