

THE WAY TO HUMAN FREEDOM  
Study 9  
**THE BASICS OF LIFE  
ON THE WAY TO FINAL FREEDOM**

The first eight studies of our series have now established for us the grand Story of Redemption—and this, in the light of the great doctrines that it declares.

We have seen the perfections of God, the high calling of humankind, its tragic fall and endless restless-struggle, God's redemptive covenantal action in the Old Testament and then in Jesus, the Spirit's sovereign work of regeneration, and the saving grace that has come to the redeemed in Christ.

At the heart of it all has been the purpose of the Father to restore His redeemed children to His likeness. He would do this by making them participants in the life of His Son's eternal covenant-union with Himself—enabling them to fulfill, at last, their high human calling.

Study 2 revealed the *basic outline* of this calling, and Study 8 the *grace* by which it may be fulfilled. The rest of the series will now *fill out* the nature of the high and holy vocation that all in Christ have received.

The various studies will show how—by the grace of God—the redeemed may be fully and joyously engaged in *relational intimacy* and *vocational partnership* with their Maker, in every area of life.

Our present study will serve as an introduction to the rest. In it, we will *gather up* what has gone before and *establish* some basic principles for what is to follow.

This study then is entitled, 'The Basics Of Life On The Way To Final Freedom'.

We saw in Study 8 that the Gifts of Salvation in Christ, actually, 'set us on the way' to ultimate freedom in the age to come. All that will be enjoyed by the redeemed eternally is *already* theirs in Christ. Even now they are *glorified* in Him, as those who are seated with the Father in Him in the heavenly realms. It will just take His *Appearing* to finally liberate them into the *uncontested, visible* and *perfect* experience of this!

The purpose of Study 9 is to provide some basic biblical principles for daily living, on the way to this glorious future. These will not be *legal principles*, added on, to the grace and calling already established. That's the last thing anyone needs! They will simply be concise, practical statements summarizing the way things *are* in Christ, and so, the way things may *be* in daily life.

As these are wholeheartedly embraced, believers may know more and more of the human freedom and fullness they were created to enjoy—on the way to the Final Day!

The first three of these 'basics' have an asterisk before them, indicating that they are 'key concepts'. They will, in fact, be part of the key concepts of studies throughout the rest of the series.

having, by faith, a constantly maintained:

**\* *full assurance of the great unseen & unchanging reality: the grace of God in Christ***

(all we have been freely given to set us on the Way: an entirely new liberty, identity, security, capacity & destiny)

God's grace to His people in Christ is, indeed, a *great* and *unchanging* reality. There is nothing more *awesomely wonderful* than what it brings, and there is nothing that can ever *diminish* its presence and power!

It is good to affirm the declaration of the apostle Paul once again:

Romans 5:21

"Those who receive God's abundant provision of grace ... [will] reign in life."

So great and constant is the grace of God, that the *life* of the Son—in His eternal covenant-union with the Father—may be richly experienced by His people in the midst of whatever they face!

The only problem is that this grace is a reality that is *unseen*. Its affects may be witnessed (Acts 11:23) but the grace itself is not visible. In fact, often, everything *around* and *within* tends to deny its presence and power. If sight and sense is relied upon, very quickly, any possibility of 'reigning in life' can seem to disappear!

But regardless of this, the grace of God may definitely be *known* and *enjoyed* by His redeemed children at any time. How? By *faith* in the *word of God* that proclaims it. This is, actually, the *only* way it *may* be known and enjoyed.

To experience more and more of the human freedom and fullness we were created for, there is one thing above all else that must be done. A child of God must *constantly maintain*—by faith in the word of God—a *full assurance* of that great and unseen reality: the Father's grace to them in Christ.

Romans 5:2

We have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.

It's by faith that God's children come into the grace in which they remain, and it's by faith that they may enjoy its treasures.

Hebrew 10:22

Let us draw near to God ... in full assurance of faith.

Colossians 2:6–7

Just as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in Him, [having been] rooted [in Him] and [now being] built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

We have seen that 'the faith' is that body of teaching, established by the apostles and recorded in the New Testament, which proclaims the grace and purpose of God in Christ, and the glorious calling His people have received. The redeemed may only enjoy the blessing of being 'rooted and built up in Him', as they are 'strengthened in the faith'—in such a way that it causes them to overflow with thankfulness! This is 'the full assurance of faith' that keeps a child of God glad in His grace.

Acts 20:32

I commit you to God and to the word of His grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

In Study 6 we saw that these were Paul's final words to the elders at Miletus, as he journeyed towards imprisonment in Jerusalem. What those elders needed in order to fulfill God's call in their tough, idolatrous situation in Ephesus was 'the word of His grace'. Only this, could build them up and enable them to experience more and more of the *inheritance* that was theirs in Christ—as those who had been *set apart* to the Father.

2 Timothy 2:1

Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

In this command there is great promise. We may be *strong*—in the midst of whatever we face—by setting our hearts and minds upon all that is true of us now in Christ!

Hebrews 13:9

It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace.

We must never attempt to 'strengthen our hearts' by anything else—certainly, never by adherence to various religious or cultural rules. Only hearts strengthened by the grace of God can fulfill the will of God.

2 Corinthians 6:1

We urge you not to receive God's grace in vain.

It is possible—through failing to diligently maintain the full assurance of God's grace by faith—to be total *possessors* of it, but know little of its *power*. To receive God's grace 'in vain' is to receive it in an, 'empty way'.

How dreadful, to have been given an *entirely new* liberty, identity, security, capacity and destiny in Christ, but to live as though it had all never been received!

This first basic principle is such an important one. If God's people are to *reign in life* in the midst of the dominion of darkness—the world, the flesh and the devil—and fulfill their holy calling for the pleasure, purpose and praise of God, they must be *strong in His grace*. And they may!

It is the heritage of the redeemed to constantly enjoy a glad assurance of grace. And so, be enabled to live truly, simply and fully in Christ—in the midst the complexity that life in this world so often brings.

If at any particular time these amazing gifts of grace are not the most wonderful things to us, we are at that moment, in a most tragic state. To know these and not *exalt* in them, may indicate that something *else* has become the object of our imagination, trust, affections and allegiance. If that is the case, we are in urgent need of repentance. The sweet and liberating nature of such *decisive* repentance, in the midst of our struggles, will be spoken of in future studies.

And so, we have our first principle for free and full living on the way to the Final Day: The children of God must—by faith—constantly maintain a full assurance of His grace.

The next basic principle is one that is at the heart of our human calling. It has to do with the first key concept of Study 2: *an inner spring of great delight in God*.

having only:

**\* *one primary delight: the Father, Son & Spirit***

(finding our deepest pleasure in who He is, what He has done, is doing & has promised to do; always delighting in Him on account of every other good & pleasant thing)

We have seen that the first part of our human calling is to live in a joyous spirit before the Father—a spirit of worship; and that to have *joy in Him* is the primary expression of true human experience. This is what the grace of God releases a redeemed person into—bringing praise, glory and honour to the Redeemer!

In ‘the flesh’ we have, all our lives, habitually sought after happiness in the creation—people, situations and things—rather than in the Creator. But the Father has sent the Spirit to liberate His children from such foolishness, by revealing the wonders of His grace to them.

With a new song in their hearts, the redeemed may now find their deepest pleasure in knowing who God is, what He has done, is doing and has promised to do. And they may now enjoy every other good and pleasant thing in His presence—delighting in Him on account of them all!

**a people commanded to joy**

With the many complexities that life brings, joy can quickly be gone. Then the old dullness and heaviness of spirit once known, sadly again dampens the atmosphere of our days. This is all very natural, and often, understandable. But, in Christ, it is entirely abnormal!

Let us understand that the Father doesn’t *invite* His redeemed children into worship. All has been gloriously provided. So, in His love, He *commands* them into the joy and happiness of His Son!

Philippians 4:4

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

The apostle Paul gave this command to a group of believers who were going through a very difficult time. He didn’t say, “Try to stay happy if you can.” He commanded them to ‘rejoice in the Lord *always*!’ And just in case this may have seemed to be a bit of an ‘over-statement’, he said, “I will say it again: Rejoice!”

ALL OF THE REDEEMED MAY REJOICE IN ALL THAT IS THEIRS IN CHRIST, ALL OF THE TIME—IF THEY WILL!!!

Psalms 105:3

Let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.

Nehemiah 8:10

Do not grieve for the joy of the LORD is your strength.

After the people of Israel had returned from their exile—and had completed the rebuilding of the city wall—Ezra read to them from the Book of the Law. Realizing how greatly they had fallen short of the LORD’S way in the past, they were deeply grieved. But this was not to be a time of studying their failures and wallowing in their sorrows. They were to celebrate the LORD’S unfailing covenant love towards them!

To be with the LORD in His own enjoyment of His grace, is what makes His people strong!

Psalms 118:24

Let us rejoice today and be glad.

Joy is so often an act of the will. When the will is decisively engaged, preoccupation with difficulty and disappointment is set aside through repentance, and the great, unseen realities of the kingdom of God are wholeheartedly embraced by faith!

As was seen in Study 8, the children of God may know that in every relational and circumstantial situation of life, the Father is at work according to His glorious purpose, to conform them to the likeness of His Son. And so, at all times—sharply attuned to this reality—they may worship and adore Him, and find their life in His presence, in Christ.

James understood the Father’s sovereign, redemptive activity within the lives of His children, saying:

James 1:2–4

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

## promises of joy

No one needs to be left wondering whether consistent, joyous, life-giving fellowship with God is possible! Jesus declared:

John 6:35

“Whoever [keeps on coming] to Me will never be hungry, and whoever [keeps on believing] in Me will never be thirsty.”

The old endless and futile fleshly-pursuit of personal fullness and refreshment—from people, situations and things—need be no more. All who *keep on coming in faith* to Christ may *count upon* the spiritual reality of a total, God-accomplished union with their crucified, risen, reigning and indwelling Lord. And they may, in a happily maintained assurance of Him, constantly feed upon the *soul satisfying* ‘bread from heaven’ and drink from the *spirit renewing* ‘spring of living water’ that He has promised.

The following scriptures provide further witness to our Redeemer’s intention regarding the enduring gladness of His people.

John 16:22

[Jesus said], “You will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.”

Isaiah 58:14

You will find your joy in the LORD.

Job 22:26

You will find delight in the Almighty and will lift up your face to God.

Job 33:26

They will see God’s face and shout for joy.

In these last two references, although Job’s friends were responding inadequately to his suffering, they were obviously, giving witness to a joy that was well known within that early community of faith.

Isaiah 51:11

Everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

This last promise referred to what Israel would experience when they returned from their time of exile. It speaks too, of the joy all the redeemed will know at the Appearing of Jesus. But it is also, a promise to be *daily* enjoyed—to a great degree—by every believer who has been liberated from their sins and assured of the Father, in Christ.

In this present age there is certainly sorrow and sighing in our experience of life. But sometimes—even often, as has already been said—this can simply be a result of refusing to ‘be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus’. There is much of the ‘everlasting joy’ of the new age to be possessed in the present—in the midst of all kinds of troubles!

The Father has released us into a life of worship! Isaiah spoke of the liberating affects of the dawning of divine grace:

Isaiah 61:3

[He will] bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.

How glorious are God’s promises for all whom He has brought into life-giving union with His Son!

## what God’s people have known by His grace

The joy of the Father’s redeemed children is not, in any way, dependent upon circumstances that are ideal. Here are some scriptures that specifically testify to their experience of this.

Habakkuk 3:17–18

[Though everything around me fails] yet will I rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Saviour.

1 Peter 1:8–9

[In the midst of your many trials], though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you [go on believing] in Him and [go on being] filled with an

inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Peter was testifying to the fact that it is not *suffering* that determines the mental and emotional state of the redeemed, but what they know they are *receiving* in the thick of it all—the salvation of their souls and the ongoing redemption of their humanity! This after all is the true goal of life in Christ—rather than an easy path.

The apostle Paul underwent enormous suffering and difficulty in response to the call of God. He didn't find this pleasant. But he did find that the grace of God was entirely sufficient to keep Him personally alive in a spirit of worship. Giving witness of this to the Corinthians he said of himself and Timothy:

2 Corinthians 4:8

We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed but not in despair.

2 Corinthians 6:10

[As God's servants we are] sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.

Yes, there may, indeed, be perplexity and sorrow through the impact of life's circumstances. Sometimes things become extremely complex and difficult to understand—often bringing a holy grief in God's presence. But our spirit need never be crushed or despairing. There may always be joy in the midst of sorrow!

Proverbs 15:15

All the days of the oppressed are wretched, but the cheerful heart has a continual feast.

Psalms 16:8–9

I keep my eyes always on the LORD ... Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices.

Psalms 21:6–7

[LORD], You have granted [the king who trusts in You] unending blessings and made him glad with the joy of Your presence.

Psalms 89:15–16

Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim You, who walk in the light of Your presence, LORD. They rejoice in Your name [—in who You are and what You do—] all day long; they exult in Your righteousness.

Psalms 126:3

The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.

Psalms 43:4

I will go ... to God, my joy and my delight.

Psalms 90:14

Satisfy us in the morning with Your unfailing [covenant] love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.

Psalms 90 was a prayer of Moses, probably prayed during those forty difficult years of wandering in the wilderness. After the darkness of that period, a new era of joy would dawn for Israel in the land that had been promised. This also, may be applied to the Final Day of promise to come.

However, in these present days of the Spirit—in the blessings of the new covenant—a new era has already dawned. The redeemed certainly have their battles and difficulties; but in Christ, they may be satisfied every morning with God's unfailing covenant love—and in this, sing for joy and be glad all their days!

## **a wise and functional way of living**

From what has been said, it is clear that a spirit of joy in God is the way of true mental and emotional health. We were never, intended to be focused primarily upon ourselves, and other people, situations and things—with all of the fear, fretfulness, anxiety and anger it brings. To live that way is both foolish and dysfunctional. It is also wicked—grievous to the Father.

To find our first and deepest pleasure in God, and to delight in Him on account of every other good and pleasant thing, is the way of personal liberty and abundance. It makes agreeable relationships, situations and things to be all the more sweet and enjoyable. Everything received with joy before the Father is more deeply satisfying than anything else!

And, as we've seen, in the happiness we've been given in Christ, the trials of life also lose their power to needlessly crush and oppress.

After the responsibility of maintaining a full assurance of God's grace, *this* matter of delighting primarily in Him, is the most basic principle of daily living in Christ.

Now, having established the necessity of embracing *one primary delight*, we may progress to the next 'basic': *three primary desires* that flow from this.

having only:

**\* *three primary desires:***

Desire is fundamental to human experience. It can however, be authentic or not, healthy or unhealthy. For example, physical appetite may be a sign of good health. But a passion for food may also be a sign of deep personal unhappiness—an unfulfilled appetite for joy.

'Passion' may have much more to do with unhealthy personal driven-ness, than free-spirited pursuit of true human desire. The 'passions of the flesh', the 'passions of the eyes', and the 'pride of life' are very powerful dynamics operating within the fallen human heart.

Outside of enriching fellowship with God we are quickly pressed towards idolatrous pursuits—seeking to gain emotional satisfaction apart Him, through: the *stimulation of sensory experience*, the *possession of material things* and the *elevation of personal status* in the eyes of others.

That's why the redeemed must be distrustful of their various *passions*—even if based upon biblical themes! These may be authentic, or they may not.

TRUE HUMAN DESIRE ALWAYS COMES FROM 'A FULL ASSURANCE OF THE GRACE OF GOD' AND 'A PRIMARY DELIGHT IN HIM'—AND FROM THE 'THREE PRIMARY DESIRES' THAT FLOW FROM THESE TWO SUPREME BASICS OF LIFE IN CHRIST.

We'll now establish what the Scriptures reveal these primary desires to be. Each one, it will be seen, engage a person in *the way of righteousness*.

the first primary desire of the righteous in Christ is:

**- *the pleasure, glory & praise of God***

(seeking above all else to be a delight to Him at all times; to see Him honoured & adored by all, & His kingdom revealed)

We saw in Study 2, 'The High Human Calling', that the fountain of true human vocation is 'an inner spring of great delight in God'. It was seen that this would then produce a *reflection of His glory* through our humanity. And the first element of this reflected glory would be *His moral purity* in our inner being: 'a spring of jealous desire for His glory and praise'.

An inner spring of great delight in God, at once becomes within us a spring of affectionate desire to, at all times, be a source of delight to *Him*—to so wholeheartedly obey Him, that He may receive *pleasure* in our every desire, thought, word and act! And then with this, there is, immediately, a jealous desire and zeal for His supreme honour! HIS PERFECTIONS ARE SUCH THAT HE IS *WORTHY TO BE HONOURED, WORSHIPPED, PRAISED AND ADORED, EVERY MOMENT, BY EVERY PERSON, IN EVERY SITUATION IN HIS WORLD. THE REDEEMED, WHOSE DELIGHT IS IN HIM—& WHO EVER-SEEK HIS PLEASURE—CANNOT BEAR THIS NOT TO BE SO!!!*

With this, there is also a perpetual longing for God's great reign and rule over all things to be revealed, and His will to be done in every part of the creation.

Here, of course, is not only zeal for a *present* manifestation of God's kingdom, but also for its ultimate fulfillment at the Appearing of Christ. This is what is behind the cry, "Maranatha!" "Come, Lord!" (1Corinthians 16:22; Revelation 22:20). Only then, will God be honoured, glorified and adored by all, as He ought!

We have spoken—and will continue to speak—of the personal enjoyment of human freedom and fullness in Christ. This is part of the salvation that has come to the redeemed. But it is by no means to be the primary focus of our desire. ABOVE ALL ELSE, THERE MUST BE A HOLY PASSION FOR THE PLEASURE, GLORY AND PRAISE OF GOD!!!

To be primarily focused upon our own and others' happiness, is an unfortunate fleshly drive which must be resisted. The supreme issue in this world is not merely the enhancement of human life, but the establishment of *God's righteousness* within His creation—for His glory, honour and endless praise! The gospel that we love and proclaim, and the desires that propel us, must always be divinely rather than humanly centred.

## **the Truly Human One's testimony to 'primary desire'**

In the Sermon on the Mount, when Jesus taught the basic elements of true human need and desire, He said:

Matthew 6:9

"This then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'"

After Greeks had come seeking Jesus, and His attention was turned to the redemptive terrors that lay before Him in the cross, His prayer was immediately:

John 12:28

"Father, glorify Your name!"

Later, in the Garden of Gethsemane, He was so overwhelmed by the 'sorrows of sin' that came upon Him—and that lay before Him—that He thought He might even die in the garden. Having asked that He be spared from this, He then, also, *immediately* expressed what was primary in His heart:

Matthew 26:39

"Father ... not as I will, but as You will."

His primary delight being in the Father, His all-consuming desire was for that Loved-One's pleasure, for Him to be glorified and His will accomplished. What else would we expect from the Truly Human One—the Blessèd, En-fleshed Eternal Son!

## **God's redeemed people's jealous zeal & desire for His honour & praise**

The Psalms give many examples of a heart that longs for the glory, honour and praise of God's name.

Psalm 96:8-9

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name ... Worship the LORD in the splendour of His holiness; tremble before Him, all the earth.

Psalm 150:6

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

Psalm 145:21

Let every creature praise His holy name for ever and ever.

Psalm 67:3

May the peoples praise You, O God; may all the peoples praise You.

Psalm 113:2-3

Let the name of the Lord be praised, both now and for evermore. From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the Lord is to be praised.

Finding their joy above all else in God Himself, His liberated people are jealous for His glory, honour and praise—from the heart of every person who enjoys the light of day!

## **grief over all that dishonours Him**

When the way of God is despised, this brings great sorrow and holy disturbance to His adoring servants.

Psalm 119:136

Streams of tears flow from my eyes, for Your law is not obeyed.

Psalm 119:53

Indignation grips me because of the wicked, who have forsaken Your law.

Psalm 104:35

May sinners vanish from the earth and the wicked be no more.

Not only are God's children grieved by the human failure of others. They know that their own sinfulness dishonours Him greatly.

Psalm 25:11

For the sake of Your name, O LORD, forgive my iniquity, though it is great.

More is desired than mere 'guilt-relief'. The redeemed feel that their primary *need* is to bring honour to the LORD'S *name*—and they seek the liberating joy of forgiveness toward that end!

## **free from small-minded 'glory grasping'**

The grace of God liberates His people into a noble, joyous, creaturely humility!

Psalm 115:1

Not to us, O LORD, not to us but to Your name be the glory, because of Your [unfailing covenant] love and faithfulness.

Isaiah 26:8

Your name and renown are the desire of our hearts.

In the western world many of us use the saying that another person has 'stolen our thunder'. By this, we mean that we were going to say or do something really impressive, but someone said or did it first—and *stole* the 'big impression' we were going to make. Poor us!

But the grace that is given in Christ is able to release the redeemed from such self-interested 'glory grasping'. Having the glory and praise of God as a primary desire, they are *free* to have *their* thunder stolen, as long as the Lord gets *His*—the thunderous praise that belongs to Him from all of His creatures!

When a child of God has Him as their 'one primary delight', jealous desire for His supreme honour and exaltation is a natural fruit. Contentment to remain in the background—unseen, or unrecognized, longing for the Lord to be magnified—is, indeed, a grand manifestation of freedom in Christ. So is being placed in a position where one is both *seen* and *recognized*, but desiring only the honour and praise of the Father and the Son.

the second primary desire of the righteous in Christ is:

**- *our own conformity to the likeness of the Son***  
(loving righteousness, hating, grieved by & dreading sin  
—& joyously pressing towards the goal of the coming Day)

We saw in Study 2 that human reflection of divine moral purity also involved 'hatred for what is against His will and way'. In the first primary desire above, this was spoken of in regard to expressions of wickedness round about. But it also has much significance here in this second primary desire: 'our own conformity to the likeness of the Son'. Having such a longing, there is very naturally, a strong hatred of *personal sin*.

Psalm 119:104

I gain understanding from Your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path.

Study 2 also showed that one expression of having an inner spring of great delight in God was, to walk with Him in 'a joyous spirit of wholehearted obedience'. In this, the child of God 'loves the Father's way and delights to do His will'. His commands are not burdensome, but the way of true human-ness—to be eagerly pursued!

## the way of the Son

In Study 6 we saw the 'priestly action' of Jesus among us—humankind's True, Representative Worshipper. In that, He revealed of the '*life* of the kingdom'. As the True Worshipper, His every desire, thought, word and act was an offering up of 'fragrant incense'—a spiritual sacrifice—that brought unbounded joy and pleasure to the Father's heart!

In this revelation of the life of the kingdom, we saw before our eyes the *righteousness* to which we have been called as the image of God. No doubt every regenerate heart *longed* for conformity to what was revealed there. In that brief sketch, we saw the glory of a true humanity lived moment by moment before the Father, and all others. AND TO SEE THIS IS TO WANT IT!!! A truly legitimate 'passion of the eyes'!

### **the gift of His righteousness**

Of course the fulfillment of every element of our high human calling, has been *provided for* in the grace proclaimed in Study 8. We saw there that those who are united with Christ have received the new covenant gift of *justification*. As well as being declared 'not guilty', THEY HAVE BEEN 'MADE ONE WITH THE SON IN HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS BEFORE THE FATHER'!!!

## the hope of righteousness

We saw too, that this gift of the Son's righteousness—*credited now* to the adopted child of God—is also a *pledge* to them that in the age to come, every element of their humanity will become a glorious manifestation of that righteousness! It will take only the Appearing of Jesus for it to be revealed.

As Paul declared:

2 Timothy 4:8

“There is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that Day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for His Appearing.”

When this takes place, the Father’s predestined goal for His redeemed children will have been finally accomplished. Receiving ‘the crown of righteousness’, they will—‘in the twinkling of an eye’—be totally conformed to the likeness of His Son! EACH ONE PARTICIPATING WHOLLY IN THE SON’S GLORIFIED HUMANITY—THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD EXPRESSED IN EVERY DESIRE, THOUGHT, WORD AND ACT, FOREVER!!!

No wonder Paul spoke in Galatians 5:5 of the redeemed ‘eagerly awaiting the hope of righteousness’!

## **the gifts of righteousness & sanctification in Christ, ‘lived out’ in the power of the Spirit**

We saw in Study 8 that the saints not only have ‘the hope of righteousness’. *The gift of the Spirit* has been given to every child of God, enabling them to even now, *actively participate* in the righteousness of Christ in the way they live each day.

In the full assurance of grace, all may be one with the Son in *His joyous communion with the Father* and in *His love for every person!* They may participate in ‘the life of the kingdom’—being a fragrant offering to the Father, as they are ‘transformed’ into the Son’s likeness ‘with ever increasing glory’ (2 Corinthians 3:18). This is the present vocation that the Father’s ‘holy ones in Christ’ have been set apart to—and enabled to fulfill!

### **the example of ‘a truly impassioned apostle’**

When Paul thought of the gift of righteousness that He had received, and the *hope* of that righteousness being totally expressed through his humanity in the age to come, HE WANTED AS MUCH AS HE COULD HAVE OF IT, NOW!!!

Listen to the Spirit-pressed cry of his heart:

Philippians 3:8–11

“[I consider all else as garbage] that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own ... but that which is through faith in Christ. ... I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of His resurrection and participation in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.”

Understanding by faith all that was set before Him in Christ, Paul wanted to be, right then, an *embodiment* of the risen Jesus! He wanted to have surging within his own breast the *whole* of the Son’s joy in His Father, and the *whole* of the Son’s own love for every person—lost or redeemed!

The apostle also equally desired to be a participant in the *sufferings* of Christ. This desire was based upon three things regarding the nature of His Lord’s sufferings.

Firstly, Paul was aware that the One who was the True Image of God in this world, doing His Father’s will, finally, had nail scars in His hands and feet. The darkness hated the light—and so the sufferings of the Holy and Righteous One were, by nature, *inevitable!* Jesus had, in fact, said it was inevitable that *all* who live righteously, in His name, in this world, would suffer too.

Secondly, he also understood that THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST WERE *REVELATORY*—MAKING KNOWN THE VERY NATURE OF THE LOVE OF GOD POURED OUT FOR SINNERS!!! That’s why the Son was truly the Image His Father as He bore the sins of the world. So Paul now wanted to be part of that glorious ongoing revelation!

Thirdly, he knew that the sufferings of Christ were not only by nature *inevitable* and *revelatory*, they were also *indispensable*. Our salvation could have been accomplished in no other way. And by experience, Paul knew that the *proclamation* and *manifestation* of this salvation among the nations could also, be accomplished in no other way. It is a sober—yet glorious—truth that in the present age, God’s great redemptive purposes of love will always be worked out within a general context of suffering. Participation in the suffering love of God is an *indispensable mode* of authentic, life-giving service to others. Paul declared to the Corinthians that this principle was at the heart of his ministry among them:

2 Corinthians 4:10–12

“Death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.”

Knowing the love of God towards Him in Christ, the grace inflamed apostle wanted personally, above all else, to deeply participate in this redeeming love—for His life to be wholly immersed in the action of that love, with all of the *revelatory* and *vocationally indispensable suffering* it would bring.

Already, Paul had come to experience much of the Son's *joyous communion* with the Father and His *Self-expending love* for every person. But to bring maximum revelation of the glory of God—in the blessed fulfillment of his high human calling in Christ—he wanted more! MUCH, MUCH MORE!!!

He continued:

Philippians 3:12–14

“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize [of the high calling of God] in Christ Jesus.”

When it comes to *personal longing*, a Spirit-filled child of God says, “This *one* thing I do!” A HOLY, SINGLE-MINDED DESIRE FOR TOTAL CONFORMITY TO CHRIST!!!

### **a word from the Holy and Righteous One**

The Lord Jesus promised much to those who embrace this second primary desire. He said:

Matthew 5:6

“Blessèd are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”

To hunger and thirst for anything other than personal conformity to the likeness of the Son, will only produce the bitter fruit of *un-righteousness*. But desiring for oneself, above all else, to be filled with the fruit of the gift of righteousness in Christ (Philippians 1:11), will bring the *human fullness* that alone can satisfy our deepest personal and vocational longings—bringing glory and praise to the Father!

the third primary desire of the righteous in Christ is:

### **- *others' human freedom & fullness in Christ*** (yearning for them to know & exalt in God's grace, & so be engaged in the grand pursuit of their high calling)

True humanity is expressed in loving the Lord our God with the whole of our being, and in loving our neighbour as ourselves. To love others as ourselves is simply, to want for them all that we want *personally*—and to the same degree! So we may say that this third primary desire is very much related to the second.

It may also be said, that our desire for others to know all that we have spoken of so far, will never, be any greater than our own desire for these things. This is, of course, obvious. The river will never rise above its source.

### **the Son's yearning desire**

Jesus' desire for the ones His Father had chosen, stirred powerfully within Him. He ceaselessly yearned for *them* to share in all that His Father had prepared for *Him*, as the En-fleshed and soon to be Glorified Son! He said:

John 17:24

“Father, I want those You have given Me to be with Me where I am, and to see My glory, the glory You have given Me because You loved Me before the creation of the world.”

The blessedness of His own Sonship—now and in the eternal future—was such that He longed with the whole of His Being for others to enjoy it with Him. His love for them was as great as His love for the Father—the ever-present Object of His delight!

### **a participation in the love of the Son**

In the first two primary desires, it has been made clear that our calling is to participate in *the Son's* desire for His Father's glory and praise, and for the fulfillment of His Father's purpose in the whole world; and that we are to be with *the Son* in His desire and capacity to bring pleasure to His Father.

Now, in this third primary desire, we are to see that our high calling requires us to be with *the Son* in His desire for the human freedom and fullness of all His Father's elect—those who are presently regenerate, and those who are not yet.

The love of the En-fleshed, Divine Son ‘surpasses knowledge’ (Ephesians 3:19). It is beyond our comprehension. But by God’s grace it may, nevertheless, stir in the deepest parts of His servants! How wonderful, that the redeemed should come to share in this yearning, Self-expending love of their Redeemer. That they should want all others to know and exalt in the grace of God as they themselves do—never satisfied, until all are joyously pursuing their high calling, with the whole of their being, for honour and praise of their Liberating Father!

### **Paul’s example of ‘a holy passion for others’**

Again, Paul as ‘a man of the Spirit’ models this primary desire in a fine way. When standing before King Agrippa in chains, his appeal for him to respond to the gospel was so strong and urgent, that the king was astounded by it.

Acts 26:28

[Agrippa said to Paul], “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to become a Christian?”

Paul replied, “Short time or long—I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains.”

This ‘grace-gripped apostle’ could never be silent, until *every person* had received full opportunity to be as he was, in Christ.

He also longed for those who were one with Him in the Lord, to know precisely, what he himself earnestly desired. He said:

Colossians 1:28–29

“We proclaim Him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.”

Philippians 1:9–11

“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with all the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.”

The *one thing* he pressed towards for himself, was what he yearned for others to enjoy—yes, and this as always, ‘to the glory and praise of God’!

### **Paul’s Spirit-wrought witness to the 3 primary desires**

In one impassioned statement to the Philippians, Paul actually expressed all three of the primary desires we’ve been speaking of. He declared:

Philippians 1:20–22

“I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain on in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.”

His desire was that Christ would be *exalted* in his body, and that the Philippians’ *boasting* in Him would abound. Christ, Himself, was the focus of Paul’s entire life, and he longed to be away from the body and present with Him. But equally compelling, was his desire to remain with the Lord’s people, for their progress and joy in the faith. That was his only motivation for wanting to continue for a time upon the earth.

This powerful witness to the thrust of the apostle’s heart, is certainly an excellent example to all who are in Christ in this present age.

## **summing up these ‘key concepts’ to do with assurance, delight & desire**

As the children of God press towards the Day of Final Freedom, they are to maintain—by faith—a full assurance of His grace, to have only one primary delight and three primary desires.

In this world there are many objects of *trust* that are set before the redeemed. But only the *great, unseen* and *unchanging* reality of the grace of God in Christ is, at all, worthy of their total confidence and constant attention.

There are many things that are *delightful* within God's good world. But only He—who He is, what He has done, is doing and will do—is to be the *primary* object of personal joy. His children are to delight in Him on account of all else that is good and pleasurable—and yes, in the midst of all else that is not. And by His grace they may!

There are also many *desires* that fill the human heart. But all these must flow out of only three. *Any desire* that does not spring from a 'holy-passion' for the glory and praise of God, personal conformity to the Son, and others' human freedom and fullness in Him, is *misplaced*—no matter how, otherwise, legitimate it may be. It must be seen as *an intrusion of idolatrous passion* into the life of a sanctified child of God.

Any passion that is contrary to these three primary desires is to be discarded as *garbage*. To put it another way: it must be *evicted* from the sanctuary! For, it will keep a redeemed person from fulfilling their high and holy calling—no matter how glowingly, and even 'biblically', such passion may be promoted.

The wonderful thing is though, that every desire that *does* flow from these three primary ones, is not only legitimate, but also, SANCTIFIED! Authentic worship! It comes from the heart of the Son, and is part of what is offered up in His name to the Father, bringing Him great pleasure!

All this contributes to the revelation of the glory of God through His image, in His world. It is the first fruits of what will ultimately *fill* the new creation!

So now, we may consider what else is *basic* to the life of the redeemed, on their way to the Final Day.

embracing the reality of these key concepts, the redeemed may know:

## **- personal rest & peace—& freedom to live truly** (a foretaste of the eternal blessedness to come)

This study was originally entitled, 'On The Way & Traveling Light'. What a good picture this is of life in Christ! The redeemed child of God has been released from all the *excess baggage* that idolatry brings. Idolaters must travel through life constantly gathering objects of 'worth-ship' that bring some promise of human liberty, identity, security, capacity and destiny. Of course, the futility of such foolish endeavour weighs heavily upon the spirit of the rebel child, creature and servant.

How different it is to live in the *joyous simplicity* of having only one primary delight and three primary desires—LIGHT TRAVELERS, ON THEIR WAY TO A GLORIOUS ETERNAL INHERITANCE!!!

### **rest & peace—under the good yoke**

As we've seen, life in this present age is not without its hardships and struggles. But the redeemed may be at rest in it all. In the full assurance of grace, they are at peace with God—even though so much of corruption still remains within them. And in this, their human energies may be healthfully directed towards the Father, in the life of the Son, and by the refreshing presence of the Spirit.

This is the simplicity of life that Jesus promised to His people. He said:

Matthew 11:28–29

“Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

Jesus calls all weary travelers to come to Him. The yoke He places upon His servants is His own—THE YOKE OF HIS ETERNAL SONSHIP!!! This is what every person was made for!

Within the oppressive realm of the dominion of darkness, 'hard yokes' are made for all of the devil's children. But the redeemed may wear the good yoke for which *they themselves were made!* An 'easy yoke' in Jesus' day was one that fitted perfectly. The good yoke of the Son is without doubt the easiest of all—fitting to perfection, those created to participate in the blessedness of His own life and action!

## the theme of rest & peace within Studies 1–8

We may trace the theme of rest and peace throughout the eight studies already covered, in the following way:

### Study 1

The God of righteousness, rest and peace.

### Study 2

A life of rest and peace, under the good yoke of sonship/righteousness.

### Study 3

Throwing off the good yoke of righteousness and pursuing a path of unrestrained idolatry.

### Study 4

The realm of rebellion and restlessness: a life of endless restless-struggle—with the ceaseless devising of futile ‘coping mechanisms’, under the hard yoke of the evil one.

### Study 5

The God of righteousness and peace, calling His Old Testament people into His rest.

### Study 6

The Prince of peace, calling all to take His yoke of Sonship/righteousness upon them; Himself bearing *our* yoke of unrighteousness, condemnation and shame—and securing present and future rest for His people.

### Study 7

Revelation, bringing to the restless rebel an intensification of the inner turbulence—and the crisis of repentance and faith.

### Study 8

The grace that brings the redeemed into rest and peace under the Son’s good yoke—in the midst of the menacing pressure of this world, the persistent surging of their own fleshly passions, and the oppressive assaults of the devil; and this, in the promise of an ultimate eternal rest to come.

## the theme of rest & peace throughout the Story of Redemption

As the redeemed move on towards the Great and Final Day, it is always so important for them to keep ‘the big picture’ of the Story in mind. And this theme of rest and peace is a very significant part of it.

### the Story’s Blessed Author & Central Character

The eternal life within the Triune God has always been one of perfect rest and peace. A total participation in this is what the Father planned for His image—and is what He has been working towards throughout the grand Story He has been telling in history.

### an ordered & functional creation

The God of Peace has always been the One in whom there is no chaos or disorder (1 Corinthians 14:33). When He first created the earth as a barren and watery globe, it was ‘formless and empty’ (Genesis 1:2). But then He began to *speak* to it, and throughout the following six days His own divine order and fullness was gloriously reflected within ‘the work of His hands’. Every part of His creation was good and functional (Genesis 1:31)—perfectly suited to fulfill His grand purpose for it! Then He ‘rested’ from His work. There was nothing more to add!

We have seen that from the very beginning God set apart one day within each week, in which His creatures could enjoy a taste of His own *rest* as Creator (Genesis 2:1–2). Apart from this day of rest, all of life was to be lived in the enjoyment of a completed, good and functional creation—according to the Creator’s way.

### fallen humankind forfeits its Maker’s rest

Through their rebellion and corruption, the first couple lost serenity, and were banished from the garden. Then later, unrighteous Cain became a ‘restless wanderer on the earth’ (Genesis 3:23–24; 4:12).

The affects upon humanity were grievous and heavy.

Ecclesiastes 2:23

All their days their work is pain and grief; even at night their minds do not rest.

### **rest through the judgment of the Flood**

Godly Lamech prophetically named his son 'Noah'—a word that sounded like 'comfort' or 'rest'. When the world was cleansed from the unbridled wickedness of pre-Flood days, there would be *rest* in the midst of labour and painful toil (Genesis 5:29)—a fresh hope for functional living according to the way of the Redeemer-Creator!

### **restless Israel**

The people of Israel were promised deliverance from slavery in Egypt and rest in the LORD'S presence, in the land He had promised (Exodus 3:7–8; Deuteronomy 12:9–10; Exodus 33:14; Numbers 6:24–27).

But when—through unbelief and rebellion—the Exodus generation forfeited its right to inherit the land, they were forced to *wander* in the desert for forty years.

Hebrews 3:10–11

[The LORD said], "Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known My ways."  
So I declared on oath in my anger, "They shall never enter My rest."

Then, when Moses instructed the new generation that was about to enter the land, he warned them that rebellion would always keep them from enjoyment of the rest that could be theirs. He said:

Deuteronomy 28:1, 48, 65–66

"If you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all His commands ... He will put an iron yoke on your neck ... The LORD will give you an anxious mind, eyes weary with longing and a despairing heart. You will live in constant suspense, filled with dread both day and night, never sure of your life."

When Israel believed and obeyed the LORD'S word, they knew much of the rest promised to them, and their testimony was rich:

Isaiah 26:3

You keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in You.

Psalms 62:1

My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from Him.

Psalms 23:1–3

The LORD is my Shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters, He restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

But although endowed with all they needed in order to know their Creator's rest and peace, Israel consistently fell back into unfaithfulness, and knew the opposite—as He had promised would be the case.

They so often cast off the restful yoke of righteousness to which they had been called. And—within the land that had been set apart for true worship—they prostituted themselves with *shameful 'adulterous' idolatry*. Eventually, this unfaithfulness became the habitual pattern of their ways.

Jeremiah 2:20

[The LORD said], "Long ago you broke off your yoke and tore off your bonds; you said, 'I will not serve [and worship] You!' Indeed, on every high hill and under every spreading tree you lay down as a prostitute."

And like all who are given to idolatry, they were caught up in a restless round of futile attempts to cope with its consequences.

Jeremiah 2:36

[The LORD said], "Why do you go about so much, changing your ways? You will be disappointed."

Jeremiah 6:16

"Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls."

But confident in their pursuit of what was false, they closed their minds to the word of God.

Isaiah 28:12

[The LORD] said, "This is the resting-place, let the weary rest"; and, "This is the place of repose"—but they would not listen.

Isaiah 48:18

[He said], "If only you had paid attention to My commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness [and wellbeing] like waves of the sea."

Dominated by dark spiritual powers, they became like them. As Jesus said:

Matthew 12:43c

“[An unclean spirit] goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it.”

Isaiah made this pronouncement:

Isaiah 57:20–21

“The wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud.  
‘There is no peace,’ says my God, ‘for the wicked.’”

Yet there was always the promise of a great future rest, under the reign of the coming Messiah. Isaiah declared:

Isaiah 32:1, 15, 17

“See, a king will reign in righteousness ... till the Spirit is poured on us from on high ... The fruit of [His] righteousness will be peace.”

### **the new Exodus & the promised rest**

The story of Israel is on one hand, a very tragic one. But on the other, it is a glorious proclamation of the great and unfailing covenant love and faithfulness of the LORD. No matter how much they refused Him, He never turned away from His purpose for them—and never will.

And so as mentioned above, we see the Son coming among us as the Prince of Peace, calling all into His Father’s Rest, under His own yoke of Sonship—and then, bearing on the cross *their* yoke of unrighteousness, condemnation and shame. It was time for humankind’s release from restless servitude to their cruel and tormenting pharaoh, Satan!

Isaiah 9:4

[LORD] You have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor.

When Jesus rose from the dead, His first word to the disciples was, “Peace be with you” (John 20:19).

### **a present heritage of rest & peace**

On the basis of Jesus’ great victory on the cross, His people may enjoy a marvelous redemption! In this, through His Resurrection, Ascension and Reign as Lord and King, and His outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, there is now a wonderful, *present heritage* of rest and peace—one that is more substantial, and more liberating, than has ever been known before by a fallen humanity!

Although Israel again and again forfeited the rest that could have been theirs—through unbelief and disobedience—this does not need to be the case with the redeemed today. All in Christ—both Jew and Gentile—may know the *rest* that is part of the life of His own eternal covenant-union with His Father, as they take His good yoke of Sonship upon them.

Hebrews 4:3

Now we who have believed enter that rest.

2 Peter 1:2

Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus gave the people a beautiful insight into the restful simplicity of His Sonship—and earnestly called them into it. He said:

Matthew 6:25–34

“Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life?

And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “What shall we wear?” For the [unbelieving world runs] after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

This is the rest that belongs to the redeemed children of God, in the kingdom of the Son!

Romans 14:17

The kingdom of God is [a matter of] ... righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Colossians 3:15

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.

### **rest in the midst of the wrestling**

The present heritage of rest and peace in Christ truly is a grand reality. But it is nevertheless—as will be seen in the next section—one that is constantly *contested* by the world, the flesh and the devil. However—as the series will increasingly show—the redeemed may be sure of this: **ALTHOUGH THE BATTLE IS CERTAINLY ON, THE REST MAY BE POSSESSED!!!**

The Lord's people must 'make every effort to enter that rest' (Hebrews 4:11). That is, they must wholly set their mind to *know and trust* the word of God, and *fully engage their will* in pursuing His way. Enjoying God's rest in this present age requires both of these of things. They are in fact, the normal response of a regenerate person to His grace.

Rest for the redeemed certainly does not mean *inactivity*. God rested from His work of creation, but—within that rest—has continued to work towards His goal of a fully accomplished redemption. Jesus said when accused of working on the Sabbath:

John 5:17

"My Father is always at His work to this very day, and I too am working."

Living in His Father's perfect rest and peace Jesus was the 'Lord of the Sabbath', who was bringing it to fulfillment on behalf of humankind—making its rest to be a reality for all who take His yoke upon them (Matthew 12:8; 11:28-29).

And so Christ's people are called to be with Him in His joyous action until the Final Day—in the midst of the turbulence created by all that opposes the kingdom of God. They are to do this, of course, in the flow of enjoying a particular day of rest and refreshment in Him, each week—as they freely cease from their usual labours.

Hebrews 13:20–21

May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing His will, and may He work in us what is pleasing to Him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The God of peace is ever providing for His people, as He calls them to be with Him in His grand redemptive purpose for His world!

### **an ultimate, eternal rest for the people of God**

As we saw at the close of Study 6, the Final Day will release the redeemed into the perfect rest and peace of the Triune-Community! They will live in the full and uncontested blessedness of a completed redemption; and this, within a creation that was complete from the beginning, but is now entirely renewed. **WHAT HAS BEEN KNOWN IN PART—AND RELENTLESSLY OPPOSED—WILL BE WHOLLY ENJOYED FOREVER!!!**

Hebrews 4:9–10

There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for those who enter God's rest also rest from their own work, just as God did from His.

The Day will come when the labours of this age will be ended!

Revelation 14:13

Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labour, for their deeds will follow them."

The constant labours of Christ's servants will, indeed, ultimately cease; and then all that those expended energies have accomplished will be openly revealed and celebrated! The contest will be over—for the oppressor of the saints will no longer be able to intrude into the Holy One's good creation.

Romans 16:20

The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

## the liberty of light travelers, as they press towards the Day

Those who discipline their minds to know the grace and call of God, and who engage their will to maintain only one primary delight and three primary desires, may experience the 'happy freedom' of a *new capacity* to live truly! This is the promise of Jesus. He said:

John 8:32, 36

"You will know the truth, and the truth will set You free ... If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

The redeemed may taste more and more the blessedness of fulfilling 'The High Human Calling'. What they long to be ultimately liberated into, they may increasingly, know the pleasure of along the way!

How different this is to idolatrous living, with its inner fountain of polluted passion. This can never bring the blessedness a human being was created for. It only drives a person more desperately into god-refusing pursuits, or hopeless despair—all, under the tyranny of Satan and dark spiritual powers.

**IN CHRIST, THE REDEEMED MAY LIVE FREELY UNDER THEIR LIBERATOR'S GOOD YOKE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS—BEARING THE ETERNAL FRUITS OF THEIR INNER DELIGHT!!!**

Paul—justified, adopted, sanctified, Spirit-filled and abounding in hope, in Christ—knew the exalted liberty of having his will submitted to the Father's way. With a holy glee he could identify himself as:

Romans 1:1

"Paul, a [bond-slave] a Christ Jesus."

Bond-slaves had no will of their own. Every moment of their lives was totally at the disposal of their master. For Paul, no image could better describe the glorious liberty he enjoyed in the love of Christ—his will, having been freed into glad abandonment to the indwelling Son!

And he persistently called all the saints into the nobility of this way of living:

Romans 6:19

"Just as you used to offer yourselves as slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness."

Future studies will speak of what the Scriptures reveal in this regard; showing how it may all work out in the various situations of life in this world.

One thing will be very clear: the *holiness* to which all are called, brings the *happiness* that every heart longs for. A life *set apart* to the way of God *satisfies* the deepest human desire.

Now we are to see that the rich vocational action spoken of in this study, is to be *worked out* within the context of three things.

true vocational action in Christ is maintained within the context of, firstly:

### **- a relentless spiritual-battle**

(constant conflict with the world, the flesh & the devil)

Because of all that Jesus has accomplished, there is nothing that can keep a redeemed person from present enjoyment of their freedom in Christ—including, what the Father has allowed to continue according to His purpose.

Those continuing things are the three elements of the dominion of darkness that have often been referred to: the world, the flesh and the devil. The battle in which the Lord's people are continually involved is against these three mighty foes.

### **a purposeful battle**

As has been seen, the world, the flesh and the devil have been fully dealt with by the work of Christ. However, the Father's wise intention has not been to *eliminate* them, until His purpose for Israel and the nations is complete.

The battle we are speaking of is, indeed, unceasing and often, openly horrendous. But it is not to be lamented. The One who is revealing *the glory of His grace* in all the earth, has good reason for ordaining that this battle continue till the very end.

Although the provision is *complete* for His redeemed children's blessedness in Christ, the Father's concern is not for an ideal situation at this time. For, **HIS GRACE IS BEST REVEALED IN THE MIDST OF IMPERFECTION!!!**

The incessant conflict that God's children find themselves in is, actually—according to His purpose—a dynamic environment for *fruitfulness*. IT IS WITHIN THIS BATTLE THAT THE LORD'S SERVANTS MAY HAVE DEVELOPED WITHIN THEM—AND WORKED OUT THROUGH THEM—ALL THE FRUITS OF HIS LOVE THAT WILL ENDURE FOREVER!!!

### **great grace for sinners**

Although present human perfection is not possible, it must be quickly added that continuous defeat in the battle we face is totally unnecessary. Although through the *passions* of the flesh, the *pressure* of the world and the *power* of the devil there *will* be many failures, the fact is that provision for victory has been made, if it will be taken!

Paul's testimony to the powerful operation of the flesh is very clear. He said:

Galatians 5:17

“The [flesh] desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the [flesh]. They are in conflict with one another, so that you do not do what you want.”

He spoke of his own personal struggle with the flesh, saying:

Romans 7:18–25

“I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my [flesh]. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this is what I keep on doing. ... I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

The battle is, indeed, relentless. But fallen human hearts, minds and wills all too quickly yield to the flesh—bringing tragic conformity to the way of this world and its dark ruler. The issue, of course, is not what comes suddenly upon us by way of temptation, but what we do, the moment it does. The grand reality is that deliverance *is* there, in Christ! Again, much will be said about this in later studies.

In the midst of it all, the marvelous thing for the redeemed is that every moment of their personally defiling human failure, is constantly, *cleansed*, by the blood of Christ! And EVERY ACCUSATION DIRECTED BY THE EVIL ONE AGAINST THE CONSCIENCE, MAY BE MET WITH ASSURANCE OF THE PRICELESS GIFT OF THE SON'S RIGHTEOUSNESS BEFORE THE FATHER!!!

### **a contested vocation**

We have seen that all who are baptized into Christ have been *consecrated to His service*—set apart to be with Him in His ongoing prophetic, priestly and kingly action. All are called to be involved in this grand manifestation of the kingdom of God—each one, according to what they have received from the Holy Spirit.

At the heart of this ongoing warfare is the matter of worship—the most vocational thing of all. As we've seen throughout the Story of Redemption, the evil one is always seeking to either destroy or pervert the worship of the saints.

Above all, the devil works incessantly to keep the Lord's servants from having only one primary delight and three primary desires. His delight is to incite idolatrous passion, keep each one from a glad assurance of grace, and to—needlessly—lock them back into futile pursuits.

The apostle Peter knew all about this ever-present foe of the redeemed. He warned those who were in troubling circumstances:

1 Peter 5:8

“Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”

Given the slightest opportunity, Satan will do all he can to overwhelm the saints with his deceits—hoping to make a mockery of their consecrated status.

Paul also, knew the greatest danger that faced believing communities. Hear the cry of his heart:

1 Thessalonians 3:5

“I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless.”

2 Corinthians 11:3

“I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.”

However, he declared to the Corinthians that they need not be outwitted by the devil, saying:

2 Corinthians 2:11

“We are not unaware of his schemes.”

As will be seen further on, Satan only has a limited number of approaches. But he uses them craftily and well!

Sadly, there are all too often, *casualties* in the battle—even among those who seem most unlikely to fall. Paul lamented the vocational demise of one of his dearly loved and trusted fellow-workers, saying:

2 Timothy 4:10

“Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me.”

Others may not have thought Demas had fallen into grievous sin. But he had certainly lost his true primary Object of delight. This was, surely, a tragic outcome for a servant of the King.

Much more will be said later about this battle and the suffering it often brings. But right now, there is one thing we may surely know: THE PATH TO ULTIMATE FREEDOM AND VOCATIONAL FULLNESS IN CHRIST, IS ONE THAT PASSES THROUGH ENEMY TERRITORY—ALL THE WAY!!!

true vocational action in Christ is maintained within the context of,  
secondly:

## **- the two essentials**

(the sure word of God & the intimacy of prayer)

The word of God and prayer are inseparable. And both, together, are absolutely essential for growth into human maturity, in the midst of the battle just described. Without them the great promises of life in Christ by the power of the Spirit, will always be experienced in only a limited way.

According to the Scriptures, the word and prayer are to be the two great preoccupations of God's sanctified children.

### **the sure word of God**

The children of God actually *live* by His word (Matthew 4:4). He loves to speak directly into their hearts—assuring, strengthening and refreshing them, and enlarging their capacity to be with Him in His glorious purpose.

The apostle Paul knew that when the word came to the believers at Thessalonica, a powerful dynamic had entered into their lives. He said:

1 Thessalonians 2:13

“You received the word of God ... not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.”

This was a word that was, literally, ‘energizing’ within them!

Paul knew that everything recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures—together with all that was now being proclaimed and written by him and the other apostles—was indispensable for personal maturity and vocational fruitfulness. He declared to his young co-worker Timothy, that:

2 Timothy 3:16–17

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is [profitable] for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that God's servant may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

We'll see in our next study, precisely, how the word of God does teach, rebuke, correct and train His redeemed people in righteousness. It is this constant action of His word within their hearts and minds that equips them to fulfill their high calling.

### **prevailing in the battle by the word**

The only way the saints can overcome in the relentless spiritual battle we've been speaking of is, to be ‘strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus’ (2 Timothy 2:1). And this, of course, can only be as they are strengthened by the word that proclaims it.

In writing to the Ephesian believers, Paul had spoken of the riches of God's grace in Christ, and the grand dimensions of their calling in Him. And knowing that all this would be fiercely contested by the evil one, he exhorted them in the following way:

Ephesians 6:10–13

“Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you may take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

They would have to be fortified by ‘the armour of God’ if their calling was to be fulfilled in godless Ephesus. With enormous forces of darkness arrayed against them in the unseen spiritual realm, they would consistently find themselves in the midst of ‘the day of evil’.

At such times, when the onslaught of dark powers was most intense, only the *full* armour of God would enable them to *stand* in the truth.

Paul then went on to spell out the nature of this armour. And, no surprise, it was all to do with response to the word of God! He said:

Ephesians 6:14–17

“Stand firm, then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the [firm foundation] which comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

Further on in the series, the nature of this armour will be described in detail, as we speak of God’s people as ‘an army of love’. But just now, we may say that fortification by the armour of God has to do with constant mental diligence, in relation to His word.

The sure word of God is a gift of indescribable value. It is His own good provision to keep His redeemed children strong, alive and fruitful in Christ. And it is absolutely essential for the maintenance true delight and desire.

## **the intimacy of prayer**

We have already mentioned prayer as the supreme gift of the Father to His children. And so it is! In it, they may know the immediacy of His presence and the happiness of intimate fellowship with Him. They may be released from personal heaviness, anxiety, fear, anger and frustration, and be renewed and refreshed in the wonders of His grace and call. Through it, they may enjoy the privilege of being with their Maker in the accomplishment of His glorious purpose for His world.

### **a spirit of prayer**

The term ‘a spirit of prayer’ speaks of a constant attitude of prayerfulness.

When the En-fleshed Son walked among us, prayer was ‘the air He breathed’. He enjoyed always a spirit of prayer. The Father desires this to be so for all of His redeemed children—for nothing brings them more fully into the pleasures of their inheritance than a life of prayerfulness.

Prayer involves adoring worship and praise to God, deep heart-searching and acknowledgment of personal failure, joyous expressions of gratitude for the Father’s abundant goodness, mercy and grace, together with believing request for one’s own needs, and for those of others.

Maturity in prayer doesn’t just happen overnight. As God’s children grow in their assurance of His grace to them in Christ, and understand more clearly the nature of their calling in Him, prayer may increasingly become their deepest pleasure.

They may more and more find themselves desiring the things spoken of in this study: an awesome enjoyment of God’s presence; His being honoured and adored by all people; their own complete conformity to the image of the Son; and the human freedom and fullness of every person. Prayer becomes the natural environment in which such cries of the heart are expressed!

### **some apostolic encouragement**

Peter knew that prayerfulness is rarely present where there is pre-occupation with the things of this world, and undisciplined thinking. So he said to the scattered communities he was caring for:

1 Peter 4:7

“Be clear-minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.”

In Christ, the saints have received everything needful for enjoyment of this gift of prayer, but it is by no means automatically experienced. A mind set on the truth and general mental discipline, are required.

Paul, exhorted Christ's people at Colossae in a similar way, saying:

Colossians 4:2

"Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful."

Prayer needs to be a dominant element in the life of every believing person and community. And for this to be truly expressed, sharpness of mind and a grateful spirit are crucial.

Paul also urged the saints at Ephesus to take up every opportunity for prayer. He said to them:

Ephesians 6:18

"Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints."

Here, he emphasizes that prayer involves every aspect of a relationship with God. Again, watchfulness is encouraged, together with a faithful persistence on behalf of others.

As indicated above, it is the grace of God that has come to the saints that, above all else, releases them into the enjoyment of this matchless occupation. The word of God gives it substance, and also provides an environment for life-giving revelation in His presence—and the Spirit loves to facilitate it all!

Soon we will enjoy a study entitled, "On The Way In A Spirit Of Prayer".

And so we have these two essentials for the maintenance of our vocational life in Christ: the sure word of God and the intimacy of prayer.

true vocational action in Christ is maintained within the context of, thirdly:

### **- the two communities,**

(the redeemed: the Father's liberated & enlivened community of holy worship & love in Christ; & the world: Satan's desperate community of idolatry & self-service in Adam; belonging only to one—living truly in both, in a prophetic, priestly & kingly way)

Every child of God lives within two communities. One they belong to and the other they don't. But in both, they may enjoy the life they've freely and abundantly received in Christ.

### **the community of the redeemed**

Life together in the 'community of the redeemed' is a most wonderful gift. Those who experience the true fellowship of a common life in Christ, know, something that cannot be reproduced in any other human situation. Such fellowship can, indeed, be a foretaste of the ultimate Community to come!

This community is, of course, full of sinners! And so there will be difficulties from time to time, and things won't always be ideal—if ever. But a community of sinners in Christ is, also, by God's grace, a community of saints—set apart and anointed by the Spirit to express the love of God within their common life! By remaining in the word and in a spirit of prayer, the gift of forgiveness may be enjoyed, and the sweetness of fellowship maintained.

We saw in Study 6 how, after the Day of Pentecost, believers richly enjoyed the life of the kingdom together, in glad assurance of the wonders of grace they had received.

Luke shows us that, as a natural consequence of all they had freely been given, they were constantly drawn together by the Spirit's work among them. He said:

Acts 2:42

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

As a community freshly renewed by the grace of God, they couldn't get enough of His word. They constantly sought fellowship with one another, celebrated the Lord's Supper whenever they could, and were always lifting up their hearts together in prayer!

Luke further described the life of the redeemed community in this way:

Acts 2:46

"Everyday they continued to meet together ... They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God ... And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

Again, we see that they were constantly drawn together in joyous fellowship. And in this, every day the Lord, Himself, was bringing more and more people to know the treasures of His grace—these too, being welcomed into the family of the redeemed!

We also saw in Study 6 that all this was soon powerfully contested by the evil one. But the Spirit of God prevailed in His work, and the life of the kingdom was preserved among them—as they continued together in the word and in a spirit of prayer.

Jesus told his disciples of a wonderful, invisible reality that exists in every situation of fellowship. He said:

Matthew 18:20

“Where two or three come together in My name, there am I with them.”

This is what makes the community of Christ to be the remarkably unique thing it is. It is the coming together of the redeemed, in the direct presence of their Redeemer!

It is no wonder then, that the writer to the Hebrews exhorted his embattled friends in Christ with these words:

Hebrews 10:25

“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

To not have fellowship with other brothers and sisters in Christ—missing out on encouragement in the word and prayer—is a sad and, indeed, dangerous practice. Personal assurance of God’s grace can quickly be diminished, and conformity to ‘the pattern of this world’ may steadily take place (Romans 12:2). The saints need to spend time together as they press towards the coming Day!

To ‘give up meeting together’ can easily become a spiritually detrimental ‘habit’. How much better it is to form a habit of fellowship with other believers. Such fellowship is, of course, not merely for one’s own benefit. King Saul’s son Jonathon certainly understood this:

1 Samuel 23:18

Jonathon went to David ... and helped him find strength in God.

When the redeemed go into situations of fellowship, they may do so expecting to receive from the Lord what He will give them, both *for* and *from* others. Unlike situations of ‘fleshly sociality’, they are not merely going to ‘get’ from other people.

The community of the redeemed is, truly, the Father’s liberated community-of-love in Christ. A most marvelous gift to those upon whom He has lavished His grace!

## **the community of the world**

We have already spoken much of the world. Here, we are recognizing it as a community of people with a common culture: opposition to God and His way. It is a community that is shaped by a desperate drive to find significance, security, enlivenment and a destiny, apart from the True and Living God.

This community is ‘Satan’s desperate-community-of idolatry-&-self-service in Adam’.

Because of the nature of the community of the world, it is not one that the saints should look to for their own sense of personal significance, circumstantial security, human enlivenment or future hope. These things are to be found in Christ, and nurtured within the community of the redeemed.

But although the world is not to be depended upon for what God Himself exclusively provides, His redeemed people are nevertheless to be involved within it.

Jesus made this very clear as He prayed for His disciples towards the close of the Last Supper. He said to His Father:

John 17:15

“They are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that You take them out of the world but that You protect them from the evil one.”

He, Himself, was not *of* the world, and neither were those whom He had set apart to Himself. He belonged to His Father, and they belonged to Him.

But although they didn’t belong to the world, Jesus’ desire was not for them to be removed *from* it. His only concern was that they be kept from falling prey to the one who was its prince, the devil. They were definitely to be *in* the world, but, not at all, to be *of* it. That is, they were not to be conformed to its way.

Then Jesus affirmed before His Father the *nature* of their continued presence within the community of the world. He said:

John 17:18

“As You sent Me into the world, I have sent them into the world.”

Being en-fleshed among us, Jesus was sent into the system of the world—the environment of Satan’s dark and oppressive dominion. And just as His Father had sent Him into that community to redeem those within it, so He had sent His disciples into the same community with a grand purpose: to live, speak and act redemptively for its sake.

They were to operate within two communities: the redeemed and the world. One they belonged to, the other they didn’t. But although they belonged only to one, they were to live in a prophetic, priestly and kingly way within both!

For sanctified people in Christ, engagement in one of these communities to the exclusion—or neglect—of the other, is a dysfunctional way of living.

Fellowship within the community of the redeemed, and redemptive engagement within the community of the world, are both *entirely natural* in Christ. Fellowship within the *redeemed* community is natural because there, the saints are strengthened in, and find rich expression of, their life together in the Lord. And redemptive engagement within the community of the *world* is natural, because their hearts are one with their Redeemer!

How godless communities everywhere need to have Christ’s people among them—light travelers, with the love of God in their hearts and His word of grace on their lips!

Later in the series there will also be studies entitled, ‘On the Way In The Redeemed Community’ and ‘On The Way & With God In His Mission’.

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So, there we have it: the basics of life in Christ—on the way to final freedom!

Now, we are ready to specifically address all of the other elements of life and calling in Christ, as we move through the remainder of the series.

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