

TEAM

DISCIPLESHIP

training | education | accountability | motivation

Preaching the Gospel to Yourself

Welcome to TEAM Discipleship!

We're thrilled that you've decided to commit the next few months to the process of growing as a disciple of Jesus Christ. We have great expectations of what God will do in our lives as we study his word and discover what it means to "Preach the Gospel to Yourself."

As you already know, TEAM Discipleship will require sacrifice and commitment. It will require work. It will require a stick-with-it attitude that will challenge you. But, if you are willing and able to make the commitment, we believe it will be worth it.

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:20-21)

Because the Tomb is Empty

Week by Week Assignments

Date	Reading/Study Due	Drivetime Audio	Training Exercise/Other
	The Gospel: A User's Guide	Missing Ingredient (Stanley) - 36 min	Personal Info Sheet
	Luther Preface	The Prodigal Sons (Keller) - 38 min	
	Doctrinal Building Blocks #1 Justification & Adoption	How the Cross Converts Us (Keller) - 36 min	Being a Blessing
	Doctrinal Building Blocks #2 Justification & Sanctification	How the Cross Changes Us (Keller) - 39 min	
	The Centrality of the Gospel	Boasting Only in the Cross (Piper) - 39 min	Teach a Friend
	Identifying Idols	The Gospel (Keller) - 38 min	
	Dismantling Idols & Preaching the Gospel to Yourself	Men & Masculinity (Driscoll) - 75 min	"One Another" Assessment
	Son or Slave?	Lessons from the Life of John G. Paton (Piper) - 79 min	
	Forgiveness Project	The Gospel and Yourself (Keller) - 41 min	Forgiveness List
	Lovelace & Whitefield Projects	Missional Ministry (Driscoll) - 59 min	
	Workmanship Project	The Biblical Man (Driscoll) - 66 min	Divine Design

Why call it "TEAM Discipleship"?

The Christian faith has always been a team sport. From the earliest days, Christians met together to help one another treasure Jesus and live out the truth. Though we live in a very individualistic age, we see the need for pursuing Jesus in the context of community.

The name "TEAM Discipleship" is significant for the following reasons:

1. The idea of TEAM reminds us that not only are we doing this together, but others are counting on us for success. On a team, the whole team wins or loses. Each member of the team plays a crucial role. Though individuals vary in their personal development or achievements, the team's success is top priority on a winning team.
2. The idea of TEAM reminds us that we are action oriented. Successful teams don't spend all their time indoors watching film or studying playbooks. They get out on the field. In the same way, we will be taking what we learn and applying it in our lives and ministries. Therefore, it's essential that each man has an outlet for ministry and service.
3. The term TEAM is an acronym:
 - a. Trainning - practical experiences
 - b. Education - learning
 - c. Accountability - relational commitment
 - d. Motivation - grace-driven exhortation
4. The term Discipleship reminds us that we are Christ-followers. We are those who are walking in the footsteps of Jesus who, before he ascended, said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20).

Personal Info Sheet

Please fill out this sheet thoughtfully and honestly. This sheet will allow your TEAMmates to get to know you a little better.

Name: _____

Age: _____

Address: _____

City, Zip: _____

Email: _____

Best Phone: _____

Ministry(ies): _____

T-shirt size: _____

Are you married? Yes No

 If yes, wife's name: _____

Do you have children? Yes No

 If yes, names and ages: _____

What do you do for a living?

What are some hobbies and activities you like to do?

What are some of your favorite movies?

Who are some of your favorite musical artists or groups?

Who are your favorite authors (dead or living)?

What are your strengths? (give at least 3, and briefly explain)

What are your weaknesses? (give at least 3, and briefly explain)

Overall, how effectively are you using your strengths?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all				very much

I know how to share my personal testimony with somebody who does not know Jesus Christ.

1	2	3	4	5
not at all				very much

I know how to share the gospel with somebody who does not know Jesus Christ.

1	2	3	4	5
not at all				very much

I know how to study the Bible and feed my faith with God's word.

1	2	3	4	5
not at all				very much

I know how to help another person change and grow in his faith.

1	2	3	4	5
not at all				very much

I have a good sense of what God has called me to do with my life.

1	2	3	4	5
not at all				very much

The top 3 areas of my life I would like to see change:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Introduction to the Gospel

What are some common ways to explain the Gospel?

Do you think most Christians have a good understanding of the Gospel? Why or why not?

CONVICTION: THE WHOLE BIBLE IS THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST!

Luke 24:25-27 - *He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.*

Luke 24:44-47 - *He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."*

1 Corinthians 1:22-24; 2:2 - *Jews demand miraculous signs [power] and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God... For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.*

Commitments

1. **We resolve to read the Bible as the Gospel.**

Since the central theme of the Bible is—the sufferings and glory of Christ, we resolve to read the Bible as the story of salvation, not moralistic lessons. We resolve to see how the law, the ceremonies, and the history all point us to their fulfillment in the coming of the Deliverer promised in Genesis 3:15 and throughout the Bible.

2. **We resolve to preach and teach the Gospel to believers, not just unbelievers.**

We become Christians and we grow as Christians by grace through faith in Jesus. Therefore, we resolve to preach the Gospel as the means to grow, not 'biblical principles for living' (which means 'the law') to believers.

3. **We resolve to preach and teach the Gospel in every sermon and every lesson.**

The most desperate need of both unbelievers and believers is to hear and appropriate the Gospel to their lives each and every day. Therefore, we resolve to point people to the Gospel in every sermon, lesson, small group meeting, etc.

4. **We resolve to receive the Gospel as the "milk" and the "meat" of God's Word.**

Since the whole Bible is the Gospel and Christ crucified is the wisdom and power of God (1 Cor. 1:22-24), then we never move beyond the Gospel to something deeper. There is nothing deeper than the Gospel. Therefore, we resolve to view the Gospel as both the A-B-C's and the A-to-Z of Christianity.

5. **We resolve to view the world and the church through the lens of the Gospel.**

Since the Bible is our ultimate authority and the Bible is the Gospel, we resolve to know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2). This means our understanding of the world and church and how to address its needs and problems will be based on the Gospel.

6. We resolve to be "new" people, not "nice" people.

The Gospel is out not to reform people but to transform people. Churches that preach for behavioral reformation tend to elevate middle-class values to the level of biblical norm and focus on external change. We resolve to seek transformation at the motivational and character level, not merely behavioral modification.

7. We resolve to believe that the Gospel can change anyone.

Since we are saved by grace, there are no hopeless cases and no hopeless situations. Since we are saved by grace, we resolve to have great respect and great hope for every unbeliever.

8. We resolve to motivate with grace, not guilt.

The Gospel is the power of God to motivate us. Those gripped by the Gospel are compelled by the love of Christ (2Cor.5:14) to serve, give, and witness. Therefore, we resolve not to motivate people through guilt trips driving them to obey out of fear. But rather we resolve to motivate people through the Gospel that sets us free to love unconditionally out of gratitude for God's grace.

9. We resolve to solve all problems (personal, church, social) with the Gospel.

The root of all of our problems is that something other than Christ is serving as our functional savior. Therefore we neither tell people: "You shouldn't act like that-stop it!" nor "You need to accept yourself as you are!" Rather, we call them to repent of their idols and trust in Christ who through his life and death is the only one who can give them all they are longing for.

TWO WAYS TO READ THE BIBLE

Narratively:

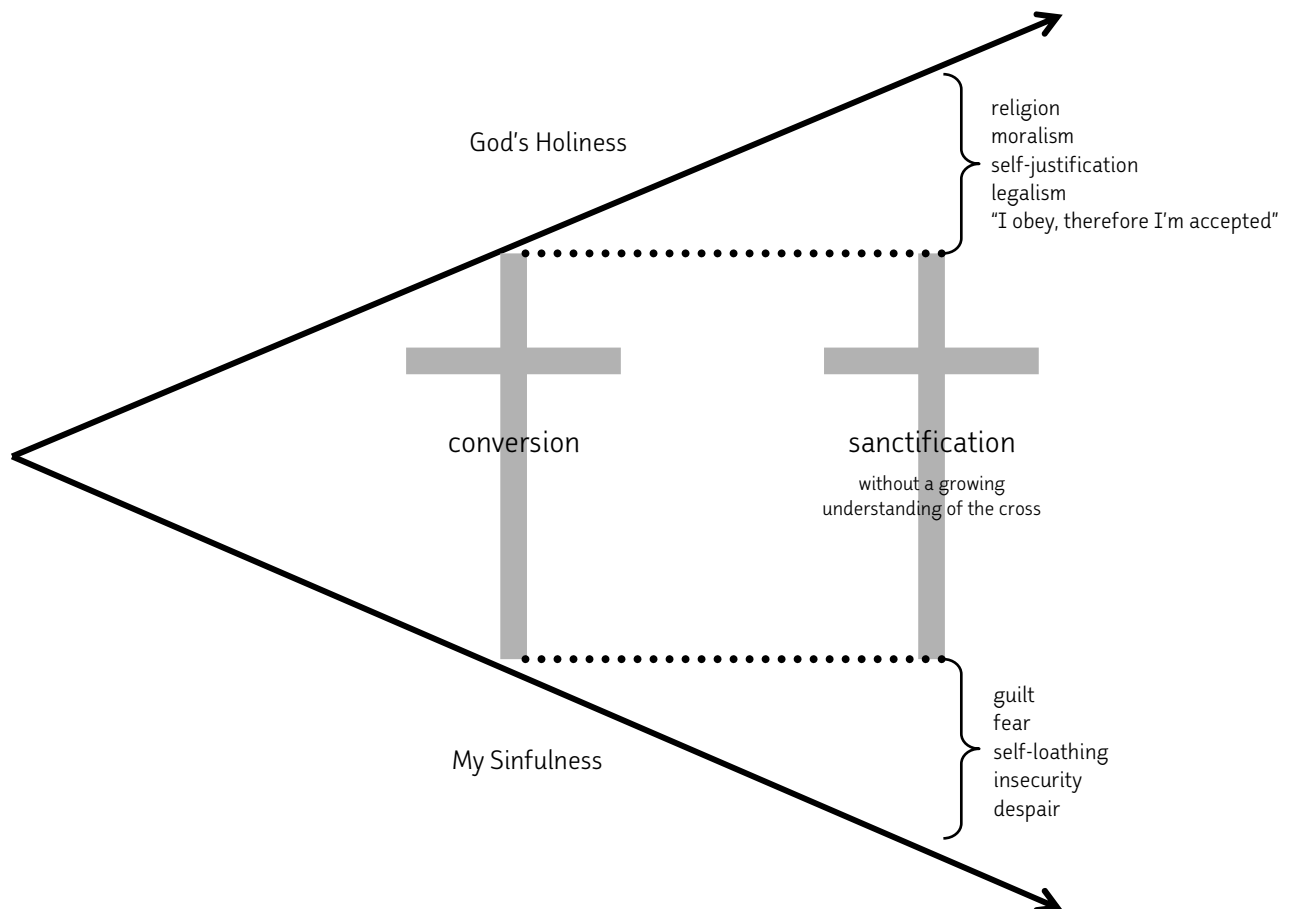
Creation → Fall → Redemption → Restoration

Topically:

God → Sin → Christ → Faith, not works

THE GOSPEL IS THE KEY TO CONVERSION AND ONGOING CHANGE

"The Gospel is both the A-B-C's and the A-to-Z of Christianity" - Dick Kauffman



The Gospel: A User's Guide

WHAT IS THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST?

1. **Everyone has a "Center."** Everyone has to live for something--something that we think will give us a sense of significance and satisfaction. We all then have a "personal center," a bottom line, an ultimate value by which we sort through all the activities of life and set priorities. It may be career, possessions, appearance, romance, peer groups, achievement, good causes, moral character, religion, marriage, children, friendships or a combination of several. Without this "bottom line," our life would be completely meaningless. This means, however...
2. **Everyone is a Slave.** Whatever we live for has control over us. We do not control ourselves. The things we live for enslave us with guilt (if we fail to attain them) or anger (if someone blocks them from us) or fear (if they are threatened) or drivenness (since we must have them) or despair (if we ever lose them completely). This means, then...
 - a. **Even the most irreligious people are really worshipping something.** Whatever thing or things from which we choose to derive our value become the ultimate meaning in our lives - thus it serves as a 'god' and gives us a sense of worth or 'righteousness' even if we don't think in those terms.
 - b. **Even the most religious people are not really worshipping God.** Religious people may look to God as Helper, Teacher, and Example, but it is their moral performance, which is serving as their Savior. They are just as guilty and self-hating if they fail it, just as angry and resentful if someone blocks it, just as fearful and anxious if something threatens it, just as driven "to be good."

Sum: So both religious and irreligious people are avoiding God as Savior and Lord, but in different ways. Both are seeking to keep control of their own lives by looking to something besides God as their salvation.

Transition: We have to live for something, and something will control us. What will we do then? There is only one Master, however, who can *forgive* (none of the rest ever will), and who will *last* (none of the rest ever can). Neither failure on our part nor the circumstances of life can separate us from Him. Thus only in service to Him will we find freedom. To find Him we must admit:

3. **Everyone needs a Substitute.** "Sin" then is us substituting ourselves for God, putting ourselves where only God deserves to be--as Savior and Lord of our lives. "**Salvation**" is God substituting himself for us, coming to earth in Jesus and putting himself where only we deserve to be--living the life we should have lived and dying the death we should have died. "**The Solution**" To become a Christian is first to admit **the problem**: that you have been substituting yourself for God either by religion (trying to be your own savior by obedience to moral standards) or by irreligion (trying to be your own lord by disobedience to moral standards). And second to accept **the remedy**: asking God to accept you for Jesus' sake and know that you are loved and accepted because of his record, not yours.

HOW CAN I CONNECT WITH CHRIST?

1. **Change not the amount, but the depth of your repentance.** You have to “repent,” but the repentance that receives Christ is not so much being sorry for specific sins. It is not less than that, but it is much more. Saving repentance is admitting that your main sin is your efforts of self-salvation, at trying to be your own Savior. Don’t just repent of sins, but of the self-righteousness under all you do, bad and good. Repent not just for doing wrong, but even for the reason you did right, not just for law-breaking but also for law-relying. Admit that the reason you did right was so you could put God in your debt, to have some say in what kind of life you deserve, to keep control of your life.
2. **Change not the amount, but the object of your faith.** You have to “believe,” but the belief that receives Christ is not so much subscribing to a set of doctrines about Christ. It is not less than that, but it is much more. Saving faith is transferring your trust from your own works and record to Christ’s work and record. We are not liberated by the teaching of Christ, but by the work of Christ for us. The gospel is not our developing a righteous record and giving it to God but that God in Christ developed a righteous record and gives it to us. The only way to be accepted by God is by asking God to accept you for Jesus’ sake. Then you can know that you are loved and accepted because of his record, not yours. Then the determining factor in your relationship with God is not your past but Christ’s past.

Pray: “Lord, I have been trying to be my own Savior and Lord, both in my bad deeds and in my good. If I have never done so before, I thank you for the perfect life and sacrificial death of Christ in my place. Now I ask you to receive and adopt me as your child not because of anything I have done, but, because of what Christ has done for me.”

HOW WILL I LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE?

This new life of freedom extends through:

1. **Continual joyful repentance for residual self-righteousness.** A new quality of life results as you learn to joyfully repent for “idols,” left-over systems of self-salvation. Under every problem there is something more important than Jesus that is operating as our functional righteousness and worth.

Here is a real example. A woman in her late 30’s had never married. Her family and her part of the country believed that there was something radically wrong with any woman of that age that was still single. She wrestled greatly with shame and guilt, and she went to a counselor. The therapist rightly told her that she had taken to heart her family’s approach to personal value and worth. They taught that a woman’s “record” had to include a husband and children if she was to have any value or worth. The counselor then proposed that she throw off such an unenlightened view and throw herself into a career. About this time she was going to a church where she was clearly hearing the gospel for the first time. She realized that the well-meaning counselor was asking her to throw off a politically incorrect system of works-righteousness for a politically correct one! She said, “why should I leave the ranks of the many women who make ‘family’ their righteousness to join the ranks of the many men who make ‘career’ their righteousness? Would I not be as devastated then by career setbacks as I have been by romantic ones? No. I will receive the

righteousness of Christ, and learn to rejoice in it. Then I can look at males or career and say, 'what makes me beautiful to God is Jesus, not these things.' Only then will I have power and freedom." She found the self-righteousness that is under every problem.

2. **Growing experience of grateful love.** A new quality of life results as you lose the old motivation of selfish fear ('slave' mentality) and become empowered by the new dynamic of grateful love ('child of God' mentality).
 - a. **New joyful repentance.** Many people object to the gospel by saying, "if I believed I was totally accepted despite my failures, then I would have no incentive to live a good life." But that means that that person's incentive was one of fear, and fear-motivation is always selfish. Before, the thing that convicted us of sin was the thing that de-assures us, the fear of rejection, "if I do these things, I will be cut off." In this situation, repentance was very unnatural, a total disruption, and devastating to one's fellowship with God. Now, however, the thing that convicts us is the very thing that assures us--his undying loyal love to us, "if I do these things, I displease the one who was cut off himself rather than cut me off." Repentance now becomes normal and revitalizing to one's fellowship with God.
 - b. **New joy in obedience.** Without an experience of grace, all our good deeds are essentially self-interested, impersonal, and conditional. But the gospel moves us to love and serve God for who he is in himself--there is an entirely new motivational structure for why we obey his Word. There is a new "aesthetic joy" for God himself. In addition, now our obedience is unconditional. If we were saved by our works, then there would be a limit to what God could ask of us, but if we are saved by grace at such an infinite cost, then whatever we are asked to do is reasonable (and a deal!) Since we now have (in embryo) everything possible, guaranteed, we obey God not to get anything, but simply to please him, out of delight for who He is in Himself, to give him pleasure and joy. People who give up on God were in it for something besides God, which did not come forth. But the gospel removes any possible motivation for disobeying God. We are not our own (I Cor. 6:19-20). To the degree the gospel energizes us, to that degree our obedience will be joyous and limitless regardless of any circumstances.

SUMMARY

1. **Irreligion** is avoiding God as Lord and Savior by ignoring him.
2. **Religion** is avoiding God as Lord and Savior by developing a moral righteousness and giving it to God so that then He owes you.
3. **The Gospel** is *not* that we develop righteousness and give it to Him, so that then he owes us, but that *he* developed righteousness through Jesus Christ and gives it to us, so that then we owe him.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Summarize the argument in the section entitled "What is the Message of Christ?"
2. Under "How Can I Connect With Christ?," two ideas are highlighted. In your own words, what is meant by:
 - a. Change not the amount, but the depth of your repentance?
 - b. Change not the amount, but the object of your faith?
3. Under "How Will I Live The Christian Life," the statement is made "Under every problem there is something more important than Jesus that is operating as our functional righteousness and worth." Think of a problem that illustrates this.
4. How would you respond to the objection "if I believed I was totally accepted despite my failures, then I would have no incentive to live a good life."?
5. What is meant by: the gospel gives us "an entirely new motivational structure"?
6. What did you find helpful? What raised questions?

Luther Project

Read and mark "!" - for something that helped you
 "?" - for something that raised a question

MARTIN LUTHER'S PREFACE TO THE GALATIANS

(Abridgment and paraphrase by Tim Keller)

1. The most important thing in the world

- a. The one doctrine which I have supremely at heart, is that of faith in Christ, from whom, through whom, and unto whom all my theological thinking flows back and forth day and night. This rock...which we call the doctrine of justification...was shaken by Satan in paradise, when he persuaded our first parents that they might by their own wisdom and power become like God... Thereafter the whole world acted like a madman against this faith, inventing innumerable idols and religions with which everyone went his own way, hoping to placate a god or goddess, by his own works; that is, hoping without the aid of Christ and by his own works to redeem himself from evils and sins. All this is sufficiently seen in the practices and records of every culture and nation...
- b. The devil our adversary, who continually rages about seeking to devour us, is not dead. Likewise our flesh and old man is yet alive. Besides this, all kinds of temptations vex and oppress us on every side, so that *this doctrine can never be taught, urged, and repeated enough*. If this doctrine is lost, then is also the whole knowledge of truth, life and salvation lost; if this doctrine flourish, then all good things flourish...

2. Kinds of righteousness

- a. Paul expounds the Biblical doctrine with the goal of demonstrating beyond doubt the difference between Christian righteousness and all other kinds of righteousness, for there are many kinds. First there is political or *civil righteousness*, the nation's public laws, which magistrates and lawyers may defend and teach. Second there is *cultural righteousness*, the standards of our family and social grouping or class, which parents and schools may teach. Third there is *ethical righteousness*, the Ten Commandments and law of God, which the church may teach (but only in light of Christian righteousness). [Now it is right to be a good citizen, to be loved and respected by your social group, and to be a morally upright person. So all these may be received without danger], if we attribute to them no power to satisfy for sin, to please God, or to deserve grace... These kinds of righteousness are gifts of God, like all good things we enjoy...
- b. Yet there is another, far above the others, which the Paul calls "the righteousness of faith," Christian righteousness... God imputes it to us apart from our works; in other words, it is **passive** righteousness as the others are **active**. For we do nothing for it, and we give nothing for it, we only receive and allow another to work, that is God.

3. The need for Christian righteousness

- a. This "passive" righteousness is a mystery that the world cannot understand. Indeed, Christians never completely understand it themselves, and thus do not take advantage of it when they are troubled and tempted. So we have to constantly teach it, repeat it, and work it out in practice. For anyone who does not understand this righteousness or cherish it in the heart and conscience, will continually be buffeted by fears and depression. *Nothing gives peace like this passive righteousness.*
- b. For human beings by nature, when they get near either danger or death itself, will of necessity view their own worthiness. We defend ourselves before all threats by recounting our good deeds and moral efforts. But then the remembrance of sins and flaws inevitably comes to mind, and this tears us apart, and we think: "How many errors and sins and wrongs I have done! Please God, let me live so I can fix and amend things." We become obsessed with our active righteousness and are terrified by its imperfections. But the real evil is that we trust our own power to be righteous and will not lift up our eyes to see that Christ has done for us... So the troubled conscience has no cure for its desperation and feeling of unworthiness unless it takes hold of the forgiveness of sins by grace, offered free of charge in Jesus Christ, which is this passive or Christian righteousness... If I tried to fulfill the law myself, I could not trust in what I had accomplished, neither could it stand up to the judgment of God. *So...I rest only upon the righteousness of Christ...which I do not produce but receive: God the Father freely giving it to us through Jesus Christ.*

4. Law and grace

- a. It is an absolute and unique teaching in all the world, to teach people, through Christ, to live as if there were no Law or Wrath or Punishment. In a sense, they do not exist anymore for the Christian, but only total grace and mercy for Christ's sake. Once you are in Christ, the law is the greatest guide for your life, but until you have Christian righteousness, all the law can do is to show you how sinful and condemned you are. In fact, to those outside of Christian righteousness, the law needs to be expounded in all its force. Why? So that people who think they have power to be righteous before God will be humbled.
- b. Therefore the communicator of the Word of God must be careful when dispensing the knowledge of both law and grace. We must keep the law within his bounds! If you teach that we can be accepted by God through obedience, then Christian righteousness becomes mixed up with earned/moral righteousness in the people's minds. Such a teacher is an ill logician, failing to "rightly divide." On the other hand, if you teach to persons outside of Christ about God's acceptance and love, with no mention of repentance and the cross of Christ, you also confuse and fail to "rightly divide." Rather, he that applies the law and works to the flesh or the old man [the unconverted], and who applies forgiveness of sins and God's mercy to the spirit or the new man [the awakened by the Spirit] does well.
- c. For example, when I see a man that is bruised, oppressed with the law, terrified with sin, and thirsting for comfort, it is time to remove out of his sight the law and active righteousness, and that I should set before him by the Gospel the Christian and passive

righteousness. Then the man is raised up and realizes the hope of being under *grace*, not under the law (Rom. 6:14)... But upon the man without Christ there must be laid the obligation of works and the law, we do have to fulfill the law. This burden must press him down until he put on the new man, by faith in Christ, then he may enjoy the freedom of the spirit of grace. (Nevertheless, no one fully does this in this life!)

- d. Therefore, no one should think we reject the importance of good works or of obeying the Law. When we receive the Christian righteousness, we consequently can live a good life, naturally, out of gratitude. If we try to earn our righteousness by doing many good deeds, we actually do nothing. We neither please God through our works-righteousness nor do we honor the purpose for which the law was given. But if we first receive Christian righteousness, then we can use the law, not for our salvation, but for his honor and glory, and to lovingly show our gratitude.
- e. So, have we nothing to do to obtain this righteousness? No, *nothing at all!* For this righteousness comes by doing nothing, hearing nothing, knowing nothing, but rather in knowing and believing this only, that Christ has gone to the right hand of the Father, not to become our judge, but to become for us, our wisdom, our righteousness, our holiness, our salvation! Now God sees no sin in us, for in this heavenly righteousness sin has no place. So now we may certainly think: "Although I still sin, I don't despair, because Christ lives, who is both my righteousness and my eternal life." In that righteousness I have no sin, no fear, no guilty conscience, no fear of death. I am indeed a sinner in this life or mine and in my own righteousness, 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.

5. Living the gospel

- a. Now both these things continue while we live here. We are accused, exercised with temptations, oppressed with heaviness and sorrow, and bruised by the law with its demands of active righteousness. These attacks fall upon our "flesh" [the part of our heart that still seeks to earn our salvation]... Because of this, Paul sets out in this letter of Galatians to teach us, to comfort us, and to keep us constantly aware of this Christian righteousness. For if the truth of being *justified by Christ alone* (not by our works) is lost, then all Christian truths are lost. For there is no middle ground between Christian righteousness and works-righteousness. There is no other alternative to Christian righteousness but works-righteousness; if you do not build your confidence on the work of Christ you must build your confidence on your own work. On this truth and only on this truth the church is built and has it's being...
- b. *This distinction is easy to utter in words, but in use and experience it is very hard.* So you who would be teachers and counselors of others I admonish to exercise yourselves continually in these matters through study, reading, meditation on the Word and prayer—that in the time of trial you will be able to both inform and comfort both your consciences and others, to bring them from law to *grace*, for active/works-righteousness to passive/Christ's righteousness. For in times of struggle, the devil will seek to terrify us by

using against us our past record, the wrath, and law of God. So if we cannot see the differences between the two kinds of righteousness, and if we do not take hold of Christ by faith, sitting at the right hand of God (Hebrews 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 Savior, but a Lawgiver, and is no longer our salvation, but an eternal despair.

- c. So learn to speak to one's Heart and to the Law. When the law creeps into your conscience, learn to be a cunning logician, learn to use arguments of the gospel against it. Say: "O law! You would climb up into the kingdom of my conscience, and there reign and condemn me for sin, and would take from me the joy of my heart which I have by faith in Christ, and drive me to desperation, that I might be without hope. You have over-stepped your bounds. Know your place! You are a guide for my behavior, but you are not Savior and Lord of my heart. For I am baptized, and through the Gospel am called to receive righteousness and eternal life... *So trouble me not!* For I will not allow you, so intolerable a tyrant and tormentor, to reign in my heart and conscience, for they are 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 shall keep my conscience joyful and quiet in the sound and pure doctrine of the Gospel through the knowledge of this passive and heavenly righteousness."
- d. When I have this Christian righteousness reigning in my heart, I descend from heaven as the rain making fruitful the earth. That is to say...I do good works, how and whensoever occasion is offered... Whoever he be that is assuredly persuaded that Christ is his righteousness, does not only cheerfully and gladly work well in his vocation...but submits to all manner of burdens and dangers in his present life, because he knows that this is the will of God, and that this obedience pleases him. This then is the argument of this Epistle, which Paul expounds against the false teachers who had darkened the Galatians' understanding of this righteousness by faith.

HISTORICAL NOTE ON LUTHER'S PREFACE

In the 1730's a small group of English men and women were meeting together to seek spiritual reality. John and Charles Wesley and a number of friends were meeting in homes in London for prayer and study, trying to find God and to know what salvation was and how it could be experienced. One of their friends, William Holland, got hold of Martin Luther's Commentary on the Galatians, where he distills the basic argument of Paul's letter. One night Holland and Charles Wesley and some others were reading Luther's book.

"Mr. Charles Wesley read the Preface aloud. At the words [where Luther said], 'What, have we then nothing to DO? No! Nothing! But only to accept of Him, who of God is made unto us, our wisdom, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.'...and there came such a power over me as I cannot well describe; my great burden fell off in an instant; my heart was so filled with peace and love that I burst into tears. I almost thought I saw our Savior! My companions, perceiving me so affected, fell on their knees and prayed. When I afterwards went into the street, I could scarcely

feel the ground I trod upon." --(quoted in A. Dallimore, *George Whitefield, vol. 1 (Banner of Truth, 1970)*)

After that, Holland went around finding other seekers and reading Luther's summary of Galatians everywhere he could, and it changed the lives of many others. Some days later, it was probably William Holland reading from Luther that brought John Wesley himself to faith. The Wesleys went on to spearhead a revival of Biblical religion that not only established the whole Methodist church, but also changed the face of Western society.

Who knows what the book of Galatians could do to you?

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is the key difference between Christian righteousness and all other kinds?
2. What do we mean by passive righteousness?
3. Why must we "constantly teach it (passive righteousness), repeat it, and work it out in practice"?
4. How do we "keep the law within its bounds"?
5. Why is the difference between passive righteousness and active righteousness so important?
6. What do you notice about how Luther speaks to his heart and to the law?
7. What is the result when Christian righteousness reigns in our heart?
8. Identify a quote that was especially helpful to you? What raised questions?

Theological Building Blocks #1: Justification and Adoption

Read and mark "!" - for something that helped you
 "?" - for something that raised a question

In order to understand the gospel deeply and comprehensively it is important to understand various doctrinal "building blocks" which the Bible teaches.

ALIENATION FROM GOD

And [God] passed in front of Moses proclaiming, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin. Yet he by no means clears the guilty; he punishes the children and their children's children, for the sins of the fathers to the 3rd and 4th generations. (Exodus 34:6)

POINT: In this declaration of his character, God puts most starkly the apparent "contradiction" between his holiness and his mercy, his law and his love. On the one hand, he cannot clear people who are guilty and be unjust. On the other hand, he cannot bear to see us perish. He says all debts must be paid, yet he wants us to be free from condemnation. He swears that he hates the death of a sinner (Ezek.33:11) yet he has also sworn that the soul that sins must die (Ezek.18:4). It seems he cannot keep both oaths! As Horatius Bonar put it: "*Law and love must be reconciled ... the one cannot give way to the other. Both must stand, else the pillars of the universe will be shaken.*"¹

SUBSTITUTION

"For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. (I Peter 3:18)
 "The Son of man came ... to give his life a ransom for [Grk. 'anti' instead of] many." (Mark 10:45). "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for [Grk. 'hyper' on behalf of] us." (Gal. 3:13)

Two-fold concept. If God must be judged and the law fulfilled, what can be done? The Bible tells us that Jesus came as our substitute. 1) He lived the life we should have lived in our place, and 2) he died the death we should have died in our place.

Life-substitute. From the beginning of his life he did everything that is required of a human being. When John the Baptist showed a hesitation to baptize Jesus, he replies, "it is necessary for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:13). Jesus was sinless in himself—so why was it "necessary" to be baptized? It was necessary for our substitute. In our place, he was perfectly fulfilling the law wholly and fully. He was doing everything that a human being needed to do to be acceptable to God. He was loving God with all his mind and soul and strength; he was loving his neighbor as himself (Luke 10:27). He was perfectly obedient to the law for us, "by one man's obedience many shall be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19).

Death substitute. When he died he did not simply experience physical pain, but also the punishment and rejection of God. He gave 'propitiation' for sin, he took all God's wrath (Rom. 3:25). Jesus carried our identity upon the cross. Matthew (in 8:17) applies Isaiah 53 to Jesus. There it says, "Surely he took up our

¹ Horatius Bonar, *The Everlasting Righteousness* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1993), 4

infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him...the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:4-6)

"Our most merciful Father...sent his only Son into the world and laid upon him the sins of all men, saying, 'Be thou Peter, that denier, Paul that persecutor, blasphemer and cruel oppressor; David that adulterer; that sinner that did eat the apple in Paradise; that thief that hanged upon the cross; and, be thou the person which hath committed the sins of all; see therefore that thou pay and satisfy for them.'" - Martin Luther, Commentary on Galatians [On Gal. 3: 13]

"The concept of substitution may be said, then, to lie at the heart of both sin and salvation. For the essence of sin is man substituting himself for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for man. Man asserts himself against God and puts himself where only God deserves to be; God sacrifices himself for man and puts himself where only man deserves to be. Man claims prerogatives which belong to God alone; God accepts penalties which belong to man alone." - John Stott, The Cross of Christ

Law and Love fulfilled. It is by Christ's substitution, and especially at the moment of his death upon the cross that God's love and law are both satisfied. He was smitten to satisfy the justice of God (it pays for sins), and yet at the same time the love of God (it secures our salvation) - "that God might be both just and justifier of those who believe" (Rom.3:26).

"Both love and law have triumphed. The one has not given way to the other. Each has kept its ground; nay, each has come from the conflict honored and glorified. Never has there been love like this love of God, so large, so lofty, so intense, so self-sacrificing. [Yet] never has the law been seen so pure, so broad, so glorious, so inexorable. There has been no compromise. Law and love have both had their full scope. Not one jot or tittle has been surrendered to the full; the one in all its severity, the other in all its tenderness. Love has never been more truly love, and the law has never been more truly law, than in this conjunction of the two... - Horatius Bonar, The Everlasting Righteousness, p.4.

JUSTIFICATION

Justified. To be "justified" is to be right with someone, without any blame or liability. "Justification" is a legal act in which a person who trusts in Christ is declared to be completely righteous in God's sight. "A man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ." (Gal. 2:16) In Colossians 1:23 Paul tells us that through the gospel "he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through his death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation." The word "present" is a legal term, meaning to appear in court. The two sides of justification are pardon (as if we never sinned) and acceptance (as if we lived a perfectly righteous life) because of the double imputation.

"Such are we in the sight of God the Father as is the very Son of God Himself. Let it be counted as folly or frenzy or fury whatsoever, it is our comfort and our wisdom; we care for no knowledge in the world but this, that man hath sinned, and God hath suffered; that God hath made Himself the sin of man, and that men are made the righteousness of God." - Richard Hooker, On Justification

Intercession. The Christian's position is now more certain and sure than we can imagine. We are told that Christ stands before the Father as our legal representative, our advocate (I John 2:2; Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:33-34). What this means is that the law, once our enemy that "demanded" our punishment, now becomes our friend, "demanding" our acceptance. How so? The law has been perfectly fulfilled in our substitute, and so now it would be unjust for God to turn on us! For God to punish us for any sin would be to exact two payments for the same debt (since Jesus paid it). Now Jesus stands before the Father, in a sense, demanding not mercy but justice for us. We have both his law and his love *for* us. We could not be more loved or secure.

If thou my pardon hast secured,
 And freely in my room endured
 The whole of wrath divine,
 Payment God cannot twice demand,
 First from my bleeding surety's hand
 And then again from mine.
 - Augustus Toplady

"Now the Lord Jesus Christ does not merely ask God to overlook our sin or forget it. He stands [before the Father]...as it were, to say to God... 'I am here to just remind you that the law has been fulfilled, that the death has been died, that the punishment has been enacted; they are free because I died for them...I say it with trembling and yet I say it with confidence, God would be unjust if He did not forgive my sin. Christ has died for me...' If confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins..." (I John 1:9). God's acceptance of us is now a matter of justice. It is Jesus who enables God to be at one and the same time just and justifier of the ungodly (Rom. 3:26)..." - D.M.Lloyd-Jones, Walking with God

"[On the cross] in that combination of the judicial and the paternal...law has become the source and vehicle of love; and love law's upholder and honorer; so that even in these and aspect love is the fulfilling of the law. The law that was against the sinner has come to be upon the sinner's side. It is now ready to take his part in the great controversy between him and God...provided he will put that case into the hands of the Divine Advocate (I John 2:2)." - Horatius Bonar, The Everlasting Righteousness, p. 12.

Martin Luther wrote:

"I labored and diligently and anxiously as to how to understand Paul's word [in Romans 1:17], where he says that the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel. I sought long and knocked anxiously, for the expression "the righteousness of God" blocked the way, because I took it to mean that righteousness whereby God is righteous and deals righteously in punishing the unrighteous. My situation was that, although an impeccable monk, I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience, and I had no confidence that my merit would assuage him. Therefore I did not love a righteous and angry God, but rather hated and murmured against him. Yet I clung to the dear Paul and had a great yearning to know what he meant.

...Then I grasped that the righteousness of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us by faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise... When I saw the difference, that law is one thing and gospel another, I broke through. And as I had formerly hated the expression "the righteousness of God," I now began to regard it as my dearest and most comforting word. So that this expression of Paul's became to me in very truth a gate of paradise."

...If you have a true faith that Christ is your Savior, then at once you have a gracious God, for faith leads you in and opens up God's heart and will, that you should see pure grace and overflowing love. This it is to behold God in faith that you should look upon his fatherly, friendly heart, in which there is no anger nor ungraciousness. He who sees God as angry does not see him rightly but only looks upon a curtain, as if a dark cloud had been drawn across his face." (Quoted in Here I Stand, by R. Bainton)

A PRACTICAL STATEMENT OF THE GOSPEL

THE GOSPEL IS THAT YOU ARE MORE SINFUL AND FLAWED THAN YOU EVER DARED BELIEVE; YET, YOU CAN BE MORE ACCEPTED AND LOVED THAN YOU EVER DARED HOPE AT THE VERY SAME TIME BECAUSE JESUS CHRIST LIVED AND DIED IN YOUR PLACE.

The determining factor in our relationship with God is not our past or present, but Christ's past and present.

D.M. Lloyd-Jones, in his book *Spiritual Depression*, wrote:

How then does it work? It works like this. God accepts this righteousness of Christ, this perfect righteousness face to face with the Law, which He honored in every respect. He has kept it and given obedience to it [through his perfect life], and he has borne its penalty [through his death]. The Law is fully satisfied. God's way of salvation, says Paul, is that. He gives to us the righteousness of Christ. If we have seen our need and go to God and confess it, God will give us his own Son's righteousness. He imputes Christ's righteousness to us, who believe in Him, and regards us as righteous, and declares and pronounces us to be righteous in Him. That is the way of salvation, the Christian way of salvation...

To make it quite practical let me say that there is a very simple way of testing yourself to know whether you believe that... [After] I have explained the way of justification...to them, then I say: 'Well, then, you are now ready to say that you are a Christian?' And they hesitate. And I know they have not understood. Then I say: 'What is the matter, why are you hesitating?' And they say: 'I do not feel that I am good enough.' At once I know that in a sense I have been wasting my breath. They are still thinking in terms of themselves; their idea still is that they have to make themselves good enough to be a Christian, good enough to be accepted with Christ. They have to do it! 'I am not good enough.' It sounds very modest, but it is the lie of the devil, it is a denial of the faith... The essence of the Christian faith is to say that He is good enough and that I am in Him!

As long as you go on thinking about yourself and saying: 'Ah, yes, I would like to, but I am not good enough; I am a sinner, a great sinner,' you are denying God and you will never be happy. You will continue to be cast down and disquieted. You will think you are better at times and then again you will find that you are not as good as you thought you were... How can I put this plainly? It does not matter if you have almost entered into the depths of hell, if you are guilty of murder as well as every other vile sin, it does not matter from the standpoint of being justified before God. You are no more hopeless than the most respectable...person in the world. Do you believe that?

IMPUTATION

Imputing vs. imparting. How does Jesus' life and death substitute for me? It is by imputation. Imputation is a legal, forensic term. It is helpful to distinguish imputation from impartation. Imputation is to put something into my account or record; impartation is to put something into my nature. Though it is not a common term, if we say, "you are imputing motives to me," we mean, "you are treating me as if I had those motives." So to impute is to treat *as if*.

Two-fold transfer. Jesus saves us through "double imputation," our sins (record) is imputed to him and his righteousness (record) is imputed to us. "*God, made him sin who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in him.*" (2 Cor. 5:21). This classic verse tells us about the double imputation. First, "God made him sin." Did God "impart" sin to him? No, he did not become sinful in his nature. This means God treated him *as if*. He was legally declared sinful, and treated as a sinner, held liable for the record of a sinner. He is given all that a sinner deserves. Second, "we become the righteousness of God in him." Clearly this is parallel to the first, clause, so it does not, mean that God imparts his righteousness into us. It means God treats us *as if*. We are legally declared righteous, and treated as perfect. We are given all that perfectly holy persons deserve. This meaning is clear in that Paul says we are only righteous "in him." He loves us "even as" his Son (John 17:23).

"God beholdeth us in the righteousness which is imputed, and not in the sins which we have committed...we are as free and clear as if there were not one spot or stain of uncleanness in us. Now, sin being taken away, we are made the righteousness of God in Christ." - Richard Hooker, Commentary on Jude

Beyond probation. It is crucial to understand "double imputation" in order to understand the fullness of justification. If all Christ did was to take our sins (and not give us his righteousness), then his death would only give us pardon, and put us back into probation in order to serve and obey God. But he not only was our death-substitute, but also our life substitute. He not only fulfilled the law by paying the penalty, he also fulfilled the law by obeying it. The result of his life-record is "blessing"; the result of our life-record is "curse." Now when we believe in him, there is a double transfer, the curse of *our* record is imputed to him (Gal. 3:13) but the blessing of his record comes to us (2 Cor. 5:21). He does not put us back on probation, but back beyond probation, for he fulfilled the probation for us. "Now there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). It is "double imputation" that makes Luther call a Christian: "*simul justus et peccator*" (simultaneously just and sinner.) At the same time, we are both sinful yet completely righteous in God's sight.

[The] covenant of works was a probation. If Adam had kept the law of God for a certain period, he was to have eternal life. If he disobeyed, he was to have death. Well, he disobeyed, and the penalty

of death was inflicted upon him and his posterity. Then Christ by his death on the cross paid that penalty...but if that is all Christ did for us, do you not see that we should be back in just the situation in which Adam was before he sinned? The penalty of his sinning would have been removed from us because it had all been paid by Christ. But for the future the attainment of eternal life would have been dependent upon our perfect obedience to the law of God. We should simply have been back in the probation again. As a matter of fact, [Christ] has not merely paid the penalty of Adam's first sin (and the penalty of the sins which we individually have committed), but also he has positively merited for us eternal life. He was, in other words, our representative both in the penalty paying and in probation keeping. He paid the penalty [of failed probation] for us, and he stood the probation for us... [Christ not only took the punishment by his death], but merited for them the reward by his perfect obedience to God's law... Those are the two things he has done for us. - J. Greshem Machen, God Transcendent

Adoption. "According to the Scriptures, pardon, acceptance, and adoption are distinct privileges, the one rising above the other in the order in which they have been stated...while the first two properly belong to (the sinner's) justification, as being both founded on the same relation [with God] as a Ruler-and-Subject, the third is radically distinct from them, as being founded on a nearer, more tender, more endearing relation [with God] as Father-and-child... The privilege of adoption presupposes pardon and acceptance, but is higher than either..." --James Buchanan, The Doctrine of Justification

To see the law by Christ fulfilled
 And hear his pard'ning voice
 Transforms a slave into a child
 And duty into choice. -- William Cowper, Olney Hymns

Point: There is a "higher" benefit of Christ's grace than even justification. We are also adopted into God's family as his children. This is implied in substitution. God now loves us as if we had done all Jesus had done. He loves us even as he loves his own son (John 17:23). Therefore, he adopts us into his family (Romans 8:14-16). Like justification, adoption is fundamentally not a change in nature, but a change in status. As in civil adoption, we not only become a loved member of a family, but certain rights and duties come to us legally. But adoption is distinct and beyond justification, for it brings us into the most intimate position possible with the God of the universe.

FAITH AND WORKS

Intro: How does all this comes to us? By faith. But what is "saving faith"?

"Faith of itself is God's gift and God's work in our hearts, which therefore justifieth us because it apprehendeth Christ our Redeemer." - Martin Luther, Commentary on Galatians [Comment on Gal.2: 4ff.]

Faith is not a work. Our new status is based wholly on the merits of Christ, and not in anything in us, not even in our act of believing. A marble statue has an "instrumental cause" (the chisel and hammer) and an "efficient cause" (the sculptor). The real power and "merit" that caused the statue is therefore the artist; the chisel and hammer are only channels by which the artist's power and skill come to the marble. Even so,

faith is only the "instrumental cause" of our salvation. It has no merits of its own--in no way does it procure or earn our salvation. If we slide into such a belief, we will begin to think that we need a high quality to our faith. Actually, all faith does is recognize our need and our provision in Christ. It merely transfers the merit of Christ to us.

Faith looks away from our works. Paul defines saving faith in extreme language when he says, "now to him who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited to him as righteousness." (Rom. 4:5) Since the book of James and Romans 6 shows us that true faith always leads us to *good works*, why would Paul say, "to him who does not work"? Paul is showing us in the boldest terms that no one can be a Christian until you change your attitude toward not just your sins, but also your best deeds. Paul provides himself as a case study of this very thing in Philippians 3, where he says he had to come to see his achievements and his moral efforts as worthless (Phil. 3:3-9).

Saving faith is not just a general belief in Jesus' divinity and that he lived, died, and was risen. Saving faith is also not just a general effort to live for him, follow his example and obey him. (Saving faith entails both of these general "faiths," an assent to the facts about him and a desire to serve him, but it is something distinct, additional.) The real difference between a Christian and a non-Christian is not their attitudes toward sin. (Both the Christian and the non-Christian ordinarily acknowledge that they sin and need forgiveness.) The difference is their attitude toward their good deeds. The Pharisee repents of sin, but the Christian repents of his or her "righteousness" as well, seeing it not only as insufficient, but sinful itself, since it was done in order save ourselves without Christ. This is what it means to "stop working" (Rom. 4:5). This means that every what really comes between God and the sinner is not so much our sin as our good works.

Faith always leads to works. The Reformers summed up the Biblical teaching by saying: "We are saved by faith alone, but not by a faith that remains alone." In other words, though we are not saved by leading a holy life, salvation leads us to a life of gratitude and liberation from the bondage of sin into a progressively more righteous life. "Faith, if not accompanied by works, is dead" (James 2:17).

A THEOLOGICAL STATEMENT

THE GOSPEL IS ADOPTION THROUGH SUBSTITUTION. GOD HONORS BELIEVING SINNERS AS IF THEY HAD DONE EVERYTHING THAT JESUS HAD DONE, AND LOVES THEM AS HIS ONLY NATURAL SON.

*"[True] faith saith not: 'what have I done? ...what do I deserve? But it saith: 'what hath Christ done? What doth he deserve?'. Therefore he that apprehendeth Christ by faith...may be bold to glory that he is righteous. How? Even by that precious jewel, Christ Jesus, which he possesseth by faith."
-Martin Luther, Commentary on Galatians [On Gal. 2:4ff.]*

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Identify one quote that was most helpful to you.
2. Put it in your own words. Why is it important to you?
3. What questions were raised in your mind by the texts?

Theological Building Blocks #2: Justification and Sanctification

Read and mark "!" - for something that helped you

"?" - for something that raised a question

DEFINITIONS OF JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION

Justification: "Justification is an act of God's free grace, by which he pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone." (Westminster Shorter Catechism. Q/A 33)

Sanctification: "Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness." (Westminster Shorter Catechism Q/A 35)

Point: The first Protestant Reformers all taught that not only was justification an act of God's grace, so is sanctification. It is not that justification is something God does by grace through faith while sanctification is something we do through our effort. Sanctification is also by grace. But how does that work? What is the connection between justification and sanctification?

DISTINCTIVENESS OF SANCTIFICATION BY FAITH

"To understand the Sola-fide of the Reformation as the only proper response to the biblical message of sovereign grace is to know that this Sola-fide can never be a threat to real sanctification. Such a threat can emerge only from a...devaluation of this doctrine. The ancient feud of Rome with the Sola-fide doctrine, based as it is on the view that Sola-fide is subversive of sanctification, must be called Rome's most fundamental error. It was no other than Sola-fide which made clear the true significance of sanctification, and distinguished it from all moralistic effort at self-improvement..." - G.C.Berkouwer, Faith and Sanctification (Eerdmans, 1952) p.14.

"Wesley admitted full acceptance of the Sola-fide doctrine. [But] one may accept the doctrine and then fail to do justice to it...the Sola-fide doctrine is subject to frequent misunderstanding. One can assume it as one's starting point, as did Wesley, and subsequently view the process of sanctification in terms of a dynamic category, a power plus its effects, without taking account of the bearings which faith always sustains toward divine grace. Sola-fide becomes a point of departure and breaks its connection with sanctification... When the victory of Christ is lost sight of, the warfare degenerates into self-reliant activism...it is on the road to making sanctification independent from justification." - Berkouwer, pp.52, 63

Point: Berkouwer insists that it is not salvation by grace, but sanctification by grace which is the biggest difference between the Reformers and the Catholic church and between the Reformers and later Methodism (Wesley) and much of Protestantism today. (Berkouwer even sees Rome's main mistake as their inability to see the connection between free justification and a holy, sanctified life.) He is saying that both Rome and later Protestantism essentially do believe that we are saved by grace, but they believe that then we are sanctified by works, effort, and obedience. The Reformers, however, understood that Biblical sanctification was also by grace through faith as a work of God, just as justification (even though

sanctification is never "received" once for all, it is never complete in this life). If this is the case, Christians in the Reformed tradition have adopted the "moralistic self-improvement" approach to sanctification without knowing it. They have picked it up from other Christians surrounding them, and they have lost touch with the precious legacy of Luther, Calvin and others. That legacy is sanctification by grace through faith.

RELATIONSHIP OF JUSTIFICATION TO SANCTIFICATION

1. What it is not: "justification by God, and sanctification by us"

"Indeed, all the problems of sanctification are bound up with the question of a 'transition' from justification to sanctification... [If] sanctification is cut loose or abstracted from justification...the church is certainly in mortal danger of slipping into moralism, with its attendant self-conscious pride or its nagging uncertainties... [If] justification by faith [is seen as] an initial stage on the pilgrim's journey, a supply station which later becomes a pleasant memory...sanctification would then be described as a series of devout acts and works performed by the previously justified man. The distinction between justification and sanctification could then be traced to the subject of each act, God or man. An obvious division would have taken place: man...is not called upon to justify himself, but [he is] to purify himself. It is not hard to see that the Scriptures are intolerant of this division. We are told that Christ 'was made unto us to be wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.' (1 Cor.1:3) and 'may the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly' (1 Thess.5:23)" - Berkouwer, pp.20-21

2. What it is not: a "combination of our efforts and God's efforts"

"People would...fall back on a cooperative relation between divine grace and human action. This...is especially prevalent in the Roman Catholic doctrine...of the infusion of supernatural grace. On this basis, sanctification can have meaning only as the successive development, with the cooperation of a free will, of the grace implanted. Justification and sanctification are brought down on the same plane, while their interrelation becomes nowhere clearly visible...justification becomes almost indistinguishable from sanctification... [This] deflects faith from its true bearings on divine grace." - Berkouwer, pp. 27-28

3. What it is: "sanctification is our faith-orienting us to our justification"

"Foundation" *"According to Luther...good works follow faith... All important for [Luther] is this new 'being' implied in reconciliation and adoption. This is the reality from which springs faith. The adoption to sons, that is the foundation of sanctification, the only foundation. It is true that, for Luther, 'being precedes action'." - Berkouwer, p.33.*

"Orientation" *"We must speak of faith, not as a point of departure for a fresh emission of power, or as a human function and potency producing other effects, but of faith as true orientation toward the grace of God and as the life which flourishes on this divine grace, on the forgiveness of sins" - Berkouwer, p.28.*

"Genuine sanctification, let it be repeated, stands or falls with this continued orientation toward justification and the remission of sins...too often the bond between sanctification and Sola-fide was neglected and the impression created that sanctification was the humanly operated successor to the divinely worked justification." - Berkouwer, p.78.

"Feeding" *"The Scriptures always speak of sanctification in the existential sphere of faith. Paul speaks of 'perfecting holiness in the fear of God' (2 Cor.7:1). Holiness is never a 'second blessing' placed next to the blessing of justification... The exhortation which comes to the Church is that it must live in faith out of this fullness: not that it must work for a second blessing, but that it must feed on the first blessing, the forgiveness of sins. The warfare of the Church...springs from the demand to really live from this first blessing."* - Berkouwer, 64.

"Commerce" *"[We must oppose] any view that does less than justice to the all-determining righteousness and forgiveness that is of God. The believer's constant 'commerce' with the forgiveness of sins and his continued dependence on it must, both in pastoral counseling and in [teaching] be laid bare, emphasized, and kept in sight... Faith...preserves us from autonomous self-sanctification and moralism"* - Berkouwer, p.84, 93

Point: Berkouwer says that it is a mistake to ask: "we know we have imputed righteousness, but now how do we move on to become actually righteous?" We do not "move on." Any particular flaw in our actual righteousness stems from a corresponding failure to orient ourselves toward our imputed righteousness. Sanctification happens to the degree that we "feed on" or "orient to" or "have commerce with" the pardon, righteousness, and new status we now have in Christ, imputed through faith.

CONNECTION OF SANCTIFICATION TO JUSTIFICATION

Intro: So sanctification is not primarily a matter of trying hard to live according to the Bible, but rather a matter of "feeding" or "doing commerce" with justification. But how does that actually work? What is the practical connection by which we "live out of justification" in such a way that we become like Christ?

1. Sanctification flows from *gratitude* for justification; sin is always *ingratitude*.

Q: How can you say that the good we do doesn't earn anything when God promises to reward it in this life and the next?

A: This reward is not earned; it is a gift of grace.

Q: But doesn't this teaching make people indifferent and wicked?

A: No, It is impossible for those grafted into Christ by true faith not to produce fruits of gratitude."
- Heidelberg Catechism Q/A 64

2. Sanctification flows from *remembering* justification; sin is always *forgetting* his 'benefits'.

"There is no rational technique that affords a priori insurance against [human-centeredness, legalism] and pharisaism. The only insurance is an exultant faith which thrives on God alone and 'forgets not all his benefits'." - Berkouwer, p.84

Point: Sanctification results when we force ourselves to 'remember' what God has given us in Christ, 'his benefits'. To 'remember' means to reflect until our hearts are moved, and then to act in accordance with what you know to be true.

3. Sanctification flows from new deep soul *satisfaction*; apart from assurance of justification, the heart is run by *lusts-soul-hunger*.

"Since in his faith each has all the possession he requires and can therefore freely and lovingly devote his entire life to the service of his fellowman... The believer...must perform [good works] for God's sake... Only in the way of faith, but then indeed, does the Holy Spirit grant us good works 'for God's sake and for his praise'... In the absence of faith and trust in God, evil lusts hold sway in our hearts. Hence a true faith is the key to good works." - Berkouwer, p.33, 36.

Point: If we do good works out of a desire to win God's favor or the favor of others or even the favor of our own conscience, we are really doing them all for our sake. We are not ever doing good for God's sake, or people's sake, or for goodness sake. We are doing good to fill a 'void' in us. But only if we by faith truly grasp and believe what we already have in Christ, will we be freed to do all our deeds for our neighbor's sake and God's. Without the gospel, we are just 'using' our neighbor and God to meet our needs. Such goodness is always partial and conditional.

4. Sanctification flows from *love to God*; apart from assurance of justification, the heart can only do 'good' out of pride or fear.

"We believe that this true faith, being wrought in man by the hearing of the Word of God and the operation of the Holy Spirit, regenerates him and makes him a new man, causing him to live a new life, and freeing him from the bondage of sin. Therefore it is so far from being true that his justifying faith makes men remiss in a pious and holy life, that on the contrary without it they would never do anything out of love to God, but only out of self-love or fear of damnation. Therefore, it is impossible that this holy faith can be unfruitful in man; for we do not speak of a vain faith, but of such a faith which is called in Scripture a 'faith working through love,' which excites man to the practice of those works which God has commanded in His Word... We would always be in doubt, tossed to and fro without any certainty, and our poor consciences would be continually vexed if they relied not on the merits of the suffering and death of our Savior." - Belgic Confession, Chapter 24

Point: Unless we believe the gospel, that we are righteous in Christ, we will be driven in all we do, whether obeying the law, or disobeying it by, pride ("self-love") or fear ("of damnation"). That means, apart from 'grateful remembering' of the gospel, all good works are done for sinful motives. Mere moral effort, apart from the gospel, may restrain the heart, but does not truly change the heart. Moral effort merely 'jury rigs' the evil of the heart to produce moral behavior, out of self-interest. It is only a matter of time before such a thin tissue collapses.

5. Sanctification flows from *heart trust* in God; apart from justification in God, the heart will always trust something else as 'god'. Sin is always idolatry.

"Faith is not opposed to life, but rather determines it and shoots meaning into it... Again and again, and for this reason, Luther pointed out the deep significance of the first commandment and accounted all works performed outside its sphere as nothing." - Berkouwer, p.32

"This faith, faithfulness, confidence deep in the heart, is the true fulfilling of the First Commandment; without this there is no other work that is able to satisfy this Commandment. And as this Commandment is the very first, highest and best, from which all the others proceed, in which they exist, and by which they are directed and measured, so also its work, that is, the faith or confidence in God's favor at all times, is the very first, highest and best, from which all others must

proceed, exist, remain, be directed and measured... - Martin Luther, Treatise Concerning Good Works, IX

"Now you see for yourself that all those who do not at all times trust God and do not in all their works or sufferings, life and death, trust in His favor, grace and good-will, but seek His favor in other things or in themselves, do not keep this Commandment, and practice real idolatry, even if they were to do the works of all the other Commandments, and in addition had all the prayers, fasting, obedience, patience, chastity, and innocence of all the saints combined. For the chief work is not present, without which all the others are nothing but mere sham, show and pretense, with nothing back of them..." - Luther, X

"If we doubt or do not believe that God is gracious to us and is pleased with us, or if we presumptuously expect to please Him only through and after our works, then it is all pure deception, outwardly honoring God, but inwardly setting up self as a false god...there is not one in a thousand who does not set his confidence upon the works, expecting by them to win God's favor and anticipate His grace; and so they make a fair of them, a thing which God cannot endure, since He has promised His grace freely, and wills that we begin by trusting that grace, and in it perform all works, whatever they may be..." - Luther, XI

"Note for yourself, then, how far apart these two are: keeping the First Commandment with outward works only, and keeping it with inward trust. For this last makes true, living children of God, the other only makes worse idolatry and the most mischievous hypocrites on earth..." - Luther, MI

Sum Point: All people sin in general because we are sinners, but *why* do we sin in any particular instance? The Reformers said, any sin is rooted in the inordinate lust for something which comes because we are trusting in that thing rather than in Christ for our righteousness or salvation. Therefore, in sin we are always 'forgetting' what God has done for us in Christ and instead are being moved by some idol. Luther says that to fail to believe God accepts us fully in Christ and to look to something else is a failure to keep the first commandment, love God with all the heart.

THE PROCESS OF SANCTIFICATION

Intro: How does one practically go about 'remembering' our justification and thus destroying the false trusts and idols that at any moment are moving us toward sin? The following are practical ways to do so.

"But you say: How can I trust surely that all my works are pleasing to God, when at times I fall, and talk, eat, drink and sleep too much, or otherwise transgress, as I cannot help doing? Answer: This question shows that you still regard faith as a work among other works, and do not set it above all works. For it is the highest work for this very reason because it remains and blots out these daily sins by not doubting that God is so kind to you as to wink at such daily transgression and weakness. Aye, even if a deadly sin should occur (which; however, never or rarely happens to those who live in faith and trust toward God), yet faith rises again and does not doubt that its sin is already gone; as it is written I John: "My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with God the Father, Jesus Christ, Who is the propitiation of all our sins."... - Luther, XVI

"Lo! thus must thou form Christ within thyself and see how in Him God holds before thee and offers thee His mercy without any previous merits of thine own, and from such a view of His grace must thou draw faith and confidence of the forgiveness of all thy sins. Faith, therefore, does not begin with works, neither do they create it, but it must spring up and flow from the blood, wounds and death of Christ. If thou see in these that God is so kindly affectioned toward thee that He gives even His Son for thee, then thy heart also must in its turn grow sweet and kindly affectioned toward God, and so thy confidence must grow out of pure good-will and love, God's love toward thee and thine toward God. We never read that the Holy Spirit was given to any one when he did works, but always when men have heard the Gospel of Christ and the mercy of God. From this same Word and from no other source must faith still come, even in our day and always. For Christ is the rock out of which men suck oil and honey, as Moses says, Deuteronomy xxxii..." - Luther, XVII

"Throw away the crutches of your righteousness...throw them far from you! With them it is impossible to climb the mount of the Lord. Tear those rags from you with which you are trying to cover your wounds, and appear before the Righteous and Holy One just as you are! Before Him, to despair of self is salvation.' To rely on the righteousness of Christ is the beginning and the end."
- Berkouwer, p.103-104

THE PROGRESS OF SANCTIFICATION

"We agree wholeheartedly that progressive sanctification is compatible with a faith-connected sanctification... Sanctification reveals itself both in the adoption and the growing awareness of sonship, as renewal after the image of God..." - Berkouwer, p.109-110

"The life of sanctification proceeds in weakness, temptation, and exposure to the powers of darkness... The believer who understands his justification and views his life against the backdrop of Divine grace will gain a deeper knowledge of his own sinfulness... A sense of guilt is not pushed back by a sense of holiness [and sonship]. Indeed, if sanctification were a process of 'improvement', a sense of guilt would gradually evaporate. But sanctification as increased immersion in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ must result in a deeper sense of unworthiness. Of course, this perspective is thinkable only when sanctification remains tethered to faith..." - Berkouwer, pp.66-67, 129

Point: Some people who also reject "sanctification by works" and believe in "sanctification by faith" go to another extreme. They believe that we "receive" our sanctification by faith all at one time, just as we received our justification by faith all at one time. This extreme is sometimes called "perfectionism," and various forms of it exist. But the Bible teaches that sanctification is progressive and gradual, as we struggle to live 'in line with the gospel'. Perfectionism boils down to a new legalism, because it always demands that you surrender and cleanse yourself in some deep way in order to receive your holiness 'second blessing'. Rather, we see that progressive gospel sanctification has two foci: a) we grow more and more 'up' into a greater and greater realization of our sonship, which gives us the strength to b) grow more and more 'down' into humility and a greater realization of our sin and weakness. The two 'knowledges' grow together. The more we see our acceptance, the more we have the security to admit our sin; the more we see our sin, the more grateful and exultant we become in our sonship.

RELEVANCE OF SANCTIFICATION BY FAITH

1. Only gospel-based sanctification evangelizes people:

"The Scriptures are very emphatic about the connection between good works and the scrutiny of the world. 'that ye may become...children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye are seen as lights in the world.' (Phil.2:15) 'Even so let your light shine before men: that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.' (Matt.5:14,16). [Yet] 'take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them' (Matt.6:1-14) ...It is exactly this relationship between required hiddenness and impossible hiddenness which gives to any discussion of sanctification its peculiar character... This is not self-contradictory teaching but a revelation, full of meaning and admonition, of two aspects of the sanctified life." pp.10-11

Point: On the one hand, evangelism depends on our sanctification, our good works. No one will listen to the gospel unless our lives and deeds are attractive and beautiful. But on the other hand, it is clear that the only kinds of good works that influence people are not good works done for a show—not to be seen by people. Only 'hidden' good works, good works done disinterestedly, freely without hope of or view toward reward or acclaim that actually draw others. This is quite a tension! If we do good works in order to "be seen," what is seen will not be effective. Berkouwer is setting us up to see that, therefore, only good works done out of sheer gratitude, out of a joyful realization of our complete acceptance, will be effective in evangelism.

2. Only gospel-based sanctification transforms culture:

"In the interest of what seems to be a common goal, namely a renovation of society and resistance against its deterioration, there are the efforts of those who wish to unite with Christian ideals... Surely concrete results are more important than the rationale that produced them. Could we not somehow acquire a common vision of the Good? ...[But] implicit in them is the intent to destroy the connection between justification and sanctification... The man who understands the relationship between faith and sanctity knows better; he knows that he can pave his way into real life only by keeping these connections intact... Only thus will it be apparent that sanctification embraces all of life... Sanctification must not take place merely on some underground level of psychic life, quite in defiance of all outside disturbances, but must be the redemptive touch of our faith on all of life..." pp. 11-12

Point: Many people want Christians to make common cause with other philosophies and groups who have common ethical ideas (concern for the oppressed, on the left; family values, on the right) and "play down" the distinctive motivations and reasons for Christian behavior, namely, justifying faith. Many want Christians to ally with others and call society to certain moral ideals, leaving out the challenge to accept Christ by faith. Berkouwer says that this will never work, because the kind of ethical life ("sanctity") that grows out of faith is different than that which grows out of appeal to rules. The consciousness that we are justified fully produces a "sanctity" that touches all of life, effects the way we do everything. A "sanctity" that grows out of appeal to obey rules or pragmatism is very different. Berkouwer does not here draw out all the differences except to say that gospel-sanctity becomes a whole new way of approaching everything in life. Justifying faith creates a) a sanctity that is *civil*—not superior toward unethical people, for it tells

us that we are not saved because of moral superiority to others, b) a sanctity that is *sacrificial*, for it tells us that our salvation was approved by sacrifice, and c) a sanctity that is *exuberantly hopeful*, for it tells us that our acceptance is not based on our performance. Rules-appeal sanctity cannot create these dynamics that flow out and effect every area of life.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Identify one quote that was most helpful to you.
2. Put it in your own words. Why is it important to you?
3. What questions does this raise?

The Centrality of the Gospel

Read and mark "!" - for something that helped you
 "?" - for something that raised a question

APPLYING THE GOSPEL

Most people have not heard or thought out the implications of the gospel. We exist to bring things "in line with the Gospel" (Gal.2:14) which renews us spiritually, psychologically, corporately, socially. The gospel avoids either legalism or liberalism, moralism or relativism yet it does not produce "something in the middle," but something different from both. The gospel critiques both religion and irreligion (Matt.2 1:31), and shows us a God far more holy than the legalist can bear (he *had* to die because we could not satisfy his holy demands) and yet far more merciful than a humanist can conceive (he had to *die* because he loved us). It affects absolutely everything we do.

An example. One of the wonderful implications of the gospel is that salvation by grace alone brings down racial and cultural barriers. It relativizes race and class as components of personal identity, bringing a new humility and respect to people (and especially Christians) of other races and classes. It ends the self-justifying behavior of cultural pride (a form of works-righteousness) in which the human heart seeks to see cultural differences as really kinds of virtue. But the early church had not seen the implication of the gospel in this area (in spite of the day of Pentecost). Peter and the apostles had continued to insist that Christians had to adopt Jewish cultural forms in order to be "real" Christians, and had kept their attitudes of racial superiority. As a result, evangelism and worship and fellowship suffered. Paul had to confront Peter and the apostles about it, and called them to repentance. But his rebuke was that "they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel" (Gal.: 14). The gospel was not growing and bearing fruit in the church, because in this area they had not understood God's grace in all its truth. Paul applies the gospel and the result was a renewal, a great leap forward for the church.

THINKING "IN LINE" WITH THE GOSPEL

The "two thieves" of the gospel. Tertullian said, "Just as Christ was crucified between two thieves, so this doctrine of justification is ever crucified between two opposite errors." These errors continue to "steal" the gospel from us. The theological terms for these two thieves are *religion* and *irreligion* or *legalism* and *antinomianism*. More colloquial terms could be *moralism* and *relativism*. Another set of terms (sure to offend some people) would be *conservative* and *liberal*.

On the one hand, "moralism/religion" stresses truth without grace, for it says that we must obey the truth in order to be saved. On the other hand, "relativists/irreligion" stresses grace without truth, for they say that we are all accepted by God (if there is a God) and we have to decide what is true for us. But "truth" without grace is not really truth, and "grace" without truth is not really grace. Jesus was full of grace and truth. Any religion or philosophy of life that de-emphasizes or loses one or the other of these truths, falls into legalism or into license and either way, the joy and power and "release" of the gospel is stolen by one thief or the other.

"I am more sinful and flawed than I ever dared believe" (vs. antinomianism)

"I am more accepted and loved than I ever dared hope" (vs. legalism)

The moralism-religion thief. How does moralism/religion steal joy and power?

Moralism is the view that you are acceptable (to God, the world, others, yourself) through your attainments. (Moralists do not have to be religious, but often are.) When they are, their religion is pretty conservative and filled with rules. Sometimes moralists have views of God as very holy and just. This view will lead either to a) self-hatred (because you can't live up to the standards), or b) self-inflation (because you think you have lived up to the standards). It is ironic to realize that inferiority *and* superiority complexes have the very same root. Whether the moralist ends up smug and superior or crushed and guilty just depends on how high the standards are and on a person's natural advantages (such as family, intelligence, looks, willpower). Moralistic people can be deeply religious--but there is no transforming joy or power.

The relativism-irreligion thief. How does relativism steal joy and power?

Relativists are usually irreligious, or else prefer what is called "liberal" religion. On the surface, they are more happy and tolerant than moralist/religious people. Though they may be highly idealistic in some areas (such as politics), they believe that everyone needs to determine what is right and wrong for them. They are not convinced that God is just and must punish sinners. Their beliefs in God will tend to see Him as loving or as an impersonal force. They may talk a great deal about God's love, but since they do not think of themselves as sinners, God's love for us costs him nothing. If God accepts us, it is because he is so welcoming, or because we are not so bad. The concept of God's love in the gospel is far more rich and deep and electrifying.

What do both religious and irreligious people have in common? They seem so different, but from the viewpoint of the gospel, they are really the same.

Irreligious people seek to be their own saviors and lords through irreligion, "worldly" pride. ("No one tells me how to live or what to do, so I determine what is right and wrong for me!") But moral and religious people seek to be their own saviors and lords through religion, "religious" pride. ("I am more moral and spiritual than other people, so God owes me to listen to my prayers and take me to heaven.") Thus moral-religious people may be characterized by intense arrogance and pride, or they may seem extremely penitent and sorry for their sins. But even in their confession, they see sins as simply the failure to live up to standards by which they are saving themselves. They go to Jesus for forgiveness, but only as a way to "cover over the gaps" in their project of self-salvation. The important thing to see is that both irreligious people and religious people are seeking to be their own saviors and lords. (Flannery O'Connor wrote that religious people think, "that the way to avoid Jesus was to avoid sin...") And both moral people who hate themselves, feeling like failures and moral people who feel good about their record are both seeking to be their own saviors and lords. When people say, "I know God is forgiving, but I cannot forgive myself," they mean that they reject God's grace and insist that they be worthy of his favor. Both religious pride and despair are forms of self-righteousness. Both irreligion and religion are forms of self-salvation.

But Christians are those who have adopted a whole new system of approach to God. They may have had both religious phases and irreligious phases in their lives. But they have come to see that their entire reason for both their irreligion and their religion was essentially the same and essentially wrong! Christians come to see that both their sins and their best deeds have all really been ways of avoiding

Jesus as savior. They come to see that Christianity is not fundamentally an invitation to get more religious. A Christian comes to say: "though I have often failed to obey the moral law, the deeper problem was why I was trying to obey it! Even my efforts to obey it has been just a way of seeking to be my own savior. In that mindset, even if I obey or ask for forgiveness, I am really resisting the gospel and setting myself up as Savior." To "get the gospel" is to turn from self-justification and rely on Jesus' record for a relationship with God. The irreligious don't repent at all, and the religious only repent of sins. But Christians also repent of their righteousness. That is the distinction between the three groups, Christian, moralists (religious), and pragmatists (irreligious).

Summary. Without a knowledge of our extreme sin, the payment of the cross seems trivial and does not electrify or transform. But without a knowledge of Christ's completely satisfying life and death, the knowledge of sin would crush us or move us to deny and repress it. Take away either the knowledge of sin or the knowledge of grace and people's lives are not changed. They will be crushed by the moral law or run from it angrily.

KEY TO EVERYTHING

We have seen that the gospel is the way that anything is renewed and transformed by Christ, whether a heart, a relationship, a church, or a community. It is the key to all doctrine and our view of our lives in this world. Therefore, all our problems come from a lack of orientation to the gospel. Put positively, the gospel transforms our hearts and thinking and approaches to absolutely everything.

The Gospel and the individual.

1. **Approach to discouragement.** When a person is depressed, the moralist says, "you are breaking the rules, repent." On the other hand, the relativist says, "you just need to love and accept yourself." But (assuming there is no physiological base of the depression!) the gospel leads us to examine ourselves and say: "something in my life has become more important than God, a pseudo-savior, a form of works righteousness." The gospel leads us to repentance, but not to merely setting our will against superficialities. It is without the gospel that superficialities will be addressed instead of the heart. The moralist will work on behavior and the relativist will work on the emotions themselves.
2. **Approach to the physical world.** Some moralists are indifferent to the physical world, they see it as "unimportant," while many others are downright afraid of physical pleasure. Since they are seeking to earn their salvation, they prefer to focus on sins of the physical like sex and the other appetites. These are easier to avoid than sins of the spirit like pride. Therefore, they prefer to see sins of the body as worse than other kinds. As a result, legalism usually leads to a distaste of pleasure. On the other hand, the relativist is often a hedonist, someone who is controlled by pleasure, and who makes it an idol. The gospel leads us to see that God has invented both body and soul and so will redeem both body and soul, though under sin both body and soul are broken. Thus the gospel leads us to enjoy the physical (and to fight against physical brokenness, such as sickness and poverty), yet to be moderate in our use of material things.
3. **Approach to love and relationships.** Moralism often makes relationships into a "blame-game." This is because a moralist is traumatized by criticism that is too severe, and maintains a self-

image as a good person by blaming others. On the other hand, moralism can use the procuring of love as the way to "earn our salvation" and convince ourselves we are worthy persons. That often creates what is called co-dependency, a form of self-salvation through needing people or needing people to need you (i.e. saving yourself by saving others). On the other hand, much relativism/liberalism reduces love to a negotiated partnership for mutual benefit. You only relate as long as it is not costing you anything. So the choice (without the gospel) is to selfishly use others or to selfishly let yourself be used by others. But the gospel leads us to do neither. We do sacrifice and commit, but not out of a need to convince ourselves or others we are acceptable. So we can love the person enough to confront, yet stay with the person when it does not benefit us.

4. **Approach to suffering.** Moralism takes the "Job's friends" approach, laying guilt on yourself. You simply assume: "I must be bad to be suffering." Under the guilt, though, there is always anger toward God. Why? Because moralists believe that God owes them. The whole point of moralism is to put God in one's debt. Because you have been so moral, you feel you don't really deserve suffering. So moralism tears you up, for at one level you think, "what did I do to deserve this?" but on another level you think, "I probably did everything to deserve this!" So, if the moralist suffers, he or she must either feel mad at God (because I have been performing well) or mad at self (because I have not been performing well) or both. On the other hand, relativism/pragmatism feels justified in avoiding suffering at all costs, lying, cheating, and broken promises are OK. But when suffering does come, the pragmatist also lays the fault at God's doorstep, claiming that he must be either unjust or impotent. But the cross shows us that God redeemed us through suffering. That he suffered not that we might not suffer, but that in our suffering we could become like him. Since both the moralist and the pragmatist ignore the cross in different ways, they will both be confused and devastated by suffering.
5. **Approach to sexuality.** The secularist/pragmatist sees sex as merely biological and physical appetite. The moralist tends to see sex as dirty or at least a dangerous impulse that leads constantly to sin. But the gospel shows us that sexuality is to reflect the self-giving of Christ. He gave himself completely without conditions. So we are not to seek intimacy but hold back control of our lives. If we give ourselves sexually we are to give ourselves legally, socially, personally--utterly. Sex is only to happen in a totally committed, permanent relationship of marriage.
6. **Approach to one's family.** Moralism can make you a slave to parental expectations, while pragmatism sees no need for family loyalty or the keeping of promises and covenants if they do not "meet my needs." The gospel frees you from making parental approval an absolute or psychological salvation, pointing to how God becomes the ultimate father. Then you will neither be too dependent or too hostile to your parents.
7. **Approach to self-control.** Moralists tell us to control our passions out of fear of punishment. This is a volition-based approach. Liberalism tells us to express ourselves and find out what is right for us. This is an emotion-based approach. The gospel tells us that the free, unlooseable grace of God "teaches" us to "say no" to our passions (Titus 2:13) if we listen to it. This is a whole-person based approach, starting with the truth descending into the heart.
8. **Approach to other races and cultures.** The liberal approach is to relativize all cultures. ("We can all get along because there is no truth") The conservatives believe there is truth for evaluation of

cultures, and so they choose some culture as superior and then they idolize it, feeling superior to others in the impulse of self-justifying pride. The gospel leads us to be a) on the one hand, somewhat critical of all cultures, including our own (since there is truth), but b) on the other hand, we are morally superior to no one. After all, we are saved by grace alone. Christians will exhibit both moral conviction yet compassion and flexibility. For example, gays are used to being "bashed" and hated or completely accepted. They never see anything else.

9. **Approach to witness to non-Christians.** The liberal/pragmatist approach is to deny the legitimacy of evangelism altogether. The conservative/moralist person does believe in proselyzing, because "we are right and they are wrong." Such proselyzing is almost always offensive. But the gospel produces a constellation of traits in us. a) First, we are compelled to share the gospel out of generosity and love, not guilt b) Second, we are freed from fear of being ridiculed or hurt by others, since we already have the favor of God by grace c) Third, there is a humility in our dealings with others, because we know we are saved only by grace alone, not because of our superior insight or character. d) Fourth, we are hopeful about anyone, even the "hard cases," because we were saved only because of grace, not because we were likely people to be Christians. e) Fifth, we are courteous and careful with people. We don't have to push or coerce them, for it is only God's grace that opens hearts, not our eloquence or persistence or even their openness. All these traits not only create a winsome evangelist but an excellent neighbor in a multi-cultural society.
10. **Approach to human authority.** Moralists will tend to obey human authorities (family, tribe, government, cultural customs) too much, since they rely so heavily on their self-image of being moral and decent. Pragmatists will either obey human authority too much (since they have no higher authority by which they can judge their culture) or else too little (since they may only obey when they know they won't get caught). That means either authoritarianism or anarchy. But the gospel gives you both a standard by which to oppose human authority (if it contradicts the gospel), but on the other hand, gives you incentive to obey the civil authorities from the heart, even when you could get away with disobedience.
11. **Approach to human dignity.** Moralists often have a pretty low view of human nature, they mainly see human sin and depravity. Pragmatists, on the other hand, have no good basis for treating people with dignity. Usually they have no religious beliefs about what human beings are. (If they are just chance products of evolution, how do we know they are more valuable than a rock?) But the gospel shows us that every human being is infinitely fallen (lost in sin) and infinitely exalted (in the image of God). So we treat every human being as precious, yet dangerous!
12. **Approach to guilt.** When someone says, "I can't forgive myself," it means there is some standard or condition or person that is more central to your identity than the grace of God. God is the only God who forgives, no other "god" will. If you cannot forgive yourself, it is because you have failed your real God, your real righteousness, and it is holding you captive. The moralist's false god is usually a God of their imagination, which is holy and demanding but not gracious. The pragmatist's false god is usually some achievement or relationship.
13. **Approach to self-image.** Without the gospel, your self-image is based upon living up to some standards, whether yours or someone's imposed upon you. If you live up to those standards, you will be confident but not humble. If you don't live up to them, you will be humble but not confident.

Only in the gospel can you be both enormously bold and utterly sensitive and humble. For you are both perfect and a sinner!

14. **Approach to joy and humor.** Moralism has to eat away at real joy and humor--because the system of legalism forces you to take yourself (your image, your appearance, your reputation) very seriously. Pragmatism on the other hand will tend toward cynicism as life goes on because of the inevitable cynicism that grows. This cynicism grows from a lack of hope for the world. In the end, evil will triumph, there is no judgment or divine justice. But we are saved by grace alone, then the very fact of our being Christians is a constant source of amazed delight. There is nothing matter-of-fact about our lives, no "of course" to our lives. It is a miracle we are Christians, and we have hope. So the gospel which creates bold humility should give us a far deeper sense of humor. We don't have to take ourselves seriously, and we are full of hope for the world.
15. **Approach to "right living."** Jonathan Edwards points out that "true virtue" is only possible for those who have experienced the grace of the gospel. Any person who is trying to earn their salvation does "the right thing" in order to get into heaven, or in order to better their self-esteem (etc.). In other words, the ultimate motive is self-interest. But persons who know they are totally accepted already do "the right thing" out of sheer delight in righteousness for its own sake. Only in the gospel do you obey God for God's sake, and not for what God will give you. Only in the gospel do you love people for their sake (not yours), do good for its own sake (not yours), and obey God for his sake (not yours). Only the gospel makes "doing the right thing" a joy and delight, not a burden or a means to an end.

The Gospel and the church.

1. **Approach to ministry in the world.** Legalism tends to place all the emphasis on the individual human soul. Legalistic religion will insist on converting others to their faith and church, but will ignore social needs of the broader community. On the other hand, "liberalism" will tend to emphasize only amelioration of social conditions and minimize the need for repentance and conversion. The gospel leads to love, which in turn moves us to give our neighbor whatever is needed, conversion or a cup of cold water, evangelism and social concern.
2. **Approach to worship.** Moralism leads to a dour and somber worship that may be long on dignity but short on joy. A shallow understanding of "acceptance" without a sense of God's holiness can lead to frothy or casual worship. (A sense of neither God's love nor his holiness leads to a worship service that feels like a committee meeting.) But the gospel leads us to see that God is both transcendent yet immanent. His immanence makes his transcendence comforting, while his transcendence makes his immanence amazing. The gospel leads to both awe and intimacy in worship, for the Holy One is now our Father.
3. **Approach to the poor.** The liberal/pragmatist tend to scorn the religion of the poor and see them as helpless victims needing expertise. This is born out of a disbelief in God's common grace or special grace to all. Ironically, the secular mindset also disbelieves in sin, and thus anyone who is poor must be oppressed, a helpless victim. The conservative/moralists on the other hand tend to scorn the poor as failures and weaklings. They see them as somehow to blame for their situation. But the gospel leads us to be: a) humble, without moral superiority knowing you were "spiritually

bankrupt" but saved by Christ's free generosity, and b) gracious, not worried too much about "deservingness," since you didn't deserve Christ's grace, c) respectful of believing poor Christians as brothers and sisters from whom to Learn. The gospel alone can bring "knowledge workers" into a sense of humble respect for, and solidarity with the poor.

4. **Approach to doctrinal distinctives.** The "already" of the New Testament means more boldness in proclamation. We can most definitely be sure of the central doctrines that support the gospel. But, the "not yet" means charity and humility in non-essentials beliefs. In other words, we must be moderate about what we teach except when it comes to the cross, grace and sin. In our views, especially those that Christians cannot agree on, we must be less unbending and triumphalistic ("believing we have arrived intellectually"). It also means that our discernment of God's call and his "will" for us and others must not be propagated with overweening assurance that your insight cannot be wrong. Vs. pragmatism, we must be willing to die for our belief in the gospel; vs. moralism, we must not fight to the death over every one of our beliefs.
5. **Approach to holiness.** The "already" means we should not tolerate sin. The presence of the kingdom includes that we are made "partakers of the divine nature" (II Pet. 1:3). The gospel brings us the confidence that anyone can be changed, that any enslaving habit can be overcome. But the "not yet" our sin which remains in us and will never be eliminated until the fullness of the kingdom comes in. So we must avoid pat answers, and we must not expect "quick fixes." Unlike the moralists, we must be patient with slow growth or lapses and realize the complexity of change and growth in grace. Unlike the pragmatists and cynics, we must insist that miraculous change is possible.
6. **Approach to miracles.** The "already" of the kingdom means power for miracles and healing is available. Jesus showed the kingdom by healing the sick and raising the dead. But the "not yet" means nature (including us) is still subject to decay (Rom.8:22-23) and thus sickness and death is still inevitable until the final consummation. We cannot expect miracles and the elimination of suffering to be such a normal part of the Christian life that pain and suffering will be eliminated from the lives of faithful people. vs. moralists, we know that God can heal and do miracles. vs. pragmatists, we do not aim to press God into eliminating suffering.
7. **Approach to church health.** The "already" of the kingdom means that the church is the community now of kingdom power. It therefore is capable of mightily transforming its community. Evangelism that adds "daily to the number of those being saved"(Acts 2:47) is possible! Loving fellowship which "destroyed...the dividing wall of hostility" between different races and classes is possible! But the "not yet" of sin means Jesus has not yet presented his bride, the church "as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish" (Eph.5:27). We must not then be harshly critical of imperfect congregations, nor jump impatiently from church to church over perceived blemishes. Error will never be completely eradicated from the church. The "not yet" means to avoid the overly severe use of church discipline and other means to seek to bring about a perfect church today.
8. **Approach to social change.** We must not forget that Christ is even now ruling in a sense over history (Eph.1:22ff). The "already" of grace means that Christians can expect to use God's power to change social conditions and communities. But the "not yet" of sin means there will be "wars

and rumors of wars." Selfishness, cruelty, terrorism, oppression will continue. Christians harbor no illusions about politics nor expect utopian conditions. The "not yet" means that Christians will trust any political or social agenda to bring about righteousness here on earth. So the gospel keeps us from the over-pessimism of fundamentalism (moralism) about social change, and also from the over-optimism of liberalism (pragmatism).

Sum: All problems, personal or social come from a failure to use the gospel in a radical way, to get "*in line with the truth* of the gospel"(Gal.2:14). All pathologies in the church and all its ineffectiveness comes from a failure to use the gospel in a radical way. We believe that if the gospel is expounded and applied in its fullness in any church, that church will look very unique. People will find both moral conviction yet compassion and flexibility. For example, gays are used to being "bashed" and hated or completely accepted. They never see anything else. The cultural elites of either liberal or conservative sides are alike in their unwillingness to befriend or live with or respect or worship with the poor. They are alike in separating themselves increasingly from the rest of society.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What are the two thieves of the gospel? How are they different?
2. How does each thief steal joy and power?
3. What do they have in common? How does that work?
4. What is the distinction between moralists, relativists, and Christians?
5. Choose one personal issue/problem in your life. What is the moralist's way of handling it?

What is the relativist's way of handling it?

Which way do you often handle it?

What is the gospel's way of handling it?

Identifying Idols

Read and mark "!" - for something that helped you

"?" - for something that raised a question

A. THE DEFINITION OF IDOLS (WHAT THEY ARE).

Romans 1:25 tells us that idols are not sinful things, but good and basic things elevated into being ultimate things (v.25- *worshipped created things rather than the Creator*) We look to them for meaning in life, for covering our sense of insignificance, for developing a "righteousness" or worth.

"An idol is anything in our lives that occupies the place that should be occupied by God alone. Anything that...is central in my life, anything that seems to me...essential... An idol is anything by which I live and on which I depend, anything that...holds such a controlling position in my life that...it moves and rouses and attracts so much of my time and attention, my energy and money."

- D.M.Lloyd-Jones, "Idolatry" in *Life in God. Studies in 1 John*

"The virtues on which the mind preens itself as giving control over the body and its urges, and which aim at any other purpose or possession than God, are in point of fact vices rather than virtues " - Augustine, *City of God Chap. 19:25*

"[Each person] acts as if God could not make him happy without the addition of something else. Thus the glutton makes a god of his dainties; the ambitious man of his honor; the incontinent man of his lust; the covetous man his wealth; and consequently esteems them as his chiefest good, and the most noble end to which he directs his thoughts... All men worship some golden calf, set up by education, custom, natural inclination and the like... When a general is taken, the army runs. [Even so this [the main 'idol'] is the great stream, and other sins but rivulets which bring supply...this is the strongest chain wherein the devil holds the man, the main fort..." - Stephen Charnock, *The Existence and Attributes of God*

B. THE MOTIVATION FOR IDOLS (WHY WE HAVE THEM).

Romans 1:21 tells us that the reason we make idols is because we want to control our own lives (v.21- *though they knew God, they neither glorified him or gave him thanks*).

"Sin predisposes us to want to be independent of God, to be laws unto ourselves or autonomous, so that we can do what we want without bowing to His authority. At the most basic level, idols are what we make out of the evidence for God within ourselves and in the world, if we do not want to face the face of God Himself in his majesty and holiness. Rather than look to the Creator and have to deal with his lordship, we orient our lives toward the creation, where we can be more free to control and shape our lives in our desired directions...since we were made to relate to God; but do not want to face Him (and let him control and shape us, thus we forever inflate things in the world to religious proportions to fill the vacuum left by Gods exclusion:... We do not just eliminate God, but we erect God-substitutes in his place." - Richard Keyes, "The Idol Factory" in *No God but God*.

C. THE MOTIVATION FROM IDOLS (HOW THEY EFFECT US.)

1. Distorted thinking.

Romans 1:21 tells us each idol creates a delusional field, a whole set of assumptions and false definitions of success and failure which are distortions of reality brought on by the idol (v.21 - *their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened*).

[Your] idols define good and evil in ways contrary to God's definitions. [They spin out a whole false belief system.] They establish a locus of control that is earth-bound: either in objects (e.g. lust for money), other people (e.g. I need to please my father), or myself (e.g. attainment of my personal goals). Such false gods create false laws, false definitions of success and failure, of values and stigma. Idols promise blessings and warn of curses for those who succeed or fail [their standards] If I [make enough money], I will be secure. If I can get these certain people to like and respect me, then my life will be valid." - David Powlison, "Idols of the Heart and Vanity Fair"

2. Emotional bondage.

Romans 1:25 tells us that each idol "darkens the heart" and enslaves us (v.25- *worshipped and served created things*). Whatever we worship we must serve. The way the idol enslaves is that it creates over-desires, inordinate longings.

"Idols of the heart are graphically portrayed in Ezekiel 14:1-8... If 'idolatry' is the characteristic and summary Old Testament word for our drift from God, then 'lust' [inordinate desires], epithumiai is the characteristic and summary New Testament word for that same drift. (See summary statements by Paul, Peter, John, and James as Gal 5:16ff; Eph.2: 3, 4:22; I Pet. 2:11, 4:2; I John 2:16; James 1:14ff, where epithumiai is the catch-all for what is wrong with us) The tenth commandment [against coveting; which is idolatrous, inordinate desire for something]...also... makes sin psychodynamic'. It lays bare the grasping and demanding nature of the human heart, as Paul powerfully describes in Romans 7...the NT merges the concept of idolatry and the concept of inordinate, life-ruling desires..for lust, demandingness, craving and yearning are specifically termed idolatry" (Eph. 5.5 and Colossians 3:5). - David Powlison "Idols of the Heart and Vanity Fair"

3. The sin under every sin.

The Ten Commandments begin with two commandments against idolatry. Then comes commandments three to ten. Why this order? It is because the fundamental problem is always idolatry. In other words, we never break commandments 3-10 without first breaking 1-2.

"The greatest danger and enemy that confronts us is not a matter of deeds or of actions, but of idolatry... That may sound very strange to some. Some think that above all we need to be warned not to do certain things... But our deeds and actions are always the outcome of our attitudes and thoughts So John takes the same procedure as the 10 commandments. All the Scriptures always start like this, they always say, start here the greatest danger is idolatry. " - D.M.Lloyd Jones "Idolatry" in Life in God: Studies in 1

"The principle crime of the human race, the highest guilt charged upon the world, the whole procuring cause of judgment, is idolatry. For although each individual sin retains its own proper

feature, although it is destined to judgment under its own proper name also, yet they all fall under the general heading of idolatry...[All murder and adultery, for example are idolatry, for they arise because something is loved more than God- yet in turn, all idolatry is murder for it assaults God, and all idolatry is also adultery for it is unfaithfulness to God] Thus it comes to pass, that in idolatry all crimes are detected, and in all crimes idolatry. " - Tertullian, On Idolatry

This means then, that *idolatry is always the reason we ever do anything wrong*. Why do we ever lie, or fail to love or keep promises or live unselfishly? Of course, the general answer is "because we are weak and sinful," but the specific answer is always that there is something besides Jesus Christ that you feel you must have to be happy, something that is more important to your heart than God, something that is spinning out a delusional field and enslaving the heart through inordinate desires. So the secret to change is always to identify the idols of the heart.

SUMMARY:

1. Unbelief

We know God but we reject him *as* God and seek to be our own God and Savior.

Rom. 1:21 - *Though they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him.*

2. Unrighteousness

Result: Fear and a sense of spiritual "nakedness," a loss of "righteousness," a sense of shame and unworthiness.

Gen. 3:7 - *Then...they realized they were naked, so they...made coverings for themselves.*

3. Idolatry

Therefore: we serve created things as "gods" instead, to maintain our independence from God, yet to still replace the lost worth, "righteousness."

Rom. 1:25 - *They...worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator.*

4. Lie system

Deep within us is a false belief system, centering on the idol(s), that something besides God can provide us with worth and satisfaction.

Rom. 1:21 - *So their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened...(25) they exchanged the truth of God for a lie.*

5. Slavery

Whatever we worship we serve. Since we must have the things we serve to "cover" our unworthiness, they drive us to over-effort to get them and fill us with fear and anger if circumstances jeopardize them. If we fail to attain them, they punish us with terrible self-loathing. Therefore everyone is in "covenant service" to a "lord" that works out its will out through our bodies (Rom. 6:16-19).

Rom. 1:25 - *Worshipped and served...created things...(26) Therefore God gave them over to...lusts.*

Even after conversion, our old false saviors/lords have continued power. Though we intellectually deny them, our hearts still functionally acknowledge them unless the Holy Spirit renews us. (Romans 7:14-25). Our fear, anger, and habits still arise from false saviors that we still deeply feel we must have for our value. So the key is uprooting residual, left-over self salvation systems. Sin only masters us if we let these old idols continue to force us to "earn our salvation" through them (Rom. 6:14 - *Sin will not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace*).

ASSIGNMENT - "IDENTIFYING YOUR IDOLS"

Between this week and next week, we will take a first stab at identifying some of the particular idols of our heart. Do the following:

A. Using "Problem Emotions" to identify idols.

1. Every self exists in relation to values perceived as making life worth living. A value is anything good in the created order, any idea, relation, object or person in which one has an interest, form which one derives significance...
2. These values compete... In time, one is prone to choose a center of value by which other values are judged...[which] comes to exercise power or preeminence over other values.
3. When a finite value has been elevated to centrality and imagined as a final source of meaning, then one has chosen...a god...One has a god when a finite value is...viewed as that without which one cannot receive life joyfully. (To be worshipped as a god, something must be sufficiently good... Were my daughter not a source of exceptional affection and delight, she would not be a potential idolatry for me, but I am tempted to adore her in a way...disproportional.)

Anxiety [Idolatry and the future]

Anxiety becomes neurotically intensified to the degree that I have idolized finite values... Suppose my god is sex or my physical health or the Democratic Party. If I experience any of these under genuine threat, then I feel myself shaken: to the depths.

Guilt/Bitterness [Idolatry and the past]

Guilt becomes neurotically intensified to the degree that I have idolized finite values... Suppose I value my ability to teach and communicate clearly...clear communication has become an absolute value for me, a center of value that makes all my other values valuable...then if "I [fail in teaching well] I am stricken with neurotic guilt.

Bitterness becomes neurotically intensified when someone or something stands between me and something that is my ultimate value.]

Boredom/Emptiness [Idolatry and the present]

To be bored is to feel empty, [meaningless.] Boredom is an anticipatory form of being dead. To the extent to which limited values are exalted to idolatries...[when any of those values are lost], boredom becomes pathological and compulsive... My subjectively experienced boredom may then

become infinitely projected toward the whole cosmos.... This picture of the self is called despair] The milder forms are disappointment, disillusionment, cynicism.]"

Questions to ask yourself:

a. If you are angry. Ask, "is there something too important to me? Something I am telling myself I have to have? Is that why I am angry—because I am being blocked from having something I think is a necessity when it is not?" Write down what that might be:

b. If you are fearful or badly worried. Ask, "is there something too important to me? Something I am telling myself I have to have? Is that why I am so scared—because something is being threatened which I think is a necessity when it is not?" Write down what that might be:

c. If you are despondent or hating yourself: Ask, "is there something too important to me? Something I am telling myself I have to have? Is that why I am so 'down'—because I have lost or failed at something which I think is a necessity when it is not?" Write down what that might be:

B. Using "Motivational Drives" to identify idols. (The "far-idols.")

"An idol is something within creation that is inflated to function as a substitute for God. All sorts of things are potential idols... An idol can be a physical object, a property, a person, an activity, a role, an institution, a hope, an image, an idea, a pleasure, a hero... If this is so, how do we determine when something is...an idol?"

1) As soon as our loyalty to anything leads us to disobey God, we are in danger of making it an idol...

-Work, a commandment of God can become an idol if it is pursued so exclusively that responsibilities to one's family are ignored.

-Family, an institution of God himself, can become an idol if one is so preoccupied with the family that no one outside one's own family is cared for.

-Being well liked, a perfect legitimate hope, becomes an idol if the attachment to it means one never risks disapproval.

2) [idols] are inflated...suggesting that the idol will fulfill the promises for the good life. ... Idols tend to come in pairs-- [for example] a nearby idol may be a rising standard of living, but the

faraway idol is a semi-conscious belief that material success will wipe a way every tear... - Richard Keyes, "The Idol Factory" in No God but God

The most basic question which God poses to each human heart: "Has something or someone besides Jesus the Christ taken title to Your heart's functional trust preoccupation. loyalty, service, fear and delight?"

Questions to bring some idol systems to the surface.

To who or what do you look for life-sustaining stability, security and acceptance?... What do you really want and expect [out of Me]? What would [really] make you happy? What would make you an acceptable person? Where do you look for power and success?' These questions or similar ones tease out whether we serve God or idols, whether we look for salvation from Christ or from false saviors. [This bears] on the immediate motivation of my behavior, thoughts, feelings. In the Bible's conceptualization, the motivation question is the lordship question. who or what "rules my behavior, the lord or an idol?" - David Powlison, "Idols of the Heart and Vanity Fair"

We often don't go deep enough to analyze our idol-structures. For example, "money" is of course an idol, yet in another sense, money can be sought in order to satisfy very different, more foundational idols. For example, some people want lots of money in order to control their world and life (such people usually don't spend their money, but save it) while others want lots of money for access to social circles and for making themselves beautiful and attractive (such people do spend their money on themselves!) The same goes for sex. Some people use sex in order to get power over others, in order to feel approved and loved, and others just for pleasure/comfort. The following outline can be helpful in letting people consider different foundational "idol structures." Dick Keyes calls them "far-idols" as opposed to "near idols." Remember, these are all alternative ways to make ourselves "righteous/worthy":

What We Seek	Price Willing to Pay	Greatest Nightmare	Others often feel	Problem Emotion
COMFORT (privacy, lack of stress, freedom)	Reduced productivity	Stress, demands	Hurt	Boredom
APPROVAL (affirmation, love, relationship)	Less independence	Rejection	Smothered	Cowardice
CONTROL (self-discipline, certainty, standards)	Loneliness, spontaneity	Uncertainty	Condemned	Worry
POWER (success, winning, influence)	Burdened, responsibility	Humiliation	Used	Anger

Circle the thoughts that are lodged in your heart:

Power idolatry: "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if, I have power and influence over others."

Approval idolatry: "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if, I am loved and respected by _____."

Comfort idolatry: "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if, I have this kind of pleasure experience, a particular quality of life."

Image idolatry: "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if, I have a particular kind of look or body image."

Control idolatry: "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if, I am able to get mastery over my life in the area of _____."

Helping idolatry: "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if, people are dependent on me and need me."

Dependence idolatry: "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if, someone' is there to protect me and keep me safe."

Independence idolatry: "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if, I am completely free from obligations or responsibilities to take care of someone."

Work idolatry: "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if, I am highly productive getting a lot done."

Achievement idolatry: "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if, I am being recognized for my accomplishments, if I am excelling in my career."

Materialism idolatry: "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if, I have a certain level of wealth, financial freedom, and very nice possessions."

Religion idolatry: "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if, I am adhering to my religion's moral codes and accomplished in its activities."

Individual person idolatry: "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if, this one person is in my life and happy there and/or happy with me."

Irreligion idolatry: "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if, I feel I am totally independent of organized religion and with a self-made morality."

Racial/cultural idolatry: "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if, my race and culture is ascendant and recognized as superior."

Inner ring idolatry: "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if, a particular social grouping or professional grouping or other group lets me in."

Family idolatry: "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if, my children and/OR my parents are happy and happy with me."

Relationship idolatry: "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if, Mr. or Ms. 'Right' is in love with me."

Suffering idolatry: "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if, I am hurting and in a problem only then do I feel noble or worthy of love or am able to deal with guilt."

Ideology idolatry: "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if, my political or social cause or party is making progress and ascending in influence or power."

Answer these diagnostic questions:

- a. What is my greatest nightmare? What do I worry about most?
- b. What (if I failed or lost it) would cause me to feel that I did not even want to live? What keeps me going?
- c. What do I rely on or comfort myself with when things go bad or get difficult?
- d. What do I think most easily about? What does my mind go to when I am free? What pre-occupies me?
- e. What prayer, unanswered, would make me seriously think about turning away from God?
- f. What makes me feel the most self-worth? What am I the proudest of?
- g. What do I really want and expect out of life? What would really make me happy?

C. Summary:

Answer the questions above and then look for common themes. Write below what you think are the "*functional*" masters? What things tend to be too important to you? Bring next week.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is an idol?
2. Why do we have idols?
3. How do idols affect us?
4. What is the "key" to growth?
5. Complete the Assignment - "Identifying Your Idols."
6. Come prepared to discuss your findings.

Dismantling Idols

REVIEW "IDENTIFYING YOUR IDOLS" ASSIGNMENT

Below is a basic outline of the "Identifying Idols" Assignment that you should have spent time on this week. Share with one another what you learned. You may wish to go through and share answers to the questions under A. and B., or you may wish to just go to C, the summary question, and share your final findings.

A. Using "Problem Emotions" to identify idols

- a. If you are angry: Because you are being blocked from having something you think is a necessity when it is not?" Write down what that might be:

- b. If you are fearful or badly worried. Because something is being threatened which you think is a necessity when it is not?" Write down what that might be:

- c. If you are despondent or hating yourself: Because you have lost or failed at something which you think is a necessity when it is not?" Write it down:

B. Using "Motivational Drives" to identify idols. (The "far-idols.")

- a. What is my greatest nightmare? What do I worry about most?

- b. What, if I failed or lost it, would cause me not even want to live?

- c. What do I rely on or comfort myself with when things go bad or get difficult?

- d. What does my mind go to when I am free? What pre-occupies me?

- e. What unanswered prayer would make me think about turning from God?

- f. What makes me feel the most self-worth? What am I the proudest of?

- g. What do I really want out of life? What would really make me happy?

C. Summarize.

Write below what you think are the "functional" masters? What things tend to be too important to you?

READING-"DISMANTLING IDOLS"

Read and mark "!" - for something that helped you

"?" - for something that raised a question

A. BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF IDOLS

1. The Universality of idols.

The Bible does not consider idolatry to be one sin among many (and now a very rare sin only among primitive people). Rather, the only alternative to true, full faith in the living God is idolatry. All our failures to trust God wholly or to live rightly are due at root to idolatry - something we make more important than God. There is always a reason for a sin. Under our sins are idolatrous desires.

"At the end of Exodus 20-23, the Lord says 'You shall make no covenant with them [pagan peoples] or with their gods.' (v. 32). [Paul says] unbelievers 'worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator' (Rom. 1:25). Man cannot escape his covenantal nature...worship and service are inseparable... [We must worship something--so we must serve something.] No more explicit statement of man's allegiance to his idols could be made...Paul describes the unbeliever as one in slavery to sin (Rom.6: 16)...false service [or slavery] is thought of as emerging from a covenant with false gods.

The warning against making a covenant with a false god presumes a comparison with the true covenant...in the Sinaitic covenant of Exodus 20 there is A) The command to love. Exodus 20.3 demands, "you shall have no other gods before me.". B) The sanctions. Exodus 20 promises blessings or curses depending on our response to the covenant...

*Now unbelief is an expression of a covenant with idols... All sin involves idolatry in one way or another, although it may not be immediately obvious. Sin does not occur in a vacuum. Despite our inability to fathom the depth of sin, we can describe it more accurately once we recognize our covenantal nature. One's life as an unbeliever is organized around idolatry... Any theory of [human nature] which discusses the 'why' aspect of behavior wrestles with the question of motivation. What [is a person really after? Why is he really after it?] A covenant servant expects blessings and avoids curses [by serving his god.] Without rooting our view of human nature in the covenant, we will not be able to adequately describe human motivation: We will only see a collection of desires rather than an expression of a comprehensive covenant." - Michael W. Bobick, *From Slavery to Sonship: A Biblical Psychology For Pastoral Counseling**

*"A careful reading of the Old and New Testaments shows that idolatry is nothing like the crude, simplistic picture that springs to mind of an idol sculpture in some distant country. As the main category to describe unbelief, the idea is highly sophisticated, drawing together the complexities of motivation in individual psychology, the social environment, and also the unseen world. Idols are not just on pagan altars, but in well-educated human hearts and minds (Ezekiel 14). The apostle associates the dynamics of human greed, lust, craving, and coveting with idolatry (Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5). The Bible does not allow us to marginalize idolatry to the fringes of life. ...it is found on center stage." - R. Keyes, "The Idol Factory" in *No God but God**

"The relevance of massive chunks of Scripture hangs on our understanding of idolatry... But let me focus the question through a particular verse in the New Testament... 'Beloved, keep yourselves from idols' (1 John 5:21). How does that command merit being the final word in a 105 verse treatise on living in vital fellowship with Jesus, the Son of God?... [Keeping oneself from idols sums up what vital fellowship with Jesus is.] - David Powlison, "Idols of the Heart and Vanity Fair"

"[When does the pursuit of a legitimate goal become idolatry, or 'ideology'?] An ideology arises the moment the end indiscriminately justifies every means. Thus a nation's goal of material prosperity becomes an idol [the ideology of materialism] when we use it to justify the destruction of the natural environment or allow the abuse of individuals or classes of people. A nation's goal of military security [becomes an idol [the ideology of militarism] when we use it to justify the removal of rights to free speech and judicial process, or the abuse of an ethnic minority] - Bob Goodzwaard, Idols of Our Time

It is not only that idols are the basis for all personal sins and problems, but they are also the basis for all social and cultural sins and problems. When an individual makes and serves an idol, it creates psychological distortion and troubles; when a family, a group, or a country makes and serves an idol, it creates social and cultural trouble. The following are a list of some of the more obvious social-cultural idols:

- a. **Fascism** makes an idol out of one particular race or nationality. It occurs when a culture teaches individuals to say "I am acceptable because I am of the _____ race which is far better than _____ race (s)." This also tends to make an idol out of military might.
- b. **Communism** makes an idol of the state. It occurs when a culture teaches that all problems are at root social, not spiritual, and that government, not God, will solve them.
- c. **Capitalism** can be an idol when a society comes to believe that all our problems will be solved by free market competition. Capitalism as an idol leads people to "worship" success and change.
- d. **Relativism** makes an idol out one's own individual conscience and inner feelings. When a society teaches people "you alone can determine what is right or wrong for you, as long as you don't steal others' freedom to have the same choice," then it has made "choice" an absolute value, and the feelings of the heart a god.
- e. **Scientism** makes an idol out of reason and scientific investigation. It insists absolutely everything has a natural, scientific cause. Thus it believes science has an answer for everything and will open all doors.

Sum: At the root of all problems (personal or social), and of all non-Christian philosophies and ideologies is the elevation of some created thing to the place of ultimate worship and ultimate arbiter of truth and meaning.

2. The Formation of Idols.

How do the particular idol-systems come to be formed in us? How do we come to have our specific idols?

The world, the flesh, and the devil (1 John 2:16-17) are inextricably linked in their influences to produce idols in us. First, our "flesh," our sinful heart is by nature an "idol factory" (as Calvin put it). Second, the "world," our social environment, coaxes us into various idols by model and example and sometimes direct appeal. Our family's idols, our culture's idols, our classes idols shape us either when we embrace them or reject them for the idol-opposite. Third, the "devil" works in us to stir up and enflame desires into idolatrous bondages. If we leave out any one of the three aspects, we will reduce behavior to either "Johnny is bad" or "Johnny is abused" or "Johnny is sick." But all these approaches are simplistic compared to the Bible. None of our behavior is simply the result of only: a) our inherent nature, b) our environment, or c) our free choice. The Bible is not essentialist ("he was born that way; it is hopeless"), behaviorist ("he is a victim of what they did to him, it's hopeless"), or existentialist ("it's all a matter of his choice; he can be whatever he wants to be!")

"How do we put together the following three things? First, people are responsible for their behavioral sins... Second, people with problems come from families or subcultures where the other people involved also have problems. We suffer and are victimized and misguided by the destructive things other people think, want, fear, value, feel, and do... My problems are often embedded in a tight feedback loop with your problems... Third, behavior is motivated by complex, life-driving patterns of thoughts, desires, fears, views of the world, and the like, of which a person maybe almost wholly unawares. How are we...responsible for our behavior [#1], socially conditioned [#2], and creatures whose hearts are twisted and complex all at the same time without any factor canceling out the others?"

The social and behavioral sciences miss this...Human motivation is never strictly psychological [controlled primarily by my feelings] or psycho-social [controlled primarily by my environment] or psycho-social-somatic [controlled primarily by my biological genetic code]. Human motivation is always God-relational [we are controlled primarily by what we worship]. Seeing this, the Bibles view alone can unify the seemingly contradictory elements in the explanation of behavior." -David Powlison, "Idols of the Heart and Vanity Fair"

The things frequently labeled 'co-dependency' are more precisely instances of 'co-idolatry'. People's typical idol patterns often reinforce each other and fit in an uncanny way into a [single, large] idol system, creating massively destructive feedback loops. The classic alcoholic husband and rescuing wife are enslaved within an idol system whose components complement each other all too well.

[1.] The idol pattern in the husband...might be a use of alcohol [a] to serve an idol of escape from the pains and frustrations in life, or [b] to serve an idol of self crucifixion to deal with his periodic guilt and remorse...[2.] The idol pattern in the wife...might be a use of rescuing behavior [a] to serve an idol of personal worth by being a martyred savior of her family, or [b] to serve an idol of security by having a male's love and dependence on her.

Each of their idols (and the consequent behavior, thoughts, and emotions) is 'logical' within the idol system... Idols counterfeit aspects of God's identity and character...judge, savior, source of blessing, sin bearer, object of trust. ...Each idol in the system 'makes promises' and 'gives warnings'. Service to each idol results in a hangover of misery and accusedness, because idols lie and murder. They are continually insinuated by the one who as a liar and murderer from the beginning."

"Co-dependency literature often perceptively describes the patterns of dysfunctional idols which curse and enslave people (e.g. the rescuer or compulsive drinker). But the solution [in this same literature] is to offer different and presumably more workable idols, rather than the Bible's Christ.... Self-esteem ...acceptance and love from new significant others, [better jobs and careers] create successful versions of the idols 'fear of man' and 'trust of man'. Eufunctional idols do 'work' and 'bless' with temporarily happy lives (Psalm 73)...but the idol system is intact... "-David Powlison, "Idols of the Heart and Vanity Fair"

"The idol begins as a means of power, enabling us to control, but then overpowers, controlling us .". - Richard Keyes, "The Idol Factory" in No God but God

Sum: Sin cannot simply be resisted at the volitional level through mere will power, but on the other hand, we are not helpless victims. Sin must primarily be rooted out at the motivational level through the application of gospel-truth. We must find what we worship as our functional savior through works-righteousness, in rejection of the gospel of free grace and salvation through Christ. Then we must repent and replace the idol with love and joy in Christ at the same time we are trying to change our behavior.

B. HEALING IDOLATRY WITH THE GOSPEL

1. The "Moralizing" Approach.

Basic analysis: Your problem is that you are doing wrong. Repent!

This focuses on behavior, but doesn't go deep enough. We must find out the why of our behavior. Why do I find I want to do the wrong things? What inordinate desires are drawing me to do so? What are the idols and false beliefs behind them? To simply tell an unhappy person (or yourself) to 'repent and change behavior' is insufficient, because the lack of self-control is coming from a belief that says, 'even if you live up to moral standards, but you don't have this, then you are still a failure: You must replace this belief through repentance for the one sin under it all, your particular idolatry.

2. The "Psychologizing" Approach.

Basic analysis: Your problem is that you don't see that God loves you as you are. Rejoice!

This focuses on feelings, which seems to be "deeper" than behavior, but it also fails to go deep enough. We must also find out the why of our feelings. Why do I have such strong feelings of despair (or fear, or anger) when this or that happens? What are the inordinate desires that are being frustrated? What are the idols and false beliefs behind them? To simply tell an unhappy person (or yourself) 'God loves you, rejoice!' is insufficient, because the unhappiness is coming from a belief that says, 'even if God loves you, but you don't have this, then you are still a failure.'

You must replace this belief through repentance for the one sin under it all, your particular idolatry.

3. The "Gospel" Approach.

Basic Analysis: Your problem is that you are looking to something besides Christ for your happiness. Repent and rejoice!

This confronts a person with the real sin under the sins and behind the bad feelings. Our problem is that we have given ourselves over to idols. Every idol-system is a way of our-works-salvation, and thus it keeps us "under the law." Paul tells us that the bondage of sin is broken when we come out from under the law--when we begin to believe the gospel of Christ's-work-salvation. Only when we realize in a new way that we are righteous in Christ is the idol's power over us broken. Sin shall not be your master for you are not under law, but under grace. (Rom.6:14) You will only be "under grace" and free from the controlling effects of idols to the degree that you have both: (1) repented for your idols, and (2) rested and rejoiced in the saving work and love of Christ instead.

"If we accurately comprehend the interweaving of...behavior, deceptive inner motives, and powerful external forces, then... what was once 'dry doctrine' becomes filled with appeal, hope, delight and life. People see that the Gospel is far richer than a ticket to heaven and rote forgiveness for oft-repeated behavioral sins ... [1. A Psychologizing approach says] 'you feel horribly and act badly because your needs aren't being met, because your family did not meet them.'... then it says, 'God accepts you just as you are'... This is not the Biblical gospel, however... This approach just soothes the unhappy soul without getting to the source of the pain]. [2.] In a Moralizing approach] Christ's forgiveness is applied simply to behavioral sins. The solution is typically...an attempt to deal with the motive problems with a single act of housecleaning. There is little sense of patient process of inner renewal...daily dying to the false gods we fabricate. - David Powlison, "Idols of the Heart and Vanity Fair"

'The faith that...is able to warm itself at the fire of God's love, instead of having to steal love and self-acceptance from other sources, is actually the root of holiness... It is often said today, in circles which blend popular psychology with Christianity, that we must love ourselves before we can be set free to love others... But no realistic human beings find it easy to love or forgive themselves, and hence their self-acceptance must be grounded in their awareness that God accepts them in Christ. There is a sense in which the strongest self-love that we can have...is merely the mirror image of the lively conviction we have that God loves us. Moralism, whether it takes the form of either denunciation or "pep talks," can ultimately only created an awareness of sin and guilt or manufactured virtues built on will power... We all automatically gravitate toward the assumption that we are justified by our level of sanctification, and when this posture is adopted, it inevitably focuses our attention not on Christ but on the adequacy of our own obedience. We start each day with our personal security not resting on the accepting love of God and the sacrifice of Christ but on our present feelings or recent achievements in the Christians life. Since these arguments will not quiet the human conscience, we are inevitably moved either to discouragement and apathy or to a self righteousness [some form of idolatry] which falsifies the record to achieve a sense of peace... - Richard Lovelace, The Dynamics of Spiritual Life

ASSIGNMENT - "DISMANTLING YOUR IDOLS"

A. First Step - REPENT! Taking down the idols- (Judges 10:10-16; Rom.8: 13)

On the one hand, (contra the Psychologizing Approach) you are called to repent. You have been worshiping an idol and rejected the true God. Every idol is the center of some system of works-righteousness by which we are seeking to "earn" our salvation, so you are also trying to be your own Savior. So you must repent. But this actually gives much hope, it means there is something you can do. The Psychologizing Approach, though sympathetic, is not truly empowering, because it leaves us feeling like helpless victims.

How can we repent for idols?

1. Name the Idols (getting specific)

Below, list your main idols, as you understand them now. Refer to the "C. Summary" in the "Identifying Idols" Project. Revise and add to this any new insights that may have come to you while doing the reading of this project. Then, in prayer, name these things to God. Sample prayer language: "Lord, these are the things I have built my life and heart around..."

2. Unmask the Idols (destroying their attraction)

a. Seeing how weak and poor they are (in themselves). Idols create "delusions." They appear more wonderful or all powerful than they really are. Stand back and get them into perspective. Look at them, now, very specifically, and in prayer, confess that these things are good, but finite and weak, and praise God for being the only source of what you need. Sample prayer language, *"Lord, this is a good thing, why have I made it to be so absolute? Why do I feel so pointless without it? What is this compared to you? If I have you, I don't have to have this! This cannot bless me and love me and help me like you! This is not my life, Jesus is my life! This is not my righteousness and worthiness. It cannot give me that. But you can and have!"* Write out such a prayer in your own words.

b. Seeing how dangerous they are (to you). Idols enslave, and they will never be satisfied. Realize how they increasingly destroy you. Look and now, in prayer, confess that these things are absolutely lethal, and ask a strong God for his help. Sample prayer language: *"Lord, why am I giving this so much power over me? If I keep doing it, it will strangle me. I don't have to do so, I will not do so any longer. I will not let this jerk me around on a leash any longer. This will not be my Master-you are my only King."* Write out such a prayer in your own words.

c. Seeing how grievous they are (to Christ). Idols ultimately are cruel to the heart of the one who offers us so much, and at such infinite cost. Realize that when you pine after idols (in your anger, fear, despondency) that you are saying: *"Lord, you are not enough. This is more beautiful, fulfilling, and sweet to my taste than you. You are negotiable, but this is not. Despite all you've done for me, I will only use you as long as you help me get this. You are negotiable, but this is not. You haven't done enough for me, if you don't help me have this, I will discard you."* In prayer,

admit how deeply you have grieved and de-valued Jesus, and ask forgiveness. Sample prayer language: *"Lord I see how repulsive this idol for what it is, an idol. In yearning after this, I trampled on your love for me. I realize now that the greatest sin in my life is a lack of thankfulness, a lack of grateful joy for what you have done for me."* Write such a prayer in your own words.

B. Second step - REJOICE! - Replacing the idols- (Luke 10:20; Col.3: 1-4)

On the other hand (contra the Moralizing Approach) you are called to tremendous joy and encouragement. What you have turned from is the beauty, love, and joy of Christ. He offers what you have been seeking elsewhere. He awaits you, he "stands at the door" knocking (Rev.3: 20), seeking a far deeper connection of intimacy with you than he has had previously. It is an appreciation, rejoicing, and resting in what Jesus has done and offers you that will "replace" the idol.

"Rejoicing" in the Bible is much deeper than simply being happy: about something. Paul directed that we "Rejoice in the Lord always" (Phil.4: 4), but this cannot mean, "always feel happy," since he also said that every day he was weighted with concern and anxiety over his flock (2 Cor. 11: 28-29). Jesus forbid his disciples to rejoice in their power over demons, and insisted that they rejoice over their salvation (Luke 10:20). What you rejoice in is the thing that is your central sweetness and consolation in life. To rejoice is to treasure a thing, to assess its value to you, to reflect on its beauty and importance until your heart rests in it and tastes the sweetness of it.

So "rejoicing" is a way of praising God until the heart is sweetened and rested, and until it relaxes its grip on anything else it thinks that it needs. The rejoicing is thus not strictly a second distinct step after repentance, but rather it completes the repentance. (In the same way, the Christian repentance is not distinct, but rather it begins the rejoicing!) Why? In Christian repentance, we do not "take our sins" to Mt. Sinai, but to Mt. Calvary. Sinai represents only the law of God, and makes us fear God will reject us. But Calvary represents both the law of God and his commitment to save us no matter what, even if his Son has to fulfill and pay our debt to the law. "Going to Sinai" with our sins, means we use the painful fear of rejection to motivate us to change. "Going to Calvary" with our sins, means we use gratitude for his love to motivate us to change. The free love of Christ means that in disobedience, you have not just broken the rules, but spurned the One who lost his Father rather than lose you.

The Moralizing Approach, then, though challenging, is not in the end truly cleansing, because it only makes us afraid of the consequences of our sin, rather than disgusted with the sin itself as grieving and dishonoring to our Savior. Thus it is only as we rejoice in the absolute certainty of his love for us that we can truly repent. In the gospel, it is the thing that most assures us (free grace) that most deeply convicts us of sin.

How can we rejoice like this?

1. Rejoice in Principle

Right here and now, you can deliberately in prayer, thank God for salvation in Christ as a replacement for the self-salvation of idolatry in general. Sample prayer language: *"Lord, I have been trying to earn my own salvation and weave my own righteousness. But you are my salvation and righteousness. I am accepted in your Son! All my problems come because I am forgetting*

how loved, honored, beautiful, secure, rich, respected, embraced, free in Jesus and all other ways of finding honor, etc. are vain. Let me be so ravished with your love of me that no other love can control me." Write such a prayer in your own words.

2. Rejoice in Particular.

To replace idols so they cannot grow (back), you must learn to rejoice in the particular thing that Jesus brings or his particular asset that replaces the particular idol of your heart. Here are some examples:

When tempted because of idolatry (out of a desire for comfort), let Jesus entice you with his life. In prayer, praise him for his fulfilling, life-giving nature. When tempted, sample prayer language: *"Lord, when I forget the gospel, I begin to relate to you as a boss, not a lover. I cease enjoying you and experiencing your love on my heart. That is the reason I am tempted. Only in your presence is fullness of joy and pleasures forever more (Psalm 16:11) yet here am I trying to find comfort in something else. Why rake in a mud puddle when you have set a table for me (Psalm 23:5) filled with your love, peace, joy. This thing I am tempted by is just a pleasure that will wear off so soon, it is a sham and cheat, while your pleasure, though it may start small will grow on and on forever (Prov.4:18). And remove my idols of pleasure, which never can give me the pleasure I need."* A meditation for rejoicing in Jesus (and the gospel) when tempted, read, John 6:5-13:32-40. See Jesus feeding people with his bread, the only bread that will not leave you hungry (Jn.6:35). Meditate on John 6 and write out a rejoicing prayer that replaces temptation thoughts.

When anxious because of idolatry (out of a desire for control), let Jesus comfort you with his care. In prayer, praise him for his detailed, wise care of you. When troubled by circumstances, sample prayer language: *"Lord, when I forget the gospel, I either feel I am living up to standards, so I get mad at you when things go wrong, or else I feel I am not living up to standards, so I get depressed and guilty when things go wrong. Both ways destroy any peace. But I live by your sheer grace--that means though I don't deserve to have things go right, yet I know you are working them all out for good (Rom.8:28) because you love me in Christ. All my punishment fell into Jesus' heart, so you only allow bad things for my growth, and for loving wise purposes: I can relax, because my security in life is based neither on luck, nor hard work, but on your gracious love for me, You have counted every hair on my head (Matt. 10:30-31) and every tear down my cheeks Ms. 56:8), you love me far more and better than anyone else loves me or than I love myself. And remove my idols of security, which never can give me the security I need."* A meditation for rejoicing in Jesus (and the gospel) when anxious, read Luke 8:22-25; Mark 4:35-41. See Jesus assuring them of his care. Meditate on this and write out a prayer that replaces anxious thoughts.

When hard, cold, or angry because of idolatry (out of a desire for power), let Jesus humble and soften you with his mercy. In prayer, praise him for his great patience with and mercy toward you. When irritable or cold, sample prayer language: *"Lord, when I forget the gospel I become impatient and judgmental of others. I forget that you have been infinitely patient with me over the years. You are slow to anger and rich in love (Psalm 145:8). When I am anything other than tender-hearted and compassionate to people around me, I am like the unmerciful servant, who having been forgiven an infinite debt, is hard toward his fellow debtor (Matt.18:21-35). I live completely and solely by your grace and long-suffering, and I praise you for it. Tenderize my heart toward others as I do so. And remove the idol of power, the need to get my own way, which*

is making me so hard toward these people." A meditation for rejoicing in Jesus (and the gospel) when cold or angry, read Matthew 26:36-46. See Jesus being let down by his disciples, but still giving them credit for their willing spirits (Matt.26: 41). Remember that you have fallen asleep on him so often. Meditate on this and write out a prayer that replaces hard-hearted thoughts.

When feeling hurt and rejected because of idolatry (out of a desire for approval), let Jesus assure you of his love. In prayer, praise him for his unchanging love for you. When feeling rejected and rather worthless, sample prayer language: *"Lord, when I forget the gospel I become dependent on the smiles and evaluation of others. I let them sit in judgment on me and then I hear all their criticism as a condemnation of my very being. But you have said, 'now there is no condemnation for me (Rom.8: 1). You delight and sing over me (Zeph.3: 14-17), you see me as a beauty (Col. 1:22). Why do I pant after the approval of the serfs when I have the love of the King? Ironically, I am being a lousy friend, because I am too hurt by criticism to either learn from it or give it to others (for fear of getting it back). Oh, let me be so satisfied with your love (Psalm 90:14) that I no longer respond to people in fear of displeasing them, but in love, committed to what is best for them. Remove my idols of approval, which can never give me the approval I need."* A meditation for rejoicing in Jesus (and the gospel) when hurt or rejected, read, John 15:9-17:17:13-26. Listen to how Jesus talks about you to his Father. Think of what you mean to him, what he is willing to do for you. Meditate on this and write out a prayer that replaces despondent thoughts.

3. Rejoice in Process.

Rejoicing in Christ as a replacement for idols is a process. The first time you do it, there will be some relief and change, but it takes a long time for the fundamental "affections" of our heart to be drawn away from our idols toward Christ.

Essentially, rejoicing in Christ is worship. You can get no relief simply by "figuring out" your idols and simply saying, "but Jesus gives me peace that this idol cannot." You have to actually get the peace that Jesus gives, and that only comes as you worship. The "Rejoicing in Particular" exercises are just abstractions that will not effect you unless as you pray and praise and meditate the Spirit inscribes these truths on the heart (Eph.1: 18ff.; 3:15ff).

Meditate on this poem by John Donne. Make it a prayer-

*Take me to you, imprison me.
For I, except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except YOU ravish me.*

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by the "universality of idols" (A.1.)? What is the support?
2. How are our particular idol systems formed in us (A.2.)?
3. Summarize the three approaches to "healing idolatry" (B.1-3)?
4. Complete the Assignment, "Dismantling Your Idols."
5. Come prepared to share.

Preaching the Gospel to Yourself

By Richard P. Kaufmann, March 2005

INTRODUCTION

Over the past several years, God has grown me in my need for and joy in the Gospel, and my ability to preach it to myself. I continue to be struck by how slow I am in running to the Gospel. I still fall very far short in this area. However, by God's grace through the "Gospel and Heart" groups, challenging circumstances, and Gospel-friendships, I believe God has grown me in this discipline. Here are some things I think are important:

THE IMPORTANCE OF PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO YOURSELF

I have learned that unless I remind myself why I need the Gospel that very quickly my idol of self-reliance will kick in and bring me under the law. Here are three reasons why I desperately need to preach the Gospel to myself:

The Gospel is how I change (2Cor.3:18b)

The Gospel is what empowers me to serve (2Cor.3:5)

The Gospel is where I meet God (2Cor.3:18a; 4:6)

PROGRESS IN PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO YOURSELF

I have noticed three different types of Gospel preaching which I do to myself. Although I continue to do all three, there seems to have been a progression from exclusively "interventive," to an increasing proportion of "preventive" to a growing amount of "contemplative."

Interventive Gospel Preaching

This type is triggered when I become aware of a pressing need usually in the form of one of the following:

Moral failure

Circumstantial crisis

Negative emotions

Preventive Gospel Preaching

While "interventive" is triggered by the awareness of a need, "preventive" seeks God's grace for daily life, specifically to:

Head-off sinful responses

Empower for everyday ministry opportunities

Contemplative Gospel Preaching

While "interventive" and "preventive" both look to God for "something," "contemplative" looks to God for Himself (Ps.27:4). I often experience this during worship—God surprises me with a sense of his loving presence and the joy of knowing that I am right with him. I find myself delighting in his delight.

HOW TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO YOURSELF

The critical event is repentance and faith. The two errors I continue to fall into are: 1) I deal with the surface sin instead of the root sin, and 2) I preach moralism to myself instead of the Gospel. The following is an outline I have found helpful in preaching the Gospel to myself:

Down The Slope Of Repentance

Objective: To see and confess that I am a bigger sinner than I thought.

See And Own Your Sin

Examine yourself in the mirror of God's Word, your negative emotions and attitudes, and the responses of others to you. Guard yourself against sin's deceitfulness: the tendency to water down God's standard, compare ourselves to others, shift the blame, or commit ourselves to trying harder.

See The Sin Beneath Your Sin

Don't move too quickly to confess and receive forgiveness for the surface sin. Push the "Why?" question until you find what you are looking to other than Jesus for meaning and sweetness in life.

Expose The Idols/False Lovers Of Your Heart

They are weak

They can't deliver when you succeed; they can only raise the bar.
They can't forgive when you fail; they can only lower the boom.

They are harmful

They hurt you spiritually, emotionally and physically.
They hurt others by undermining your ability to love.

They are grievous to God

Most importantly, by going after these idols/other lovers you are saying to God: "Jesus is not enough. I also need _____ in order to be happy."

Conclusion: "I am a much bigger sinner than I thought." I am a worthy recipient of God's judgment. Trying harder won't cut it. I am helpless and hopeless in myself. BUT there is One..."

Up The Slope Of Faith

Objective: To thank God that Jesus is a much bigger Savior than I thought. I think about and give thanks that:

Jesus lived for me.

Think about and give thanks for specific ways Jesus has lived obediently where I have failed.

Jesus died for me.

Think about Jesus' death on the cross for my specific sins and idolatry. Thank God that my sin has been punished once and for all.

God sees me in Jesus.

Think about how God sees me in Jesus, clothed with his perfect righteousness. Thank Him specifically for how He provides for me in Christ all that my idols/false lovers promised but could not deliver.

Jesus lives in me.

Thank God that He does not leave me to live the Christian life on my own, but the Spirit of Christ now dwells in me. Ask Him to live His righteous life through me, specifically in the areas where I have confessed sin.

Son or Slave?

Read and mark "!" - for something that helped you
 "?" - for something that raised a question

INTRODUCTION

Galatians 4:5-9 tells us:

1. When we became Christians, we "receive[d] the adoption [lit. the sonship]."" (Gal. 4:4-5). We became sons of God.
2. Before we were "slaves," but that is true no longer. "So you are no longer a slave, but a son" (Gal. 4:7)
3. Nevertheless, it is possible, even if you are a Christian, to return to some degree into a state of slavery, and to lose our "sonship consciousness." "Formerly...you were slaves...do you wish to be enslaved...all over again?" (Gal. 4:8,9; cf. Romans 8:15- "you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear." i.e. it is possible to fall back into fear/slavery though we are in fact children of God).

Therefore, the two fundamentally different ways to live are not a) as religious or b) as irreligious, but a) *as a slave*, full of fear, or b) *as a child of God*, full of faith working through love.

There is a two-part "dynamic" to Christian growth. (It is, in a sense, a "combustion cycle." If it is ignited and going in the heart it results in dynamic character growth.) The two parts are a "negative" and a "positive." We see them mentioned many places:

Colossians 3:

v.1- Set your hearts on things above,
 where Christ is seated...who is your life.

v.5- Put to death what belongs to your
 earthly nature...which is idolatry...

Hebrews 12:

v:2- Fix our eyes on Jesus, the author
 and perfecter of our faith...sat down
 at the right hand of God...

v. 1- Let us throw off every-thing that
 hinders and the sin that so easily
 entangles...

Romans 8:

v.5- ...their minds set on what, the Spirit
 desires.(v.14) those who are led by the
 Spirit of the God are sons of God.

v.13- ...by the Spirit you put to
 death the misdeeds of the body,
 you will live,...

Galatians 5:

v.25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us
 keep in step with the Spirit.

v.24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus
 have crucified the sinful nature with its
 passions and desires.

The "negative" side is *repentance*, to discover the particular idolatries of the heart (Col.3:5), our besetting sins (Heb.12:1), and uproot them at the motivational level (Rom-5:13). The "positive" side is *faith*, to see ourselves as perfect in Christ (Col.3:1), who has done from first to last all that was required for my acceptance (Heb-12:2), so that we could be adopted as sons and daughters of God (Rom.8:14). This is the dynamic a) we uproot the idols of the heart, and b) we live out of our identity as children of God.

These two elements really are flip sides of each other. As we begin with one, we find that we always pass over into doing the other as well. Each stimulates the other; if either one is de-emphasized it robs the other also of any power. How? On the one hand, without a knowledge of our extreme sin and idolatry, the payment of Christ on the cross seems trivial, and the message of it does not electrify or transform. On the other hand, without a knowledge of our complete acceptance and adoption through Christ, the message of our sin would so crush us that we would deny or repress it. But, the more you know of his infallible fatherly love, the more you are able to realistically face yourself, your flaws and faults, and the more you see your sin, the more precious and valuable do you find his saving love and grace.

In this week's project, we will look at how to live as a child of God. In the next two weeks' projects, we will look at how to identify idols (the "negative" part of the growth dynamic).

PART I. - UNDERSTANDING OUR ADOPTION.

A. The importance of adoption.

"The notion that we are children of God, His own sons and daughters...is the main spring of Christian living... Our sonship to God is the apex of Creation and the goal of redemption."
- Sinclair Ferguson, *Children of the Living God*

*"If you want to judge how well a person understand Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all. [Adoption] is the highest privilege the gospel offers... That justification, by which we mean God's forgiveness of the past together with his acceptance of the future, is the primary and fundamental blessing is not in question... But...adoption is higher, because of the richer relationship with God that it involves" - J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, chap 19*

*"According to the Scriptures, pardon, acceptance, and adoption are distinct privileges, the one rising above the other in the order in which they have been stated...while the first two properly belong to (the sinner's) justification, as being both founded on the same relation [with God] as a Ruler-and-Subject, the third is radically distinct from them, as being founded on a nearer...more tender, more endearing relation [with God] as Father-and-child...T he privilege of adoption presupposes pardon and acceptance, but is higher than either..." -James Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification**

B. Objections to and distortions of adoption.

"I have heard it seriously argued that the thought of divine fatherhood can mean nothing to those whose human father was inadequate, lacking wisdom, affection or both, nor to those many more whose misfortune it was to have a fatherless upbringing... But this is silly. For it is just not true to suggest that in the realm of personal relations, positive concepts cannot be formed by contrast... The truth is that all of us have a positive ideal of fatherhood by which we judge our own and others' fathers [how else could we be unhappy with our bad fathers?], and it can safely be said that the person for whom the thought of God's perfect fatherhood is meaningless or repellant does not exist." - J. I. Packer, Knowing God, chap 19

"In the sense that God is the Creator all things, it is true that the Bible sometimes speaks of His Fatherhood. He is the 'Father of the heavenly lights' (James 1:17) and the One who brought the universe to birth. But that is not the most common use... We are not, by nature, children of God. We need to become his children... In fact, by nature, we are children of wrath, not children of God" (Ephesians 2:3). - Sinclair Ferguson, Children of the Living God

"The idea that all are children of God is not found in the Bible anywhere...The gift of sonship to God becomes ours not through being born, but through being born again. To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God--children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or of a husband's will, but born of God.' (Jn. 1:12-13) Sonship to God, then, is a gift of grace. It is not a natural but an adoptive sonship, and so the New Testament explicitly pictures it." - J.I. Packer, Knowing God, chap 19

C. Adoption defined.

"Adoption is not a change in nature, but a change in status. If we fail to see this truth, we will reject the power of our adoption... Adoption is a declaration God makes about us. It is irreversible, dependent entirely upon His gracious choice, in which He says: 'You are my son, today I have brought you into my family.'" - Sinclair Ferguson, Children of the Living God

"All those that are justified, God vouchsafeth, in and for his only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption: by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privilege of the children of God; have His name put upon them, receive the spirit of adoption; have access to the throne of grace with boldness; are enabled to cry, Abba, Father; are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by Him, as by a father, yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption, and inherit the promises, as heirs of everlasting salvation." - Westminster Confession, chap 12

"The profound truth of Roman adoption was that the adoptee was taken out of his previous state and placed in a new relationship of son to his new father...All his old debts are cancelled, and in effect the adoptee started a new life as part of his new family...[On the one hand, the new father] owned all the [new offspring's] property, controlled his personal relationships, and had the rights of discipline. On the other hand, the father was liable for the actions of the adoptee, and each owed the other reciprocal duties of support and maintenance." - Francis Lyall, Slaves, Citizens, and Sons

"In Roman law, it was a recognized practice for an adult who wanted an heir, and someone to carry on the family name, to adopt a male as his Son... The apostles proclaim that God has so loved those whom he redeemed on the cross that he has adopted them all as his heirs, to see and share the glory into which his only begotten Son has already come. 'God sent his Son...to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights as sons.' (Gal. 4:4-5): we, that is, who were 'foreordained to adoption as sons...' (Eph.1:5). 'How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!...When he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.'" (I Jn. 3:1-2). - J. I. Packer, Knowing God, chap 19

D. Biblical theology of adoption.

"God and religion are not less than they were; the old Testament revelation of the holiness of God, and its demand for humility in man, is presupposed throughout, but something has been added. A new factor has come in the New Testament believers to deal with God as their Father." - J.I. Packer, Knowing God, chap 19

"According to our Lords own testimony in John's Gospel, God's fatherly relation to him implied four things. [1] First, fatherhood implied authority. The Father commands and disposes; the initiative which he calls his Son to exercise is the initiative of resolute obedience to his Father's will... (6:38; 17:4; 5:19; 4:34). [2] Second, fatherhood implies affection. The Father loves the Son.' The Father hath loved me...' (5:20;15: 9-10). [3] Third, fatherhood implied fellowship. 'I am not alone, for my Father is with me.' The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone...' (16:32; 8:29). [4] Fourth, fatherhood implied honor. God wills to exalt his Son. 'Father...Glorify your Son.' The Father...has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son...' (17: 1; 5:22-23). All this extends to his adopted children. In, through, and under Jesus Christ their lord, they are ruled, loved, companied, and honored by their heavenly Father... "Father...let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father. I want those you have given me to be with me where I am...' (17:23-24), -J.I. Packer, Knowing God, chap 19

PART II. - EXPERIENCING OUR ADOPTION

A. The status Christians do have

"God sent his son...to redeem those under the law that we might receive the adoption [lit. the sonship]" (Gal. 4:4-5).

B. The experience Christians can have.

"Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" (Galatians 4:6). "You did not receive the spirit of slavery again to fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry 'Abba! Father!' it is the Spirit bearing witness with our spirits that we are children of God" (Romans 8:15-16).

C. What is the experience of sonship?

"[We all have a native] inability to believe that salvation is entirely of God's grace and love... We are slow to realize the implications of that. We are sons, but we are in danger of having the mindset of hired servants. Furthermore, if there is nothing else the Devil can do to mar our joy in

Christ, he will try to produce in us what our forefathers used to call a 'bondage frame of spirit'...That is why he sends us the Spirit of adoption. What is [that]? Paul says, 'You did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, Abba, Father' (Rom. 8:15-16)...Paul is referring to the Holy Spirit...[which] brings us into a deep-seated persuasion that we really are the sons of God. If it is a fact that...God has adopted us into his family, then the Spirit assures us this is true, and enables us to live in the enjoyment of such a rich spiritual blessing...He sends his Spirit into our hearts, bringing us the deep spiritual and psychological security that rests on the objective fact that our sins are forgiven and we belong to the Lord:" - Sinclair Ferguson, Children of the Living God

"'Abba' was the word that was used familiarly by children talking to their fathers...A child does not always address his father as 'father'; he uses terms such as 'Papa', 'Dad'. That is the kind of meaning represented by this word 'Abba'. It was a...word lisped by a little child... But let us notice the word 'cry'...we cry 'Abba, Father'. It is a very strong word, and clearly the Apostle has used it quite deliberately. It means a loud cry...it expresses deep emotion... What then does it imply? Obviously...real knowledge of God. God is no longer to us a distant God. He is not merely a God in whom we believe intellectually, theologically, theoretically, doctrinally only. All this is possible to one who is not a child of God at all...[Our] worship and praying are spontaneous; it is the spontaneity of the child who sees the father...and not only spontaneity, but confidence. "A little child has confidence. He does not analyze it...he knows that 'Abba' is his father. Grown-ups may be standing back at a distance and being very formal [with some great personage]; but the little child comes running in, rushes right in, and holds on, to his fathers legs. He has a right that no-one else has...It is instinctive...we cry 'Abba, Father'." - D.M. Lloyd-Jones, Romans 8:5-17

"Let me remind you of how Thomas Goodwin...states the matter... He pictures a man walking along a road with his little boy, holding hands--father and son, son and father. The little boy knows that the man is his father, and that his father loves him. But suddenly the father stops, picks up the boy, lifts him up into his arms, embraces him and kisses him... The boy is no more a son when he is being embraced than he was before. The father's action...has not changed the status of the boy, but oh! the difference in the enjoyment!... That is what is described in Romans 8:15..." - D.M. Lloyd-Jones, Romans 8:5-17

"It is a manifestation of God unto the soul... It is a thing better felt than spoken of. It is no audible voice, but a ray of glory filling the soul...corresponding to that audible voice, 'O man, greatly beloved,' (Dan.9:23)..."(William Guthrie) "The Spirit does not always witness to our condition by force of argument from sanctification, but sometimes immediately by way of presence: as the sight of a friend comforts without help of discourse..."(Richard Sibbes) - D.M. Lloyd-Jones, Romans 8:5-17

D. An example of the experience ("spirit") of sonship.

The problem: *"Because I did not believe God loved me on the basis of Christ's life, death, and resurrection—*

The result: *[therefore] I could not face the risk of seeing my sins as my own responsibility. So [1.] having tried to clear my conscience by blaming others, I[2.] turned on the afterburners and made myself busy with work and duty. Or to use Luther's analogy, I was full of active righteousness. I*

looked to my outward activity to feel good about myself, and judged others by my own active standards...

The turning: *But now I understood what Luther was talking about: 'in the righteousness of faith we work nothing, we render nothing to God, but we only receive and allow another to work in us.' This is what he called a "passive righteousness," a righteousness that is credited to our account through faith. This was Christ's righteousness, bought with the price of his blood on the cross. This I received by faith. The reason it had been so difficult for me to have a personal faith in Christ was that I had not experienced total forgiveness. But I had now brought real sins- including my attitudes of self-dependence and blame-shifting, to a real Savior, and they had been forgiven... How awesome it is to be loved unconditionally by a holy, righteous God. - Rose M. Miller, From Fear to Freedom*

PART III. - LIVING OUT OUR ADOPTION.

To live "by faith" is not a general "positive attitude," but a deliberate attempt to fire the heart with a knowledge of who we are in Christ and to live consistently with that. *"Sonship, [therefore] must be the controlling thought, the normative category, if you like, at every point."* (J.I. Packer). Here are all the responsibilities or duties of the Christian life recast and understood in terms of sonship:

A. Responsibilities of adopted children:

1. New motivation.

"If the love of a father will not make a child delight in him, what will?" - John Owen, Communion with God

"A perfect man would never act from sense of duty, he'd always want the right thing more than the wrong one. Duty is only a substitute for love (of God and of other people) like a crutch which is a substitute for a [healthy] leg. Most of us need the crutch at times; but of course it is idiotic to use the crutch when our own legs (our own loves, tastes, habits, etc.) can do the journey on their own." - C.S. Lewis Letters 18 July 1957

2. Obedience.

"[The Sermon on the Mount] teaches Christian conduct not by giving a full scheme of rules and a detailed conduct, to be followed with mechanical precision, but by indicating a broad and general way the spirit, direction and objectives, the guiding principles and ideals, by which the Christian must steer his course. It is often noted that this is...quite different from the tax-consultant type of instruction which was the stock-in-trade of Jewish lawyers and scribes in our Lord's day. What is less often noticed is that it is precisely the kind of moral instruction that parents are constantly trying to give their children--concrete, imaginative, teaching general principles from particular instances, and seeking all the time to bring the children-to appreciate and share the parents own attitudes and view of life.... The all-embracing principles of conduct: [1] imitating the Father...(Mt.5:44-45,48)...[2] glorifying the Father [bringing him honor and credit before others] (Mt. 5:16; 6:9)...[3] pleasing the Father... (Mt.6:1). - J.I. Packer, Knowing God, chap 19

3. Family resemblance.

*"Gospel holiness"...was Puritan shorthand for authentic Christian living springing from love and gratitude to God, in contrast with the spurious 'legal holiness' that consisted merely of forms, routines and outward appearances, maintained from self-regarding motives...[Gospel holiness] is simply a matter of a child of God being true to type, [resembling the Father]...expressing one's adoption in one's life... while it is certainly true that justification frees one forever from the need to keep the law as a means of earning life, it is equally true that adoption obliges us to keep the law as the means of pleasing one's newfound Father. Law-keeping [is transformed—now, it is] the family likeness of God's children...[Now] the sins of God's children do not destroy their justification or nullify their adoption, but they mar the children's fellowship with [and their family likeness to] the Father..." - J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, chap 19*

4. Trust.

"All Christians are, in fact, called to a life of faith, in the sense of following God's will at whatever cost and trusting him for the consequences. But all are tempted to put status and security, in human terms, before loyalty to God; and then, if they resist that temptation, they are at once tempted to worry about the likely effect of their stand... On those thus tempted in the life of faith, Jesus brings the truth of their adoption to bear....' Do not worry about your life ...your heavenly Father knows what you need...' (Mt.6:31-33)

5. Acceptance of discipline.

*"In this world, royal children have to undergo extra training and discipline which other children escape, in order to fit them for their high destiny. It is the same with the children of the King of kings. The clue to understanding all his dealings with them is to remember that throughout their lives he is training them for what awaits them, and chiseling them into the image of Christ." - J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, chap 19*

*"Faith and presumption look alike because both qualities are characterized by confidence, but faith begins in the recognition and acceptance of our total human weakness... Presumption...is a reliance on human moral abilities and religious accomplishments... A mix of presumption and faith produces a personal instability that surfaces in crises and major life transitions... Presumptive faith must have positive circumstances and feelings of success based on visible accomplishments. So when God wants to reach us, he must take away those favorable circumstances and accomplishments. He hits hard at our false trusts, [false 'righteousnesses,' things we get our strength from looking at]... Like the orphan we cry, 'I am abandoned' when in fact God's grace is pursuing us ever more intensely... [In sum,] presumptive self-trust prevails [in so many lives]. You can detect this attitude in yourself by your response to life when it goes out of control. If you handle it by blaming others, refusing to learn from God, becoming defensive and angry, you have the self trust of an orphan, not the faith of son or daughter." - Rose M. Miller, *From Fear to Freedom**

B. Privileges of adopted children:

Here are all the privileges or blessings of the Christian life recast and understood in terms of sonship:

1. Assurance

"Social experts drum into us these days that the family unit needs to be stable and secure, and that any unsteadiness in the parent-child relationship takes its toll in strain, neurosis and arrested development in the child himself. The depressions, randomness and immaturities that mark children of broken homes are known to us all. But...in God's family...you have absolute stability and security. The very concept of adoption is itself proof and guarantee of the preservation of the saints, for only bad fathers throw their children out of the family, even under provocation..." -J.I. Packer, Knowing God, Chap 19

"Although [the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15] is probably the best known and loved of all Christ's parables, the lesson it teaches us...is often overlooked. Jesus was underlining the fact that... The reality of the love of God for us is often the last thing in the world to dawn on us. As we fix our eyes upon ourselves, our past failures, our present guilt, it seems impossible that the Father should love us. Many Christians go through much of their life with the prodigal's suspicion. Their concentration is upon their sin and failure; all their thoughts are introspective. That is why in the Greek text John's statement about the Father's love begins...Behold!, look and see. ["Behold, what manner of love the Father has given unto us, that we should be called children of God!" I John 3:11] - Sinclair Ferguson, Children of the Living God

2. Prayer and intimacy

"'Abba' was the word that was used familiarly by children talking to their fathers... A child does not always address his father as 'father'; he uses terms such as 'Papa, ' Dad'. That is the kind of meaning represented by this word 'Abba'. It was a...word lisped by a little child... But let us notice the word cry...we cry 'Abba, Father'. It is a very strong word, and clearly the Apostle has used it quite deliberately. It means a loud cry...it expresses deep emotion... What then does it imply? Obviously...real knowledge of God. God is no longer to us a distant God. He is not merely a God in whom we believe intellectually, theologically, theoretically, doctrinally only. All this is possible to one who is not a child of God at all... [Our] worship and praying are spontaneous; it is the spontaneity of the child who sees the father...and not only spontaneity, but confidence. "A little child has confidence. He does not analyze it...he knows that 'Abba' is his father. Grown-ups may be standing back at a distance and being very formal [with some great personage]; but the little child comes running in, rushes right in, and holds on to his father's legs. He has a right that no-one else has... It is instinctive...we cry 'Abba Father'." - D.M. Lloyd Jones, Romans 8:5-17

"This is what prayer really means: knowing that we have a secure relationship with God in which we can address him in the knowledge that he cares, and has the power to aid us. Jesus encourages us to pray simply. This distinguishes the child of God from the hypocrite. The hypocrite is so unsure of his relationship with God (and rightly so!) that he thinks of prayer in terms of its length and eloquence; the child of God knows he is speaking to the Father, and talks simply and directly... Jesus also encourages us to pray boldly... Boldness [Which is] impudence in a neighbor is the privilege of the children of the family." - Sinclair Ferguson, Children of the Living God

3. Freedom and confidence

"The parable of the prodigal son epitomizes the disposition of some Christians, even when they are restored to fellowship with God. Lurking in their hearts there often remains this sneaking suspicion: 'I am not worthy to be God's son, but perhaps I can struggle through as one of his hired servants' [see Luke 15:19]. At the root of such thinking is an inability to believe that salvation is entirely of God's grace and love. We contribute nothing to it; we can do nothing to earn it in any way. We are often slow to realize the implications of that. We are sons, but we are [always] in danger of having the mindset of hired servants...the Devil...will try to produce in us what our forefathers called 'a bondage frame of spirit'...[When Paul says in Romans 8:15 that God sends us 'a Spirit of sonship' rather than a spirit of fear, he means] God sends His Spirit into our hearts, bringing us the deep spiritual and psychological security that rests on the objective fact that...we belong to the Lord." - Sinclair Ferguson, Children of the Living God.

4. Fellowship and connection

"We are to learn to accept and appreciate one another, no matter what natural differences might separate us... Rich and poor alike are to be treated as brothers...[We are to never give up on one another, to both confront and forgive in proportions as great as required.] Such a mixture of discipline and forgiveness is conceivable only within a family context...No family finds failure easy to handle...[But] only when we realize that the Church is a family, that we are brothers and sisters in that family, will we have a right perspective from which to view those who fail badly, and a right motive to see them disciplined faithfully, and welcomed back with many reaffirmations of our love... These are all part of what it means to 'keep on loving each other as brothers.' (Heb. 13:1)" - Sinclair Ferguson, Children of the Living God

5. Inheritance

"Adoption is incomplete in this world. John says that...we are God's children, but it does "not yet appear what we shall be" in the future...(I John 3:1-3). Similarly, Paul teaches that although we have already received the Spirit of adoption...(Romans 8:15), we are still waiting for the full experience of our sonship, for 'the glorious freedom of the children of God' (Romans 8:21). The redemption of our bodies, our adoption in all its glory, takes place at the final resurrection. Then... the image [family resemblance] now under repair will be completed." - Sinclair Ferguson, Children of the Living God

"The doctrine of our adoption tells us that the sum and substance of our promised inheritance is a share in the glory of Christ. We shall be made like our elder brother at every point, and sin and mortality, the double corruption of God's good work in the moral and spiritual spheres respectively, will be things of the past. 'Co-heirs with Christ...that we may also share in his glory' (Rom.8:17). 'Now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him.' (I Jn.3:2)." - J.I.Packer, Knowing God, chap 19

SUMMARY: WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A "SLAVE" AND A "SON"?

Both Galatians 4:1-7 and Romans 8:15-16 contrast slavery with sonship.

Different understanding

Slave	Child
False definitions—a whole different religion	True definitions
"Grace" is God's maintaining <u>your</u> strength and power to live a better life.	"Grace" is God's transforming power, to be melted by spiritual understandings of Gospel truth.
"Faith" is trying hard to do good and be better, establishing your own record (righteousness) so God and others (and yourself) will accept you.	"Faith" is a discipline of remembering and living every moment as an accepted child of God.
"Obedience" focuses nearly completely on external duties. Examination of motivations is too traumatic and is ignored.	"Obedience" is seeking to please God first in our attitude of love, then obeying his will. Concentration on principles and attitude.

Different Lifestyle

Slave	Child
Fear-based life	Faith working through love
Compulsive obedience. Obeys God and moral codes out of fear of rejection--a compulsive, driven moralism. "Drivenness." Unrealistic goals. Often a lot of self-criticism.	Obeys out of joy in your Father and out of gratitude for the certainty of his love. "How can I live so ungratefully to one who will never reject me?"
Controlled by people. Expectations and opinions of others become the real moral standard. We are controlled by what people think.	Integrity and courage is easier. "The only person whose opinion counts is my Father! Who cares what the rest think?"
Hiding. Lots of strategies to hide our inner and outer failings from one another and ourselves. Including: gossip, blame-shifting, anger at other races/classes, obsessions, overwork, etc.	Open and transparent. Freedom from having to put up a front. Able to appreciate people who are different and hurting.
Isolation. Growing feeling that no one understands, that no one cares, no one can be trusted.	Because of openness and transparency, and a lack of self-pity.
Despair in troubles. Sees difficulties as "pay backs" from God. Result is either guilt (because there's an awareness of moral failure) or bitterness (because there's a feeling of moral accomplishment).	Learns to see discipline as fatherly, loving instruction, preparing us for future tests. Learns lessons and shows patience.
Begrudging repentance. Admitting failure is destructive of one's very basis for living (that being a sense of moral adequacy). So repentance is galling, last resort.	Admitting failures is the basis of a Christian's self-image as adopted child. Repentance reminds anew of magnitude of his love. Repentance quick, willing.

APPLICATION

A. Recognizing myself.

Read over the "summary" of the slave-vs.-child mentality.

1. Which of the characteristics of a "slave" (a person still functioning as if they are "under the law") are strongest in you?
2. Are you (a) partially (b) half-way, or (c) primarily operating out of a fear-based/slave mentality? (This is subjective, of course, but these are the only three options!)

B. Turning the corner:

Case study. Here one pastor writes to another pastor who is depressed because of his feeling of guilt over his sins. But the writer points out that he has not ever confessed his real sins, the sins of self-justification:

"[You say you feel overwhelmed with guilt and a sense of unworthiness. Well,] you cannot be too aware of the inward and inbred evils you complain of, but you may be (indeed you are) improperly controlled and affected by them. You say it is hard to understand how a holy God could accept such an awful person as yourself. You, then, express not only a low opinion of yourself (which is right!) but also too low an opinion of the person, work, and promises of the Redeemer, which is wrong... You complain about sin, but when we examine your complaints, they are so full of self-righteousness, unbelief, pride, and impatience that they are little better than the worst evils you complain of!" -John Newton, to a pastor

1. List two or three of your significant besetting sins, character flaws, attitudes, or self-control problems.
2. How do they stem from a failure to grasp that you are an adopted child of God? (Put another way:) how are they fed and motivated by a desire to justify yourself instead of accepting Christ's free righteousness? [Note: ask yourself, "what do I feel I have to have for a sense of self-worth and self-acceptance. E.g. If you are angry, what goal is being blocked? If you are anxious what goal is being blocked? How do those goals substitute for the Father's free love? Etc.]
3. Have you "turned" the corner from the slave-mentality to living as a son or daughter of God? Most believers do not start out the Christian life in this understanding, but have to come into it. Have you? Pray if you have not along these lines: "Lord, show me the difference between self justification and real faith. Help me to see the false trusts that keep me feeling like a hired

servant with you. Let the cross and your Fatherly love become a living daily reality in my life. Amen."

C. Walking daily as children of God.

Individual sinful acts have sinful motivations. When we ask why we are moved to particular sins, we discover that our sins come because we still seek to find our "justification" (our identity, our sense of worthiness) in other things. Thus, to remember that we are completely loved and righteous in Christ undermines and saps our motives and desires for sin.

Case study: Consider the following motivations and results associated with a normal life activity like going out of your way to help with a project.

Slave motivation	Sonship motivation
Do this because, if you succeed, you will know you are not a bum!	Do this because Christ sacrificed for me.
Do this because then somebody will love you, and you are nobody until somebody does.	Do this because it will please both my Father and the person I am helping.

Results	Results
If no gratitude expressed—anger.	If no gratitude expressed, disappointment but gratitude wasn't my motive.
Even if gratitude is expressed—a sense of being owed (controlling).	If gratitude is expressed, new, non-controlling relationship possible.
If life goes badly, increase self-pity and bitterness toward God—"after all, look how good I am to people! how could God treat me like this?"	If life goes badly, trust. "After all, I have already been given more than I deserve. And besides, my Father must have some loving purpose."

How to engage in "normal activities" as a child of God?

1. Recognize that ordinarily both motives are present. (But your fear, pride, anxiety, hurt feelings, anger will be a good indicator of a high level of 'works' motivation present.) There is no way for motives to be totally pure. The goal is to continually refine them.
2. As you do "normal activities," identify the motives of the sin-nature (the "under the law" nature). Repent of them. E.g. "Father, I see how much I do this out of a hungry desire to steal self-acceptance from the applause of others. That trivializes your unwavering love for me in Christ. Forgive and cleanse me from these motives, which rise from the habits of my old life."
3. Now articulate the motives of the Spirit-nature. Say them to yourself as you proceed through the activity. Constantly reinforce "adopted-child" motives. E.g. "Father, I do this for you, not for the success it might bring me. I don't need that, nor am I worried that much about failure, for your recognition is all I need. Oh let my heart feel totally what I just said to you!" [Keep up daily

devotions, looking for ideas and verses in the Bible that the Spirit makes "radioactive" to you, truths about our standing in Christ that he makes vivid and engaging to your heart. Then use those radioactive verses to yourself as part of articulating adopted child motives.]

CONCLUSION

Every day, when we face the issues of life, we are to "call out" to God as our Father. That means we are to consciously seek to live as children of God, not slaves. We are to think out: "Am I acting like a slave or like a child of God here?" Sometimes, if we seek patiently, the Spirit comes "alongside" us (Rom.8:16) and fills us with an awareness of his Fatherly love for us, and acting like a child of God comes naturally. Sometimes our sonship "experience" is low and we have to "gut it out" by faith. Either way, we are being changed into his likeness.

On the one hand, the gospel changes us because it changes our thinking, bringing it "in line with the truth." But on the other hand, the gospel changes us because it brings us into actual contact with the Father. It will not be enough to simply know that God accepts you freely in Christ, but you must actually experience that love shed in your heart through the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit helps us to "call out, 'Abba', Father" (Gal.4: 6), and unless we have this experience, we will continue to act as a slave (Gal.4: 7), whether to the duties of our role or the desires of our hearts (See "Centrality," Thesis 2). We therefore must learn to preach the gospel to ourselves (as in Gal.4.4-5), until it catches fire in our hearts and captures our imagination (as in Gal.4:6-7)

Thus Luther writes: "So learn to speak to one's heart and to the Law. When the law creeps into your conscience, learn to be a cunning logician--learn to use arguments of the gospel against it. Say: "O law!...trouble me not! For I will not allow you, so intolerable a tyrant and tormentor; to reign in my heart and conscience, for they are 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." [Then] he shall keep my conscience joyful and quiet in the sound and pure doctrine of the Gospel through the knowledge of this passive and heavenly righteousness." He calls this an effort to keep "this Christian righteousness reigning in my heart."

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What helped you most? What questions did it raise?

2. Look at the list of "child" vs. "slave" characteristics. At what point do you need the most work right now?

3. Are you (a) partially (b) half-way, or (c) primarily operating out of a fear-based/slave mentality? (This is subjective, of course, but these are the only three options!)

4. Share a situation, past, present, or future, where the "slave" mentality is a particular problem for you.

5. Complete the assignment in the Application section under part B, "Turning the corner" and come prepared to discuss your findings.

Forgiveness Project

Read and mark "!" - for something that helped you
 "? " - for something that raised a question

INTRODUCTION

One of the most basic skills for building a strong and intimate relationship is the ability to forgive. If we are going to have either a romantic relationship or a good friendship, we will need to know how to forgive both the small; daily "rubs" as well as the more significant and major letdowns.

RESENTMENT AND THE GOSPEL

Resentment requires a person to sit in the position of Judge (Rom.12: 19-20). Now when we sit in judgment and condemnation of others, we forget our own sinfulness and weakness ("Let the one without sin cast the first stone" John 8:7.) Bitterness is the opposite of humility (cf. James 3:13-14- show it by...deeds done in humility... but if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition...). If we stay in a position of moral superiority, we cannot see our own lostness apart from the grace of Christ, and therefore Jesus ties our ability to forgive to our ability to repent. ("Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" Matt.6: 12.) This doesn't mean that God forgives our sins because we forgive others. It means that the degree of our awareness of ourselves as forgiven sinners determines the degree of our ability to forgive. Both forgiveness and repentance stem from an awareness of our sinfulness and deserved condemnation apart from the free mercy of God.

WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?

When someone has wronged you, it means they owe you; they have a debt with you. Forgiveness is to absorb the cost of the debt yourself. You pay the price yourself, and you refuse to exact the price out of the person in any way. Forgiveness is to (a) free the person from penalty for a sin by (b) paying the price yourself.

We are told that our forgiveness must imitate God's forgiveness in Christ. "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." (Eph.4: 32). a) How did God forgive? We are told that he does not 'remember' them. That cannot mean that God literally forgets what has happened, it means he "sends away" the penalty for them. He does not bring the incidents to mind, and does not let them affect the way he deals with us. b) How did God forgive "in Christ"? We are told that Jesus pays the price for the sins. "It is finished" means "it has been paid in full" (John 19:30).

HOW CAN WE FORGIVE?

1. Distinguish between granting and feeling.

Realize that forgiveness is granted (often for a long time) before it is felt. Forgiveness is granted first, and felt later (Luke 17:3-10). Forgiveness is not primarily a feeling, but a set of actions and disciplines. In summary, forgiveness is a promise not to exact the price of the sin from the person who wronged you. This promise means a repeated set of "payment" in which you relinquish revenge. It is hard and (for a while) constant. If this promise is kept actively, eventually the

feeling of anger subsides. It is critical to realize at the outset, then, that forgiveness is not the forcing or denying of feelings, but a promise to make and to keep despite our feelings.

2. Separate the evil-doer from evil and will his or her redemption.

Notice that on the cross Jesus says, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34) He doesn't actually say, "I forgive you." He does forgive, of course, but by turning to the Father and praying for them, he shows us an important method of forgiveness. He admits that they are sinning (otherwise they would not need forgiveness!) but he sees them as needy and weak (they don't know). He seeks their enlightenment and forgiveness from God. He prays for them. When we identify "evil" too closely with the "evildoer," we get pulled into the same cycle of hurt pride and revenge and self-absorption and then more hurt pride and more revenge. The secret of overcoming evil is for us to see "evil" as something above and distinct from the evildoer. When we do that, there are two results: 1) the spread of evil is checked toward us. Its hatred and pride does not infect us, and 2) the spread of evil may be checked in the evildoer. He or she may be softened and helped by our love.

This is, then, an act of the will. We determine to wish them good and will their growth and healing. We determine to pray for them.

3. Determine to never exact the price but to pay the price ourselves.

"[Forgiveness] is to deal with our emotions by sending them away--by denying ourselves the dark pleasures of venting them or fondling them in our minds...

"Once upon a time, I was engaged to a young woman who changed her mind. I forgave her...but [only] in small sums over a year...[They were made] whenever I spoke to her and refrained from rehashing the past, whenever I renounced jealousy and self-pity, whenever [I saw her] with another man, whenever I praised her to others when I wanted to slice away at her reputation. Those were the payments, but she never saw them. And her own payment were unseen by me...but I do know that she forgave me. ...[Forgiveness] is more than a matter of refusing to hate someone. It is also a matter of choosing to demonstrate love and acceptance to the offender... Pain is the consequence of sin; there is no easy way to deal with it. Wood, nails and pain are the currency of forgiveness, the love that heals." - Dan Hamilton, Forgiveness

This quote shows us that there are numerous ways that we can "exact" and take payment from the offender, but each time we refrain, we are absorbing the cost ourselves and "making payments." Below are the ways in which we tend to try to exact payments:

a) In our dealing with the offender:

- i. We can make cutting remarks and drag out the past.
- ii. We can be far more demanding and controlling with the person than we are with others, all because "they owe us."
- iii. We can punish with self-righteous "mercy" which makes them feel small.
- iv. We can avoid them, be cold to them in overt and/or subtle ways.

- v. We can actively seek and scheme to hurt or harm them, taking from them something valuable to them.

b) In our dealing with others:

- i. We can run them down to others, under the guise of "warning" people about them.
- ii. We can run them down to others, under the guise of seeking sympathy and sharing our hurt.

c) In our dealing with ourselves:

- i. We can replay the tapes of what they did to us, to justify our anger and hostility.
- ii. We can "root" for their failure or fall or pain.

Forgiveness is a promise, to not "bring the matter up" to the person, others, or even ourselves. At each point when we are tempted to exact payment, we refuse, and though it hurts, that is a payment:

a) With the person

In our dealings with the person we are courteous and warm as possible. If the person is repentant, we seek to restore the relationship as much as possible. Why say "as much as possible?" If the person has done grievous wrong, it may mean the trust can only be restored in degrees. If the person is continuing in a hostile manner, you must not make it easy for them to sin against you. And there are other circumstances. (E.g. If the person is a former "love interest," then to re-create the same relationship may be inappropriate.)

The speed and degree of this restoration entails the re-creation of trust, and that takes time, depending on the nature and severity of the offenses involved. Part of real repentance usually means asking: "what could I do that would make you trust me?" and being willing to accept the answer. Part of real forgiveness means being open to the possibility of lasting change in the offender and being truly unbiased and willing to offer more trust little by little.

b) With others

We must not criticize the offender to others. We should be careful, when seeking support for our "burdens" (Galatians 6:1-6) that we aren't using them as an excuse to get others to justify us by agreeing how horrible the other person is! We must be reasonable. This is not to say you can never say anything that casts a bad light on someone else, but you must watch your motives. If the person stays in a hostile and unrepentant mode, it may be necessary to "warn" someone about him or her, but again, motives must be watched.

c) With yourself

What does it mean to "not bring it up yourself"? It means not to dwell on it in the heart, and not to re-play the "videotapes" of the wrong in your imagination, in order to keep the sense of loss and hurt fresh and real to you. It means, when you are ready to do so, you

should pray for the person and yourself, remind yourself of the cross (see below) and turn your mind to other things.

4. Fill the mind with the gospel motives for forgiveness.

a) Think of Jesus as Savior.

The Bible is explicit in telling us to forgive as God in Christ forgave you (Eph.4: 32). And it is impossible to do forgiveness without continually melting the heart with a knowledge of the gospel.

Jesus himself shows us vividly how to do this in Matthew 18:21-35. When Peter asks about forgiveness, Jesus tells the parable of a servant who is forgiven a debt of an infinite sum (10,000 talents--roughly equivalent to about \$300,000,000 dollars) but who then refuses to forgive a debt to him of a few dollars. Jesus calls the servant "wicked" and says, in effect, to him, "shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant as I had mercy on you?" (18:33) This is a challenge to us. We must compare our debt to God with people's debts to us AND we are to compare his Christ's payment for our forgiveness to our payment for their forgiveness. We are to say, "Lord, you did not exact payment for my debts from me, but Jesus paid for them with his life. Now what right do I have to exact payments for their debts to me? And for me to forgive would not take a payment anything like Christ's payment!"

When we think of God's gracious gift to us, it inspires a spirit of love and forgiveness.

"Love alone has the power to release memory's grip on yesterday's evil, for only love is the power that moves us toward people without expectation of return and therefore with a great tolerance for hurt. Loves does not demand explanations and apologies or keep accounts. Love does not take pleasure in remembering how much we have coming from people who hurt us. For love is the power whose only direction is the help, healing, and salvation of the other person. " - Lewis Smedes, Love within Limits

b) Think of God as judge.

Paul in Romans 12 shows us another way to think of resentment and forgiveness. He says, "Leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written: 'vengeance is mine...says the Lord' v.19. What we are being reminded is that all resentment and vengeance is taking on God's role as judge. It is playing God. But (1) only God is qualified to be judge (we are imperfect and deserve judgment ourselves) and (2) only God knows enough to be judge (we don't know all about the offender, what he/she has faced and deserves) and (3) Jesus took the judgment of God. So Paul is saying: "Think this! Either these persons you are angry at will repent some day and Jesus will take their judgment, or they will not and God will deal with it. But in either process, you are not involved."

"Pride won't allow forgiveness; forgiveness won't allow pride." If you cannot forgive, it is because you are sure that you are not as sinful as the person you are mad at.

5. If necessary, look for inordinate loves

Anger is the result of love. It is energy for defense of something you love when it is threatened. If you don't love something at all, you are not angry when it is threatened. If you love something a little, you get a little angry when it is threatened. Then, if something you love is an "ultimate concern," if it is something that gives you meaning in life, then when it is threatened you will get enormously angry.

As we saw in our study on Idolatry, when something becomes more important than God, it becomes a defining factor, an "idol of the heart." When such a thing is threatened, your anger is uncontrollable. Your anger is the way the idol keeps you in its service.

Therefore, if you find that, despite all the efforts to forgive, your anger and bitterness cannot subside, you may need to look deeper and ask, "what am I defending? what is so important that I cannot live without?" It may be that, until some inordinate desire is identified and confronted, you will not be able to master your anger.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What helped you the most?
2. What questions did it raise?
3. Share a situation from your life that illuminates these principles.

Lovelace Project

Read and mark "!" - for something that helped you
 "?" - for something that raised a question

RICHARD LOVELACE, THE DYNAMICS OF SPIRITUAL LIFE (IVP, 1979)

1. Justification and Sanctification

In the New Testament...*justification* (the acceptance of believers as righteous in the sight of God through the righteousness of Jesus Christ accounted to them) and *sanctification* (progress in actual holiness expressed in their lives) are often closely intertwined... However, they are quite distinct: justification is the perfect righteousness of Christ reckoned to us, covering the remaining imperfections in our lives like a robe of stainless holiness; sanctification is the process of removing those imperfections as we are enabled more and more to put off the bondages of sin and put on new life in Christ...

2. Justification reversed with sanctification

- a. Only a fraction of the present body of professing Christians are solidly appropriating the justifying work of Christ in their lives. Many have so light an apprehension of God's holiness and of the extent and guilt of their sin that consciously they see little need for justification, although below the surface of their lives they are deeply guilt-ridden and insecure. [On the other hand], many others have a theoretical commitment to this doctrine, but in their day-to-day existence they rely on their sanctification for their justification...drawing their assurance of acceptance with God from their sincerity, their past experience of conversion, their recent religious performance or the relative infrequency of their conscious, willful disobedience. Few know enough to start each day with a thoroughgoing stand upon Luther's platform: *you are accepted*, looking outward in faith and claiming the wholly alien righteousness of Christ as the only ground for acceptance, relaxing in that quality of trust which will produce increasing sanctification as faith is active in love and gratitude...
- b. A conscience which is not fully enlightened both to the seriousness of its condition before God, and to the grandeur of God's merciful provision of redemption, will inevitably fall prey to anxiety, pride, sensuality and all the other expressions of that unconscious despair which Kierkegaard called "the sickness unto death... [So] we start each day with our personal security resting not on...the sacrifice of Christ but on our present feelings or recent achievements... Since these arguments will not quiet the human conscience, we are inevitably moved either to discouragement and apathy or to a self-righteousness which falsifies the record to achieve a sense of peace.

3. Justification as the basis for all sanctification

- a. Much that we have interpreted as a defect of sanctification in churchpeople is really an outgrowth of their loss of bearing with respect to justification. Christians who are no longer sure that God loves and accepts them in Jesus, apart from their present spiritual achievements, are subconsciously radically insecure persons, much less secure than non-Christians, because of the constant bulletins they receive from their Christian

environment about the holiness of God and the righteousness they are supposed to have. Their insecurity shows itself in pride, a fierce defensive assertion of their own righteousness and defensive criticism of others. They come naturally to hate other cultural styles and other races in order to bolster their own security and discharge their suppressed anger. They cling desperately to legal, pharisaical righteousness, but envy, jealousy and other branches on the tree of sin grow out of their fundamental insecurity...

- b. It is often said today, in circles which blend popular psychology with Christianity, that we must love ourselves before we can be set free to love others... But no realistic human beings find it easy to love or forgive themselves, and hence their self acceptance must be grounded in their awareness that God accepts them in Christ...[There is much evidence in our experience against the idea that we are children of God, but] *the faith that surmounts the evidence and is able to warm itself at the fire of God's love, instead of having to steal love and self-acceptance from other sources, is actually the root of holiness...*
- c. Presented in this context, even the demand for sanctification becomes part of the good news. It offers understanding of the bondage which has distorted our lives and the promise of release into a life of Spirit-empowered freedom and beauty. Ministries that attack only the surface of sin and fail to ground spiritual growth in the believer's union with Christ produce either self-righteousness or despair...

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What helped you the most? What questions did this raise?
2. In 2a Lovelace mentions two equal but opposite ways that you can fail to draw on the benefits of justification. What are they? Note: They are mentioned also at the very end of 2b and 3c.
3. In what specific ways do you "reverse" justification and sanctification (i.e. reverse the gospel) in the practical ways that you live your life?
4. (Another form of the same question) From what sources do you try to "steal love and acceptance" rather than by "warming yourself at the fire of God's love" (section 3b)? How do these things "distort our lives" and deny you "Spirit-empowered freedom" (section 3c)?

Whitefield Project

Read and mark "!" - for something that helped you
 "?" - for something that raised a question

"THE METHOD OF GRACE"

A Sermon by George Whitefield (Abridgment by Tim Keller)

Introduction: George Whitefield was a powerful open-air Anglican preacher in Britain and America during the first "Great Awakening" in the early 1700's. Literally tens of thousands of people came to hear him preach each time he spoke on streets and commons of the cities. An enormous number of people were converted. In light of the study of Galatians, his "gospel" message to unconverted people is extremely interesting. His message is designed not only to challenge irreligious people to change their ways, but also to challenge religious people to change their ways in coming to the gospel. In other words, he seeks to prevent the legalistic counterfeit of true Christianity that the false teachers were trying to promote in Galatia.

"They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, 'Peace, Peace' when there is no peace." (Jeremiah 6:14)

Preface: How many of us cry, "Peace, peace" to our souls, when there is no peace! How many are there who...now think they are Christians, who flatter themselves that they [are] in Jesus Christ; whereas if we come to examine their experience, we shall find that their peace is...is not of God's giving... It is a great matter, therefore, my dear hearers, to know whether we may speak peace to our heart... I shall...endeavor to show you what you must undergo, and what must be wrought in you before you can speak peace to your hearts...

1. First, before you can speak peace to your hearts, you must be made to see, made to feel...your actual transgressions against the law of God... We are not only to do some things, but we are to do all things, and we are to continue so to do; so that the least deviation from the moral law, according to the covenant of works, whether in thought, word, or deed, deserves eternal death... Give me leave to ask you, in the presence of God... Was ever the remembrance of your sins grievous to you?... Did you ever see that God's wrath might justly fall upon you, on account of your actual transgressions against God?... If not, for Jesus Christ's sake, do not call yourselves Christians; you may speak peace to your hearts, but there is no peace.
2. But further. you may be convinced of your actual sins...but before you can speak peace to your hearts, conviction must go deeper: you must be convinced of...the original corruption each of us brings into the world with us... If we look inwardly...there is pride, malice, and revenge... When the sinner is first awakened...the Spirit of God shows that he has no good thing by nature... Did you ever feel and experience this? The indwelling of sin in the heart is the greatest burden of a true Christian. If you have never felt this inward corruption...indeed my dear friends, you may speak peace to your hearts, but I fear, nay, I know, there is no peace.

3. Further: Before you can speak peace to your hearts, you must not only be troubled for the sins of your life, and sin of your nature, but likewise for the sins of your best duties and performances. When a poor soul is somewhat awakened by the terrors of the Lord, then the poor creature, being born under a covenant of works, flies directly to a covenant of works again. And as Adam and Eve hid themselves among the trees of the garden, and sewed fig leaves together to cover their nakedness, so the poor sinner, when awakened, flies to his duties and to his performances, to hide himself from God, and goes to patch up a righteousness of his own. Says he, "I will be mighty good now—I will reform—I will do all I can; and then certainly Jesus Christ will have mercy on me." But before you can speak peace to your heart, you must be brought to see that all your duties—all your righteousness. . . put all together are so far from recommending you to God, are so far from being any motive and inducement to God to have mercy on your poor soul, that he will see them to be filthy rags. . . that God hates them and cannot but away with them, if you bring them to him in order to recommend you to his favor. . .

I do not know what you think, but I can say that I cannot pray but I sin, I cannot preach to you or any others but I sin, I can do nothing without sin...my repentance wants to be repented of, and my tears to be washed in the precious blood of my dear Savior. Our best duties are as so many splendid sins. Before you can speak peace to your hearts, you must not only [repent] of your sin...but also of your righteousness. There must be a deep conviction before you can be brought out of your self-righteousness. It is the last idol taken out of the heart... Did you ever feel the need of the righteousness [not just the forgiveness] of Jesus Christ?... And can you say, "Lord, thou mayst justly damn me for the best duties that I ever did perform?... If you are not thus brought out of self, you may speak peace to yourselves, but yet there is no peace... You must lay hold by faith of the all sufficient righteousness of Jesus Christ, and then you shall have peace."

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What most helped you? What were your biggest ["!"] exclamation points? What questions did this raise? What were your ["?"] question marks?
2. How does GW both challenge the irreligious and the religious? How does GW make it impossible for a legalistic Christianity to grow in the new believer?
3. In paragraph 3 GW says that when a person tries gets very religious, he is actually trying to "hide himself from God." Do you think that is a fair assessment of the motives of religious people? Compare this statement with the following: "He knew that the way to avoid Jesus was to avoid sin."
4. What does it really mean to "repent of your righteousness"? Discuss this statement: "Pharisees only repent of their sins, but Christians also repent of their righteousness."

Workmanship Project

Read and mark "!" - for something that helped you
 "?" - for something that raised a question

THE DOCTRINE OF WORKMANSHIP

One of the glories of Christianity is the assurance that "we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10). This statement by Paul that we are "created" does not simply refer to how God has created us physically, as he has of course created all human beings (see Gen. 1:26-27). Rather, Paul is talking about being "created in Christ." This means that every person who believes in Christ does so because she or he is the object of a process of God's "spiritual creation." The word "workmanship" is very important, it is the Greek word *"poema"* from which we get our word "poem." It means every believer is essentially "a work of art"—God's art! Consider how artists work, whether they are writers, musicians, painters, sculptors, etc. They labor long and hard and with the utmost care and detailed attention. Sometimes they do very little, only a stroke here or there. Other times they make massive changes. But always they seek to bring the raw material into line with an artistic vision. Thus Paul is telling us that God labors over every believer, throughout their entire lives, intervening and guiding and shaping us, all to bring us into line with a vision he has for us. That is mentioned also in Eph. 2:10, "created to...good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Thus God has a particular set of "good works" for us to do, for which he prepares us our whole lives.

It is therefore of utmost importance to look back on our lives and see everything that has happened through this "grid." Namely:

1. **God has been at work through the various influences of our lives.**
 "Created in Christ." Our family, our friends, our experiences, our troubles, all of these must be seen as the instruments of an artist to mold and shape us. All of our lives, he has been at work.
2. **God has been at work to make us something beautiful - "workmanship."**
 God is out to make our beings something great, to give us characters of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, integrity, humility, self-control.
3. **God has been at work to make us something useful - "good works...prepared beforehand."**
 God is also out to make our doings something great to make us helpful and able to serve others in special ways.

Paul uses this "doctrine of workmanship" like a pair of spectacles through which to view his whole life. In Galatians 1:13-23. There he shows us:

1. He now sees God at work through his whole life ("God, who set me apart from birth and called me" v.15).
2. He now sees God used the gospel to make him something beautiful. He had been a fanatically, obsessively intense person who felt superior in his self-righteousness and only criticized others ("intensely I persecuted...extremely zealous for the traditions" v.14) but God humbled him and

showed him he was nothing apart from undeserved grace ("called me by his grace and was pleased to reveal his son in me") so that now he loved to lead people to praise and thanks ("they praised God because of me" v.24).

3. He realizes that through his obsessive study of the Bible and theology ("the traditions") originally out of self-righteousness and the need to feel superior—he now as a Christian is uniquely equipped to be a preacher, teacher and evangelist ("so that I might preach him among the Gentiles"). His scholarship and knowledge of the Bible made him able to bridge the gap between Christianity and various pagan philosophies and religions.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What was the most helpful to you?
2. What questions did it raise?
3. As you look back on your life, how can you see that God was working, though you didn't know it at the time:
 - a. To protect you-
 - b. To wake you up to things you denied-
 - c. To show you weaknesses or flaws in yourself
 - d. To show you your value to him-

Note: There may be some overlap between these categories. i.e. God may have worked to wake you up (b.) to a particular flaw in yourself (c.)

4. How did God bring you to see that salvation was by grace, not good works? (Or how has he been doing so-you may still be in process!)
5. What practical difference in your character has God made with his grace? (In other words--in what way would you be a fundamentally different personality had God not shown you his love?)
6. In what ways has God prepared you to be of service and help to others? What has he equipped you to do in service of God, your loved ones, your neighbor?