

Calvary
Community
Church

Cultivating New Habits of the Heart

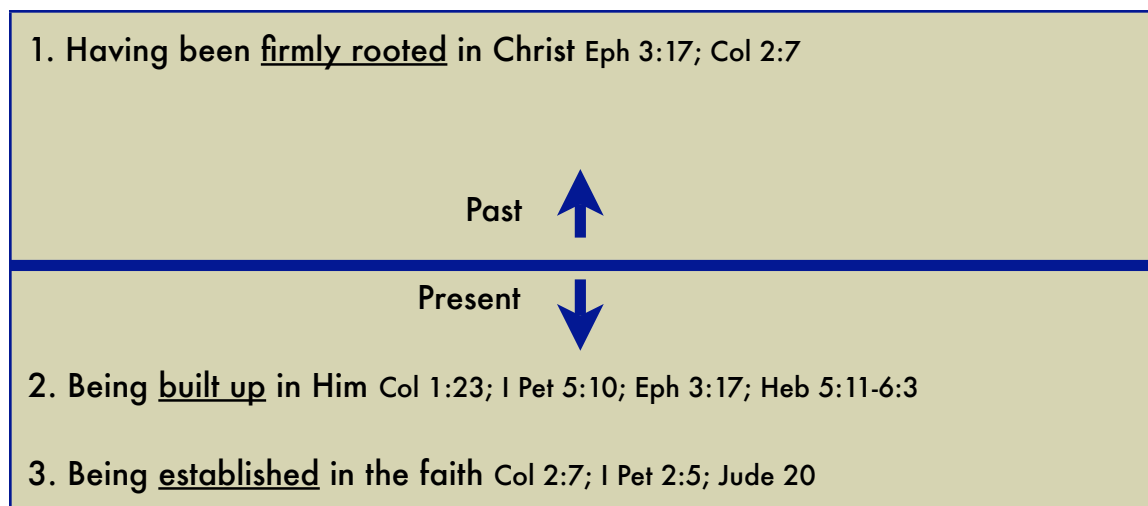
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Lesson One: Introduction

Jesus Christ commissioned His followers to go into all the world and make disciples (Matt 28:18-20). In giving this commission He made it clear that making disciples meant bringing individuals to a place of spiritual maturity characterized by obedience to Christ's commands. The Apostle Paul described the goal of this maturation process as being able to "... present every man complete in Christ" (Col 1:28-29).

This completion or maturation process seems to have three elements involved with it.



All of the three terms imply that the believer should have a solidness and stability of character that endures the pressures of life and the winds of doctrine that sometimes blow through the life of a local church (Eph 4:14).

Not only should every believer in the church receive personal attention, and be grounded in the truth, every believer should have a common characteristic, **gratitude towards God**. Take Col 2:6-7 from the above list as an example:

As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.

Notice how the process of getting a believer firmly established has a psychological side to it, the Christian should be experiencing grateful joy in abundance. This gratitude will be a response to discovering the love of Christ for His disciple (Eph 3:14-19). The Christian's life should be circumscribed by grateful joy in relationship to:

- the Father, Col 1:12
- the Son, I Pet 1:8-9
- the Spirit, I Thes 1:6
- everything, I Thes 5:18
- whatever we say or do, Col 3:17
- anxieties, Phil 4:6
- speech, Eph 5:4
- growth in grace, Col 2:7
- prayer, Col 4:2

In fact, Paul says in Colossians 3:15 that we should become people whose lives are permeated with praise: “*become thankful people*” (εὐχάριστοι γίνεσθε).

All of these elements lead to the following Discipleship Goal:

To become a Christian who has a profound appreciation of his acceptance in Christ and who lives the Christian life out of joyful gratitude.

The goal of this study, then, is to develop three responses within our hearts. The first response will be a deep sense of acceptance before God. The second response should be a profound gratitude. The third is joyful obedience. Colossians 3:17 says that whatever a believer does should be done in the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ while continually giving thanks through Him to God the Father. No matter what activity the disciple is involved in, it should always be viewed as an expression of joyful gratitude towards God.

Every session should be seen as a spoke in a wheel revolving around one center. The center will be one's sense of acceptance before God and from that sense of acceptance all these spokes will radiate out as expressions of gratitude.

The essential ingredients of spiritual growth are understanding, love, trust and experience. You will understand more of what God is doing for you as you more and more experience and feel His love in every aspect of your life. The more you know of Him, the more you will love and trust Him, and then the more you will see His power at work in your life.

The Christian is strong or weak depending upon how closely he has cultivated the knowledge of God. Progress in the Christian life is exactly equal to the growing knowledge we gain of the Triune God in personal experience. And such experience requires plenty of time at the holy task of cultivating God. God can be known satisfactorily only as we devote time to Him.

A. W. Tozer

Personal Responsibility for this week:

(1) Read the Word each day.

(2) Choose a prayer partner.

(3) Pray until you are peaceful (Phil 4:6-7):

- Recognize prayer is to bring you to embrace God's perspective.
- List the anxieties and pressures of your day.
- Trust God's ability to work in your difficulties for your spiritual good.
- Pray for your partner's prayer requests.

(4) Memorize Romans 5:1

Lesson Two: Embracing God's Perspective

In order to live in the new relationship you now have with God as a believer in Jesus Christ you must come to understand and embrace His perspective of your relationship. Too often our view of ourselves and our relationship with God is based on our circumstances or moods. However the revelation that the believer has been justified by faith is the key to understanding how the Father now sees us. The new perspective that this understanding brings totally alters our evaluation of the events of our lives and the way we respond to them.

What is God's Perspective? Romans 5:1-3

Verse One: *“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,”* You have been justified (i.e. accepted) in the past, and that provides peace with God in the present.

Verse Two: *“through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.”* Access into grace for the present, and a secure future so we can boast in the glory of God.

Verse Three: *“And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;”* Because of the previous realities the believer can be completely positive about problems; *“we can boast in our tribulations”* (cf. verse 2 where *“we can boast in hope of God’s glory.”*)

In this verse Paul uses the verb “exult” (boast) to underscore what a person values as the chief point of their religious faith. For instance, in Romans 2:17 & 23 the Jew makes his boast in the Law. In Romans 5 the believer makes his boast in the future glory that is promised (verse 2), in the present tribulations as a loving process of maturation (verse 3), and the person of Christ (verse 11).

This is a weighty statement since the problems of life so often cause the believer to become unfruitful. Therefore, if the believer assumes that there is benefit involved in His problems, he will not lose heart with them.

How can we as believers know that problems are a refinement process, and not a mark of God's displeasure? By reflecting on the dimensions of God's love that are revealed in Scripture (Cf Ephesians 3:18-19).

What is the Basis of God's Perspective?

In Romans 5:6 Paul makes a transition to the great example of God's love and motives. It begins with "if indeed (since it is true that) Christ died for us while we were morally weak", and goes on to say that God intends to use Christ's death for us as the great illustration of His perspective.

God is far more interested in us having assurance of salvation than we are. In fact, the Father uses the greatest evidence of sacrificial love there ever was to drive home to us how confident we can be. We can see this in Romans 5:6-8.

*6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.
7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

The dimensions of God's love are this, that while we were at our worst point, helpless and ungodly (verse 6) and sinners (verse 8), God the Father paid the highest price, His Son. This not only gives the basis for our salvation, or deliverance; it also gives the basis for our confidence. And God intends it to be that way.

Notice verse 8 where it says that God demonstrates His love. Have you ever gone to a "Tupperware" demonstration where the ladies are allowed to see how marvelously those plastic products meet the housewife's needs. Well God has humbled Himself to the level of giving a spiritual "Tupperware" demonstration where His own Son is part of the object lesson. The crosswork of Jesus Christ demonstrates the depth of God's love. His Son being the highest price imaginable is given for us, when we are at our lowest point of moral worth.

How can I have God's Perspective?

Is God Smaller or bigger than my problems?

Deep within their hearts, believers have to answer a few questions concerning these truths. The first question is: will we trust the motives of such a God? A Father who gave an infinitely valuable son for rebels.

The second question is: will we believe that God is bigger and more powerful than any particular problem we are having or does his abilities only cover a portion of our difficulties?

The two questions are interconnected. Some problems, such as illness, threats, or death, may lead the believer to doubt the intentions and the power of God to work with different problems for our spiritual benefit. This anxiety has to be attacked deliberately by these two thoughts. First, **God's motives are right**; he proved his motives on the cross. Second, **God's power to deal with human ills is endless**. He again proved this on the cross and through the resurrection and exaltation of His Son; he brought salvation out of that apparent tragedy, "*where sin abounded grace did much more abound.*"

Personal Responsibility for this week:

(1) Read Romans 8 and Matthew 6 every day this week.

(2) Pray until you are peaceful: Philippians 4:6-7

- Recognize prayer is to bring you to embrace God's perspective.
- List the anxieties and pressures of your day.
- Trust God's ability to work in your difficulties for your spiritual good.
- Pray for your partner's prayer requests.

(3) Memorize Romans 5:8-9

Lesson Three: God the Father and Your Acceptance

Romans 5:8,9; 8:31-34; Matthew 6:7-15

How To Learn About The Trinity

Several verses in Romans will be used to show that a believer is justified through the work of God the Father. As we discover the role of each member of the Trinity in relationship to assurance of salvation and one's acceptance before God, we will see that the Bible doesn't teach the Trinity philosophically but practically. Each member of the Trinity is related in one way or another to a certain aspect of salvation. In the Father's case, He is the one who justifies and the one to whom the believer is to address his prayers. Romans 5 and 8 will be used to show that God is totally prejudiced in favor of the one who has trusted in Christ through faith.

The Father And Our Acceptance

In Romans 5:8 it is the Father who is recommending His own love. It is Christ who died on the Cross, but it is also the love of God the Father which was illustrated on the Cross. In that He chose to give the best he had for us at our own point of greatest need.

In Romans 8:31-33 Paul asks a series of rhetorical questions to illustrate the acceptance, love, and loyalty that one can expect from God. It is a truth that is at the heart of Christianity: God will always be much more loyal to His own, than His own will ever be to him.

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies.

In verse 33 the word "justifies" is actually a present participle, meaning, "continually justifying". This describes the Father's work toward the elect as they are individually coming to

faith in Christ throughout this age of Grace. Paul can assume that for every believer the Father is unconditionally prejudiced in his or her favor.

The Father And Our Sins

The Father can be continually justifying believers because He is continually satisfied with what Christ has done on the Cross. I John 4:10 says:

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Propitiation means satisfaction. The word is used for the place in the Old Testament tabernacle where the sacrifices were made. That was where God was satisfied and the people were cleansed from their sins.

God is not angry. Christ has delighted Him with His work on the Cross.

The Father And Our Needs

Since Romans 8:32 tells us that the Father will freely give us all things, it should not be a surprise that Matthew 6 says we should not be concerned about ceaselessly telling the Father our needs. He knows our needs. We need in prayer to adjust our hearts and requests to His will. Matthew 6:9-13 will show that prayer should be directed towards God the Father and that one of the unique ministries of the Father to the believer is to be the believer's Heavenly Dad. Verse 9 of Matthew 6 shows the disciple that he should be very concerned that the Father's name is hallowed or set apart.

Christ's introduction to the prayer emphasizes that the significant thing about prayer is not the quantity of words but the quality of that which is prayed (7, 8). In the beginning of the prayer the issues are, first, the correct recognition of the person who is being prayed to, and secondly, a willingness to be conformed to the Father's will.

The Christian must not clump every member of the Trinity together but instead maintain their personal distinctions. Through the maintenance of distinctions two things will occur: First, the believer will develop a practical trinitarianism and second, he or she will have a personal sense of assurance before God, that is, before every member of the Trinity.

Personal Responsibility for this week:

1. Read Hebrews 10:19-25; 7:25 and Romans 8:31-35 every day this week.
2. Pray until you are peaceful: Philippians 4:6-7
 - Recognize prayer is coming to have God's perspective.
 - List the anxieties and pressures of your day.
 - Trust God's ability to work in your difficulties for your spiritual good.
 - Pray for your partner's prayer requests (list them below).
3. Memorize Romans 8:32

Lesson Four: Jesus Christ and Your Acceptance

Hebrews 10:19-25 & 7:25; Romans 8:31-35

This study is to show that Jesus Christ is actively involved in our salvation and acceptance.

Jesus is God's answer to the accusations of our conscience. The previous session dealt with the relationship that the believer has with the Father. This session shows that Jesus Christ is the answer for the questions of our conscience as we live out the relationship with the Father. Notice Hebrews 10:19, 22:

Since therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, . . . let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

The believer is supposed to take the great spiritual "plunge" of trusting in the power of Christ's blood in the face of our guilt feelings and obvious ability to find fault with ourselves. Since the Father is satisfied, we should be satisfied too.

The blood of Christ not only has a present ministry of cleansing the guilt we subjectively feel, but the person of Christ has a future ministry of keeping us saved forever. In Hebrews 7:25 the writer builds upon the eternal life of Jesus Christ by saying:

Hence, also, He is able to save forever (or completely) those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

The future of the believer is assured because the eternal Christ is there to help in the future.

The Important Question.

At this point a question needs to be asked. Is the priestly ministry of Christ and the Blood of Christ something in the presence of God to win the love of God on our behalf? Or are all of these saving ministries there to win our confidence? Since Romans 8:39 tells us that nothing can separate us from the love of God, those ministries cannot be there to win over God. Those ministries must be there to win our confidence, and to also show the Universe of angels how God has obligated Himself to His own.

This is precisely what we see stated in the Book of Hebrews where the writer discusses the motives of God. In 6:17 the writer says that God, wanting to win our confidence, swore an oath so that by two unchangeable things, the believer might have strong confidence in his flight to Jesus for refuge (6:18). God is the God of all encouragement (II Corinthians 1:3), and He wants His people to be encouraged.

A Common Spiritual Question.

How do I know my faith is real? I feel like a hypocrite and my conscience makes me feel guilty. How do I know I have the real kind of faith?

Answer: The question is really two parts: “What is biblical faith?” And “What right have I to exercise such faith?” First, we have to see what biblical faith is and does. Biblical faith is exercising belief in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ so that a person becomes a believer in Jesus Christ. What it produces is salvation. However, we must learn what the symptoms are of biblical faith. In scripture, there are four kinds of faith. We will not look at them now. But the faith that saves actually leaves evidence of its presence.

We can see what this evidence is in Hebrews 11:1-2:

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

For by it the men of old gained approval.

The symptoms of faith are that it expands the horizons of the person who exercises it. Suddenly, they're convinced there is a future, there is a heaven, there is a judgment, there is a rapture, etc. They are also convinced of unseen things through this faith. They are convinced there is a God, there is a Holy Spirit, the universe is much bigger than they ever imagined, the world is created and life is totally different than they ever thought. Biblical faith expands the horizons infinitely.

So talking to a person who asks this sort of question, the individual should be asked the following:

1. Do you believe that Christ lived?
2. Do you believe Christ rose from the dead?
3. Do you believe there is a God?
4. Do you believe in the truthfulness of the Bible?
5. Do you believe in the return of Jesus Christ?
6. Do you believe in the existence of heaven and hell?

Often the person will answer "yes" to all the previous questions but then will say, "It's not that I have problems with the truth, it's that I have problems with myself." At this point the person should take note that they have the symptoms of biblical faith. Their eyes have been opened to unseen things and now they are troubled about their right to exist in this wonderful new world. Now this is where verse two comes which states, "**for by it the men of old gained approval.**" In the Old Testament and in the New Testament the principle that justifies us before God is faith. When it comes to a relationship with Him He does not command us to be perfect, but He commands us to trust Him.

What happens is that people with tender consciences talk themselves out of obeying God. They don't realize it, but they are in a subtle kind of rebellion. The God of the Bible demands faith in the person and work of Christ. But they talk themselves out of their right to exercise faith and as a result, they actually rebel against the standards of the word of God. God demands that they trust in the worth of what Christ has done more than in their worthlessness.

However, Satan gets the new believer to focus on his own worthlessness which is brilliantly subtle. For it is the work of Christ that solves the problem of our worthlessness and we are supposed to look unto that and not unto our own guilt and failure.

In answer to this sort of question there are two parts then: The first is to understand what the symptoms of faith are, and the second is to remember the biblical demand that they exercise faith in the worth of Christ in the face of their own worthlessness. They are not supposed to trust their own worthlessness more than the worth of what Christ has done.

Personal Responsibility for this week:

1. Read the Word every day this week.
2. Pray until you are peaceful: Philippians 4:6-7
 - Recognize prayer is coming to have God's perspective.
 - List the anxieties and pressures of your day.
 - Trust God's ability to work in your difficulties for your spiritual good.
 - Cleanse your conscience by faith.
- Pray for your partner's prayer requests
3. Memorize Ephesians 1:13-14

Lesson Five: The Holy Spirit and Your Acceptance

Each member of the Trinity is related to the believer in such a way so as to instill confidence in his heart. This has been true for the Father and the Son, and it is also true for the Holy Spirit. We will look at two significant ways in which this is true.

1. The Holy Spirit is God's guarantee that He will complete His work in us.

Ephesians 1:13

One of the first things God did for us when we believed was to seal us with the Holy Spirit. In the ancient world a seal worked in two ways: (1) it served to identify the owner, and (2) to guarantee safe delivery of the object that was sealed. The seal was there to prevent tampering. The Holy Spirit, then, marks us as belonging to God. The Holy Spirit also keeps us tamper-proof, because greater is He who is in us, than he who is in the world (I John 4:4).

Ephesians 1:14

The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives also illustrates God's serious intentions about the future. Verse 14 tells us that the Holy Spirit is the pledge of our inheritance. It is important again to note this, because our own inclinations would be to reverse roles. We would think that we are the ones who should be giving a pledge to God, not God to us. Yet it is precisely God who pledges. This word "pledge" is *arrabòn* (ἀρραβών) in the Greek. It is a non-refundable down payment. In other words an earnest. If God does not follow through, we get to keep the Holy Spirit! If we go to hell, the Holy Spirit goes with us!

This again raises the question: is God doing this to protect us from Himself, or is He doing this to win our confidence? The answer is obvious. He is doing this to win our confidence.

2. The Holy Spirit wants to impress upon us that we have a Father in Heaven.

Romans 8:12-16 ("*Abba*" daddy-father); Galatians 4:6,7 (we are not slaves but sons with a father, *Abba*)

The Holy Spirit has a subjective ministry in the believer's life, that ministry is to impress upon us the Fatherhood of God. His goal is to convince us that God is our "Dad". Jesus, in the "Sermon on the Mount", taught His disciples to address God as their "Father in Heaven." The Holy Spirit is involved in the subjective application of this truth.

"For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!'"

Romans 8:15

The truth that the Holy Spirit would like to apply over and over again is that we need not fear God. Further, the Holy Spirit would like to emphasize the fact that God is our Heavenly Dad. The result for us is that we continually shout, "Abba, Father". Jesus addressed the Father using this phrase in Mark 14:36.

The emphasis on sonship is in strong contrast to the spirit of slavery from the past. We are not to return to that. The spirit of slavery is a spirit of fear and guilt.

Personal Responsibility for this week:

1. Read the Word every day this week. Look up the verses in John which have the word “believe” and read from them each day.

2. Pray until you are peaceful: Philippians 4:6-7

- Recognize prayer is coming to have God’s perspective.
- List the anxieties and pressures of your day.
- Trust God’s ability to work in your difficulties for your spiritual good.
- Cleanse your conscience by faith.
- Pray for your partner’s prayer requests

3. Memorize John 1:12

Lesson Six: Faith and Acceptance

God the Father has a way of bringing people into relationship with Him that sometimes comes as a shock. He makes a person His own child when they receive His Son, Jesus Christ, by faith.

John's use of the words "believe" and "faith" in his gospel illustrates the significance of trust in salvation. The verb "to believe" occurs ninety times in John; the noun does not occur at all. The emphasis in the Gospel of John is the urgency of the act of trust or belief. In the gospel a number of benefits comes to the one who believes.

The Benefit of Birth

At the very beginning of the Gospel we are told that believing gives a person the right to become a child (1:12). This has to be contrasted with the previous verse where Christ came unto His own "things" (His creation) and His own "people" (the Jews) did not receive Him. The Jews were racially the offspring of Abraham. But only the person who believes becomes an offspring of God. Based on faith the believer is not made a child of Abraham, but a child of God.

The Benefit of Transformation

This spiritual birth is the beginning of a radical inward transformation. Jesus had promised his disciples that He would come and live within each one of them (John 14:20). This "indwelling" of Jesus Christ provides the most intimate relationship a person could ever experience. In the process the indwelling Christ transforms each person in whom He takes up residence (Col 1:27-28). Although this transformation takes place at the deepest level of our being the presence of Jesus will begin to be experienced immediately because everyone who is born of God...

- will believe the truth about Jesus
- will love fellow believers
- will desire to do God's will (1 John 5:1-5)

The Benefit of Life

With this birth comes a new kind of life.

He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. John 3:36

The emphasis in the Gospel of John is not on the length of eternal life (although it is eternally long), but on the quality of this life (6:54). This can be seen in John 10:9, 10 where Christ states that he has come to give life and that more abundantly. This same thought is repeated a number of times (3:13, 36; 5:24; 6:40, 47; 10:9,10). John tells his readers in 20:30, 31 that the signs he includes in his gospel were selected that the reader might believe and live this eternal kind of life.

This life has several other benefits coming with it:

- 3:16 The believer will be imperishable. The Son will keep him from perishing.
- 3:18; 12:47 The believer will not be judged as a sinner. He has passed the judgment bar of God securely.
- 5:24 The believer has passed out of the realm of (spiritual) death into (spiritual) life. Or as John pictures it in 12:46 the believer has passed out of darkness into light.
- 4:14 The eternal life which the believer receives brings profound satisfaction and refreshment deep within the believer. The same idea is found in 6:35 & 7:38. In the context of 7:38 Christ says that deep within the believer will be rivers of refreshment. This refreshment will make it unnecessary for the Christian to look for any other source to quench his deepest thirst.
- 11:25 The believer is told that eternal life guarantees a future resurrection.
- 17:3 Eternal life enables the believer to experience the most intimate kind of personal relationship with God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

Application

The thrust of this is to recognize how easy God has made it for us to receive salvation. It is not based on effort, but on accepting what another has done for us. This underscores the value of

Jesus Christ. A person must decide what is worth more, his own religious efforts and satisfying his own conscience, or trusting in the person and work of Christ.



Personal Responsibility for this week:

1. Read the Word every day this week.
2. Pray until you are peaceful: Philippians 4:6-7
 - Recognize prayer is coming to have God's perspective.
 - List the anxieties and pressures of your day.
 - Trust God's ability to work in your difficulties for your spiritual good.
 - Cleanse your conscience by faith.
 - Pray for your partner's prayer requests
3. Memorize Galatians 3:26-27

Lesson Seven: Our Sonship and Acceptance

The goal of this session is to see how Sonship in Christ determines the way the Father views us and treats us. Salvation brings the believer two wondrous gifts: the gift of protection from sin, and the gift of an exalted position before the Father. In Session Three we saw how we should take the great “spiritual plunge” of cleansing our conscience by faith in the blood of Christ (Hebrews 10:19-22). Now we are going to examine the nature of our positive relationship with God the Father. The Blood deals with the negative, the guilt and the sin. But the position we have in Christ relates to the positive. It answers the crucial question: How should I relate to God now that I am a Christian? The answer is that we should relate to God as mature sons who are vitally significant to Him? Galatians 3 & 4 give the biblical basis of how God views us and how we should relate to Him.

Our New Sonship—Galatians 3:24-29

Using contrasts Paul teaches how the Christian is far better off than the Israelite under Law. The Law functioned as a child attendant to bring us to the teacher, the Lord Jesus Christ. A *paidegogos*, the word translated “tutor”, literally meant a “child-leader.” This child-leader was not the teacher but the child-attendant who took the child to the teacher (3:24, 25).

But now that faith is come we are no longer under a child-leader because God has placed us in a mature relationship with Him (3:25).

The “for” of verse 26 leads to the explanation of how we are not being treated as children. These verses explain that we are all sons. The word which is translated “sons” is *huioi* which is the Greek word for “mature sons.” A mature son does not need the services of a “child-leader” (3:26-29).

The reason God views us as mature sons is that we have been “baptized” (completely immersed) into His mature Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (verse 27). Notice that we have not been sprinkled into Christ but totally absorbed into a vital union with Him.

This identity before God is true no matter what our social or sexual identity is (verse 28). Spiritual equality exists before God for both sexes. The bible teaches differences in function for the sexes but not in worth.

This also gives us a direct link-up with the lineage of Abraham, the forefather of Christ, giving us the spiritual privilege of being linked with God’s people of faith (verse 29).

Our Old Spiritual Slavery—Galatians 4:1-7

We have to remember that our previous condition was one of servitude no matter if it was under the Mosaic Law or under the elementary principles of this age. What is the practical meaning of this? Religion in Israel was based upon faith and the complex set of laws that God gave to them in their spiritual infancy. Further, if we were not under that system but any other religion, the religion would still be the elemental practice of rules (verses 1-3).

But Christ came so that we might receive the Adoption of Mature Sons (verses 4 & 5).

Because we are being treated as mature sons the Holy Spirit has come into our lives continually crying “Abba [daddy], Father.” This reminds us that we have a “Dad” in Heaven (verse 6).

That being so we are not to act like slaves, but as mature sons before God (verse 7).

Our New Responsibility

Our position in Christ gives us the worth we need before God to rest in His presence. The Blood of Jesus cleanses us from our sin, but our position in Jesus Christ gives us our value before God. We have two critical responsibilities: First, to make sure our conscience is cleansed, not clear but cleansed, because of the infinite value of the Blood of Christ. Secondly, to make sure that our heart accepts God the Father’s evaluation of us in Christ.

We are to make sure that our service flows not out of a slaves mentality, but a son’s mentality. We have to make a mature decision to trust in God’s way of acceptance, and to abandon any other method we may have been using.

Slavery	Mature Sonship
Romans 8:15	Galatians 5:14,18,22,23
fear, orders of the Law	principles
browbeating, thoughtless obedience	relationship
guilt	trust and love

Personal Responsibility for this week:

1. Read the Word every day this week.
2. Pray until you are peaceful: Philippians 4:6-7
 - Recognize prayer is coming to have God's perspective
 - List the anxieties and pressures of your day
 - Trust God's ability to work in your difficulties for your spiritual good.
 - Cleanse your conscience by faith.
 - Pray for your partner's requests.
3. Memorize I Corinthians 12:4-7

Lesson Eight: Walking in the Spirit

We have seen so far that we have a position before the Father, protection from sin and a position in Christ. We also have the opportunity to live a life of love and service which are absolutely critical for human and spiritual maturity. Yet as we studied those challenges some of you probably felt within that you did not have the inclination or desire to be helpful to anyone, because you felt you desperately needed so much help yourself.

Now we are going to see that we not only have the objective means of the blood and our position to satisfy God, but we also have the subjective means of changing our character. This change of character is absolutely dependent upon who Jesus is and what Jesus has done (John 15:4-5). Jesus said that we must abide in relationship with Him in order to have a fruitful life. As we do this the Spirit will work in our lives to conform us to the character of Jesus. One of the names for this process is called, “Walking in the Spirit.”

Walking In The Spirit

Paul writes in Galatians 5:16, “But I say, walk in the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.” The Bible recognizes that problems come from within where internal pressures drive us to do wrong things. So we are told to arrange our lives in relationship to the Spirit, and not to the desires of the flesh. This process is explained in Romans 6, 7, and 8 where the word “walk” appears in 6:4 and 8:4. As we study this we shall see that each member of the Trinity becomes involved.

The Steps of “Spirit Walking”

1. The first thing we are told in Romans 6:1-4 is that we are immersed into Christ Jesus. We are identified with Christ. That is the way the Father looks at us, so that is the way we should look at ourselves. We have to walk in a new kind of life (verse 4). This is a life where we do not look at what we think or see but we begin by looking at how the Father sees us.
2. Because we are immersed into Christ, we can relate as freely to God the Father as the Son does. Romans 6:10-11 says that Christ died once and now He lives to God. Even so, in the same

way as Christ is alive to the Father, we should assume ourselves to be dead or corpses to sin and continually alive to God in Christ Jesus. We are under no obligation to hang around the moods within, but to turn our attention to God the Father and wait around in His presence. If we do this the mastery of sin will be broken by the indwelling Spirit (verse 14). Romans 8:5 goes on to say that our perspectives should be built around the things of the Spirit of God in a living relationship with the Father.

3. This is not just a simplistic technique, but it is a part of an entire lifestyle for the believer. It involves the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It involves passing judgments on unrighteous thoughts, perspectives, and actions (Romans 8:12-16). We put them to death by turning away from the desires associated with them, and turning to the Father.

We are emotional beings. But our emotions can be our greatest enemies. In the world negative emotions are either deadened by alcohol or drugs, or else attempts are made to change them by a change of circumstances or thinking. In the NT they are changed for the better by a relationship, a relationship to the Father through what Christ has done. As we actively live this relationship the controlling power of sin, the negative moods are eradicated, and a growth in love and perspective is enhanced.

Personal Responsibility for this week:

1. Read the Word every day this week.

2. Pray until you are peaceful: Philippians 4:6-7

- Reckon yourself alive to the Father
- Worship (appreciate) the Father
- Recognize prayer is coming to have God's perspective
- List the anxieties and pressures of your day
- Trust God's ability to work in your difficulties for your spiritual good.
- Cleanse your conscience by faith.
- Pray for your partner's requests.

3. Memorize I Corinthians 12:4-7

Lesson Nine: Prayer and Confession of Sin

What is Prayer?

Prayer is communicating to God from His perspective. One can see this in Matthew 6:6-14. Christ is giving the Sermon on the Mount and he says in verse 6, “but you, when you pray, go into your inner room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.” This, first of all, tells us that prayer is a private relationship between the believer and his father. It is not a relationship for others but it is a relationship towards God alone. It is not a public performance but a private relationship. Christ goes on to say in verse 7 that prayer should not involve meaningless repetition because it is not dependent upon many words. The Gentiles are very concerned about the quantity of words that they share with God and the number of times that it is repeated. But for the Christian that is not the case. The important thing is the quality of relationship between the believer and the Father.

Why is this so? Christ states in verse 8 that we should not be like the Gentiles, the non-Christians. Because our Father knows what we need before we ask him. Since he knows what we need before we ask him, prayer is then not merely asking for things from God but adjusting ourselves to God’s will. We are encouraged in many places to ask things from God. In his activity he restricts himself many times to what we request. But the important thing is that we have a correctly adjusted attitude in prayer. This prayer is actually a four step process.

1. The Father’s Person. Know who you are talking to and get his perspective of yourself.

The correct attitude in prayer has the Father as the center. This is what we find in verse 9 that prayer is addressed to our Father who is in heaven. And we ask him that we might hallow, or sanctify, his name. That simply means to take him seriously as to who he is and what he has done and is doing.

2. The Father’s Will. Accept the fact that his will is best in your life.

In verse 10 we are told that we should request that his kingdom should come and his will be done on this earth. Again, prayer is a concern with things of God.

3. Our Needs. Share your most basic needs with him.

After we adjust ourselves to the will of God we can go on to ask for things for ourselves. This is restricted to the 24 hour day because we are supposed to pray for our daily sustenance or bread.

4. Our Relation to Others. Have the right attitude toward others.

After we take care of our personal needs we go on to our relationship to others. Our relationship to others should be positive and good. We should have a forgiving attitude. Finally, we are to request that we be kept from trials and temptation in verse 13.

What is prayer then? It is communicating to God from his perspective.

The Trinity and Prayer

The night before his crucifixion Jesus was explaining to his disciples the new relationship that they have to God the Father in prayer. He tells them in verses 23 and 24 of John 16, “and in that day you will ask me no question. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you shall ask the Father for anything, He will give it to you in My name. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full.”

Jesus is stating here that we can ask the Father anything in relationship to his name and the Father will give it to us. That is a tremendous promise, but what does it mean? The important phrase is the name of Jesus Christ. The reason for that importance is that a name refers to a person’s character, reputation, and works. Therefore, any request we make should be in harmony character, reputation, and works of Jesus Christ. It is totally suspicious to simply say at the end of a prayer, in Christ’s name and expect, because of using that phrase, it will be answered. What we should be praying is in harmony with the name, character and reputation of Jesus Christ. What then, does this tell us about the Trinity’s place in prayer?

Prayer is made to God the Father, in the name, character, reputation and works of Jesus Christ, and is sustained by the power of the Spirit of God. Each member of the Trinity is involved in one way or another.

The Place of Faith

Since prayer is communication to God from his perspective we must be believing people as we communicate to God. If we are not every word we say to God implicitly would be a lie. We must know to whom we are speaking and what his character is; we must trust him. Faith is an essential part of communication to God.

We can see this in James 1:5-8. Verses 6 and 7 state, “but let him ask in faith without doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord...”

Receiving anything from God is dependent upon trusting God we are making requests of. Trust is an essential part of prayer.

Philippians 4:6,7 tells us that when we are anxious we should share those anxieties with God. “By prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving” we should make our requests concerning our fears to God. Notice that these requests are made with thanksgiving, at the heart of them is faith.

When faith is present the result will be that the peace of God which passes all comprehension shall guard our hearts.

Faith is an essential part of communication with God.

Confession of Sin

Because of the work of Jesus Christ on the cross our sins have been taken away. Since that is so, when we sin we are simply called upon to confess that sin (1 John 1:8-10).

Verse 8 tells us that “if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.”

This is a denial of the ability to sin and the principle of sin is in our lives. Only the rapture, that is, be taken into the presence of God or death will nullify the effectiveness of sin within.

When we do sin though, all we need for cleansing is to confess that sin. This is stated in verse 9. Confession is not wallowing in self-pity or tears or guilt. It is simply agreeing with God about the specific act of rebellion against the known will of God. When we do that he forgives us of that sin and cleanses us from all unrighteousness.

Verse 10 goes on to say, “if we say we have not sinned in the past with the present effect upon us, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” We must realize that a sin carries an effect. When

we sin it does disturb our relationship with God and it does disturb our inner character. We must take sin seriously by confessing it.

Summary

What is prayer? It is a living relationship to God and the members of the Trinity. We communicate to the Father in the name of Jesus Christ through the power of the Spirit of God. Since prayer is communication from God's perspective, we must come into his presence with faith and be willing to immediately confess sin. Prayer should be a daily, hourly activity of the believer. As issues come upon us, we share our lives with God and he gives us the character to maintain our Christian life.

Personal Responsibility for this week:

1. Read the Word every day this week.
2. Pray until you are peaceful: Philippians 4:6-7
 - Reckon yourself alive to the Father
 - Worship (appreciate) the Father
 - Recognize prayer is coming to have God's perspective
 - List the anxieties and pressures of your day
 - Trust God's ability to work in your difficulties for your spiritual good.
 - Cleanse your conscience by faith.
 - Pray for your partner's requests.
3. Memorize I Corinthians 12:4-7

Lesson Ten: Christian Service

What is Christian Service?

If practiced biblically, Christian service should be a unique experience. The gift and ability to serve is from God. The inner motivation to serve comes through the Spirit of God. God has designed service to be a soul-satisfying experience. He has done this because service is necessary for any true Christian experience. Further a limit exists on Christian service. God has treated us practically so that He does not want us to be overworked. Further there are present and future rewards for service.

The Gifts of Christian Service

The Bible teaches that when Christ ascended up on high, he gave gifts to men. He is presently pouring His life, character and abilities into the church. These abilities are called spiritual gifts.

As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, let him speak as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. I Peter 4:10, 11

This passage emphasizes that each person has received a gift. Our responsibility is to use it to serve one another. In this way we function like a steward of a household. We are not the owners of the household, but our responsibility is to manage the goods entrusted to us by the owner. We function as a steward. The next verse goes on to point out that there are two types of gifts. Those which are used as speaking gifts and those which are used as ministering gifts. The ministering gifts serve the physical and personal needs of the saints. While the speaking gifts mostly are evident in the congregational life of the church.

The important thing to notice is that these gifts are given by the Living God. They are not dependent upon natural talent. Either we have a gift or we do not have a gift. They cannot be manufactured nor faked. Either they are there or they are not.

This means that God really is the one who has given us the ability to serve. It comes graciously as a gift. Just as Adam was given a whole new world to take care of so we are given an opportunity to minister.

In I Corinthians 12 Paul develops how the church should function in a similar way to the human body. Each person having a place where they can help one another. Yet there are differences in how we do help one another. In chapter 12 verse 6 Paul says that it is God who causes the results. The same God works in everything in relationship to everyone. We then are free to be God-dependent, and not dependent upon ourselves for results. Christian service then, with its results, are a gift of God. The ability to serve comes from above and not from us. We do not have to be in a particular mood or a particular place to exercise a gift. We are the gift. Therefore, religious works are not some rote exercise that we do, but instead it is the use of what we are.

The Psychology of Christian Service

It is important to recognize that a psychology of Christian service is in the Bible. We are told in Scripture that the Spirit of God is within us. His ministry is to produce fruit in our lives, inward character that can have an outward effect. God creates desires within to serve.

In Philippians 2:12 Paul tells believers that they should work out their salvation or deliverance from the ways of this world with fear and trembling. They should be very, very careful not to do things the world does, or to imitate the way the world does things. In verse 14 we have to be fearful and trembling that we do things without grumbling or disputing so that, as verse 15 says, we should shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Grumbling and complaining is the air that is breathed in the secular world. Christians who are there should not be grumblers or arguers. So verse 12 is driving home the point that God wants to present deliverance from the way the world does things. This deliverance should be evident in the church too. The reason for this is that it is God who is at work in all of us. Note Philippians 3:13

for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure...

God is the one who is giving the desire to do and the energy to achieve. Since He is doing this in the congregation, the members should be very careful about grumbling or disputing among themselves about the working life of the church. God is working in the midst. Paul absolutely assumes that this is true of every congregation. God is working in our midst.

God not only supplies the desire, He wants an inner motivation that finds delight in serving others. In First Corinthians 13 Paul says that sacrifice is not enough. God wants an inner disposition that really enjoys benefitting the object, that is the people you are serving. Love is not only an act, it is a disposition. “Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous” (13:4). The fruit of the Spirit has as its leading characteristic love. God gives to the believer a real enjoyment of benefitting others; in that sense Christian service is self-serving. Enjoyment is brought to the person serving.

According to Colossians 2:6 & 7 the other inner disposition behind Christian service is gratitude.

The Rewards of Christian Service

Present Rewards:

- Maturity Ephesians 4:11-13
- Spiritual blessedness of fellowship Philippians 3:8-11

Future Rewards:

- A wage I Corinthians 3:10-13
- More meaningful worship Revelation 4:9-11

3. Memorize I Peter 4:10

Personal Responsibility for this week:

1. Read the Word every day this week.
2. Pray until you are peaceful: Philippians 4:6-7
 - Reckon yourself alive to the Father
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Appendix: Your Adversary the Devil

Satan's History

The believer has three enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. Our knowledge of the devil, or Satan, comes from the Bible. In Scripture we have a fairly clear picture of the arch enemy of the believer, Satan. The name Satan actually means “the opponent.” His other name “the Devil” means the slanderer; he is incapable of telling the truth.

In Scripture his career begins in ages past. According to the Bible Satan experienced a moral fall (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:15; 1 Timothy 3:6). Also in the past his judgment was predicted in the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:15). Another judgment was pronounced on him through the cross (John 12:31-33). He has been the ancient enemy of God and God’s purposes and the sentence of the lake of fire has been placed upon him.

Presently he is reigning as “a god of this world”; he is “the prince of the power of the air” (2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2; Revelation 2:13). He is the spiritual father of all who accept his philosophy of independence and rebellion against God (John 8:34; Ephesians 2:2).

In the future he will be cast out of heaven (Revelation 12:7-12) and for a thousand years he will be confined to an abyss in the heart of the earth (Revelation 20:1-3, 7). When released from that place of containment he will tempt the population of the earth again to rebellion against God (Revelation 20:8,9). In a sense this will be a garden of Eden experience all over again for the entire population of the earth. His final doom will be in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10). This is the history of the enemy of our souls.

Satan's Limitation

In John 5:18,19 we have the limitation of Satan.

We know that no one who is born of God sins; but he who is born of God keeps him and the evil one does not touch him. We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

Verse 18 tells us that no one who is born of God continually sins. The Greek text uses the present tense which emphasizes a habitual life of sinning. This is something that cannot be true of the believer because it is the duty of the Lord Jesus Christ to keep that individual. Further, it is the ministry of the Father to keep that individual from being condemned with the world. We are also told in this verse that “the evil one” does not touch the believer. In Greek that means that the evil one cannot grab hold of the believer. We shall soon see that the believer can have thoughts put into his or her mind by Satan. But the believer cannot be controlled by Satan. God has also put another limitation upon Satan. He cannot test above our ability to withstand (1 Corinthians 10:13). This means that Satan can be used to refine us as he was used to refine Job. Yet there is a protection that God gives to the believer from the brutal methods of Satan. God protects His own.

Satan's Methods

Satan’s methods are fear and lies. 1 Peter 5:6 tells us that we should humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God that he might exalt us at the proper time. Verse 7 also says that we should cast our anxiety upon him because it is a concern to him concerning us. Verse 8 and 9 state:

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

In the ancient world the people were familiar with the methods of the lion. The lion would roar so loud that he could be heard a half a mile away. The animal he was stalking would be petrified by fear. Then, the lion would come up and kill the victim. The lion’s method was to terrify the animal. In the same way Satan’s methods are to instill a heart of fear into the life of the believer. That is why Paul told Timothy that God has not given us a spirit of fear. Such a spirit does not come from God but Satan. Satan’s first method is to put fearful thoughts into the mind of the believer that will involve lies about God, the world, other believers, and Satan’s own existence.

Satan’s methods are basically the transference of lies into our minds. He is a spirit being and he communicates by thought transference. Using that means he will transfer thoughts into our minds. We have to defend ourselves aggressively. Being alert and resisting the devil, we can grow in spiritual strength and regain the peace we have lost in the sudden onslaught of Satan.

Ephesians 6 tells us that we have a spiritual struggle on our hands not only against the devil but

against other spiritual powers (Ephesians 6:10-12). Therefore we have to make sure we are well protected by the armor in the evil day when Satan strikes (verse 13). Our first defense is truth against Satan's lies (verse 14). And our second defense is a willingness to share the gospel. For the thrust of Satan is to keep us from sharing the gospel. Satan was judged at the cross and every time a person comes to faith in Christ Satan is reminded of the judgment at the cross. So the last thing he wants is the gospel being preached.

To protect ourselves with the truth we have to use faith to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one (verse 16). In verse 16 we have an accurate explanation of what Satan does. He wants to make us doubt. For doubt is the opposite of faith. It is interesting in Scripture that the Greek word for doubt literally means to be continually questioning. Satan's method in the garden and today is to ask the believer: can you really trust God? The believer's answer is to put his faith in the promises of God, in the hope of salvation, and in the word of God (verse 17). At the same time we need to struggle in prayer with our doubts and discouragements that come our way from Satanic attack. A believer has to learn to quickly respond in prayer to those things which Satan throws at us.

Satan's Message

Satan's message is simply that God is like he is. Satan wants to be like God. But when he attacks believers he goes for the juggler by telling the believer that God is like him. Satan tries to tell us that God wants us to feel guilty, to be religious, to be afraid, to be cowardly, and to doubt the love of God the Father for us. He wants us to believe that God is the devil.

Summary

Satan is an aggressive enemy. He wants us to believe that God is really like he himself is. To defend ourselves we need to aggressively believe the goodness of God. We need to aggressively pray when seasons of doubt and fear come. For those seasons are probably brought by Satan.

