

THE WAY TO HUMAN FREEDOM
Study 8
THE GIFTS OF GOD
THAT SET US ON THE WAY

Well, here we are at the place we've been heading towards right from the beginning of our series. We have seen the *awesome perfections* of God—the Holy One. And, in a sense, we have also stood in awe at seeing the high and holy nature of our human calling as the image of God. Then the *tragic* nature of our human fallen-ness was spelt out, together with the humanly *irresolvable* nature of its *impact* upon us.

Throughout, we have been awaiting the proclamation of the desperately needed *divine solution* to our human dilemma. Study 5 has provided the Old Testament background to this solution and Study 6 has unfolded the glorious accomplishment of it in Christ, and something of its final outcome. But now the personally liberating and transforming fruits of it all will begin to be opened up to us.

As we move through this study the Father's extravagantly, abundant grace in His Son will be proclaimed. We will see the incredible nature of the salvation that Jesus has accomplished—making the slavish, 'wrath-averting strategies' of Study 4 to be totally redundant. No longer required!

Here, following Study 7, we have yet another *doctrinal* study. But this statement must be clarified. What is before us is not 'mere doctrine'—that is, not just ideas that are to be accepted as true and correct. Doctrine, as such, will do nothing for us. But doctrine as a proclamation of all that the Father has done, is doing and has promised to do in His Son—'the proclaimed realities of Christ'—is another matter altogether. These things, revealed to our heart by the power of the Holy Spirit, may indeed, be personally liberating and transforming!

This doctrinal study will further illustrate and explain the thrilling action that took place in 'the great Story of Redemption' after the Day of Pentecost (as we saw in Study 6). Seeing now the magnificent '*gifts of salvation in Christ*' (that immediately come to every regenerate believer) the *transformation* of people within the Book of Acts will be completely understood. The renewing power at work within and among them was, totally, the result of these saving gifts they had received.

our spiritual environment:

(as those who are fallen, but also regenerate & redeemed)

- the kingdom of the Son

(the liberating & life-giving realm of Jesus' Lordship)

In Study 4—as we prepared to look at the 'endless, restless struggle' of a fallen humanity—there was some *spiritual background scenery* that had to be observed. Again, the same thing is needed as we prepare to look at this corresponding study which proclaims 'the gifts of salvation in Christ'. Thankfully, because of the great victory of the En-fleshed, Eternal Son as Lamb and King, and the Father's mercy of *regeneration* by the Spirit, this background scenery is now very much different!

Those who have repented towards the Father and believed in the Lord Jesus are still the bearers of a fallen humanity. But they are also *regenerate* and *redeemed*. In Christ, the one and only spiritual environment available to them is no longer 'the dominion of darkness: the oppressive realm of the world, the flesh and the devil'. As will be seen

below, they have now been *delivered from* that dark dominion *into* ‘the kingdom of the Son: the liberating and life-giving realm of Jesus’ Lordship’.

the amazing transfer that has taken place

Ever since the Fall Satan has, indeed, had a powerful grip upon the human race. And how evident this has been as we have moved through the Story of Redemption. Although God is totally sovereign over the whole of His creation, the evil one exercises an enormous influence within the fallen-human scene.

1 John 4:19

The whole world is under the control of the evil one.

As we’ve been shown, life outside of Christ is lived under the oppressive domination of sinister, *spiritual forces* that operate under the command of Satan—which rebellious humanity has been rightly given over to. It may be that these unseen powers are not *consciously worshipped*, but they are, nevertheless, willingly submitted to as a person pursues *life* within ‘the system of this world’. Behind every idolatrous pursuit there is the presence of malignant spiritual influence, inciting and ensnaring. The dominion of darkness is, indeed, a dire and deadly reality from which every person needs urgent release.

That’s why the doctrines of this study—the proclaimed realities of Christ—are of such massive significance to each one of us. Jesus said to the apostle Paul:

Acts 26:18

[Through the word I give you to proclaim, you will] open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God.”

Through this same word Paul could declare:

Galatians 1:4–5

[Christ] gave Himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

It will be seen as we continue, how being released from our sins does, in fact, *rescue* us from this ‘present evil age’. This is the Father’s grand purpose for His redeemed children, which they adore Him for now—and will forever!

Isaiah 26:13

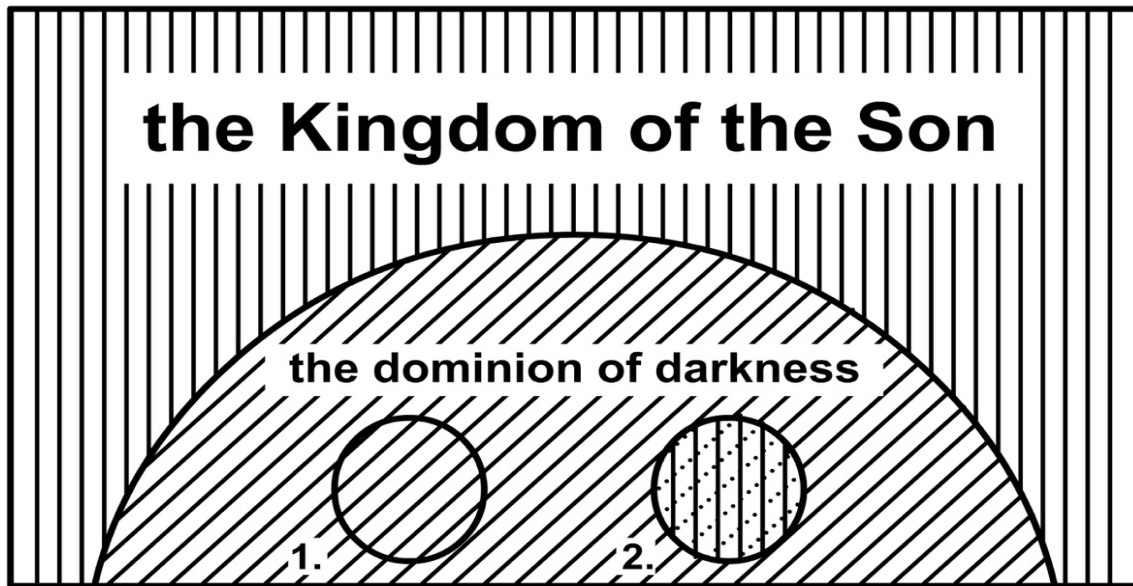
LORD, our God, other lords besides You have ruled over us, but Your name alone do we honour.

How different things may be for all who are delivered from the dominion of darkness. They can now know what they should always have known—that God’s name alone is supremely worthy of our honour, worship, thanksgiving and praise!

The following diagram that we saw in Study 4 illustrates the nature of this amazing transfer that has taken place. The difference between this one though is that the Kingdom of God is now expressed as being ‘the Kingdom of the Son’.

Colossians 1:13

[The Father] has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves.



The diagram shows that all who are in Christ *have been* delivered from the dominion of darkness and no longer belong to the 'system of this world'. They are still *in* the world but are not *of* it.

The vertical lines in the diagram represent God's truth—that is, the way of Jesus' Sonship. This is what the kingdom of the Son is all about: His reign as Son-King in the blessedness of His eternal covenant-union with the Father—ever delighting to do His Father's will.

The diagonal lines represent the way of Satan and all who belong to him. These speak of his rebellion *against* the way of God and describe the nature of life within the dominion of darkness.

As seen in Study 5, Satan never *creates* anything. He only ever takes what his Maker has created and bends it to his own way. He simply vandalizes what *is*. According to the diagram, he takes what is vertical, 'the truth', and distorts it into what is diagonal, 'the lie'. He 'grasps [and suppresses] the truth in unrighteousness' (Romans 1:18).

The first circle in the diagram represents all who are unregenerate, living under the perverse dominion of the evil one. They live *in* the world and are *of* it. Their personal pursuit of human freedom and fullness is worked out *against* God and His way.

The second circle represents those who have been made regenerate by God's great mercy. The gift of repentance has been born within them, and they now have a whole new thrust *towards* God and His truth. The dotted diagonal lines show that 'the flesh'—our fallen sinful-humanity—is still present, ready to spring into action at any time. But the regenerate *are* united with Christ, one with Him in His reign as Son-King. Yes, *in* the world but no longer *of* it.

being baptized, we receive the covenant sign of:

SALVATION IN CHRIST

Salvation—as mentioned in Study 4—is God's delivering, rescuing, healing, comforting and integrating action towards sinners. It is what He brings all into who are *united with Christ* through faith—a union that is *expressed* by receiving the new covenant sign of *baptism*.

Colossians 2:12

[You have] been buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him through your faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

Colossians 3:3

[In being united with Christ] You died, and your life is now hidden with [Him] in God.

Ephesians 2:1–6

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live, when you followed the way of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, [who rules over the abiding attitude and disposition that energizes in those who are by nature disobedient].

All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our [flesh] and following its desires and thoughts. Like [everyone else, we were by nature those who lived under and were destined for wrath].

But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions ... And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.

By the Holy Spirit God has united every regenerate believer with Jesus in His Death, Burial, Resurrection and Ascension; and has—spiritually—seated them with Himself *in* Jesus on His throne in the unseen heavenly realms!

Baptism in water is the Father's wise and wonderful *sign* of this union with His Son. In their baptism a person receives the divine declaration that they have died with Christ, been buried with Him (as they are immersed under the water) and then raised up to be alive with Him forever!¹

People don't baptize themselves. Baptism is a sign that is *placed upon* them by another, who does this in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is a sign we *receive*—a powerful declaration of the love of God, to which we may return in our mind again and again for the rest of our life.

Jesus is the New Head and Representative of the Race, and anyone who is baptized is given assurance that they have been *identified with Him* in all that He so wonderfully accomplished on their behalf. This physical act is a sign to them that they are no longer *in the old Adam* as part of an old, accursed and condemned humanity; but they are now *in Christ, the New Adam*—part of a new, liberated and blessed humanity in Him.

Baptism itself doesn't unite a person with Christ; that happens through faith and by the Spirit. But it is the God-given covenant sign that declares that this is so. From then on, we may live in the Spirit-given assurance that we are a person in Christ—and *that* changes everything, forever. No matter how long we live we will still be exploring the personal and vocational dimensions of what our baptism declares!

Baptism is, indeed, a marvellous *personal* sign. But it is also one that identifies a believer with all others who are united with Christ. To be *one with Him* is to be intimately related to every other baptized person.² Each time those in Christ see another baptized

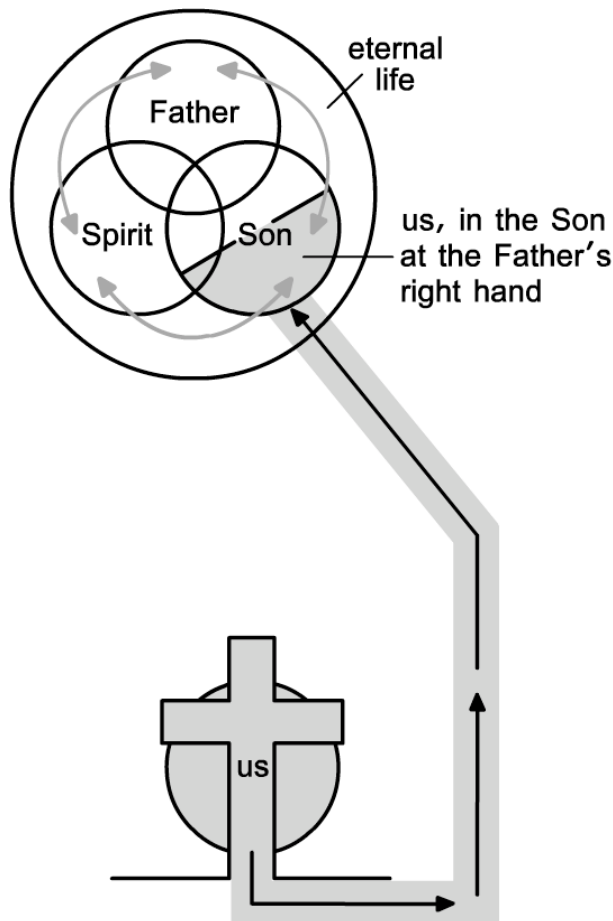
¹ Some Christian traditions baptize by the *sprinkling* of water over a person, rather than immersing them in it. This is also an expression of the sign we are speaking of. In a later study we will mention the significance of the baptism of infants. There are differences of opinion as to the mode and timing of baptism. But this does not need to be a problem if we understand what others are signifying by such approaches to this wonderful sign of the new covenant.

² All of the glorious realities of our salvation in Christ are wonderfully *personal*. And throughout this study they will be spoken of in this way. But they are also wonderfully *corporate*. That is,

into Him, they rejoice in the *wonder* of their common identification with the Saviour. And the more we see in our present study (and others to come) of the nature of this identification, the greater that fellowship may be.

It must be emphasized that although baptism, itself, doesn't *save* us, it *is* the God-given sign of salvation in Christ. Since the Day of Pentecost the New Testament knows nothing of an *un-baptized* believer. For a person of faith to refuse this sign of incorporation into Christ—and into the new covenant—is quite unthinkable.

The shaded sections of the following diagram show what it means to be incorporated into Christ—one with Him in His Death, Burial, Resurrection and Ascension.



a new life in the kingdom of the Son

Yes, the *great reality* that baptism declares qualifies a person to participate in the risen and ascended *life* of Jesus—the very life and way of His own Sonship!

Romans 6:3–4

All of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death. We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

1 Peter 3:21b

[Baptism saves you from your old way of living] by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

they are things that we know *together* with all who receive salvation by faith. In a future study it will be seen how very significant it is that this is so.

Ephesians 1:3

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with [the whole] spiritual blessing in Christ.

We saw in Study 6 that on the Cross Jesus became ‘a curse’ for us—redeeming all who believe from the curse that the Old Testament law proclaimed would always be upon rebels. *Now* the *blessing* that was promised through Abraham’s Offspring—Christ—has been fully given to all who are united with Him through faith (Galatians 3:13–14). The *whole blessing* that is in Him is now theirs to enjoy—the *life* of His own Eternal Covenant Union with the Father!

Just as Study 4 showed the impact that our fallen-ness has upon us when we dwell in the dominion of darkness, this study now shows the impact that *the redemptive reign of Jesus* has upon us through our union with Him.

2 Corinthians 5:17

If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

Even though still living in this world, every regenerate person is born into a completely new realm in Christ—who is, Himself, the New Creation. They are beginning to participate already in what is to be *fully* revealed and enjoyed when He ‘Appears’ at the great Climax of history.

every divine promise fulfilled in Christ and given to all who are in Him

The apostle Paul declared that for all who are united forever with Jesus, the promises of God are not sometimes ours to enjoy and at other times not. They are always ready to be wholeheartedly received!

2 Corinthians 1:20

For no matter how many promises God has made they are “Yes” in Christ. And so through Him the “Amen” is spoken by us to the glory of God.

What an amazing thing this is to know: that for all who are in the Son the Father’s answer to every promise He has ever made is ‘Yes’! And having this assurance we may glorify Him as we say ‘Amen’—‘So it is!’

With all of these promises made absolutely sure, *every redeemed person* may joyously take hold of *every dimension* of their new life in the kingdom of the Son.

the powerful, saving gospel—created by God’s righteousness

The gospel that is being proclaimed by Christ’s people in the world today is truly a *saving* message, and one that beautifully makes known the glory of God’s righteousness.

Romans 1:16–17

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes ... For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed.

The One who established His glorious covenant with all creation—out of the fullness of His love—has done what is *right* and entirely *natural* for Him, according to His nature as the *Redeemer* Father-Creator-King. The creation of the gospel through His Son was not an *obligation* He fulfilled. Rather it was the free *out-flowing* of His eternal purpose of love in Him!

In the gospel we have a *perfect* revelation of the righteousness of God. His way—that is, His law—is upheld and His grace abounds!

The gospel is the Divine-King's awesome proclamation of His grace, to be announced to every person in every nation. It brings to all who hear it an *urgent obligation* to wholeheartedly embrace the grace of their Maker—and for all who believe, it is THE POWER OF GOD TO SAVE!!!

Isaiah 51:6

[He says,] "My salvation will last forever, My righteousness will never fail."

Isaiah 51:22

See, I have taken out of your hand the cup that made you stagger ... the goblet of My wrath.

Psalms 34:18

The LORD ... saves those who are crushed in spirit.

By the righteousness of the Triune-God all who believe may enjoy this salvation—and may increasingly know deliverance from the *endless, restless struggle* of Study 4!

How this is so will now be made clear.

**** the lavishly, abundant action of God's grace***

In Study 1 we were told that 'God's grace is all that He delights to freely and lavishly bestow upon His sinful and undeserving creatures—for their human freedom and fullness!'

Now we will begin to see the *magnitude* of this grace that comes to the redeemed: all who are united forever with Jesus, the Christ—the En-fleshed, Crucified, Risen and Ascended Divine-Son-King!

great saving grace

Fallen humankind's littering of history with its tragic rebellion has not—in the slightest way—hardened the heart of the Father.

Romans 5:20

Where sin increased [and abounded], grace increased [and abounded] all the more.

The grace of God doesn't *falter* or *diminish* in the face of human failure. Rather, its unsearchable greatness is revealed all the more gloriously. In His yearning love the Redeeming Father has relentlessly pursued His glorious purpose!

Ephesians 2:8–9

It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

The grace that comes to all who are united with Christ has *nothing* to do with *personal performance*—and just as well! If salvation was according to merit, no one could be saved. God's salvation—and everything to do with it—is *totally* His gift.

Believers are left with only one boast: the glory and wonder of the Father's grace towards them in Christ. In this they are liberated into the joyous *purity of worship* for which they were created. There is no self-congratulation in their hearts. They know that all is entirely, and freely, from the *Electing, Regenerating and Redeeming Father!*

2 Timothy 1:9–10

This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus.

Yes, all that has come to the redeemed in Christ was *secured* for them—in the sovereign, saving purpose of God—before the creation of the world.

the lavish abundance of grace

The grace that has come to every regenerate believer is freely and *extravagantly* given!

1 Timothy 1:14

The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly.

This was the experience of the apostle Paul. But it is no less a reality for *every* redeemed person. God gives to *all* whom He calls and regenerates *all* that there is to give in His Son.

Grace doesn't come by installments—a bit now and more later if you 'surrender all' or become 'fully committed'. No, *the whole spiritual blessing* that is in Christ comes *totally* to each one who is brought to repentance and faith by the mercy of God.

Of course, the *experience* of this abundantly poured out grace will certainly increase as time goes by. The redeemed have a whole lifetime—indeed, all of eternity—to explore and enjoy its wonders!

In the moment of regeneration God gave His elect *all* that He had to give. If they were to ask for one speck more He would have to say, 'THERE IS NOTHING ELSE. I HAVE GIVEN YOU ALL THAT I, MYSELF, HAVE: MY SON!!!'

John 1:16

From [the Son's] fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given.

The grace that was so rich in the old covenant was, indeed, glorious. But the grace of the new covenant has a glory that is so much greater (2 Corinthians 3:7–11). It is grace upon grace, upon grace, upon ... —an endlessly overflowing supply!

Ephesians 3:18

[May you be enabled to] grasp how, wide and long and high and deep [are the boundless riches] of Christ.

2 Corinthians 9:15

Give thanks to God for His indescribable gift!

The *awesome* nature of the Father's gift in Christ is, indeed, indescribable. But we can at least speak of what the Scriptures reveal of it; and that *proclamation* will open up for all who have embraced it an increasing *enjoyment* of its treasures.

the shape of the saving grace of God in the Son: the gifts of the new covenant

It's time now, then, to look at the major theme of this study: *the great gifts of salvation in Christ*. In these we may see something of the *astounding reality* of the grace that immediately comes to each believer.

These are *the gifts of the new covenant*—enabling all who receive them to participate in the very life and blessedness of the Son's own Eternal Covenant Union with His Father!

Each gift of 'salvation in Christ' is *revelation* of yet another element of what the covenant sign of baptism declares. They express the Father's bestowal of grace upon a believer in the critical areas of our humanity spoken of in Study 4: *the conscience, personhood, circumstances, human fullness and eternity*. Study 4 described the *tragic*

impact upon us of our rebellion against the Father. Now we are to taste the *glorious impact* of His *grace* upon us in those same areas.

It will be seen that everyone who receives these ‘saving gifts’ is set at once ‘on the way’ to the ultimate human freedom and fullness they were created to know.

We’ll see that each section of the study that proclaims these gifts begins with a statement containing the words: ‘*Enjoying the transforming wonder of ...*’

Yes, the keyword in regard to an experience of these salvation gifts is JOY!!! The One who created all things out of the freedom and fullness of His own holy Being, yearns for us to *enjoy* all that is in His heart to give—so that our own hearts may be flooded with the revelation of His love (Romans 5:5)!

These gifts, then, are not merely to be understood as fine concepts, but are to come to us as a revelation—imparting the TRANSFORMING WONDER of the realities they proclaim.

In them we come to know the superabundant, incomparable, unending, unguarded and undeserved GENEROSITY of the Father! By His lavishing of these things upon us, He desires to liberate us from the guilt-charged *suspicion* and dull-spirited *distrust* that—tragically—intrudes into our thoughts about Him.

We must say that the extravagance of God’s grace to us—in all He has given in His Son—is nothing less than SHOCKING!! Every time these things are revealed to us afresh, we are surprised all over again. Actually, whenever they cease to surprise us, we have ceased to appreciate the real nature of His grace.

So, let’s begin the proclamation.

Firstly, in Christ, enjoying the transforming wonder of the new covenant gifts of:

FORGIVENESS, CLEANSING & JUSTIFICATION

being receivers of a **NEW LIBERTY** (for our CONSCIENCE)

no longer having to bear with a dark spirited sense of *condemnation & shame*;

now able to say: ‘**my sins are gone & I’ve been declared to be both “not guilty” & “righteous in the Son”!**’

released & purified; & also acquitted & made to be one with Jesus in His moral status as the Righteous One: awesomely ‘credited’ with His own righteousness in His Father’s presence

In Study 2 we saw the high and noble calling we have all received. This calling is one that is imprinted indelibly upon every human heart—and only a total fulfillment of it will *satisfy the conscience* of any person created to be the image of God.

Then in Study 3 we saw the horrible nature of sin—*our* sin.

Study 4 played out before us the *impact* that our fallen-ness has upon us: personally, and upon others through us. We saw that apart from the grace of God this is where we all live, every day.

The demands of the conscience are unrelenting. Left to ourselves we are never free from the haunting and tormenting awareness of our human failure.

We act and *re-act* endlessly to somehow minimize the impact of our moral pain. But there is NOTHING that we, ourselves, can do about it—nothing that truly heals and restores.

Always there is the endless, restless struggle: a desperate and incessant quest to *manage* the recurring heaviness of guilt, the nagging sense of condemnation and the burning sense of shame.

Every effort to bring relief is, at best, temporary.

Above all, there is the persistent reality that we must finally bear the just judgment of our sins: that vast body of personal, human corruption that would condemn us forever. But we have also seen in Study 6 that the Father has so loved us that He gave His Son to be the ‘propitiation’ for our sins. He ordained Him to be the One who would bear our judgment to its end, so that He may release us from the condemnation we have justly incurred—delivering us ‘from the coming wrath’.

Indeed, we saw that on the Cross Jesus gave Himself up to being totally identified with our human fallen-ness in Adam. The Spirit facilitated this terrible baptism, and the Father personally abandoned Him up to it. In those hideous hours of darkness He became the Accursed One of all history, descending ever deeper into the abyss of our awful sorrows—until BY HIS OUT-POURED BLOOD, HE TOOK US AND OUR WRETCHED FALLEN-HUMANITY IN ADAM DOWN INTO DEATH!!!

And it was moments before His last breath that the Son-Lamb-King was able to make that *triumphant pronouncement of love*, that alone, can liberate the human spirit. Knowing that all was accomplished, He declared: “IT IS FINISHED!!!”

And so, it actually *is* for *any* man, woman, boy or girl who cries from their depths, “IT WAS FOR ME!!!”

By a simple (even joyously awestruck) and decisive act of faith, each one immediately receives salvation from their sins!

And it is at this very moment they are given three wonderful new-covenant-gifts to bring FREEDOM TO THEIR CONSCIENCE—gifts they may enjoy *at any* moment of every day. Through these they now, at last, have A NEW LIBERTY in Christ!

the gift of forgiveness

On the Day of Pentecost Peter proclaimed to those who were ‘cut to the heart’ over their sinfulness:

Acts 2:38

“Repent and be baptized every one of you ... for the forgiveness of your sins.”

And that very day this is what *happened* for over three thousand people!

They were now in Christ, and able to know that every sin they had ever committed—or would commit in the future—had been *forever dealt with* in Him. He had passed through the terrors of judgment in their place, and they had been released—redeemed—from the guilt and torment of their awful, human failure.

Colossians 1:14

[In Him] we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Such a simple statement—but how enormous are its implications for the human spirit!

Ephesians 1:7–8

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that He lavished on us.

As in the Exodus of Israel from Egypt, Jesus, the Passover-Lamb, has—so to speak—sprinkled the ‘door way’ of the life of every believer with His blood. The righteous judgment of their Maker has passed over them forever, and they have been redeemed from the realm of their lifelong bondage and oppression.

This is the first *great treasure* of the grace of God that is lavished upon every regenerate person. They receive A *NEW LIBERTY* IN THE CRITICAL CENTRE OF THEIR BEING, *THE CONSCIENCE*: THAT PLACE WHERE EACH MOMENT THE MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH OF A PERSON IS DETERMINED, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER!!!

Acts 10:43

Everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.

As will be seen later there is no more need to ‘work off’ guilt or to ‘manage’ it in any way. All may simply believe in the accomplished work of the Son—and *freely receive* complete and immediate release.

With David, the redeemed may say to their liberating Maker:

Psalms 65:3

“When we were overwhelmed by our sins, You forgave our transgressions.”

A truly authentic *enjoyment* of forgiveness does, in fact, only come with an *overwhelming* sense of our offense against God. Deep, personal conviction of moral failure and the joy of forgiveness are inseparable experiences. *Delight* in being released from our sins assumes that we previously have come to the place of being *miserable* because of them! That’s why the teaching of Studies 3 and 4 is so important for us to grasp.

David came to understand that through the covenant mercy and grace of God there was forgiveness for even the greatest of sins. He could boldly say:

Psalms 25:11

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

We may be sure that no matter how awful our sin is, God is pleased to pardon us in order to show the greatness of His grace. His name is, indeed, glorified when our darkest sins are freely forgiven through the sin-bearing love of His dear Son—and when, we delight in the wonder of it all!

Acts 13:38–39

I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through Him everyone who believes is set free from every sin.

From *every* sin—no matter how shameful it may be!

Revelation 1:5

[Jesus, the Christ,] loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood.

some images of forgiveness

The Scriptures have different ways of declaring the incredible nature of forgiveness, as the following verses show:

Colossians 2:13–14

[The Father] forgave us all our trespasses, having cancelled the charge ... which stood against us and condemned us.

We have seen that all of their lives every fallen human being has ‘stored up’ wrath against themselves ‘for the day of God’s wrath when His righteous judgment will be revealed’ (Romans 2:5). Yes, but now—for all who believe—every charge that once stood against them has been *cancelled* forever!

Isaiah 43:25

[This is what the LORD says], "I am He who blots out your transgressions."

Isaiah 44:22

[He says], "I have swept away your offences like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist."

Isaiah 38:17

[LORD], You have put all my sins behind Your back.

Psalms 103:12

As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.

What amazing images we have here. The redeemed have had the record that stood against them 'cancelled', their sins 'blotted out' and 'swept away'. Their Maker has put their offences 'behind His back', removing them from His sight. Their willful transgressions being separated far from them—"as far as the east is from the west"!

Isaiah 55:7

He will freely pardon.

To receive pardon is to be released from punishment that is deserved. And all who have come to God in repentance and faith—trusting only in His grace—are, indeed, *freely* pardoned!

Micah 7:18–19

Who is a God like You, who pardons sin? ... You will ... hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.

1 John 3:5

[The En-fleshed Son] appeared so that He might take away our sins.

We see the imagery continuing to build: Freely pardoned iniquities hurled into the depths of the sea, our sins taken away. And then there are the mental pictures stimulated by David's experience of God's grace—the joy of which he commends to all.

Psalms 32:1–2

Blesséd are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blesséd are those whose [iniquity] the LORD does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit.

He uses three words here to describe what is offensive to God: 'transgression' (crossing the boundary line set by Him); 'sin' (a falling short of what He requires); and 'iniquity' (perverse deviation from what He has revealed as good and pleasing to Him). And David joyously declares that all such grave offensiveness may be entirely *forgiven*, *covered over* and *dismissed*—powerful images, indeed, that may assure our heart and release us into the blessedness for which we were created!

Yes, there is a uniquely *blissful*, *holy happiness* that comes to transgressors whom God has *forgiven*, whose moral failure He has amazingly *covered over* (so that it is as if it never took place) and whose perverse activity is *no longer counted against them*.

And furthermore, for all who know such release—having no over-hanging shadow of condemnation—there is now, at last, no *deceit* in their spirit. There is nothing they need to *hide*—from God, themselves or anyone else. To be in such a place would surely put a spring in anyone's step!

Finally, there is the sweet imagery of a soul's healing.

1 Peter 2:24

By His wounds you have been healed.

All that could keep a human being from personal wholeness has finally been dealt with in the suffering love of our Saviour. THROUGH THE FORGIVENESS HE HAS ACCOMPLISHED, THE DEBILITATING TORMENTS OF AN AILING CONSCIENCE MAY BE NO MORE!!!

the purpose of forgiveness

There is one supreme purpose behind all of the proclamation of forgiveness in the Scriptures. It is seen in God's grand promise of the new covenant in Christ:

Hebrews 8:11–12

[The LORD says,] "They will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

To everyone who *believes*, the way is now open for an entirely free, joyously intimate and purposeful relationship with the Father—to KNOW Him!

This is the primary reason for the forgiveness of sin. It is not merely that we may be free from the misery of feeling guilty; or even that we may be saved from the terrible Day of Judgment that is coming—as critically significant as such deliverance is. WE ARE FORGIVEN SO THAT WE MAY, AT LAST, COME TO KNOW, LOVE, OBEY AND ENJOY GOD WITH THE WHOLE OF OUR BEING!!! This is what 'new covenant salvation from sin' is all about: the liberation of our spirit, so that we may fulfill our High Human Calling. That is, the way of 'life, righteousness, freedom and rest', in the blessedness of that 'relational intimacy and vocational partnership' we were created for.

Yes, the forgiveness of sins truly is an amazing gift. It is the first wave of the *liberating* love of God to wash over us, as we believe.

the gift of cleansing and purification

Here we have yet another expression of the *new liberty* that has come to us in Christ, further opening up to us the blessedness we have been speaking of.

an intolerable personal reality

We all face situations where our senses are distressed by what is foul, contaminated or polluted. But what is utterly *unbearable* for anyone created to be the image of God is an oppressive sense of *inner, personal* pollution and corruption. Little else disturbs and unsettles the human spirit like this.

Apart from God's grace, any awareness of one's own inner unclean-ness sets in motion all kinds of restless endeavours to restore a sense of personal purity. But no matter how diligent we may be in creating moral environments to bring this about, the old sense of corruption is never far away.

Things such as diet can sometimes take on moral proportions when the conscience is uneasy. Jesus told us, however, that it is not certain foods entering the body that bring defilement. Rather it is what continually comes out of the heart (Mark 7:14–23). It is this polluted inner spring of the heart that is endlessly disturbing. Eating certain foods—and engaging in other activities—may be clearly beneficial to physical health, but can never bring the personal purity our conscience demands.

Sacrificial activity on behalf of others is also a fine thing. But this, too, will do nothing to really address that deep sense of moral defilement within. Still less, will harsh criticism of impurity in others.

glorious divine action

As always, it is the grace of God that does what we can never accomplish ourselves: to totally cleanse and purify the human soul. Such divine action is truly one of the great gifts of salvation in Christ.

Titus 3:5–6

He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of [regeneration].

In the moment of regeneration, a person's entire being is cleansed and purified. Every vile act and every indelible moral stain—impossible for us to ever remove—is instantly washed away!

The redeemed may walk back through a lifetime of memories and see nothing that has not already been judged in Christ, forgiven and made completely clean. There may certainly be a noble sense of *holy shame* that 'people of grace' feel deeply. But there is now no need for the *deadening moral pain* or the *sickening sense of personal pollution* that such memories may bring. Actually, EVERY MEMORY OF PERSONAL CORRUPTION BECOMES AN OCCASION TO KNOW, AFRESH, THE CLEANSING SALVATION THAT IS IN CHRIST—AND THE JOY OF HIS REDEEMING LOVE!!!

Moral pain is often experienced in the area of sexuality. Failure to maintain sexual purity is, in fact, more deeply defiling than many dare to imagine—it is sinning not only against God but also against one's own body (1 Corinthians 6:18). But those who have failed in this way may, also, know the cleansing grace of God. Physically, virginity cannot be restored once it is lost. But what is essential to every human being is restored completely in Christ—that is, *chastity*. Chastity by the grace of God is a clear-spirited state of moral purity: a *status* that may be enjoyed by all who have received their Redeemer's cleansing grace. This is what all must know, either within or outside of marriage.

Hebrews 1:3c

[He] provided purification for our sins.

1 John 1:7

The blood of Jesus, His Son, [goes on purifying] us from all sin.

There is never a time in which the redeemed may not know the cleansing power of the blood of Christ. Every moment, every sin is purified. What constant cause believers have for a joyous spirit of grateful affection towards the Redeeming Father, Son and Holy Spirit!

On the night of the Passover Feast that would foreshadow His cleansing work on the Cross, Jesus—knowing that Peter would later that night fail Him terribly—told him:

John 13:10

"You are clean."

The apostle Paul declared to believers in Corinth:

1 Corinthians 6:11

"You were washed."

Paul was reminding them of what had happened at the time of their regeneration by the Spirit. They were, in that instant, once and forever WASHED, CLEANSED AND PURIFIED!!! Even in eternity, they could never be any more clean or pure before God than what they were *then* by His grace—and would continue to be from that moment on.

1 Peter 3:21

[Baptism is] not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God.

Although baptism is with water, it is not a sign of physical washing but of ‘the washing away of our sins’ (Acts 22:16): an inner cleansing that is ‘the pledge of a clear conscience toward God’. Notice that baptism is not *our own pledge to God* but *His pledge to us*, that we have been cleansed from our sins—so we may have a clear conscience towards Him.

Hebrews 10:22

Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

Here we have a very powerful picture of the heart—as the altar of the soul—being sprinkled by the purifying blood of Christ. In this the conscience is cleansed and the mind and affections are quickened in the presence of God.

The redeemed may draw near to the Father with a cleansed conscience and, yes, a ‘washed’ body! Although baptism is not about outward cleansing, the body is certainly not left ‘unblessed’ by this wonderful covenant sign.

As already indicated, immoral use of the body can bring a tortuously discomforting sense of physical defilement. In this no amount of physical washing or scrubbing can ever bring true relief. But when the conscience is cleansed, it is as if a person’s whole body has been washed with the purest water. A body cleansed from all moral stain! Then, every functional aspect of human physicality—declared by our Creator to be ‘good’—can be enjoyed in His presence.

Isaiah 1:18

“Come now, let us reason together,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow, though they are red like crimson, they shall be like wool.”

Here is surely something for every failed human being to consider very carefully. Glaring, damning sins—but these, *themselves*, made as *white* as freshly fallen snow and as the wool of a newborn lamb!

Once again, the grace of God has gone straight to the heart of our most basic human need: the liberation of our conscience.

the gift of justification

We now come to the third element of this first wave of the liberating love of God. It is the grand proclamation of the *justification* of every believer before Him: a gift that is a central part of the experience of RECONCILIATION that was described in Study 7.

In Study 6 it was said that the apostles were to establish a body of teaching and instruction called ‘the faith’ (the Spirit-given ‘apostolic word’). This would provide a foundation for personal faith and practical action until the Final Day. And we are about to see now that the gift of justification is, indeed, one of the great *foundational realities* of the faith.

Before describing this gift, however, there is some helpful background understanding to be gained.

fallen humanity and the fact of law

Whether a welcome idea or not, it is nevertheless, a *fact* that the life of every fallen person is lived out in a particular environment: a vast, universal *legal courtroom*. Such an environment is certainly part of the air that is breathed in a fallen world.

As was said in Study 4, *law* is a fundamental part of every fallen-human culture. Even those who insist that there *be* no law are usually very *legalistic* about it! The human mind thinks constantly in terms of what is right and wrong, and with that, what should be condemned and what should not.

And at an even more basic level, each person thinks constantly of where they, themselves, stand before others in the light of the commonly agreed moral principles of their culture, or sub-culture. Are they to be morally *commended* and without shame? Or will the personal choices they make within their culture cause them to be morally *condemned* and ashamed? (That is, to fall prey to the old guilt-charged, dark-spirited experience of Study 4).

Because of the personal struggle all this produces, many reduce their 'circle of concern' to an increasingly smaller sub-culture. Some claim to no longer seek to please anybody but themselves: a sad kind of non-relational 'freedom'.

the Righteous One and His creation

Law is central to human cultures because we are all created in the image of the *Righteous One*. This, as we have seen, doesn't mean that He is the 'legal God'. He is not by nature merely *legal* at all. Rather He is the One who is Himself *love*. We saw in Study 6 that *His* is an 'eternally dynamic *relational* Being'. And in this, He always has been and always will be 'rightly related' to His creation. True righteousness is at core relational, not legal.

However, God has created a moral universe, set up to operate on the basis of *choices* that are in line with the *way* of His own nature. Any violation of that way, then, is a serious matter. In the face of such offense, the Owner-King of His creation is *rightly* 'the Judge of all the earth'—and He will ultimately, in perfect justice, bring every human desire, thought, word and action into judgment.

the One who is the 'primary focus' of the basic *drive and dread* within every person

The *drive* to be morally *commended* and without shame and the *dread* of being morally *condemned* and ashamed, are basic to humankind. This is because we are, by nature, children, creatures and servants of our Father, Creator and King—created to be His free-spirited and glorious image in His world!

Our *drive* then, to be morally *commended* and *without shame* comes, before all else, from a very basic *CREATIONAL NEED*: to enjoy our Maker's smile upon us and to receive *His affirmation of our choices*. Only this, truly sets the heart at rest.

And on the other hand, the *dread* of being morally *condemned* and *ashamed* comes, before all else, from a deeply embedded *CREATIONAL REALITY*: a persistent, inner sense of *personal accountability* to the One who gives us all that we are and have. This, together with an instinctive awareness of *the enormity of our human failure* powerfully impacts us all.

Studies 4 and 6 have declared the sober fact of the judgment to come. We have seen that on, that Day, our Maker's judgments will be 'just and true'—but *terrifying* for all who have refused His way. An authentic, personal freedom cannot be known whenever such a grim prospect remains at all times before us.

That's why the redeemed must now *hear* the Judge's verdict in regard to those who are united with His Son. They must know how, in Christ, their **dread** of being *morally condemned* and *ashamed* is dissolved, and their **drive** to be *morally commended* and un-ashamed is fulfilled. And *this* is what the doctrine of justification is all about.

So, with that background in place we may look now, firstly, at how justification deals with our *dread* of condemnation and shame (dishonor) in the face of divine judgment.

**the justified are declared 'not guilty' before God
—their basic human *dread* dealt with**

The great need of each failed human being is to be, first of all, *totally acquitted of guilt* before their Creator. And it is through the gift of justification that a person is, in fact, declared to be precisely this.

It isn't, though, merely about 'not *feeling* guilty'. Study 4 spoke of the various ways we try to deal with such intolerable, personal discomfort. But that study also stressed that OUR *REAL NEED IS NOT FOR RELIEF FROM GUILT FEELINGS BUT FROM GUILT ITSELF!!!* That is, to have nothing less than a full assurance that we have been 'delivered from the wrath to come' (1 Thessalonians 1:10). It is only liberation from the *dread* of that coming Day of Judgment that fully answers the *perpetual demand* of the human conscience. Every other authentic expression of personal liberty, flows from the fulfillment of this fundamental human requirement.

And yes, it is the gift of justification that speaks *directly* to this need, as through it, we hear THE PRONOUNCEMENT OF GOD HIMSELF THAT WE ARE 'NOT GUILTY FOREVER'!!!

The apostle Paul delighted to declare this amazing truth:

Romans 3:23–24

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that [is in] Christ Jesus.

Romans 3:26

[God demonstrated His justice in the Cross] so as to be just and the One who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

It was said earlier that in *the gospel* we have a *perfect* revelation of the righteousness of God: His right, relational action. For by His righteousness, His *way*—that is, His law—is upheld, and His *grace* abounds.

Yes, He—the Righteous Judge—is *also* 'the God of all grace', who has done what is *right* and *just* by judging and damning to death human evil once and for all *in His Son!* And so, because of this, what was *impossible* for sinners can now freely happen. God remains *just*, but also the One who *justifies*—declares to be 'not guilty' those who believe!

It has been humorously said that to be justified is to be 'just-if-I'd never sinned'. And that's perfectly true.

Romans 5:1–2

Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.

ALL WHO ARE JUSTIFIED HAVE, AT LAST, WHAT EVERY PERSON REQUIRES ABOVE ALL ELSE: *PEACE WITH GOD!!!*

To be able to live freely and truly in this world all must know that God is no longer *against* them but *for* them. He has, indeed, always loved all His creatures—and been

good and kind to them—but only those whom He has *justified* are released from His just condemnation.

And not only do the redeemed in Christ have peace with God, **THEY ALSO HAVE GAINED ACCESS INTO A WHOLE NEW REALM OF GRACE IN WHICH THEY NOW STAND!!!** The rest of this study will continue to proclaim the wonders of that incredible realm.

Romans 5:9

Since we have now been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through Him!

The apostle Paul wanted those in Rome to be absolutely sure of their deliverance from the coming wrath. He explained that it was just a matter of simple logic: the *terrible* and *costly* act of justification through Christ's blood has been *totally* accomplished. If this is so, *how much more* will the Father's *joyous* action of saving believers from 'the Final Day of His Wrath' *surely* take place!

THE REDEEMED NO LONGER HAVE THE DARK SHADOW OF AN ULTIMATE, DIVINE WRATH AND CONDEMNATION HANGING OVER THEM!!!³

Romans 8:1

There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:33–34

Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then can condemn?

Others may think and speak in condemning ways towards the redeemed. But the One who justifies those who believe in His Son never does!

Colossians 1:22b

[You are now before God] without blemish and free from accusation.

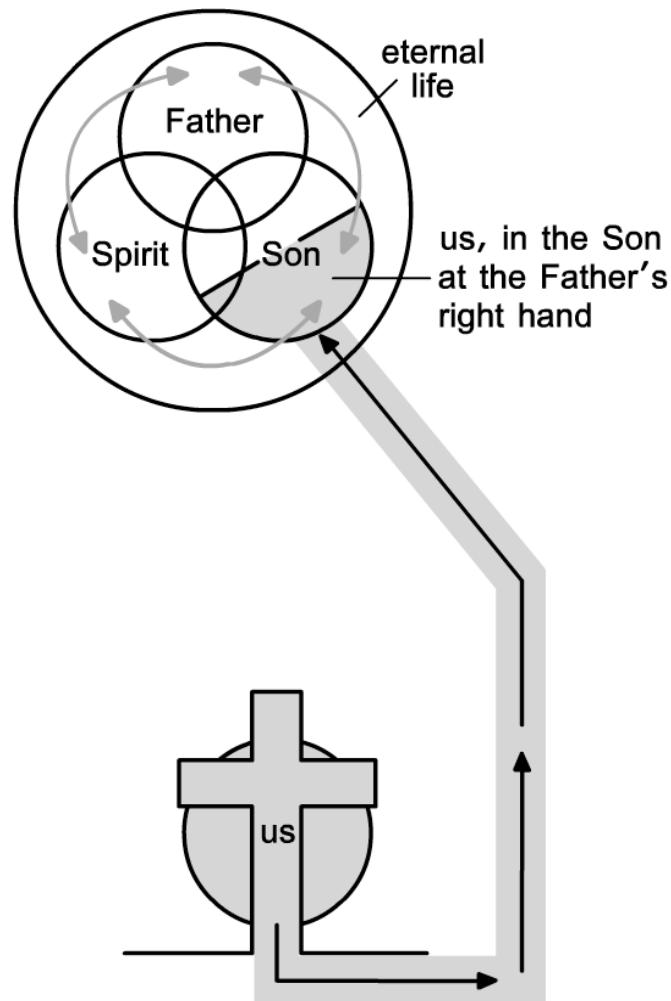
So, we have the first element of the doctrine of justification. Believers are declared 'not guilty' before God forever—and, with this, **THE DREAD OF HIS CONDEMNATION MAY BE ENTIRELY DISSOLVED!!!**

But as already indicated, there is another side to justification that is equally marvellous. It not only *dissolves* the *dread* of being *condemned* and ashamed (dishonoured) in our Maker's presence. It also *fulfills* the *drive* to be *commended* and without shame (honoured) before Him. And so together with a believer being *declared* 'not guilty', there is also the assurance that:

**the justified are *given* the Son's own moral status
of righteousness in His Father's presence
—their basic human *drive* fulfilled**

This second aspect of the gift of justification brings wonderful liberty to the human spirit. And it comes through the identification with Christ that is proclaimed in the new covenant sign of baptism. The following illustration is again helpful:

³ Although believers are no longer condemned, they may still experience God's wrath as expressed in Study 4, which is, in fact, His merciful response to refusal of Him. It is His faithful discipline, with a view to their being restored to the blessedness of faith and obedience—with no need for those futile 'wrath-averting strategies'!



Every believer has become one with Jesus in His Death, Burial, Resurrection and Ascension. Having been judged and put to death with Him, buried and raised to life with Him, and then seated with the Father *in Him* in the heavenly realms, a grand and glorious reality has come into being: **THE REDEEMED HAVE BECOME *TOTALLY ONE WITH THE SON IN HIS OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS* BEFORE HIS FATHER!!!** They have been given, in Him, the *moral status* of His own *right relational action* towards His Father and all others!

To spell out the nature of the Son's righteousness a little more, we may say that it is His constant and unbounded joy and delight in all that His Father is and does, and His flawless reflection of the Father's glorious love through His humanity. It is the perfection of His own relational intimacy and vocational partnership with His Father: His entirely faithful fulfillment of 'the high human calling'. To put it another way: *His every relational choice has always been entirely worthy of the Father's moral commendation and honour!*

And it is the *moral status* of this *same righteousness* that is immediately given to every person who believes. **THEY HAVE RECEIVED THE SON'S FAITHFUL, MORAL PERFORMANCE RECORD BEFORE HIS FATHER!!!** In Him, it is as if they themselves have every moment of their life *chosen to relate rightly* (gloriously!) to the Father and to every other person. They haven't *earned* such an awesomely liberating status—no, it is an absolute gift, received by grace through faith. And later, we will see that each one is *now able* to wholeheartedly press on towards the *relational outworking* of this gift by the grace of God—with a free and clear spirit in His presence!

This gift of righteousness certainly *is not* in any way a reward for good works. It is what the Father *credits*, or *imputes*, to all believers (Romans 4:4–5). To credit or impute something to another is to give them the *status* of being identified completely with it. This is what happens when someone credits money to our account: that money is now considered to be ours.

the great exchange

All who believe are freely justified by God's grace in two ways: acquitted of our *sins* by the propitiating *blood* of the *crucified* Christ (divine condemnation forever gone), and credited with the *righteousness* of the *risen* Christ (divine commendation forever to be enjoyed). These two elements together (*condemnation* gone and *commendation* enjoyed) bring the peace of mind and freedom of spirit that every human being yearns to know.⁴

Romans 4:25

He was delivered [up] for our [offenses] and was raised to life for our justification.

IT IS, INDEED, AN INCREDIBLE FACT THAT THROUGH JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION A *GREAT EXCHANGE* HAS TAKEN PLACE!!! In His *Death*, our *offenses* were *imputed* to Him, so that, He could embrace our accursed moral status of *condemnation* and *shame* before God (Galatians 3:13); and in His *Resurrection* and *Ascension*, His *righteousness* was *imputed* to us, so that, we may enjoy His own blessed moral status of *commendation* and *honour* in His Father's presence. This becomes a staggering reality for every person who believes!

2 Corinthians 5:21

God made Him who [knew] no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

What an exchange this is: our sin, for THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD!!!

That God should credit to fallen-human creatures the status of His own righteousness—as perfectly expressed in His En-fleshed Eternal Son—is almost inconceivable. David declared:

Psalms 36:6

[LORD] Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains.

In Study 1 we saw that to speak of God's righteousness as being, like the mighty mountains, isn't merely describing the huge *amount* of righteous acts He performs in His world. It is a statement of the *awesome nature* of His righteousness itself. The kinds of things He does are so enormously significant and breathtakingly wonderful. And that is the righteousness that was manifested in His Son—and is *credited* to all who believe!

YES, IN CHRIST, WE BECOME THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD!!! To have this astounding, moral status in the Father's presence is at the heart of His liberating grace towards us in His Son—OUT OF WHICH EVERY OTHER MORAL MANIFESTATION OF OUR SALVATION FLOWS!!!

We have seen that nothing can satisfy the conscience of a human being made in the image of God except the righteousness of God Himself. And this is precisely what His justifying grace has provided. HE HAS GIVEN US THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF HIS

⁴ The release and purification that come from *forgiveness* and *cleansing* are of course, closely related to the first element of this breathtaking gift of justification (*condemnation* gone).

EN-FLESHED, DIVINE SON—SO THAT *OUR CONSCIENCE MAY BE TOTALLY SATISFIED, AND OUR SPIRIT MADE ABSOLUTELY FREE, IN HIS PRESENCE!!!*

Yes, nothing less than the righteousness of God will satisfy our conscience. But it is also a fact that nothing less is *required* by the Holy One Himself if any person is to be able, at any time, to stand freely in His *very presence*: THAT SUPREME HOLY PLACE!!!

It is this gift of such perfect righteousness that enables us to actually *live every day* as those who have been reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:20–21)—without the slightest sense of either dread or self-defense. Moreover, we will see later and in other studies, that IT IS ACTUALLY, THE WORSHIP THAT FLOWS FROM THIS FREEDOM IN GOD’S PRESENCE THAT KEEPS US FROM SIN!!!

This astonishing reality of our *moral status* in Christ—together with the gifts of forgiveness and cleansing—releases our spirit into the relational intimacy and vocational partnership with God that we were created to enjoy.

As was said earlier, the amazing doctrine of justification is, indeed, one of the great foundational realities of the faith—a fact that will become more evident as we continue.

in Christ acceptable, at last, before the Father

Sometimes it is loosely said, “God accepts us just as we are.” But He could never simply do *that!* It is true, however, that He does *come* to us just as we are—sinners, desperately in need of a Saviour—and then, having regenerated us by His mercy, HE WONDERFULLY *ACCEPTS* US JUST AS WE ARE, *IN CHRIST!!!* It is this huge distinction that makes all the difference.

Those justified in the Lord Jesus are able to be completely at rest in the Father’s presence. He has delivered them from the Final Day of His Wrath, and made them to be morally commendable and honourable before Him in His Son—THAT THEY MAY NOW KNOW HIS SMILE UPON THEM!!!

That priestly blessing given to Israel, then, has now come to its fulfillment in a most magnificent way:

Numbers 6:24–26

The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn His face towards you and give you peace.

How different this is to that old persistent and alienating sense of *condemnation and shame*—which destroys the possibility of any true fellowship with the ‘God Who Is’.

Ephesians 3:12

In [Christ] and through faith in Him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

The prophet Isaiah declared:

Isaiah 61:10

I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For He has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of His righteousness.

Isaiah knew the greatness of God’s grace towards himself within the covenant community of Israel, and he exalted in the wonder of it. His entire being rejoiced in the *rightness* of the Redeemer’s saving action towards His people in accordance with His covenant promises. And he felt himself to be, virtually, *clothed* with the joy and wonder of it all! In this, He was being led by the Spirit to *foreshadow* the ultimate manifestation of divine, saving righteousness to come—when all who are united with Christ would

know themselves to be, in reality, in Him, magnificently clothed and arrayed before the saving Father!

The prophet Zechariah saw a vision that illustrates, even more clearly, the extraordinary fact of justification before God.

Zechariah 3:1–4

[The LORD] showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him. The LORD said to Satan, “The LORD rebuke you, Satan! ... Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?”

Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. The angel said to those who were standing before him, “Take off his filthy clothes.”

Then he said to Joshua, “See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you.”

This is precisely what has happened for all who have been united with Christ through faith: their sins have been taken away, and they have been clothed before God with the richest garments imaginable!

Satan—the ‘accuser’, and the powers he commands—has so long held fallen humankind in bondage and oppression, and hates the fact that there is freedom from guilt and condemnation for the image of God. He is fiercely determined to never let the redeemed rest in peace. But he can no longer accuse them. For they were burning sticks ‘snatched from the fire’. Those whose own righteousness was like a polluted garment before God, have had their ‘filthy clothes’ removed (Isaiah 64:6) and are now ‘without blemish and free from accusation’—standing in the righteousness of the Son before His Father!

The one whose realm is ‘the dominion of darkness’ will continue to bring his condemning accusations day and night. But as the redeemed—by faith—remain strong in the grace they’ve *received*, his attempts will be completely futile. Although he has an endless store of ‘facts’ regarding our human failure, we have the ‘truth’ regarding it: in Christ we have already been judged, condemned and damned to death—and then made alive with Him in His own righteousness forever. And **THIS TRUTH OF OUR BEING ONE WITH HIM IN HIS OWN GLORIOUS, MORAL STATUS BEFORE HIS FATHER, WILL RENDER POWERLESS ANY ACCUSATION!!!**

As we have been saying in regard to this second aspect of justification: a person’s acceptance in Christ is not merely about avoiding condemnation. The pinnacle of justification is that we may, at any time, be assured of the Father’s total commendation! He has absolute delight in the moral status He has given us in His Son—and has no greater pleasure than when we exalt in His presence on account of such an awesome gift! **HOW HE LOVES IT WHEN WE DELIGHT, TOGETHER WITH HIM, IN THE WONDER OF HIS EXTRAVAGANT GRACE!!!** And it is this assurance—along with a grace-inspired hatred for sin and love for righteousness—that **LIBERATES US INTO RIGHT RELATIONAL ACTION, WHICH GOES ON BRINGING HIM GREAT PLEASURE!!!**

It is this second aspect of justification that also deals, not only, with our guilt-charged sense of condemnation, but also with our *shame*. Shame is that unbearable, guilt-engendered experience of feeling that we have lost all honour in the eyes of others. And this is most deeply and desperately felt in regard to our moral failure before God. In the next set of salvation gifts, we will see other amazing ways in which the Father *honours* us through our union with His Son. But these could be no greater than the

honour He has given in the gift of justification—freely *crediting* to us the perfect righteousness of the En-fleshed and Glorified Son Himself. HE TRULY HAS REMOVED THE BARS OF OUR YOKE AND ENABLED US TO WALK WITH HEAD HELD HIGH!!!⁵

To be strong in the thrilling reality of justification's incredible moral status—'not guilty' and 'relationally right' in the Son—is truly a foundational part of life in the new realm of grace, in which every believing person now *stands*.

Further on in this study, we will see how the gift of justification brings us into a *particularly exhilarating* fruit of being one with the Son in the *very action* of His righteousness: able to be *one with Him in His own joy in His Father's love—and there's nothing more righteous than that!*

life-giving fruits of our new liberty in Christ

It will be most appropriate now to spell-out some *life-giving fruits* that may be enjoyed through forgiveness, cleansing and, and in particular, justification.

no more slavery to a self-attained righteousness

In Christ, there is no place whatsoever for any kind of legal, self-produced righteousness. The redeemed may at last be free from the constant struggle of trying to *do* something to be at peace with God. They no longer need to self-righteously focus upon their *own performance*, to *calm* an ailing conscience—or to *feed* personal pride.

Further on we will see that *action* certainly *follows* faith in God's grace. In his New Testament letter, James was very keen to point this out to some who were not clear about the purpose of justification. He stressed that it was to *liberate* them into a life lived according to God's way: 'the law of freedom' (James 1:25). He said of Abraham offering Isaac at Mount Moriah:

James 2:22, 26

"His faith and actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. ... As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead."

Yes, James was, rightly, stirring up this community of Jewish believers to, live consistently, with the enormous reality of their justification in Christ. Action should naturally flow from saving and justifying faith—and it certainly may. It is a tragically, dysfunctional experience of justification, that does not bring an *active response* to the high calling we've received.

But of course, it must always be emphasized that, no-one, is ever saved or justified by what *they do*; only by faith in what *God has done*. There is no other basis for either eternal salvation or present confidence before our Maker.

As we have said, justification is 'by grace alone through faith alone'. Any attempt to gain merit, favour or status before the Holy One apart from faith in His grace is absolutely futile.

⁵ Leviticus 26:13. It must be mentioned here also that torments of the conscience may be based upon either 'true guilt', that is a violation of God's way, or 'false guilt', that is merely a violation of some cultural, moral code that His law doesn't condemn. Thankfully, the word of God educates our conscience to be able to discern the difference. Further on we will look at how such discernment can be exercised in His presence.

Galatians 2:16

We may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

Galatians 3:3

Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by human effort?

A person is born again by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. As we saw in Study 7, the Spirit brought enlightenment, conviction, repentance and faith. Then what came was joy and confidence in what *God* has done and promised to do in Christ, and *that* only. Nothing else was required. It would be so foolish to in the beginning trust Him for salvation and ‘personal rest’ by His grace, but *then* try to reach that same goal by human effort: by self-focused and self-saving adherence to old covenant law, or any other religious or moral pursuit. This would be great folly, indeed!

And so the principle is very clear: No one should ever do *anything* in order to *be right* with God, but only because they have already *been made right* with Him. They should never do anything *for* peace with God, but always *from* the peace that comes through faith.

To try to gain God’s favour by *works* is to place oneself back under the way of self-exalting self-righteousness. The author of that way is Satan, and allegiance to it brings personal bondage and oppression—together with the endless expressions of guilt-charged, personal dysfunctionality spoken of in Study 4.

Galatians 5:1

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

The redeemed have been brought into a new life of *liberty* before God—standing joyously in His grace under His smile. They know that nothing they *do* could make them any more acceptable—for they are already totally accepted in Christ!

Let it be said again that nothing brings greater pleasure to God the Father than our faith in His grace. When anyone acknowledges personal failure in any situation—knowing the grief it brings Him—and then trusts in His grace alone to bring release from their guilt and shame; at that very moment He could not be *happier* with them! He so *delights* to see His ‘justified ones’ exalting in the abundance of His grace towards them in His Son (and the Son Himself, has boundless joy in this same reality!) Every moment of simple, child-like faith in His free and lavish giving receives the Father’s joyous, “Well done.”

In such free-spirited assurance then, all are able—by the Holy Spirit—to gladly keep God’s good commands; and when they do, they may wholeheartedly thank Him for His enabling. When they fail, and their hearts are immediately grieved, each may know that they still *stand* in grace—and can, by faith, be *freshly assured* of God’s amazing forgiveness and cleansing, together with His gift of righteousness and His loving smile upon them. And yes, *then*, in joyous humility, be enabled to press on in Spirit-given obedience once again—to *do* the things that bring Him ongoing pleasure!

That old foolish and futile, self-exalting slavery to a self-attained righteousness may, indeed, be no more.

free from the old ‘ladder climbing spirit’

In discouraging a ladder-climbing spirit we are not speaking against making authentic progress in Christ. As we proceed through this study—and, indeed, through the rest of the series—the Scriptures will show that we may, rightly, expect in the lives of God’s

regenerate children, nothing less than, a progressive conformity to the likeness of the Son.

Paul said to the Philippians, “I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith” (Philippians 1:25). He also encouraged Timothy to respond to instruction, that his “progress may be evident to all” (1 Timothy 4:15). His appeal to the Lord’s people was that they should always be seeking to respond ‘more and more’ to the calling they’d received (1 Thessalonians 4:1, 10).

Such progress is a natural, organic growth in enjoyment of the pleasures of God’s grace to us in Christ—with our hearts being enlarged towards Him, His will and His way. It is about a growing holy happiness in the love of God and the fruits this produces. That is, our *love-captured will* may increasingly cause us to be wholeheartedly engaged in seeking the pleasure of our Redeemer. “I delight to do Your will, O my God” may more and more shape the mental and volitional atmosphere of our days: a prayerful spirit so conducive to increasing conformity to Christ.

Now this is very different to the old, fleshly drive within us towards *self-righteous self-improvement!* That has been part of our fallen-human agenda since infancy. It is a wild-spirited quest that needs to be *done away with*, through the Spirit’s revelation to us of the totally loathsome nature of our sinfulness—and the sheer wonder of the Father’s grace.

In Study 7 we heard the testimony of Paul regarding ‘the great crisis of personal reality’ through which he passed: desperately struggling under the convicting and death-dealing work of the law of God. He came to see that his heart was and always had been full of Saul (his old name). His relationship to God was, in effect, a kind of concrete slab from which he was building a monument to his own personal, moral and vocational magnificence—with the illusion of ‘divine help’, of course! But he came to see that what he had built—moreover, what he *was*—was vile and corrupt. There was nothing salvageable in his humanity. He was fit only for death! And, at last, he was ready to see that there was One who had gone into the place of judgment on his behalf; and in being united with Him through faith he could know that he had, with this One, in His Cross, been damned to death. But then also *made alive* with Him in His Resurrection—to enjoy the gift of being *credited* with the En-fleshed, Eternal Son’s own righteousness in His Father’s presence!

Once in Christ, Paul experienced ‘the powers of the age to come’ at work within him—transformingly. The thrust of his heart and life was no longer one of self-righteous ladder-climbing and self-improvement. The regenerating work of the Spirit had birthed within him an altogether different drive (which we will hear much more of).

This, however, didn’t mean that he was able to now simply sail on into an uncontested conformity to Christ. Although abundantly and joyously endowed with all the saving gifts we will speak of in this study, he nevertheless gave witness to the incessant presence and activity of ‘indwelling sin’: those three elements of ‘serpentine poison’ (spoken of in Study 4) that still intruded into his spiritual bloodstream. He knew well that of himself, i.e. in his flesh (his old sinful, adamic humanity) there still dwelt *nothing* of any moral value—and he often experienced the stubborn reassertion of its powers within him. In this, he longed for that Final Day when the wretched nature of his fallenness would be unable to ever again intrude (Romans 7:14–25)!

Later in this study, and others to come, we will see the glorious provision that has been made for us to ‘grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ’ (2 Peter 3:18). However, we will also see that, like Paul, although happily called into conformity to the likeness of the Son, we too face the ongoing, personal battle that he

experienced. And it will be seen too, that as with Paul, this conflict does not have to bring us to despair. That only happens when the old, restless drive for self-betterment is present. Then it's all about a self-exalting vision of 'making progress': 'getting there' at last! When that's the case we find ourselves either riding high on our 'improvements'—even 'spiritual magnificence'—or down in the despairing depths of remorseful humiliation at our poor performance. Either way it is all about *us*. But this is not the life to which we have been called in Christ—and does not produce its fruits.

So, let's be done with that old ladder-climbing spirit. Let it be damned to death in the Cross as the dark and deadly thing it is—and let us set our hearts on the wonders of lavishly given grace! This alone brings us to that place where growth in the Lord is a delightful pursuit, and the desperate, self-exalting passion for 'climbing higher' is no longer our cruel master.

free from self-righteous boasting

Within our fallen humanity there is enormous energy towards both self-justification and self-righteous boasting. On the one hand, we desperately seek to deliver ourselves from any sense of personal guilt; and on the other, there is a relentless drive for godless *self-exaltation*, which we have seen was a central part of the Fall. We want to be something great, of ourselves, in our own eyes and in the eyes of others—having some capacity for self-praise and a proud place to stand, apart from the grace of God.

This doesn't mean, of course, that we are not to rejoice in the gifts and abilities we've received and the ways we are able to exercise them. The thing for us is to see is that they are all from the One who gives us life and breath and everything else, every moment—to be free-spiritedly exercised and enjoyed with thanksgiving in His Presence. In this the ugliness of self-righteous boasting will have no place.

What is always appropriate—and that makes the human spirit truly sing—is boasting in the incomparable excellence of the One who loved us and gave Himself up for us!

When the apostle Paul took the gospel to Corinth, he didn't go with a personally boastful spirit—even though as one in Christ he had experienced much that was truly remarkable. He told them later:

1 Corinthians 2:2

"I resolved to know nothing while I was with you but Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

When writing to believers in Galatia who were being tempted to trust in what they themselves could do, he shared the thrust of his own heart, saying:

Galatians 6:14

"May I never boast except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."

To boast in our own achievements is to operate according to the system of this world. But Paul no longer had any desire to be a part of that. Finding his boast only in the Cross, the world and its empty promises no longer had an attraction to him. In fact, that God-refusing, self-righteous system had become a *dead thing* to him. And, of course, in the world's eyes he was no longer seen to have anything to offer *it*. He was a dead thing to *the world* as well! He had come to see that the system of the world is not interested in the Cross or those who have it as their only boast.

Again, speaking to the believers at Philippi—who were being troubled by some element of boastfulness—the grace-delighted apostle declared:

Philippians 3:3–4, 7–9

“[We] boast in Christ Jesus and ... put no confidence in the flesh. ... I myself have reasons for such confidence. If others think they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more ... But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness [from] God on the basis of faith.”

Paul as a Pharisee, had much that he could boast of in many people’s eyes. As a former, radical and highly principled ‘law man’ he’d achieved a huge amount. But to him, those things were mere rubbish compared with the righteousness he had received through faith in the Crucified, Risen and Ascended Jesus! He knew that the degree to which he boasted in any of those other things was the degree to which he would lose the joy of what he’d received in Christ. This may always be the view of every redeemed person.

Justification by grace alone, through faith alone, brings one into *the realm of moral reality* like nothing else. It reveals what is of true worth and what isn’t. And it certainly brings freedom from the grip of self-deceived, self-boasting—or even, a self-absorbed complaint that, unlike others, we ourselves have too little to boast of!

It may be said that whenever anyone in the Lord self-righteously compares themselves with others, is *critical* of those who are not as they are and don’t do as they do, or find themselves needing to assertively *defend* the *way* they are and *what* they do—they are, at that point, clearly not operating in the enjoyment of God’s grace. A boastful, defensive, self-righteous and superior spirit is, indeed, a horrible thing—a denial of the grace that has been lavished upon one who has been redeemed!

Paul’s declaration in Philippians 3:3 on behalf of every grace-assured person, truly is, a powerful statement of personal freedom: “We boast in Christ Jesus ... and put no confidence in the flesh.” This, alone, dissolves that self-absorbed, critical and defensive spirit, which is so contrary to our high human calling.

free from slavery to the moral approval of others

A truly delicious fruit of being justified in Christ has to do with that very basic element of daily living: gaining or losing the moral favour of those around us.

Being now, at last, absolutely blameless and totally acceptable before the Father, in the Son, our relational life may be so very much different to what it has been. That is, our daily existence within ‘the courtroom environment of this world’ no longer needs to have as its dominant theme: “Will my personal choices within this particular culture bring me moral *commendation* and honour, or will they bring me moral *condemnation* and dishonour?”

In Christ, a person can now rejoice every day in the fact that although they may well have ‘wrong standing’ in the eyes of others, they always have a gloriously ‘right standing’ in the eyes of the Father! In situation after situation, the old *dread* of others’ moral *condemnation* and *dishonour* may go on being *dissolved*, and the *drive* for moral *commendation* and *honour* may go on being *fulfilled*—as those who have the delightful status of being one with the Son in His own righteousness in His Father’s presence! A future study will show how this enables us to actually *love* those who are around us, rather than being locked into ‘managing’ their opinion of our performance record.

There may well, in fact, *be* things that are deficient in our personal choices. Others' criticisms may be partly, or totally, valid. But in the Lord, no one needs to launch out into a fear/pride-based mode of 'self-justification'. It is only as we delight in the gift of having been *made right in the Son* before the Father, that anyone really has any *true* capacity to *put things right* in relation to others—as that future study mentioned above will also show.

Apart from the joyous assurance of already *having been put right* with God in Christ, any attempt to put things right with others will be with a view to 'putting *ourselves* right'. That is, our efforts will always be, by nature, acts of self-righteous self-justification: attempts to *deal* with our ailing conscience, wounded ego and dread of condemnation and dishonor by self-absorbed explanations and actions. The problem then is that we find ourselves having to live with the personal and relational complexity this inevitably brings. There is only ever peace when we are relating to others *from* a place of commendation and honour, rather than *for* it.

What a foolish thing: to be a possessor of lavishly given freedom from divine condemnation, and yet to still live in a bitter bondage to human, moral disapproval. It just doesn't have to be like that—when every moment we may enjoy that deliciously sweet taste of the Father's smiling commendation and honour, in the Son!

**no more slavery to self-justifying desires, thoughts, words
and actions—the old 'guilt-averting strategies' obsolete!**

At the beginning of this study, it was stated that although having all our lives fled to the *wrath-averting mechanisms* of Study 4 (frantically attempting to create a NEW DAY for ourselves) such desperate and futile behaviour need be no more. That will definitely prove to be so as we deal with each of the gifts of salvation that are now being described. And it is *most definitely* the case when it comes to this first cluster of gifts: forgiveness, cleansing and justification. Our endless attempts to find 'guilt relief' for our conscience apart from the grace of God in Christ, may now, be a thing of the past. Such desperate and incessant efforts never did actually work, anyway!

In particular, the gift of credited righteousness surely means that the redeemed no longer need to 'manage' guilt. Neither do they need to prove to others that they are a 'good person'. They know that of, themselves, they are *not*—but that in Christ, all is well!

And so those personally demeaning, and usually relationally destructive, 'wrath-averting strategies' can be decisively declared, obsolete. They are *redundant*—no longer required!

What a life of *freedom* the grace of God brings! No more do we need to constantly be seeking godless relief from a sense of condemnation and shame through:

- blaming someone or something else: "It wasn't *my* fault; it was *them*, or *that*!" "A person can only put up with so much!" "I should be pitied rather than condemned!"
- condemning others: "Now *there's* someone who should come under judgment!"
- performing better: "*This* is the kind of person I really *am*—unlike others I could mention!"
- changing the rules: "It *isn't wrong*!" "Times have changed." "It is actually a virtue to be 'broad-minded'." "Sometimes you just need to be practical."
- denying the facts: "That's not true." "This is what *really* happened—so, it's all OK!" Retelling the story or reconstructing history (another word for it is 'lying'—to both ourselves and others).

- self-condemnation: “I’m so stupid and pathetic!” “I can never get it right!” Often the more guilt we feel the harder we work—usually with a depressed spirit and a simmering low-level anger, or even openly expressed, self-destructive rage.

None of this, needs to any longer be part of the way we respond within the various personal, relational and vocational situations of our life.

But the fact remains, that resisting the constant temptation to ‘self-justification’ will be one of the most difficult things we will do in our daily living. What may be helpful in this is to understand that every time we *do* try—in some way—to justify ourselves, we actually are telling the Lord that His gift of righteousness really is a very small thing! And, of course, we are also saying that the great goal of our life is *not* to find our delight above all else in Him, but to have a righteousness of our own, in which we may boast.

As the series continues—with all of the grand doctrines of Studies 1–8 worked out in practical, relational and vocational ways—we will see more of the freedom that may be enjoyed in regard to this matter of personal justification in Christ.

justification that is relational rather than merely legal

We have been affirming the fact of God’s ‘eternally dynamic *relational* Being’. This must always be the way we view Him and His actions towards us. They are *never* merely legal. And that is certainly the case when it comes to the glorious covenant gift of justification.

There *is* clearly a legal aspect to justification. But if this gift is received just as a means of ‘getting the monkey of guilt off our back’, then it’s whole outworking will also be within a legal and self-interested atmosphere. The emphasis will *not* be upon ‘the smiling face of the Father’, or on an *affectionate longing* to bring Him pleasure in all we desire, think, say and do. Neither will it be upon our Saviour, in the joy of our being in Him and with Him in His Father’s love. It will rather, be primarily upon a constant endeavour to be free from ‘feelings of guilt, shame or dishonour’—and with this, the foolish pursuit of whatever will promote our sense of personal identity, security and fulfillment.

When this is the case, then—in our relationships with both God and others—it will be a legal attainment of *personal rights* and a legal securing of *life-enhancing agendas* that will be reflexively in focus. The implications of such a tragic attitude will be seen as the series progresses.

the heart of it all

There is one thing that needs to be said as we bring this matter of justification to a close, and it is this: We are not to merely have a *doctrine* of justification—for that will bring us little joy and relational freedom. OUR FOCUS ISN’T TO BE ONLY UPON ‘JUSTIFICATION’, BUT UPON THE ‘JUSTIFIER’!!! The central thing, is not to be assurance of a *fact*, but rather, full-hearted faith in and joyous worship of A PERSON!!!

As we move through this Study it will be seen that what our Saviour has accomplished in His Life, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, Outpouring of the Spirit and Promised Appearing, is ALL that we have ever desperately needed, and that He is, Himself, EVERYTHING we have ever longed for!!! Doctrines are good and essential—but only to the degree that they lead us always to Him.

Now to conclude our proclamation of God’s grace in regard to the conscience, we must look at a particular, *massively life-changing freedom*—one that is a powerful fruit of the liberation that is known in Christ. This theme really belongs to a later study, but it is important to look at it here as we are speaking of a new, personal freedom of spirit.

freedom to forgive

A magnificent part of the new liberty we have been speaking of has to do with this: a new *freedom to forgive* those who have offended us. In the light of all we've seen, it must be said that for the redeemed to have mercy upon others is the most *natural* thing imaginable. And for them not to, is completely unthinkable!

Ephesians 4:32

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

We have seen that of ourselves we are all deserving of eternal condemnation, and that by the mercy and grace of God we have been *totally* forgiven, cleansed and justified. And so, there can be only one reasonable—and God-pleasing—response to those who sin against us: immediate and complete forgiveness.

Colossians 3:13

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

As sinners relate to each other, there will of course, always be 'grievances' that arise. We so easily hurt one another by what we say or do or *don't* say or do. Sometimes these grievances will be the result of *great personal injury* that has been inflicted on us—even over a long period of time. But as we have seen, no offense committed against us could compare with our own enormous body of offense against God—which He has (according to those scriptural images we have seen) erased, blotted out, swept away, put behind His back, removed far from us, freely pardoned, hurled into the deepest sea and forever taken away!

Being able to *truly forgive* great offenses has little to do with one's own 'large-mindedness'. Rather, let it be said again, it has everything to do with the staggering nature of the divine goodness, mercy and grace that we ourselves have experienced—and will continue to! As the constant receivers of such incessant love, to consider shutting our heart in bitterness towards another is an outrageous prospect. It's not an option! Yes, we are to forgive as we have been forgiven.

It must be understood that the glorious grace that has come to the redeemed has an equally glorious goal: that the love, honour and affection within the Divine-Triune-Community be reflected in every human relationship! To, through an unforgiving spirit, oppose the fulfillment of this grand, divine intention—which is also a yearning desire within the heart of God—can only be seen as hard-hearted defiance and callous ingratitude towards Him. It is great wickedness, that need never be known among God's dear people.

As the series progresses, we will see that to receive God's grace is to be brought into a whole new realm of *relational life*; a way of relating that is not dependent upon the actions of others, but upon the grace and kindness of God that is personally enjoyed.

forgiveness involves *reconciliation* —friendship with others restored

Forgiveness is always to be with a view to restored friendship—in whatever way that is done. Jesus showed that 'reconciliation' is an essential part of life within the Kingdom of His Father. He said:

Matthew 5:23–24

“If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.”

Being ‘personally at one’ with others is of extreme importance, and, in the mind of Jesus, more significant than public worship! Even if it is the *other person* who is embittered, the situation is still to be urgently attended to by the offender. Any wrong against another is to be *instantly* apologized for. Even if offense by us has been *wrongly sensed* by the other person, we are, nevertheless, to at least honour their perception of what has happened, even if we feel it is misplaced. To just cold-heartedly insist on being ‘right’ is never the way of one who knows the grace of God.

If the other person won’t receive a sincere apology, that is tragic. In such a situation the offender may pray for reconciliation to be brought about—and continue to relate freely towards that one in God’s love.

Taking ‘urgent action’ should not, of course, cause unnecessary inconvenience or embarrassment to the offended person. It may be needful to wait until an appropriate time. The point is, the action must be *immediately* decided upon and then quickly carried out. Within the kingdom of God reconciliation is always an urgent matter. Needless delay is never appropriate.

Reconciliation may also require some act of restoration or compensation—that is, *restitution*⁶. If the one offended refuses restitution or insists that it is not necessary, then the matter is closed. Sin has been acknowledged and appropriate restoration humbly and lovingly attempted. Of course, sometimes, for other reasons restitution is simply not possible.

the motivation for forgiving

We must see here that the issue is not, first of all, a matter of how un-forgiveness affects the one who will not forgive. As already mentioned, forgiveness of others has to do with God’s whole purpose in pouring out His grace. It is to reveal the glory of His love in the midst of those who are His image—transforming their communities!

As will be seen, it is true that not to forgive is personally destructive. Bitterness against another destroys one’s own spirit—and rightly so! But authentic forgiveness is not with a view to *self-protection*. Its goal is the fulfillment of the will and pleasure of our good and kind Creator. To merely forgive others for our *own* sake has nothing to do with a participation in the love of God. It is as wicked as not forgiving at all—simply ‘me looking after me’: “I’m not going to let that person destroy my life by allowing them to lock me into bitterness!” There is nothing glorifying to God—or personally dignifying—in that.

Grace for the conscience is totally full and free. But it is not—as we’ve already said—merely about ‘getting the monkey of guilt off our back’. It has to do with being personally released into intimate fellowship with God, and being wholeheartedly with Him in His glorious will and purpose of love! The Father so dearly desires for us to be whole. But to turn His grace into just another means of self-obsessed ‘self-care’ is horrible.

⁶ The Old Testament Scriptures speak of the principle of restitution (Exodus 22:1–15): the compensation of another for loss, damage or injury that has been caused. Those actual laws don’t apply within the new covenant, but restitution as a ‘principle of love’ certainly does—doing whatever can be done to make amends.

the just consequences of refusing to forgive

In Matthew chapter 18, Jesus spoke of how sinful situations were to be dealt with within the fellowship of God's people. Everything possible was to be done to restore any breakdown of true communal life among them.

Wondering just how radical such action should be, Peter asked Jesus:

Matthew 18:21

"Lord, how many times shall I forgive someone who sins against me? Up to seven times?"

In introducing this possibility, Peter was far exceeding the current requirement within Judaism, which was to forgive the same person up to three times in one day. But Jesus replied:

Matthew 18:22

"I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times."

In this He meant "seven times seven, times seven, times ... "; an endless amount!

We can imagine the bewildered look on the faces of Peter and the others at this point. The matter of forgiving the offense of another is such a difficult one within community relationships. And to now have all limits to its exercise removed must have seemed totally unrealistic!

As He so often did, Jesus met their bewilderment by telling a parable of the kingdom. He said:

Matthew 18:21–27

"Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' The servant's master took pity on him, cancelled the debt and let him go."

We must interrupt Jesus' story at this point, to explain that the ten thousand talents owed was equivalent to 200,000 years wages for a servant. This was a debt that he, of himself, would never, ever be able to repay!

Jesus was revealing to the disciples, and to us, something that is absolutely essential to grasp if a new freedom to forgive is to be known. We have seen that day after day each person—in failing to fulfill the high human calling—builds up an ever-increasing debt before God. Every transgression of His law in heart, mind, word or deed is recorded against them. And there is nothing that can be done to dissolve the debt!

If not for the grace of the Cross there would be no hope of release for anyone. But, as the word of God has declared, such release is incredibly given to all who believe. This is the *heart transforming power* of the gospel!

Unfortunately, the servant in Jesus' story had no such appreciation of the grace that had been shown him. To begin with, he pathetically begged for patience. In his mind, all he needed was time and he would be able to repay the full amount. He clearly had no desire to appreciate the vast nature of the debt he owed, nor of his own total inability to remove it.

The rest of the story is a graphic portrayal of every fallen-human act of self-righteous un-forgiveness—and the response of our Maker to such evil. Jesus continued:

Matthew 18:21–30

“But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded. His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.’ But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.”

As soon as he was released from his own debt this servant ‘went out’ and ‘found’ one of his fellow servants who owed him money. Having no sense of the grace shown to him, he went *looking* for his own debtor—not to release him but to *obligate* him!

One hundred denarii was one hundred days wages for both of these servants. The one who had his debt cancelled was owed about four months wages. That’s a lot of money. To have it withheld could certainly be seen as a great personal injury. But having just been released from a debt equivalent to two hundred thousand years wages, four months was nothing!

Just as he, himself, had done before his master, his fellow servant begged for *patience*. But the one who had been forgiven so much refused to show mercy—and had his offender thrown into prison until the debt was paid.

Jesus’ portrayal of the master’s response to news of this is to be carefully observed:

Matthew 18:31–34

“When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened.

Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I cancelled all that [unpayable] debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ In anger his master turned him over to the [torturers] until he should pay back all he owed.”

The unforgiving servant’s action would have certainly held up in a court of law. There was an element of justice in it, on one level. But in the light of the mercy he had been shown, it could only be called ‘*wickedness*’, and the consequence for him was to be an enduringly torturous one!

Jesus then applied the parable directly to Peter and the others. He said:

Matthew 18:35

“This is how My heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive a brother or sister from your heart.”

Because of the magnitude of his offense, the servant’s master gave him over to ‘the torturers’—and this is what each of the disciples could expect the Father to do to *them* if they refused to forgive another ‘from the heart’.

Although not too much should be made of the details of parables when making application of them, we may safely speak on this occasion of what ‘the torturers’ referred to. In the light of the biblical teaching we’ve already received, they would refer to God’s *holy law*, which declares ‘the high human calling’, and the *conscience*, which will—at core—accept nothing less than what the law, or way, of God requires.

Each unforgiving person, without exception, will be given up—by the Father—to the tormenting impact of their conscience. And each one will be held in that state until the un-forgiveness is acknowledged and repented of, and the releasing grace of God is joyously embraced.

The life-draining and tormenting pain referred to here is suffered by all ‘unforgiving sinners’—those, who are regenerate and those who are not. No human being—in Christ or still in Adam—will ever be released into the personal, relational and vocational

freedom and fullness for which they were created, unless, they forgive ‘from the heart’ those who have offended them.

The principle here is very clear. Every sin committed against us must be seen in the light of this parable. Although it may have been a great offense, it is, nevertheless, *always only a ‘one-hundred-day debt’, compared to our own debt of ‘two-hundred-thousand years’!*

In the light of such an undeniable reality, every totally forgiven, cleansed and justified sinner in Christ has the ability to freely forgive ‘from the heart’. They are able to say, “I have been released forever from all of my sins, and with all my heart I release this person. As with all of *my* sins, it is just as if what *they* did never happened. Their debt is cancelled. I now choose to have no record of their wrong against me—and will act towards them accordingly!” (1 Corinthians 13:6).

When divine forgiveness that is personally experienced is unreservedly passed on to others, there are certain marvellously liberating affects. The ongoing, painful bitterness suffered as a result of what had or had not been done, is gone. It no longer needs to be indignantly stored in our mind, or spoken of to others. And the offending person no longer needs to be avoided or merely ‘tolerated’—but may now be, with holy affection, loved ‘deeply from the heart’ (1 Peter 1:22). The offense will no doubt come to mind, but what is *remembered* is the wonder of having been released from our own debt and enabled to participate in the love of God towards a fellow sinner. In this THE FATHER’S GREAT GRACE HAS MIGHTILY PREVAILED—BRINGING A REVELATION OF HIS GLORY IN HIS WORLD!!!

It is indeed true that refusal to forgive another results in our being locked into the deadening torments of an offended conscience (with all of the other ‘cascading aberrations’ of Study 4 being heightened, in one way or another). Bitterness towards others does destroy one’s own spirit. Yes, and as said before, rightly so. But, as indicated above, this is not just an unfortunate psychological consequence. It is the righteous wrath of God upon us, as in His ‘hot love’ He gives us over to the consequences of our self-righteous rebellion!

It is wise, indeed, to heed this reality in the fear of the LORD. But not just as an act of psychological self-protection. It has, above all, to do with ‘wholeheartedly pursuing His pleasure’ in ‘unwavering obedience’, with ‘hatred for sin’ and ‘strong, jealous passion for His glory and praise’—as the Study 2 ‘High Human Calling’ outline states.

So then, the redeemed forgive others that they may reveal the glory of the love of God in their relationships—freely and abundantly passing on the goodness, mercy and grace that they, themselves, have received.

When Jesus gave His disciples the ‘pattern prayer’ in the Sermon on the Mount, He showed that it is unthinkable for anyone to enjoy the Father’s forgiveness while not forgiving others. He said:

Mathew 6:12

“[When you pray say], ‘Forgive our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors’.”

Refusal to forgive others, certainly, prevents any transforming enjoyment of divine forgiveness. But on the other hand, a grace-charged *freedom to forgive* unfailingly preserves the experience of *new liberty*, into which every believing person has been called—and which is truly, a magnificent part of *new life in the kingdom of the Son!*

road blocks to the enjoyment of forgiveness

Although forgiveness is a marvelous reality for every redeemed person, it is certainly possible—as seen above—to have it, yet not be in the enjoyment of it. Apart from a spirit of un-forgiveness, we'll see now that there are five other responses that can make this unfortunate experience to be so.

1: “I’m too sinful to be forgiven”

There is no condemnation for all who are in Christ, but a believer may still feel condemned regardless of the promises of God’s grace. Such people have a debilitating sense of their own sinfulness—often having lived under constant criticism and condemnation.

They feel that although others are worthy of forgiveness, they, certainly could not be. Compared to others around them they see themselves as a miserable failure.

Those who feel this way, however, need to understand that there is *no-one* who is worthy of forgiveness. It’s not just *particular* sins that condemn a person, but an entire attitude of disregard towards God and refusal of His grace; and every fallen human being, of themselves, is desperately guilty of this!

When it comes to comparing oneself with others, it must be understood that although all don’t openly express their personal struggles, they all do have them. Everybody knows very well the dilemma of Study 4.

As mentioned already in this study, some of us are oppressed by *false guilt* arising from a wrongly educated conscience. This is often the case where certain *cultural* values are violated: things that are not against the way of God but against family or community expectations. Where honour and respect for others is maintained, such cultural failure is not necessarily sinful at all. In fact, at times, some cultural obligations must be disobeyed in order to obey God.

All may know that every sin they’ve committed, or will commit, has already been judged in the Cross. When Jesus made that great pronouncement, “It is finished,” it all *was*! Not one sin escaped the dreadful judgment that fell on that darkest yet most glorious day in all of history. Having heard this, anyone who truly understands their human fallen-ness will flee to Christ and joyously receive abundant grace!

Although there should rightly be compassion for those who struggle in the way being described here, there is however, usually something very foolish that is behind their inability to rejoice in the grace of God. It is a longing to be able to be ‘as good as others’; that is, to be of themselves, apart from grace, as good as others are or *appear* to be.

This is simply the old struggle for a *self-attained self-esteem*—that relentless battle to achieve a righteousness of our own in which we may boast. The goal is to be ‘as good as other people’ and so be able to proudly hold one’s head high. Attainment of this prize has been continually frustrated. And now grace has come and threatens to take away the possibility of *ever having* a ‘self-attained, self-esteem’—and so forgiveness is not wholeheartedly embraced.

In this, God’s amazing grace is resisted because of a humiliating preoccupation with poor personal performance. Those who feel this way also tend to fall into the second category of response.

2: “God forgives me, but I can’t forgive myself”

This may sound very noble, but it is actually extremely naughty! It is really saying to God, “Although You have done all that is needful to bring forgiveness—given up Your Son as a propitiation for sin—that is not enough. It may satisfy You but not *me!*”

The real problem here again is the old matter of fallen-human pride. What the protestor is actually saying is, “I am (or could be with the right opportunity)—of myself—much better than this, and until I can prove to myself that I am, I will not accept the grace of God!

Once more it is simply the ‘remorseful humiliation’ spoken of in Study 4. Remorse is self-centred rather than God-centred. Both remorse and humiliation have to do with injured pride. They are the dark and bitter states that proud sinners fall into when they don’t perform as their ego demands—the exact opposite of the sweet and joyous *humility* that flows from liberating, God-centred *repentance!*

Refusal ‘to forgive oneself’ is simply a sullen, self-righteous refusal of grace—unwillingness to freely receive the gift of God and worship Him with a heart full of grateful and adoring affection.

We will see that it is only the knowledge of freely given forgiveness—and the fellowship with God that flows from it—that *enables* a person to live according to His way. And there is *no self-congratulation* in this.

Again, to speak in such a way is not to disregard the horrible circumstances that many have endured, and may even continue to. But the One who bore their sins has manifested THE GLORIOUS DIVINE COMPASSION OF THE FATHER—who holds out that forgiveness which alone will liberate them from their pain!

3: “Sure, I need the grace of God—but not as much as others do”

Here, the proud fallen-human heart may be willing to accept a ‘top up’ of grace. It will say, “Yes, I’m not perfect. Grace is a useful, even superb, *provision* to bring me up to the mark. But to admit to having a desperate need for 100% grace is too much to bear—it is so demeaning!”

This, however, is, actually what every person *does* need. Not 10% or 50% or even 99% grace—but 100%! Our old, self-righteous humanity in Adam needs to be seen as *entirely* judged, damned and put to death in Christ, and—being raised up with Him—the whole of His righteousness received!

Now is a good time to introduce an extremely important statement: THOSE WHO KNOW THAT THEY NEED 100% GRACE, 100% OF THE TIME, MAY, AT ALL TIMES, HAVE THE EXALTED JOY OF A 100% FORGIVENESS—AND SO HAVE A 100% CAPACITY TO BE ALL THEY WERE CREATED TO BE!!!

On the other hand, those who feel they only need a *certain percentage* of grace can only ever experience *that* percentage of the *joy* that may be known—and probably much less.

We will continually see that foolish self-righteousness is our greatest problem. It is the one thing that cuts us off from enjoyment of the boundless freedom and fullness that is in Christ!

4: “I’ve committed the ‘unforgivable’ sin”

Some fall into the morbid state of feeling they have done what cannot be forgiven: the ‘unforgivable’ or ‘unpardonable sin’. They have read or heard these words of Jesus:

Mark 3:28

“Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven all their sins and all the blasphemies they utter. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven, but is guilty of an eternal sin.”

Focusing on this causes a terrible gloom to descend upon such people. They feel that no matter what they do there is no longer any hope of salvation for them. As they understand it, something they have thought, said or done must surely have been blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. That is, they have in some way, thought, spoken or acted in an irreverent, disregarding or disrespectful way towards to the Spirit. But what they don't understand is, that Jesus was speaking of those present, who were denying the reality of the Spirit in His miraculous works, and who in their hatred of Him eventually called for His crucifixion (Mark 3:22).

Then there is the word of the apostle John:

1 John 5:17

“There is a sin that leads to death.”

This ‘sin that leads to death’ would appear to be the same as blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. But here it particularly has to do with people who were being taught that Jesus didn't really come as a human being, but only looked as if He did—that on close examination it could be seen that His feet didn't even touch the ground! (1 John 4:1–6). John was saying that to refuse to believe that Jesus had ‘come in the flesh’ to die for our sins, is to commit a sin that leads to death: the unpardonable sin. Among many other things that this wrong teaching denied was, the reality of sin itself (1 John 1:8) as well as a person's responsibility to obey God's commands. To embrace such teaching is to become destined for death, rather than the life that is in Christ. This is what the Apostle John was speaking of.

And then there is the statement of the writer to the Hebrews:

Hebrews 10:26–27

“If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment.”

Having read such words, the sensitive soul may fall into a horrible state of dread, feeling that the Cross is no longer of any value for them and that they are now without hope for eternity. But here the writer was speaking to second generation believers who were being enticed to go back to Judaism—and in doing so, denying that Jesus was the Messiah, who had dealt with their sins once and for all.

Without going into further detail about these three verses, it must simply be said that there is *one thing common* to all who have blasphemed against the Holy Spirit, committed the sin ‘that leads to death’ and deliberately persisted in sinning. This one thing is that *they don't care* that they have done so—and never will!

Such people have come to a place where they have, forever, closed themselves off to the enlightening and convicting work of the Holy Spirit. Their hearts are willfully and permanently hardened towards Him. We may be sure that if anyone is *truly grieved before God* that they have committed the unpardonable sin, then they most certainly have not!

The only thing that is unforgivable is to proudly, and finally, refuse the grace that the Spirit declares. This is the blasphemous sin that leads to death, which drives a person back into unbelief and godless living—even after they have made some kind of positive, but shallow, response to the truth.

All, though, may be certain of this: No matter how great and persistent the sin, if it is humbly confessed as grievous to God and worthy of His condemnation, and if Christ is fled to as the Great Sin-bearer, there will only be one divine response: TOTAL FORGIVENESS!!!

A wonderful example of this is seen in the testimony of the apostle Paul, where he says:

1 Timothy 1:13–16

“Even though I was once a blasphemer and persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display His immense patience as an example for those who would believe in Him and receive eternal life.”

If anyone had done what was worthy of unforgiveness it was Paul—a blasphemous hater of Christ, intent on exterminating His people. But he was raised up by the Lord to be an encouragement to all who feel that their particular sins must exclude them from divine mercy and grace.

5: “I haven’t done anything that needs forgiveness —what is there to confess?”

The matter of confession of sin will be fully dealt with later in a study on prayer. But because here we are speaking of the enjoyment of forgiveness it is important to, at least, briefly mention it.

To *confess* means ‘to acknowledge’. It is ‘to agree with God’ about our sins: ‘to say the same thing’ about them as He does.

As was said in the previous section, the apostle John wrote to churches that were being influenced by those who denied that sin is a personal reality. They said that although *the body* sinned, a person’s *spirit* remained pure. John declared that those who made such claims had not been ‘born of God’. They were ‘unregenerate’. The whole process of enlightenment, conviction, repentance and faith had clearly not taken place within them.

Those, however, who acknowledged that they were sinners and worthy of condemnation, could be assured of the complete forgiveness that is in Christ. John said:

1 John 1:8–9

“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

The statement, “If we confess our sins” can be translated, “If we are sin-confessors”, ‘sin acknowledgers’: those who agree with God about their need for forgiveness. For a redeemed person, each particular ‘confession’ of sin isn’t what brings forgiveness. Forgiveness comes ‘by grace alone, through faith alone’. What particular acts of confession do is to enable a believer to *enjoy* the gift of forgiveness already received in Christ.

In Christ a person is wholly justified before God, forever. But if the freedom and pleasure of this is to be enjoyed, conscious sins *must* be acknowledged and *renounced* as being things that grieve God. Only then can faith delight in the release that forgiveness brings.

To renounce a sin, of course, doesn't guarantee that failure will never happen again. But it does mean that it will be loathed, and everything possible done to prevent it.

Proverbs 28:13

Those who conceal their sins do not prosper, but those who confess and renounce them find mercy.

When we refuse to acknowledge sin, we lock into ourselves an *experience* of the guilt that it causes. For those who are in Christ the sin is forgiven. As justified people they actually have *no guilt* before God! But they will remain under the spiritually deadening *affects*, of their sin—suffering very real *feelings* of guilt (as well as the other Study 4 impacts that follow)—until it is 'coughed up'! As soon as this confession takes place and faith *takes hold* of the grace of God there is the experience of *mercy*—the sinner is put out of their misery and restored to the joy that forgiveness brings!

Psalms 32:3–5

When I kept silent [about my sins], my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.

Then I acknowledged my sin to You and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"—and You forgave the guilt of my sin.

If a believer refuses to acknowledge a matter before God, we could say that although they are 'forensically' or 'legally' forgiven—saved and no longer condemned—they are not 'functionally' forgiven. They are not able to *enjoy* the grace they have received.

The Lord gives up His 'sin-harboring' people to this discomfort. And, in it all, He relentlessly moves them to the place of confession and repentance, so they may enjoy by faith what is theirs and live according to His way.

Confession of sin is the exact opposite of the self-justifying, wrath-averting strategies outlined in Study 4. The fact is that whenever we don't know the joy of forgiveness, cleansing and justification, *those old ways of self-justification are immediately present*—and, we find ourselves back under their personally and relationally destructive tyranny: 'desperately seeking relief by blaming someone or something else, condemning others, performing better, changing the rules, denying the facts, or self-punishment'.

a final word

What a liberating thing it is to have received the knowledge of God's grace! By it the redeemed are free to *face* the fact of their sins. They are able to see sin for what it is: willful, God-grieving personal, relational and vocational failure: a deliberate choice to desire, think, speak or act against the way of our Creator.

When it comes to such choices, the redeemed don't have to refer to them as 'mistakes' or 'unfortunate consequences of personal adversity'. No. They can call sin 'sin', hate it, renounce it and exalt in the abounding grace that has dealt with it. Better still, they may *greatly delight* in the God of all grace Himself!

So, there we have it: the first group of new covenant gifts in Christ. These are the *foundational saving gifts* freely and lavishly bestowed upon every believer. The Redeemer has forgiven, cleansed and justified each one—so that they may be

delivered from the wrath to come and from any present sense of guilt, condemnation or shame. They may, at last, be at peace with their Maker. In their CONSCIENCE they have been given A NEW LIBERTY: an entirely new *freedom of spirit*. In this, a new life has truly begun: a life of great JOY in the total forgiveness and cleansing of their sins—and in knowing that they are now and forever, freely and fully one with the Son in His own righteousness before His Father!

As we continue on to unfold the rest of these amazing covenant gifts, it will be seen that upon the basis of *this amazing reality*, there is much more that is gloriously true of every redeemed person.

Secondly, in Christ, enjoying the transforming wonder of the new covenant gifts of:

ADOPTION & (immediate) SANCTIFICATION

being receivers of a **NEW IDENTITY** (for our PERSONHOOD)

no longer having to bear with a dark-spirited

sense of *lostness & inferiority*;

now able to say: **‘I am a child of God—a saint (a holy one), forever set apart to the Father & His purpose!’**

made to be one with Jesus in His personal status as Beloved Son & Heir, & in His vocational status as Priest, Prophet & King

Having established the fact of a NEW LIBERTY in the area of the CONSCIENCE through the gifts of forgiveness, cleansing and justification, we are now able to press further into our proclamation of salvation in Christ. In this next section, then, there will be set before us two further elements of God’s extravagantly abundant grace: the gifts of *adoption* and *immediate sanctification*.

Firstly, it will be seen that these two gifts are of enormous significance to every believer in regard to PERSONHOOD. Together they impart an entirely NEW IDENTITY—bringing the enjoyment of a total oneness with the Son in His *personal and vocational status* before the Father.

the gift of adoption

The gift of adoption restores to any person what is basic to their true human-ness: the status of being a child of God. No one can know what it is to truly exist as the image of God without possessing this priceless gift from the Father.

John 1:12–13

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 a husband’s will, but born of God.

Every person who welcomes Jesus as Saviour is given the right, privilege and authority to become one of the Father’s children. And as we saw in Study 7, from the Fall onwards the miracle of *regeneration* has had to take place for this gift to be received. Every child of God is one who has been ‘born of God’—born anew by the Spirit.

1 John 3:1

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him.

In His divine love for us the Father has given up His Son as a propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:9–10) with this grand end in view: that believing, we may actually be called ‘the children of God’! Rightly understood, this is the most treasured gift that could ever be received; for as we saw in Study 6, the Sonship of the Son is central to the nature of the entire creation. It is, however, not recognized as such by those who operate as part of the ‘God-the-Father-hating’ system of ‘the world’.

When Jesus Himself walked among us He was largely despised by the world, rather than welcomed and esteemed. To those whose allegiance was given to the devil’s dark dominion, His personal and vocational status as the Father’s Son held no attraction. More than that, it was regarded as a grave threat to the system of the world itself—and its’ false promises that are so desperately pursued!

The revelation of Jesus’ Sonship was ‘the light of all people’ (John 1:4). But in its hostile aversion to the Father the world preferred the darkness of its own pursuits. It could be very interested in ‘religion’, but not the way of the En-fleshed Eternal Son among us.

In the light of such stubborn refusal, how great is the Father’s love towards those He has *redeemed*—choosing them by His *grace* and regenerating them by His *mercy* to be His children!

the gift of sonship through union with the Son

Adoption as the children of God is certainly a magnificent reality for those who are united with Christ through faith.

Galatians 3:26–27

You are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Every person who is baptized into the Lord Jesus has received a sign of having been ‘clothed’ with Him. They have literally ‘put Him on’ like a robe. The term ‘put on’ may refer to the Roman toga that was worn by a son at his adoption (a Roman practice which we will speak more of later). The toga was a loose flowing outer garment, made of a single piece of cloth and covering the whole body apart from the right arm. It was a robe that signified *great privilege*—something that is certainly a reality for all who are adopted as the children of God.

The sign of baptism declares that in being raised up with Jesus in His Resurrection, believers have not only been made one with Him in His *moral status* as the Righteous One in His Father’s presence (justification), they have also been made one with Him in His *personal status* as the Father’s Beloved and Eternally Treasured Son. Along with the gift of His righteousness, the entire glorious and eternal status of His Sonship has now been given to them!

There are no favourites among those who have been united with the Son—there are none who have greater status or are more dearly loved than another. Regardless of their nationality, personal background or gender—or anything else about them—each one in Christ may say, “I am a son or daughter of God the Father and a brother or sister of the Eternal Son!”

Galatians 3:28

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

To have been united with Him is to have been adopted into the Family of the Father—equal in every way with every other person who has received the same awesome privilege. We could even say that as sharers together in the Personhood of the Son, all are, in an amazing way, ‘*one person*’ in Christ!

one with the Son, the Father’s Beloved Heir

All who are in Christ can know that just as they have been included in the Son’s personal status in His Father’s love, they are also those who are sharers with Him in His eternal *inheritance* as the Son!

This matter of God’s people gaining an inheritance has always been His loving purpose. It is what the Father, Son and Spirit have been at work to accomplish throughout the whole of history.

In the Old Testament the LORD began to speak of this plan to His servant Abraham. Abraham was promised that his descendants would be a *redeemed* people and have a grand *inheritance*. And this was initially fulfilled through Israel’s *exodus* from Egypt and *possession* of the land of Canaan.

However, that old patriarch didn’t understand just how great and glorious his descendants’ *ultimate* redemption and inheritance would be. In his day he couldn’t appreciate all that they would be mightily *liberated from* and would wonderfully *possess*, when the great and glorious Messiah-Son had finally appeared!

When our Lord did come and accomplish that redemption, the way was open for the stunning nature of this planned inheritance to finally be seen. Everything that was promised to Abraham was then able to be fully revealed and *joyously embraced* by all who believe the promise of God—just as Abraham had done.

The LORD had promised Abraham in Genesis 12 that through his ‘seed’—or ‘offspring’—all the nations of the earth would be blessed. But then in Galatians 3:16, the apostle Paul pointed out that this promise referred to a singular ‘seed’ (one particular ‘offspring’ of Abraham) and that it is Jesus who was that ‘Seed’. He then declared that all who are united with Christ through faith (‘one person’ in Him) are also Abraham’s seed—and *inheritors* together with Jesus of everything that had been promised! That is, we have been made heirs with Him—the Eternal Son made flesh—of all that He has received in His glorified humanity at the Father’s right hand, on our behalf.

Galatians 3:29

If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

liberated from slavery into an inheritance

As Paul was writing to his first century readers—particularly the Galatians—he had the well-known Roman practice of adoption (referred to earlier) in his mind to illustrate the doctrine of adoption in Christ. This was, clearly, a practice that had been sovereignly overseen by God, to eventually explain what He had been planning for His people down through the centuries.

The practice was that when a first-born male child was born into a Roman family, he was not immediately given the status of ‘sonship’. This would happen only at a later time set by the father—maybe when the son was in his teens or even his twenties. Then, during a special legal ceremony—followed by a grand celebration—he would have a ring placed on his finger, receive a name and be declared the heir of His father.

He had then finally gained his personal status as son and heir; and nothing could now keep him from inheriting all that was his to possess!

But until that time he was placed under the guardianship of a household slave. This guardian would take him to and from school and was also responsible to discipline him, administering punishment with a rod whenever there was a breach of the father's law. Such guardians were often harsh, and the child would look forward to the time when this period would end. Even though he was a first-born son, he was, until the day of his adoption, no better off than a slave within the family (Galatians 4:1–2).

Although Israel as a nation was God's first-born son (Exodus 4:22–23), Paul tells us that it was like a son under the guardianship of 'the law', until the time set by the Father.

The tragic history of Israel graphically shows that the law of the old covenant—though a good, holy and purposeful gift—could not bring them into their ultimate inheritance as the people of God. As Study 7 showed, the reason for this was that *one* function of the law was to prove to them that, of themselves, they could not obey it. It so often stirred up rebellion in their hearts against the LORD, rather than drawing them into joyous response to Him.

From a positive point of view, the law did keep Israel from running without restraint into the ways of darkness—like a child under the strict rules of the guardian (Galatians 3:23)—but its negative effect upon them was, nevertheless, quite enormous.

Their seasons of glad obedience and blessing were few in number compared to their extended periods of disobedience and frustration. Time after time they found themselves manipulated by dark spiritual powers and in the grip of deadly and demeaning idolatry—together with the judgment this inevitably brought upon them. And, of course, the nations, who were outside of God's covenant with Israel and worshipping other gods (Galatians 4:8) were living under the same deadly spiritual oppression.

Both Jew and Gentile desperately needed the arrival of that new era through the Seed of Abraham! And so, Paul declared to his fellow believers in Galatia:

Galatians 4:3–5

[We] were in slavery under the [dark] elemental spiritual forces of the world. But when the set time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those who were under law, that we might receive adoption as God's children.

Jesus, born under the old covenant law as a Jew, came to fulfill every element of the law on behalf of both Israel and the nations Israel represented. And He did just that, in perfect faithfulness. Moreover, His was a fulfillment not only of the letter but also of the very spirit of the law. In the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 He declared repeatedly, "You have heard that it was said ... but I say to you ..."—each time revealing the radical heart response that the old covenant commands required. All this He Himself perfectly fulfilled as the Holy and Righteous One.

But then also, according to His Father's purpose through the Cross, He fulfilled everything that the old covenant *sacrificial system* pointed towards—by once and for all bearing the curse that is upon all who fail to fulfill their high human calling!

Galatians 3:13

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.

The result? Paul could announce that now both Jew and Gentile may through faith in Him 'receive adoption as God's children':

Galatians 4:7

You are no longer slaves, but [sons]; and since you are [sons], He has also made you heirs.

Romans 8:17

If we are [sons], then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.

Amazing! Each one who has been united with the En-fleshed Son has received the full *personal status* of His Sonship, becoming an heir with Him of all that is His. Yes, every child of God is a co-heir with the Son in His communion of love with His Father, and a co-heir with Him of the entire creation that He Himself has called into being by His word—heirs with Him of all things in heaven and on earth!

the children of God predestined to adoption from eternity

Paul makes one further statement regarding those to whom the Father has given the grace of adoption:

Ephesians 1:5–6

He predestined us to be adopted as His children through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will—to the praise of [the glory of His] grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves.

As the Father's elect children, the redeemed have been predestined *from eternity* to be brought into the holy happiness of this glorious covenant relationship. As such, they are and will always be 'to the *praise* of the glory of His grace'. He will forever be worshipped and adored for everything He has freely bestowed upon His children—in this One who has eternally been His Treasure!

It might be helpful to make one final comment in regard to this matter of being God's children: We may say that although, by creation, God is the Father of all, not all are the children of God. This is the same as saying that Jesus is 'the Saviour of the world' but only those who believe are saved (1 Timothy 4:10). It is at regeneration that those whom God has fathered by creation are *adopted* and made to be *heirs* together with the Son.

And so, we have this first element of the *new identity* of the redeemed. They are now called the children of God—one with the Son in His *personal status* as Beloved Heir!

the gift of immediate sanctification

We have said that the gift of adoption restores a person to what is basic to their created nature. No one can live as the *image* of God without having the status of being a *child* of God. But there is a further gift that must be added to adoption for this status to be complete. Here we need to introduce the matter of *sanctification*.

In Study 5 we learned that to 'sanctify' is to set apart, consecrate or make holy. A holy life is basic to any fulfillment of the high human calling. But before such a holy *life* can be expressed, a child of God must first of all be given a holy *status* before Him.

A holy life is one of *worship*: a life set apart to the enjoyment of God that brings Him pleasure and fulfills His purpose. The gift of a holy *status* before God is received when He *consecrates* and *sets a person apart* to worship and enjoy Him and do His will forever!

Later it will be seen that there is a *process* of sanctification—that is, a life of holiness in which a child of God, in the way they live, is *increasingly* set apart *to* Him and *from* all that displeases Him. Here, though, we are speaking of sanctification not as a

process but as a *crisis*—the ‘status-gift’ of complete holiness before the Father, *immediately* received at regeneration.

sanctification as a *status* within the old covenant

In Study 5, under the old covenant with Israel, we saw that nothing could be used in the worship of God that was not first of all *made clean* and *sanctified*. Every item used in the tabernacle or the later temple had to be prepared in this way. That was also the case with the priests. They could not be engaged in worship on behalf of Israel without being both ceremonially clean and consecrated as holy.

In fact, we saw in Exodus 24 that Israel itself had to be consecrated as a holy nation. Moses, as the mediator of the covenant, sprinkled the blood of sacrificial offerings upon the assembled community at the foot of Mount Sinai. This blood both *cleansed* them from their sins and *consecrated* them as God’s own worshipping people.

It was the *LORD* who sanctified Israel, setting them apart to Himself. No one could just come and worship God. Only divinely cleansed and consecrated covenant members of Israel could offer sacrifice and lift their hearts up to Him in worship.

The way of worship within the tabernacle, and the later temple, was a *divine proclamation* that all true worship must be *provided* by the grace of God. We will see in a later study that we can only offer the worship that He Himself gives, and with the authority He provides to do so, in the Son.

sanctification as a *status* within the new covenant in Christ

When Jesus came to redeem Israel and the nations, this *immediate* status of sanctification was an indispensable part of what He was to accomplish:

Hebrews 10:9–10, 14

[Christ said], “Here I am, I have come to do Your will” ... And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all ... For by one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who [are sanctified].

By the propitiating sacrifice of Jesus’ body on the Cross, all who believe have been *made holy*. They have been forever set apart to God as His holy children to worship Him and do His will.

1 Peter 1:1–2

God’s elect ... have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with His blood.

Peter tells us that through the Spirit’s sanctifying work of regeneration, a person is brought to obedient faith and sprinkled with the blood of Christ. Here again we see the imagery of Exodus 24, where Israel was consecrated as God’s holy covenant people at Mount Sinai through the sprinkled blood of the sacrifices.

The status of immediate sanctification as the children of God is a very significant *covenant gift*. It is at the heart of what it means to be included in the *new covenant* in Christ. As we’ve been saying, all of the gifts we have looked at so far have to do with this inclusion.

Every person who receives the gifts of forgiveness, cleansing, justification, adoption and sanctification are immediately *qualified* to participate in the blessedness of the Son’s own eternal covenant union with His Father. Yes, as the sanctified children of God they are set apart as beloved heirs in Him, to fully participate in this intimate relational bond, forever!

a free and noble standing before the Father

Writing to believers at Corinth, Paul wonderfully summed up the status of every redeemed person through the regenerating work of the Spirit. He declared:

1 Corinthians 6:11

“You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”

Here we have three life-giving elements of a person’s status before the Father as one of His children. They are those who have been washed, sanctified and justified. The *cleansing* that is necessary before sanctification, the *sanctification* itself and *justification*.

It is in this way that every child of God enjoys—by faith alone, through grace alone—the same standing before the Father as the Son has: a status of complete purity, holiness and righteousness!

As declared earlier in regard to justification, so now even more—in the light of cleansing and sanctification as the children of God—each person in Christ may be assured of the same affirmation that Jesus received from His Father at His baptism:

Luke 3:22

“You are My Son, whom I love, with You I am well pleased.”

Ephesians 1:4

He chose us in [Christ] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless [before Him in love].

Ephesians 3:12

[In Christ] and through faith in Him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

It was always the Father’s purpose that, united with the Son, His children should be able to freely and confidently stand before Him, in love!

Colossians 1:22a

He has reconciled you ... to present you holy [before Him].

YES, THE FATHER HAS ESTABLISHED *FRIENDSHIP* BETWEEN HIMSELF AND THE REDEEMED FOR A TRULY MAGNIFICENT PURPOSE: THAT THEY MAY BE FOREVER SET APART TO ENJOY HIM AND DO HIS WILL!!!

the holy happiness of the Sanctifying-Son

Not only do the children of God in Christ have the Father’s delighted affirmation, they also have the affirmation of the Son. As the writer to the Hebrews said:

Hebrews 2:11

“Both the One who makes people holy and those who are made holy [have the same Father]. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.”

The Sanctifying-Son’s great pleasure was to affirm that the redeemed are heirs together with Him of all that is His in His Father’s presence!

Hebrews 12:2

For the joy set before Him He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Isaiah 53:11

After He has suffered, He will see [the fruit of His suffering and will be satisfied].

An enormous part of the joy that was ‘set before’ Jesus was what we’ve been speaking of here: to have the redeemed sharing fully with Him in the blessedness of His holy and blameless status as the Father’s Beloved!

the gift of immediate sanctification in Christ consecrates the redeemed to grand vocational action

We have been saying that to be made holy in Christ involves two things: to be set apart to worship the Father and to do His will. These two, together, form the rich and noble *vocation* that belongs to the children of God: called to live as the image of God in His world.

We have spoken throughout the series of these two aspects of our high human calling as *relational intimacy* and *vocational partnership* with Him. Although only the second is referred to as being ‘vocational’, they are both—as Study 2 has shown—inseparable parts of authentic human vocation.

The Father’s purpose has always been that His redeemed children would ‘joyously walk with Him’ and, in this, to participate with Him in the outworking of His gloriously wise plan of love. This is the fulfillment of their grand and holy calling:

2 Timothy 1:9

[God] has saved us and called us [with a holy calling]—not because of anything we have done but because of His own purpose and grace ... given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.

He has saved His family and called them to be with Him in His work; *not* because of their own human performance but simply by His grace, to fulfill His plan. This ‘vocation-charged salvation’ was—as Study 7 showed—*given* to His elect children, in the Son, before the creation!

We saw in ‘The High Human Calling’ study that the Father’s children are also by nature His *servants*: worshippers, rulers and stewards. When God ‘effectually called’ His elect at their regeneration, He was calling them *out* of sin, condemnation and futility *into* a freedom to live truly and fully as part of His vocationally dynamic family.

When Paul was converted, Jesus immediately said to him:

Acts 9:6

“Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

Paul was not to ‘do’ anything in order to *merit* or *maintain* his salvation—but simply to *express* it. He had, certainly, been saved *into* something! His, of course, was a *particular* calling: to be an apostle. Not many receive such dramatically clear instructions when they are born again. But all are, nevertheless, immediately called into the service of the Father and the Son.

It could be said that every regenerate child of God is called into the ‘Family Business’.

the redeemed formally consecrated at baptism

When Jesus was baptized in the River Jordan, He was *consecrated* by His Father to do the work for which He had been sent. We saw that this consecration included His own glad *affirmation* of obedience to His Father’s will and way, His *identification* with a fallen humanity in need of repentance and forgiveness, and His *anointing* as Priest, Prophet and King.

A person's baptism into Christ is *also* an act of *consecration*. By it the Lord Jesus Himself—through the one who is baptizing—*identifies* the one being baptized with His Death, Burial and Resurrection.⁷

On the basis of this identification, the baptized one is symbolically consecrated—*set apart*—to participate in Jesus' own priestly, prophetic and kingly life. Yes, those three elements that were at the heart of *His* vocational partnership with His Father are *also* now, at the heart of *every* baptized person's vocational life in Him! Then on the basis of their being identified and set apart in this manner, they themselves also—like their Lord in His baptism—wholeheartedly *affirm* their obedience to the Father's will and way.

And so, the emphasis in this symbolic act is not primarily upon the person's consecration of, them-self. Rather it is Christ, Himself, who is doing both the identifying and consecrating. The glad affirmation of obedience is, simply, a response to the amazing reality of what is being declared! There is in that, of course, an element of *personal* consecration in *response* to the declaration that is being made.

What an incredible *sign* baptism is! In it, all that a child of God has been predestined to from eternity is being symbolically acted out.

Romans 8:29

Those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.

IN BAPTISM, A PERSON IS BEING TOTALLY *IDENTIFIED* WITH THE SON AND *CONSECRATED* FOR TRANSFORMATION INTO HIS LIKENESS—TO BE WITH HIM, IN HIS RELATIONAL INTIMACY AND VOCATIONAL PARTNERSHIP WITH HIS FATHER, FOREVER!!!

As we've been saying, this consecration involves being set apart to participate in Jesus' ongoing *priestly*, *prophetic* and *kingly* life. It will, however, be seen in further studies that although such participation is truly personal, it is not 'individualistic'. That is, each child of God is not 'a priest, prophet and king'. It is God's whole family together in Christ that is priestly, prophetic and kingly. But each member is called to have a part in this grand vocational action—according to God's will, and the spiritual gifts they have each been given.

Further on in the series, more will also be said about 'spiritual gifts', as well as the priestly, prophetic and kingly calling of God's redeemed people. However, just now we must say something about these three vocational elements.

called to be priestly in Christ

No one is called to be 'a priest'. In the New Testament Scriptures there is no such person mentioned among God's redeemed new covenant people. But all are certainly part of a holy, priestly community.

⁷ Acts 8:16 & 10:48 tell us that people were baptized in the name of Jesus. Matthew 28:19, says that baptism is to be "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." In Matthew the emphasis is upon the truth that it is the Triune Community effecting the identification, whereas in Acts the focus is upon Jesus, the One into whom the person is being baptized. Either way, the declaration being made is not that the one being baptized is identifying *them-self* with the Redeemer, but that the Redeemer is identifying the baptized one with *Himself* in His Redemptive Act. The 'baptizer' is the 'active party' in this event, representing the action of Jesus / the Triune Community; while the 'baptized' one is the 'passive party'—who is identified with the Death, Burial and Resurrection of Jesus.

1 Peter 2:5

[You are called to be] a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

We have seen that a priest is a worshipper of God, and also, that for a true human being worship is a whole way of life. And in Study 6 we saw that this was how it was for Jesus.

The En-fleshed Son's every desire, thought, word and act was a 'fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice' bringing pleasure to His Father (Ephesians 5:2; Philippians 4:18). And, in this, every moment of His days was a glorious manifestation of *the way and the aroma of the kingdom!*

Accordingly, each redeemed child of the Father, in Christ, has been set apart to continually offer up to Him the desires of their heart, the thoughts of their mind, the words they speak and the things they do—all as a pleasure-giving sacrifice to Him!

It must be emphasized that although such sacrifices are 'acceptable' to the Father, they are *never* offered in order to *gain acceptance* by Him. That has all been established once and for all in the Son.

called to be prophetic in Christ

Again, not everyone is called to be 'a prophet', as such. But all in Christ are definitely called to be *prophetic*. That is, they have been set apart to be those who have God's word living dynamically within them, and to express the truth of this in all that they say.

The saints are to be focused upon *the wonder of God's mighty works* throughout history and the glorious fulfillment of these in Christ—together with the realities of their high human calling. These things are to so 'dwell richly' within them (Colossians 3:16) that they are ready to speak of them at any time.

1 Peter 2:9

You are ... God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

called to be kingly in Christ

In Study 6 we saw that Jesus' ministry among us included His performing the 'works and signs of the kingdom'. These declared His authority as King over five things: sin, sickness (and other physical dysfunction), dark spiritual powers, death and the creation. They also pointed forward to the ultimate kingdom to come at His Appearing when the first four would be forever eliminated from God's world, and the fifth, the creation, entirely renewed.

For the children of God to be kingly in Christ, again, does not mean they will be individual, 'kings'. They become part of a 'kingly community' in the Son-King—in the midst of which they may expect to see ongoing revelation of the 'works' and 'signs' of the kingdom! As will be seen later in this study, such works and signs may be of the same nature as those that Jesus performed, but also, together with these, other wonderfully powerful expressions of new covenant reality.

So then, from what has been said of these three areas of a person's calling in Christ, it is clear that an incredible act of *vocational consecration* takes place when each one is baptized into Christ. **THEY ARE DECLARED TO BE ONE WITH THE SON IN HIS VOCATIONAL STATUS AS PRIEST, PROPHET AND KING!!!** This then, is the second element of their *new identity* in Him.

the saints in Christ

A 'saint' in the Scriptures is 'a holy one'. The word saint comes from the same word used for 'holy', 'sanctify', 'consecrate', 'set apart', etc. God's people were sometimes called saints in the Old Testament, referring to those who were functioning as part of the 'holy nation' of Israel. In the New Testament it is an extremely important term, expressing what is at the heart of our calling to relational intimacy and vocational partnership in the Son.

The primary meaning of 'saint' doesn't refer to those who are exceptionally holy in their way of living. It speaks of the *status* that all of God's people have been given in Christ. Every child of God is also a saint—part of a gloriously consecrated community!

To the believers in Corinth, the apostle Paul said:

1 Corinthians 1:2

"[You are] those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours."

Then to God's people in Rome:

Romans 1:6–7

"You also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ ... who are loved by God and called to be saints."

They were—as the Father's dearly loved and elect children—called to be His 'holy ones'.

In writing to the Philippian believers, Paul began his letter by saying:

Philippians 1:2

"To all the saints who are in Christ Jesus, in Philippi."

This is a powerful description of any community of God's people anywhere in the world. They are set apart in the Son to worship and enjoy the Father and to do His will in the *location* in which He has placed them.

Later studies will show what a significant thing it is for God's 'holy ones' to be situated among the nations of the world.

'set apart and set up' for a glorious and eternal future

We have already mentioned the fact of the redeemed being made *co-heirs* with Christ: *qualified* to participate in the blessedness of His eternal covenant union with His Father. Later in this study the wonders of that *eternal inheritance* will be proclaimed. But before we move on, something must briefly be said of this here. That is because it is the ultimate fulfillment of a believer's sanctification in Christ, declaring a very significant aspect of their *present status* in Him.

Acts 26:18

[Jesus said, "They will] receive ... [an inheritance] among those who are sanctified by faith in Me."

Colossians 1:12

[The Father] has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the [the saints in light].

Every child of God has been *qualified* by the Father to inherit all that belongs to the Son. Those who are sanctified in Christ will inherit everything that He is, and is His, in His glorified humanity. And all this in an eternal realm of light!

But for the saints, in Christ, the *status* of being in this glorious realm of light is *already* theirs. Paul said to the Lord's people in Ephesus:

Ephesians 5:8

"You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord."

The Ephesians, who lived in a dark (diagonalized) idolatrous city, needed to know two things: Firstly, that they were not only once *in* darkness but had been actually, themselves, *darkness*. And secondly, **NOW IN CHRIST THEY WERE ACTUALLY LIGHT!!!**

The saints in Ephesus had been given the status of being 'light in the Lord'. They were already set apart and set up for their inheritance in the eternal realm of light!

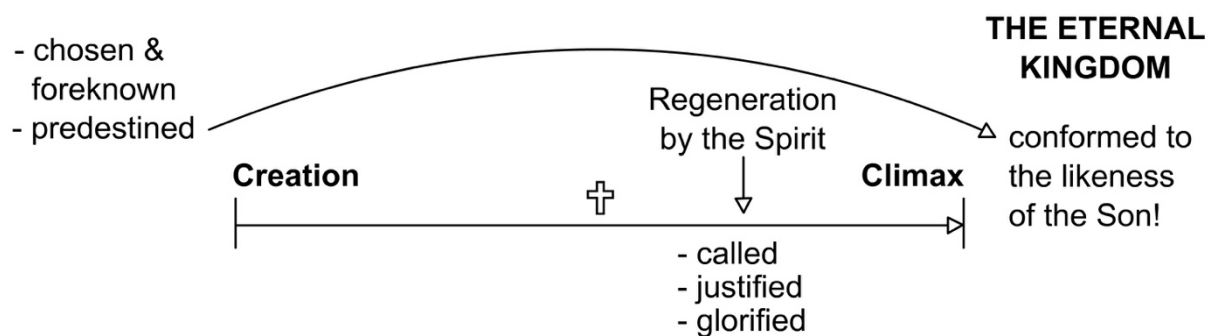
But not only do the saints, even now, have this status of being 'light' in the Lord; they also have the status of already being 'glorified' in Him. Again, Paul's proclamation is stunning:

Romans 8:29–30

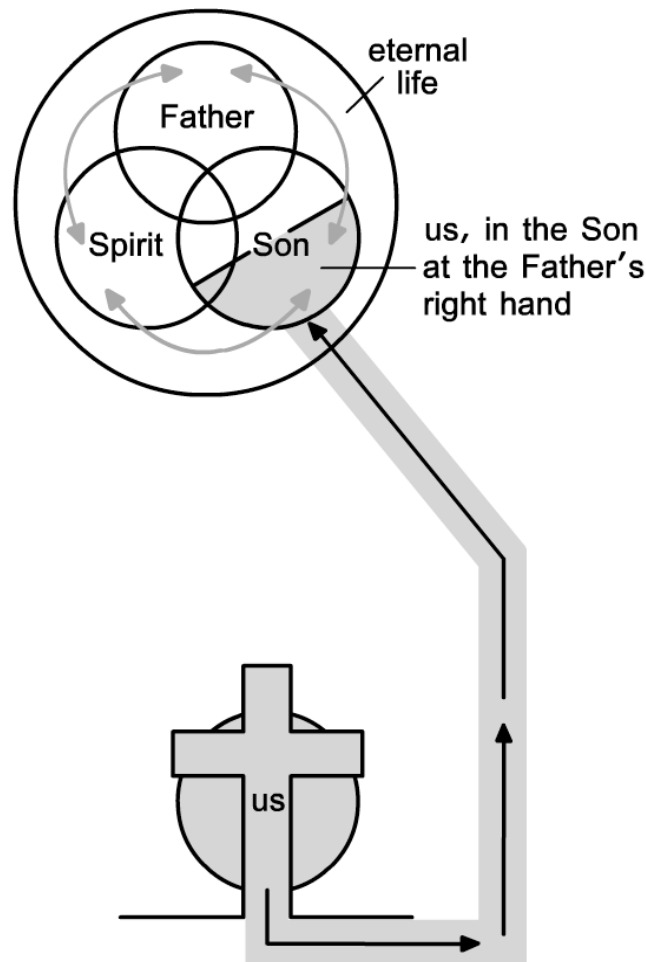
"Those He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those He predestined, he called; those He called He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified."

In these two amazing verses we see that the saints were chosen and predestined from eternity; and, in time, were called, justified and glorified. Yes, **ALREADY, IN CHRIST, GLORIFIED!!!**

The following two diagrams once again illustrate the present status of the children of God, sanctified in the Son and having the status of being, even now, glorified in Him. This first one from Study 7:



Then the one already twice used in this study, with the shaded sections showing what it means to be incorporated into Christ—one with Him in His Death, Burial, Resurrection, Ascension and Glorification:



The saints are the called, the justified and the *glorified*. At present, it is all known and enjoyed by faith. But later in this study we will see that when Jesus appears at the great Climax of history, it will all be totally revealed and enjoyed by sight!

In this section we have been speaking of the gift of immediate sanctification, *consecrating* the redeemed to grand vocational action. And *that* consecration will never be *grander* than what it will be when Jesus finally comes 'to be glorified in the saints' (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

God's sanctified children have been set apart to a vocation with glorious eternal dimensions. This is at the heart of their amazing heritage in the Son. YES, THE PERSONAL IDENTITY OF THE REDEEMED IS HUGELY ENRICHED BY THIS INCREDIBLE INHERITANCE THAT IS LAID UP FOR THEM IN ETERNITY!!! They may know that from the moment of new birth, the Father set them apart to finally and wholly possess this greatest of all gifts!

the Father's inheritance in the saints

There is something else for us to understand about this matter of inheritance—something quite astonishing! Not only have *the saints* been given an inheritance *from* the Father, but *He* also has an inheritance *in them*!

This is one of the three things Paul earnestly prayed that the Ephesian believers would have revelation of. He said:

Ephesians 1:18

"[I keep on praying that you may know] the riches of the glory of His inheritance in [the saints]."

The saints are *the Father's* holy ones! From before the creation He anticipated—and lovingly cherished—the ultimate fulfillment of His great purpose of grace: to eternally *enjoy* total relational intimacy and vocational partnership with His elect children, who are co-heirs with the Son.

What was true of God's holy people under the old covenant is also true of those under the new:

Deuteronomy 14:2

[Moses said], "You are a people holy to the LORD your God ... The LORD has chosen you to be His treasured possession."

The LORD called His sanctified nation Israel His 'treasured possession'. We have seen that He also called them His 'first-born son'—a kind of 'national representation' of the Eternally Treasured One who was soon to be 'made flesh' within human history. And so, today, all who have been united with the now En-fleshed and Glorified Son are also *the Father's delight* (1 Peter 2:9).

The *sanctification* of the redeemed—forever set apart to the Holy One and His purpose—makes them to be those who, indeed, have enormous personal significance. They have been liberated into the greatest and most noble status that anyone in the world could ever have: life, every moment, as the children of God—*His* very own inheritance!

The following Old Testament images communicate something of this status that is freely given to the Father's redeemed children (the first one already declared earlier):

Leviticus 26:13

I broke the bars of your yoke and enabled you to walk with heads held high.

Psalms 3:3

You, LORD, are ... my glory, the One who lifts up my head.

It is the LORD who is the glory of the saints; it is He who makes them to be what they are and calls them into such rich vocation!

1 Samuel 2:8

[The LORD] raises the poor from the dust ... and has them inherit a throne of honour.

Isaiah 61:3

[By His grace He bestows on them] a crown of beauty instead of ashes.

free, at last, from 'status anxiety'

Status anxiety—having concern and fretfulness about one's personal status—always has behind it an unsettling awareness of what Paul declared to the Romans:

Romans 3:23

"All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."

That is, as Studies 3 and 4 have shown, all have refused the presence of the Father and have idolatrously pursued human identity, security, fulfillment and hope apart from Him—with outcomes devoid of both divine glory and true humanity!

When lacking assurance of the gifts we've been speaking of in this study, a person can never truly enjoy a *free engagement* in personal reflection. Always, at core, there is the glaring fact of a lifetime of human failure. This, of course, sets in motion an ever-vigilant use of those 'guilt-averting strategies'; and also with these, there is the drive to construct and visualize some kind of *noble, personal and vocational identity*—one *grand* enough for those created to be the image of God. Study 4 showed how all such endeavours prove to be futile, making personal reflection a consistently frustrated

exercise. Yes, and this, regardless of how sophisticated and, even, ‘spiritual’ these mechanisms may be.

When, however, the massive reality of our sinfulness is met *in its totality* by the grace of God in Christ, a marvelous liberation can be experienced. And then restless anxiety about *who we are* may, at any time, be instantly dissolved!

Assured of the great saving gifts of God, all can authentically ‘walk with heads held high’ *regardless* of their human performance, personal appearance, life experience, material acquisition or the attitude of others towards them. Such states may be far less than ideal, but focusing on the *new liberty* and *new identity* that is given in Christ (together with the other gifts to come in this study) makes all else totally irrelevant. YES, IN THE SON, OUR SENSE OF PERSONAL STATUS AND SIGNIFICANCE MAY BE JOYOUSLY RICH AND FULL—REGARDLESS OF WHAT ELSE IS, OR ISN'T, IN PLACE!!!

As mentioned previously, many of us have lived in an environment of criticism and rejection. But that doesn't have to lock us into an incessant quest for self-attained self-esteem. The Father's redeemed children may drink freely from the cup of His exalted estimation of them in Christ. He delights to see those who are His inheritance deeply and joyously imbibing the grand status He has bestowed upon them!

In the Lord there can be true ‘self-acceptance’. This—as was seen in regard to justification—is not about accepting our ‘sinful self’, but the ‘new self’ in Christ. *That* authentic self is, certainly, one to be wholeheartedly embraced!

the new identity—and life upon the ‘performance platform’

When declaring the nature of the gift of *justification*, it was said that the entire life of every person in this world is lived out within a particular environment: the atmosphere of a vast ‘*legal courtroom*’.

But now we are to see that life is also consistently lived out upon what may be called, a ‘*performance platform*’: that is, a whole range of social situations in which we are openly observed by others, and sense that the *significance* of our *personal and vocational performance* is being evaluated and assessed. Such settings would include things like the schoolyard, the playground, the club, the shopping centre, the office, the workshop, the church and the family etc. That is, any situation where we express who we are and what we do, in the presence of others.

The environment of both the legal courtroom and the performance platform may make great demands upon our mental, emotional and physical energies, for they have to do with the attitude of others towards us. But the context of these two is different.

Within the *legal courtroom environment* we saw that the issue had to do with our ‘*moral status*’: whether or not we are seen to have a good or bad *moral standing* in the eyes of others. We could say that it is like always being in a ‘moral dock’—awaiting the verdict of those examining the evidence against us.⁸ The moral dock is the place of *moral judgment*—resulting in our being either ‘morally commended and honoured’ or ‘morally condemned and dishonoured’.

Life lived upon the *performance platform*, however, has to do with ‘*personal and vocational status*’: whether or not we have personal and vocational *esteem* in the eyes of those around us. We could say it is like always being in a ‘relational spotlight’: a place of *assessed value and significance*—which results in our being either personally and vocationally acceptable to others, or not. The question is whether *who we are* and

⁸ A dock being the area in a law court where the accused person stands during a trial.

what we do is worthy of either their *esteem* or *disdain*, whether we are to be *liked* or *not liked*, *delighted in* or *ignored*, *accepted* or *rejected*—all on the basis of others' assessment of our personal value and significance.

For the sake of clarity, we can summarize the contrast in this way:

the legal courtroom / moral dock

- the place of *moral judgment* in regard to our *personal choices*—to do with 'moral status' (in light of the 'rightness' or 'wrongness' of our chosen words or actions)

the performance platform / relational spotlight

- the place of *assessed value and significance* in regard to our *personal and vocational performance*—to do with 'personal and vocational status' (in light of who we are seen to be and what we are seen to do).

It's not difficult to understand, then, how anyone's sense of personal wellbeing is very much dependent upon the state of their heart and mind within both of these spheres: the legal courtroom (or moral dock) and the performance platform (or relational spotlight). They can be realms in which we enjoy a free and clear spirit in the presence of God and others, or the exact opposite.

It's also true that the way we respond in each of these spheres impacts upon the other. For example, fearful reaction to life upon the *performance platform* can adversely affect the *moral choices* we make—causing us to say and do what will promote human acceptance rather than what will bring divine pleasure. And, of course, any uneasiness in regard to our moral status within the *courtroom* environment—with the sense of alienation from God and others that this inevitably brings—will also drive us into seeking social acceptance by what we say and do. There is no doubt that the more we languish under feelings of moral failure, the less we enjoy our God-given identity in His presence—and the more we are pressed to contrive a personal and vocational identity that is valued by others. And so, the spheres of the legal courtroom and the performance platform are, clearly, very closely related. In fact, often our lack of personal wellbeing within a particular situation may well have to do with unsettledness in regard to both environments: troubled simultaneously by our *personal choices* and our *personal and vocational performance*.

Well, once again the good news is that for the redeemed there is great freedom to be enjoyed in relation to life upon the 'performance platform', within its various settings. None need be in fearful bondage to a *dread* of the rejection and scorn of others or have a compulsive *drive* for their acceptance and esteem. And this because of what has been declared regarding a redeemed person's *place* in the *unseen* spiritual realm—face to face with the Father *in* the One who is gloriously seated with Him at His right hand!

Fulfillment of both the *courtroom drive* for moral commendation and honour and the *platform drive* for acceptance and esteem, never need to be sought on the basis of what is seen and sensed (that is, a perception of others' *judgments* regarding our *moral choices*, or their *assessments* regarding our *personal and vocational performance*). But rather, every redeemed person may exalt every day in their glorious status in the Son. That is, those who are one with Him in the *moral* status of His own righteousness in His Father's presence; who are one with Him in His own *personal* status as Beloved Heir; and who have been set apart to be one with Him in His own *vocational* status as Priest, Prophet and King. And in all this, those who are—forever, with Him—the cherished objects of His Father's boundless joy and delight!

Considering what we know of ourselves—and the way that certain other people see us—such a position in Christ may seem too good to be true. But that’s what makes the grace of God so gloriously surprising—and even, wonderfully *shocking*—every day. There is no sense of being morally commended and honoured, nor being socially accepted and esteemed, like that which is found within a child of God’s *grace-saturated union with the Son*, in the presence of the Father, by the operation of the Holy Spirit!

Yes, in the light of the astonishing reality of their *place* in Christ in the unseen spiritual realm, the redeemed may dare to take hold of such wondrous grace—and every day breath the invigorating air of that realm within the courtroom and platform environments of this world.

It will be seen as we continue through this study, and the rest of the series, that the *unseen realm* is to be our primary personal focus—for it is in fact, that PLACE from which we may alone, freely live a righteous and holy life for the pleasure, glory and praise of God.

a new relational freedom

For all who share in the Son’s status before His Father, there may, then, be a calm and assured personal *humility*: a *freedom from having to grasp after self-elevation* in the eyes of others. There also may be *freedom from an incessant self-defensiveness*: not needing to preserve a sense of ‘wise dignity’ by *always being right*. And, above all, there may be the *freedom to truly love others*—rather than *use* them as a means of self-affirmation or *compete* with them for top position. All these expressions of personal liberty are signs that the old status fears are, indeed, losing their binding power.

What great mercy the Father has shown His children to deliver them from that disturbing sense of personal *lostness* and *inferiority* spelt out in Study 4—into the *magnificent identity in the Son* that they were created to enjoy!

This section on freedom from ‘status anxiety’ truly does show the enormous power of this pair of salvation gifts of adoption and [immediate] sanctification. The *liberating implications* of them are many, indeed. And so, before we move on it will be good—in the light of these—to look at some other categories of ‘self-perception’.

no longer needing to be either ‘the wounded one’ or ‘the one who has been denied and deprived’

In Study 4 it was seen that in order to escape the despair that comes from a sense of personal failure, lostness, inferiority, fear and frustration we often develop a ‘**victim mentality**’. Without the assurance of God’s grace, all of us naturally tend to justify our emotional state and personal performance by blaming them on circumstances: those unfairly created by the people around us or the situations of life that have been, or are being, faced.

Things suffered physically or verbally, rights or pleasures denied—all kinds of things that can, even, cause distressing emotional ‘flashbacks’—tragically then become part of what shapes our *identity* as a person. And so, within the difficulties of life we tend to see ourselves as sad victims of denial, deprivation and abuse: those who painfully bear wounds that have been unjustly inflicted upon us.

But here—in the proclamation of Study 8, and later in Study 14—we find that our identity, as one who has been redeemed, may be found not in what has or has not happened to us in the circumstances of life (as tragic and horrible as these may have

been), but in what *has* happened, *is* happening and *will* happen to us in Christ—an entirely new way of viewing ourselves!⁹

It is, indeed, a tragic thing when children of God disregard the new identity that is theirs in order to hold on to an old ‘self-pitying’ and ‘other person/situation blaming’ way of thinking—with that bitter spirit of unforgiveness which is so often a part of this. It just doesn’t have to be that way anymore!

no longer needing to be ‘the self-exalting victor and over-comer’

Study 4 emphasized how life can, indeed, be *hard* in a sinful world—especially when we are living against the way of our Maker. And we saw how proud rebels often develop godless mechanisms, by which they do everything possible to *avoid* being a ‘victim’ of the way things are or have been; and apart from their Creator adopt a ‘**victor mentality**’, priding themselves on being a great *overcomer*. And so often—in the eyes of their admiring audience—with all this magnificently accomplished in the face of personal tragedy and adversity!

Sadly, such an ego-driven agenda can keep those who embrace it enslaved to maintaining their ‘super-image’. The result, of course, being that true relational freedom is rarely enjoyed.

But again, assured of what is *so* of them in the Son, a redeemed child of God no longer needs to give way to such foolishly, grandiose self-projection. Freedom to be openly honest about one’s fears and failures—without feeling personally inferior—is a wonderful thing!

We will, indeed, see in future studies that there is much victory and overcoming in life through a decisive exercise of the will in Christ—the one, supremely exalted kingly Victor! But this, truly known, doesn’t create a spirit of self-exaltation. Rather (as Study 10 will show) it brings with it, *joyous humility*, *adoring worship* and *thanksgiving* in the Father’s presence: pleasures that are part of His children’s heritage in the Son.

no longer needing to be ‘the all-knowing and infallible sage’

Study 4 also spoke of the ‘**sage mentality**’. It was said there that having ‘overcome the odds’ (or convinced ourselves that we have) there is a self-enlarging personal drive to proudly pass on our ‘wisdom’ to needy strugglers around us, who haven’t come to our place of triumph. We saw that the sage is convinced that they are the one ‘who has the word that needs to be heard’ (by those who have clearly not been initiated into the secret). Again, as we progress through these studies there will, indeed, be an ability to *humbly exalt* in what it means to have been united with Jesus: the one and only, all-knowing prophetic Sage! There, the emphasis is delightedly upon Him (and not us—especially not in our grand, personal spirituality!).

no longer needing to be ‘the treasured saviour and helper of others’

We saw also in Study 4 that self-attained self-esteem can be grasped after by adopting a ‘**saviour mentality**’. In this, we adopt the role of ‘saviour’ and ‘helper’ of those around

⁹ This entire area (together with those other elements following in this section) will be more comprehensively and helpfully dealt with in a future study which addresses the distressing complexities we face in a fallen world.

us in order to bolster our sense of personal worth—giving people in need the status of a victim and becoming their long-awaited deliverer and provider!

Here the God-given creational drive for compassionate service to others is being expressed, but is tainted by a quest for our own self-affirmation.

Self-affirming ‘victors and over-comers’, ‘sages’ and ‘saviours and helpers of others’ seldom enjoy the freedom of spirit for which they were created. Status anxiety may still prevail, but may be overlaid with a veneer of self-confidence. It then takes the shape of ever-vigilant ‘status management’—with the dark, fretful and, often, hostile spirit that rises up when the pursuit of ‘being wonderful’ is frustrated.

As also said in Study 4, functions such as counsellor, educator, social worker, religious worker, reliever of the oppressed and practical helper are not necessarily a means of grasping at personal significance and status. These can, of course, each be splendid and free-spirited ways of contributing to a fulfillment of others’ needs. As the series continues it will be shown how in Christ, we may do just that—in joyous fellowship with God and in bright-eyed, humble participation in His love!

a totally new way of looking at things

As we’ve seen, in a sinful world there are all manner of painful situations that can befall a person: things that may leave their attempts at self-authentication in tatters, and so, see them desperately striving to salvage a sense of self-worth for the rest of their days. But let it be declared once again, that by the grace of God His redeemed children’s sense of personal worth no longer needs to be attached to anything that has (or has not) happened to them. The only thing to be considered is what is true of them in the Son—past, present and future!

Yes, it is entirely true, that the healthy self-perception of a child of God doesn’t depend upon what they do, have or achieve; nor upon their personal appearance, ability, social position or the response of others. These are *completely irrelevant* when it comes to enjoyment of the NEW IDENTITY that is in Christ!

The redeemed may know they are the Father’s eternally chosen, called, forgiven, cleansed, justified, sanctified, eternally glorified, vocationally rich, beloved, delighted in and cherished children. What a mouthful! And it can also be a powerfully sustaining *heart-full* for all who humbly and happily embrace the wonder of it.

No person need necessarily have anything in this world that is ‘in their favour’, in order to enjoy the rich and noble identity that is in Christ. In fact, we saw in Study 7 that God has so often chosen those who are weak and despised in order to reveal His glory through them (1 Corinthians 1:26–31). He loves to see His children who are nothing in the eyes of others come to rejoice in the wonders of His grace, and then—as this study will show—begin to reflect His glory through their humanity.

every category of our human identity may be *truly-informed* and *transformed* in Christ

What is being referred to here, are the ‘creational categories’ of human identity that are part of everyday life: i.e. vocational functions that have to do with basic human living. Such things include being a child of our parents, a brother or sister, a husband or wife, a father or mother, a friend, a student, a worker or skilled person, a community member or leader, etc.

A redeemed child of God may well find them-selves experiencing great personal pain in such areas: seeing their own performance as sadly lacking, or feeling personally

demeaned by others' perception or treatment of them. When this is the case, even the mere thought or mention of these categories can evoke emotional distress.

Again, it must be emphasized that every child of God is engaged in any such area 'in Christ'. And keeping this in focus, they may know what is *true* of them *in Him* as they operate within it. At all times, they can remain *assured* of their magnificent moral, personal and vocational status, regardless of their own failures and other unfortunate experiences. With their mind being *truly informed*—and their view of themselves *transformed*—they are able to enjoy a free and full engagement within *any* of the above-mentioned categories!

Apart from such fully assured living in Christ, these various vocational spheres of life will inevitably be those in which self-esteem is idolatrously pursued. But this kind of God-refusing resolve will never deliver the sense of identity that our hearts yearn to know, and usually brings with it all kinds of complexities.

As the series progresses each of these vocational categories will be dealt with, and the issue of authentic self-perception in Christ spelt out in appropriate detail. Together with this there will be biblical teaching on our need for *decisive rejection* of improper personal desire, thought, speech and action—enabling freedom and fullness in Christ to be experienced in each area. There is much more practical proclamation to come that will be both liberating and enlivening!

success is good—but watch out

In the Lord, much vocational 'success' may be enjoyed by the redeemed. But great care must be taken when this is the case, as such experiences can quickly see us locked back into seeking the 'old fleshly identity' we've been speaking of—and the slavish maintenance this demands.

Whenever there are successes 'the flesh' can rise up and disregard the magnificent things of grace. The old godless cry may return: either, "I am somebody, of myself, apart from my Maker!" or, "I am somebody, with His help!" But the joy is in one's *own performance* rather than in 'the God of all grace' who has set us in His Son, forever! When filled with the 'perceived wonders' of our achievements, the *grand*, moral, personal and vocational status we have in Christ, tragically, becomes as nothing to us.

This of course, is so unnecessary. When they do succeed, the redeemed may enjoy a spirit of worship and thanksgiving. Knowing that although, of themselves, they are and have nothing, they may *exalt* in the *supreme wonder* of being as they are before the Father, in the Son. They may, in fact, rejoice that they have been delivered from what would otherwise be ugly self-congratulation—delighting in the gifts they have freely received. There may, indeed, be a song in their heart to their Lord because of His joyous inclusion of them in His own vocational fruitfulness!

We have quite thoroughly pursued the implications of adoption and sanctification. This is because it all relates, so powerfully, to this matter of 'status anxiety' in regard to our personal and vocational identity. Hopefully, it has been a helpful exposure to the goodness and perfection of every endowment that is received by all who are in the Beloved—who now no longer need to be locked into the endless, restless struggle of maintaining a fragile, self-attained self-esteem.

And so, there we have it. Every regenerate, forgiven, cleansed and justified person in Christ has also been given these two extraordinary gifts of adoption and [immediate] sanctification. Yes, and in these they have a NEW IDENTITY enabling them to say, "I am a child of God, and as a 'holy one' the Father has forever set me apart to Himself and His purpose!" And they may also declare, "I have been made one with the Son in

His personal status as Beloved Heir, and in His vocational status as Priest, Prophet and King.” How critically significant are these issues of PERSONHOOD for those created to know the dignity of being the very image of God of His world.

in Christ, enjoying the transforming wonder of
the new covenant gifts of:

ADOPTION & (immediate) SANCTIFICATION

being receivers of a **NEW SECURITY** (in our CIRCUMSTANCES)

no longer having to bear with a dark-spirited
sense of *uneasiness & vulnerability*;

now able to say: **‘I have a sovereign Father—at work!’**

made to be as secure as the Son in His Father’s purpose

We have seen that the gifts of adoption and sanctification in Christ bring a *new identity* in the area of personhood. But now we will learn that they also bring a *new security*—and *serenity*—within the circumstances of life. The One who has forgiven, cleansed, justified, adopted and sanctified those whom He has called, also *cares* for them and *works purposefully* towards them in every moment of their days.

the Father’s attitude towards His children

We understand from Study 1 that ‘the God Who Is’ is by no means detached from His creation. And this is certainly the case when it comes to those He has chosen to be co-heirs with His Son.

Isaiah 49:15

Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you.

It could be that through exceptionally tragic circumstances a mother may deny her maternal nature and forget her child. But the Father will never be less than all He truly is, towards all who have been ‘born of Him’.

Zechariah 2:8

Whoever touches you touches the apple of His eye.

Zechariah was declaring that God’s ‘holy ones’ are as precious to *Him* as anyone’s *eyeball* is to *them*—especially when someone tries to poke their finger in it!

Zephaniah 3:17b

He will take great delight in you, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.

God’s grand family—and each member of it—is the constant and joyous focus of His adoring attention.

the Father’s sovereign purpose and power

It was shown in Study 1 that our great Father, Creator and King knows exactly what He is doing in His world, and is *able* to accomplish all that He has purposed. It was also pointed out that although *human* fathers have *excellent intentions* for their children, they are so often powerless to fulfill them. But because of the way the Sovereign One is, this will never be the case within His family.

a purposeful Father

Every sanctified child of God may be, *absolutely sure* that the Father is purposefully at work towards them.

Romans 8:28-29

We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who [are the called ones] according to His purpose. For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.

Ah, here we have, again, that most important statement in regard to adoption and sanctification: THE FATHER'S GLORIOUS PURPOSE FOR HIS CHILDREN IS TO CONFORM THEM TO THE LIKENESS OF HIS SON. THIS IS THE KEY TO HIS EVERY ACTION ON THEIR BEHALF!!!

If any child of God ever finds themselves asking, "What is God doing in these circumstances I'm facing?" then here's the answer. He is in the process of accomplishing what He has predestined all of His elect children to: to be like His Son!

Ephesians 1:11

[He] works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will.

Within the broad sweep of history, as well as in the details of the lives of each of His 'called ones', He is working out His great and glorious purpose of love.

Jeremiah 29:11

"I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

This statement is certainly one that brings personal assurance for a child of God. However, here it is fitting to make a comment about the nature of many Old and New Testament scriptures like this one. The context is that Jeremiah was speaking of the LORD'S purpose for Israel as His 'holy nation', whom He would ultimately deliver from exile. In His great plan for them, as a people, they would have 'hope and a future'.

Although the Father's purpose for each of His children *personally* is very wonderful, it is not a merely an *individual* thing. It is always worked out in the midst of a great plan for His people as a whole. His intimate, fatherly intention for each of His 'holy ones' is never unrelated to the purpose He has for His *entire* family.

More will be said of this in a later study, where the emphasis will be upon the redeemed as the Father's richly purposeful 'community of love'—rather than merely a group of individuals. Here in Study 8, the focus is more upon what is *personal* for each one who is regenerate in Christ.

always at work—in His own way and according to His own timetable

The Father of His family is the 'Living God'. He never ceases to be dynamically *acting* within His world and among His people. But this is not always obvious to those who are looking on! Isaiah found Himself saying:

Isaiah 45:15

"Truly You are a God who has been hiding Himself."

By faith, Isaiah always knew that the LORD was at work among His people. But it certainly didn't *appear* this way to him at the time. Whatever God had been doing, He had not made it very clear to His servant! But Isaiah was still convinced that what had been promised would surely come to pass.

Peter could confidently declare:

2 Peter 3:8

“With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.”

Here the apostle was responding to the idea that some people had: that God was a bit slow in fulfilling His promise. But for Him—the Lord of history—speed is not the issue. In Study 1 we saw that time is something God has created, but that He, Himself, is not locked into it. Although always *at work within* time, He is unsearchably greater than it and sovereignly rules over it.

His children may know that He is the *Eternal One*. He is GOD, who knows exactly what He has planned to do over the centuries and millenniums of history. This great Father, Creator, King and Redeemer is neither slow nor impatient as He goes about His business. In His wisdom and love He is always acting according to His will—and His timing is always perfect!

Isaiah 33:10

“Now will I arise,” says the LORD. “Now will I be exalted; now will I be lifted up.”

No matter how much He appears to have been ‘hiding Himself’, the time will surely come when He *acts* in a way that openly reveals the glory of His Fatherhood!

the Mighty Father-Creator-King-Redeemer who does as He pleases in His world

Yes, the children of God are fathered by One who has much more than good intentions. As we saw in Study 1, He is the Sovereign Lord of His creation, powerfully and purposefully presiding over every instant of human history, as these scriptures declare:

Lamentations 5:19

You, LORD, reign forever; Your throne endures from generation to generation.

Jeremiah 32:17

Ah, Sovereign LORD, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for You.

Jeremiah 32:26-27

Then the word of the LORD came ... “I am the LORD, the God of the whole human race. Is anything too hard for Me?”

Isaiah 46:9–11

I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what still is to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please ... What I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do.

Isaiah 14:26–27

This is the hand stretched out over all nations ... [The] LORD Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart Him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?

Psalms 135:6

The LORD does whatever pleases Him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and in all their depths.

The Father’s children may be certain that whatever pleases *Him* is always the very best thing for *them*, according to His gloriously wise, eternal purpose.

the Father—sovereign over the worst assaults of the evil one

We have said that the devil, together with the powers he commands, is a perpetual terrorist and vandal within the creation. The Scriptures tell us that, as such, he exercises great power in his assaults against the will and purpose of God.

1 John 5:19

We know that we are the children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

The world system that is set up against God and His way is under the control of Satan. It is a reality that every element of rebellious human activity is powerfully shaped by his dark designs. He—together with his legions—is constantly at work within the creation to frustrate the good purposes of God; and in this he particularly sets out to unsettle, discourage and deceive the children of God in whatever way he can.

But although the devil is maliciously at work within the creation as the *controller* of his 'world system', he is by no means 'in charge' within God's world. As we saw in Job's life in Study 5, Satan had to gain permission to touch the property, family and body of the LORD'S righteous servant (Job 1:9–12; 2:6). And even—in God's wisdom—where the devil may not be required to gain permission to act, the *worst* that he can do will still not frustrate the Father's ultimate good and perfect intention.

It is always a fact that—in His unsearchably great wisdom (Romans 11:33)—God is working out everything for the good of His children, in conformity to the purpose of His will. Yes, the *Creator* is always millions of moves ahead of that rebellious *creature*, the devil! As the Story of Redemption has revealed, the greatest satanically wrought tragedy in all of history—the Cross—did not achieve Satan's purpose of damning humanity forever; the exact opposite was the result. In the Father's purpose it was His foreordained way of accomplishing eternal salvation for all who believe! (Luke 22:3–4; Acts 2:23; Revelation 13:8).

All this of course doesn't mean that we become foolishly *passive* in the face of the evil one's schemes. But it does mean we can be absolutely certain that our Maker is in charge of His world—and is always acting with glorious purpose on behalf His treasured children. It will also be seen in other studies how the redeemed—within the kingly authority of the Son—may prevail mightily over the works of the devil.

Fatherly perfection

We have spoken of the divine 'perfections' of our unsearchably great Father-Creator-King. These may be a source of enormous assurance for His adopted and sanctified ones. EVERYTHING ABOUT HIM IS PERFECT!!!

Romans 12:2

His will is good, pleasing and perfect.

The Father's will, is *good*. We all want our lives to be good and functional—and He wants this too! His will is also *pleasing*. It is pleasing to *Him* and is for the ultimate pleasure of His family. And His will is *perfect*. Nothing could be better than what He has purposed.

2 Samuel 22:31a

His way is perfect.

A perfect *way*! We have learned that He is always doing what is *right* according to the way, or law, of His own nature. As Father, Creator and King all that He does is *exactly* as it, should be, on behalf of His family, creation and kingdom.

Deuteronomy 32:4b

His works are perfect.

Perfect *works*! Every manifestation of His divine power and activity is *precisely* what is needed. Anything more or anything less would not accomplish His good, pleasing and perfect will.

Revelation 15:3

Great and marvellous are Your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are all Your ways, King of the ages.

His deeds are great and marvellous. His ways are just and true. Surely that's the kind of Father anyone would want to be at work on their behalf!

James 1:17a

Every good and perfect [giving] is from above, coming down from the Father.

James was writing to believers who were going through 'trials of many kinds'. But they could know, as the children of God, that in the midst of them all there was 'good and perfect giving' from above, from the hand of the Sovereign One.

Well, how about that? His will, His way, His works and His gifts are all perfect! There may not be the *ideal* situation that has been imagined or longed for—or even demanded. But it is exactly what He knows His children need—at least at this particular time—to conform them to the likeness of His Son! That is, if they will have it that way.

no more fear, regarding people, situations and things

In the light of what has been proclaimed about the nature and action of the Sovereign Father, His children may certainly be free from fear within the various circumstances of their lives. People, situations and things may cease to be a cause of personal distress for them.

It must be said, however, that although the things spoken of here apply to all fallen-human situations, application to horrendous experiences such as child-abuse etc., do require special care and wise sensitivity. These will be addressed in a later study dealing with particular complexities that arise within our daily living. That study will follow others which provide 'a proclaimed gospel-given framework' for dealing with life's many complexities.

This having been said, let us be undistracted in opening our hearts to this particular proclamation that is of immense significance to us all.

false hope as the cause of fear

We tend to become dark-spiritedly fearful about people, situations and things when these are where our *hope* is centred (as the Study 3 diagram shows). God's sanctified children, however, have been set apart to an entirely different Object of hope: their good, merciful, gracious, wise and sovereign Father, and His glorious purpose for them in His Son!

Isaiah exhorted Israel to be done with seeking their wellbeing in people, saying:

Isaiah 2:22

"Stop trusting in human beings, who have but a breath in their nostrils. Of what account are they?"

In reality, the only thing a human creature has is the latest breath their Creator has given them! They provide very little substantial hope for anybody's future. This is precisely the view that all must have of every *human* object of trust.

Hope is always totally misplaced when it is focused upon either people, situations that arise or the things around us. And when this is the case, a dark-spirited fear regarding them is never far away.

Misplaced hope, of course, always ultimately—one way or another—has to do with the lust of the flesh (pursuing a false promise of life in the stimulation of sensory experience), the lust of the eyes (pursuing a false promise of life in the possession of magnificent things), or the pride of life (pursuing a false promise of life in the elevation of our personal status).

We've seen that fears in regard to such idolatrous pursuits always have behind them the forebodings of an unsettled conscience. Created in the image of God, the uneasiness we feel is not only to do with the dread of incurring personal loss. We irrationally—albeit unconsciously—sense ourselves to be under judgment. And our mental obsession with the present threat locks us into anxious creation of those various self-securing mechanisms of Study 4 ('desperately seeking to gain physical, financial, material, relational, vocational and political security').

in the face of the great and powerful

In this world there can be extremely powerful figures and personalities who very quickly 'cause our hearts to fail'. But the redeemed may know that only God is GOD! As Isaiah has just said, all others are merely creatures.

Psalm 62:9

The lowborn are but a breath, the highborn are but a lie; if weighed on a balance, they are nothing; together they are only a breath.

Those who are born into—or ascend into—high privilege and power may have the appearance of greatness. But that is both a lie and an illusion. Like the lowborn and powerless, they themselves are a mere breath. The sum total of their personal substance is what is currently in their lungs!

Proverbs 19:21

Many are the plans in a human heart, but it is the LORD'S purpose that prevails. Such a statement can only be understood through an acceptance of the awesome sovereignty of God. And in the light of this, THERE IS SOMETHING THAT EVERY SANCTIFIED CHILD OF GOD MAY KNOW: THE *WORST* THAT ANYONE IS EVER ABLE TO SUCCEED IN DOING AGAINST THEM, CAN STILL BRING ABOUT THEIR FATHER'S *BEST* FOR THEM—ACCORDING TO HIS WISE PURPOSE!!!

For God's children it is an exhilarating fact of life that no one can do anything in this world unless their Maker allows them to. If it is evil that they intend, He will either prevent it, or—with divine purpose—give them up to the performance of it. Either way, His perfect will may be accomplished.

The Lord Jesus declared this to be so when wicked and powerful men came against Him, on—what we've called—that darkest (yet most glorious) day of history. As the governor was pressed to have Him crucified, He said:

John 19:11

"You would have no power over Me if it were not given to you from above."

The horrendous events that followed were both, the worst thing humankind had ever done and the most magnificent purpose of the Father!

Proverbs 21:1

In the LORD'S hand the king's heart [is like] a stream of water that He channels [wherever He pleases].

In Study 5, after Joseph had been, treacherously, sold into slavery by his older brothers, we saw that he was later able to happily say:

Genesis 50:20

“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good.”

Neither earthly nor heavenly powers can frustrate the purpose of God.

Daniel 4:35

He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth.

Proverbs 21:30

There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the LORD.

The great and powerful can do no actual harm to the children of the Holy One. All they can, ultimately, do is unwittingly serve their Maker’s grand redemptive purpose.

Once again, we must say that this does not mean we are to become *fatalistically passive* when evil comes against us. In John 8:59, on one occasion when those who were offended by Jesus’ words picked up stones to stone Him, we are told that He ‘hid Himself, slipping away’ from the area. Throughout His Ministry among us He *actively* pursued His Father’s will in the midst of what was being perpetrated against Him. And in the end, He was raised from the dead and exalted as Lord over all!

We are to be neither *frantic* nor *passive* when evil is having its way. The devil delights in inciting us to either *personal panic* or *moral paralysis*. But neither of these is the Father’s good purpose for His children under His sovereign hand.

called to a childlike trust when things get ‘scary’

In the midst of every complex and alarming circumstance of life, the children of God are called to exercise simple, childlike faith in their Faithful Father.

The True Son among us clearly affirmed this when speaking to His disciples of what is usually the most disturbing situation of all: the threat of death at the hands of others. He said:

Matthew 10:28–31

“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul ... Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground [apart from] your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”

It will only be according to the Father’s permissive will that anyone takes the life of a sanctified and dearly cherished child of God—even though the killer’s will, was fully engaged against the will of their Maker. The death of Stephen in Acts 7:54–60 (that we saw Study 6) was a supreme example of both human tragedy and divine permission and purpose.

It has been well said that the Lord’s servants are ‘unkillable’ until their work is done! They may know that in any violent situation, if it is in the Father’s purpose to preserve His child He most certainly will—very often, of course, responding to their prayers as He does.

Deuteronomy 1:17

Do not be afraid of anyone, for judgment belongs to God.

Yes, only the Judge of heaven and earth is to be taken into account. And he can be trusted to judge truly!

And in all that we face there are those superb promises that assure us of the Mighty One, whose hand is always operating on our behalf:

Zephaniah 3:17a

The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves.

The LORD God is, indeed, the One who goes into battle on behalf of His saints—jealous for His purpose for them. They are never in any situation where this Mighty Warrior is not present to *dynamically act* according to His own purpose.

Isaiah 41:10

Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.

Isaiah 46:4

Even to your old age and grey hairs ... I am He who will sustain you.

From beginning to end, the Faithful One promises to sustain those who are both His children and servants. And He calls them to trust Him—without fear.

the bold confidence of the Father's justified, adopted and sanctified ones

Those who know they are not the objects of God's condemnation but of His grand purpose and tender care, need not be afraid of any person, situation or thing. They can, indeed, be *boldly confident* in every troublesome or threatening circumstance of life!

Hebrews 13:5–6

God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can human beings do to me?"

When fear does 'fall upon' a child of God, they know exactly what to do.

Psalms 56:3–4

When I am afraid, I will trust in You. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can [people] do to me?

Psalms 31:13–15

I hear the slander of many; there is terror on every side; they conspire against me and plot to take my life. But I trust in You, LORD; I say, "You are my God. My times are in Your hands."

THE SAINTS KNOW THAT THEY ARE THE CHILDREN OF GOD!!! They once believed that their times were in their own hands, or the hands of others, or even determined merely by chance circumstances. But now their understanding is altogether different. And so, in every circumstance of every day they may be boldly confident: trusting in the One who has gloriously released them from their sins and *set them apart to Himself*, as co-heirs with His Son, forever!

quietness, rest and peace

In our relentless quest for personal quietness, rest and peace, we are all prone to a questioning of God's faithfulness and power in the midst of life's circumstances. But, as we've been seeing, such dysfunctional meditation is completely out of order. And it may be dissolved by decisive focus on what it means to embrace the vast dimensions of the Father's grace—including, of course, this gift of a 'new security' that truly brings the *circumstantial serenity* we were created to enjoy.

the quietness of creaturely humility—before a good, wise and almighty Father-Creator-King

The Father's 'holy ones' truly are in good, wise and strong hands. They certainly have no cause to question His ways.

Isaiah 45:9

Does the clay say to the potter, "What are you making?"

The minds of God's redeemed children have, in fact, been enlightened to see Him as He is—and their hearts have been enlarged to honour Him as such. In this they may enjoy the quiet trust and creaturely humility that belongs to them.

Psalms 62:11–12

Two things I have heard: "Power belongs to You, God, and with You, Lord, is unfailing [covenant] love."

We've spoken of Job's struggle in the midst of excruciating circumstances. Sadly, he found himself giving way to the defiant questioning mentioned above. But when the LORD proclaimed the fact of His sovereign wisdom and power within the creation, dark-spirited Job was brought into a deep repentance and sweet humility.

Job 42:1–3

Then Job replied to the LORD: "I know that You can do all things; no plan of Yours can be thwarted. [You asked], 'Who is this that obscures My counsel without knowledge?' Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know."

David also was brought to a place of calm humility and contentment before the LORD in the midst of the difficulties he faced. He said:

Psalms 131:1–2

"My heart is not proud, LORD, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. But I have calmed myself and quieted my ambitions; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child I am content."

The Father's dearly loved heirs in Christ may be free from a proud and demanding spirit in His presence. They may be like a weaned child against its mother's breast—quietly assured and insisting upon nothing.

rest and peace for the redeemed—a new serenity in the Son

Serenity is usually thought of in terms of the enjoyment of rest and peace in an *ideal* environment. And, of course, it's nice when such circumstances come our way. But in the Lord, there is a healthful inner rest and deep abiding peace that may be known even in the most imperfect situations.

The personal serenity being spoken of here *actually is* dependent upon an *ideal environment*—a perfect setting. This, however, is not in the realm of the *physical* senses but in that most perfect realm of all: the *unseen spiritual realm* where the redeemed are in Christ at the Father's right hand, as cleansed, sanctified, justified and glorified co-heirs with the Son—as secure as He Himself is in His Father's glorious purpose of love!

This amazing environment is known, of course, only by faith—and, as we'll see further on, is enjoyed when one's *spiritual* senses are most fully stimulated by the revelation of God's grace.

The greatest battle in the life of one of God's children is to *remain* in the assurance of these things, and so, in the serenity they bring into the midst of *any* situation—but more of that later.

Psalms 62:5–7

Find rest, my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from Him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; He is my fortress, I shall not be shaken. My salvation and honour depend on God.

To overcome the restless anxiety and fretfulness that various physical, financial, material, vocational, relational and political situations promote, requires a constant and specific focus: the One who is, Himself, the Immovable Rock and Unshakable Fortress of the redeemed. They know that their deliverance and their honour, at any time, depends in no way upon people, situations or things—but only upon Him.

1 Peter 5:7

Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.

Nahum 1:7

He cares for those who trust in Him.

Philippians 4:6–7

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

With a quiet, fully assured humility in God's presence, we may boldly call upon Him to act on our behalf according to what He has clearly promised in His word—with thanksgiving!

Throughout the series we will see that prayer is *the Father's supreme gift* to His sanctified children. By it He brings them into their greatest enjoyment of the unseen spiritual realm—and into His own peace that stands guard over their hearts and minds. It is the peace of God that keeps the heart and mind from unwelcome intruders!

Yet in all of this a child of God may live *substantially* in *two* realms: both the seen and the unseen. Prayer is not an escape from the 'real world'. It is, simply, the Father's gift of rest in 'the realm of the unseen', so that His saints may live freely and truly within 'the realm of sight'.

In this, then, a person may face all that comes their way, yet no longer be governed and ruled by circumstantial anxiety.

Isaiah 60:17

I will make peace your governor and wellbeing your ruler.

The Eternal Son was en-fleshed among us as the Prince of Peace. He lived in the midst of all the turbulence of this world; yet His Father's peace was His constant possession. It reigned, within Him. And by it, He reigned in life—prevailing over the world and its godlessly restless system.

He could say to His disciples:

John 16:33

"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Once He had accomplished their redemption—and the Holy Spirit had brought revelation to them of their union with Him—they too would possess the same peace He enjoyed. He said:

John 14:27

“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

They were to be one with Him in His own liberty, identity, security and serenity before the Father. Yes, in this world, they could be as secure and serene as He was among us in His Father’s glorious presence and purpose of love!

This same heritage is for all who are in Christ.

1 Peter 5:14

Peace to all of you who are in Christ Jesus.

1 Peter 1:2

Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

Psalms 85:8

He promises peace to His people, the saints.

Psalms 29:11

The LORD blesses His people with peace.

Isaiah 26:3

[LORD] You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in You.

Perfect peace! The Father loves to secure His saints in the midst of all they face. More will be said of this whole matter of rest and peace in our next study.

no more fretful ‘security systems’ required

Here we are reminded once more of what was seen in Study 4: of how rebel creatures must live always with ‘a nagging sense of impending trouble’—under the wrath of God’s love. Everyone who has unresolved guilt before God experiences an unsettling sense of judgment within the circumstances of their life. There is personal *uneasiness* and feelings of *vulnerability*.

This can all be quite irrational. The perception is that something horrible could happen at any time. So, rebel creatures ceaselessly engage in setting up their various ‘wrath-averting strategies’. The purpose is always to eliminate the intolerable despair that, inevitably, intrudes into a God-refusing human spirit.

We have seen that such wrath-averting mechanisms are established in the hope of obtaining physical, financial, material, relational, vocational and political security. For—as mentioned above—it is in all these areas that the sense of uneasiness and vulnerability may be keenly felt.

In such wrath-averting pursuits there are a whole range of emotions expressed: from a fleeting, exalted joy and a brief, blazing hope when all seems to be working well; to the old enemy of dark despair when the mechanisms inevitably fail—with the debilitating anxiety and bitter anger that usually rises up. And in between: that unnerving sense of uneasiness and vulnerability.

But the justified and sanctified children of God may be, at last, *free* from these foolish, futile and idolatrous behaviours! No more do they need to be oppressed and driven into folly by a sense of impending doom.

The saints, in the midst of any difficult situation (yes, and their personal stumbling within it), may exalt in the fact that the Father has declared them to be ‘not guilty’ before Him: crediting them with the very righteousness of His Son. They may know that He has *embraced* them as fellow-heirs with His Beloved and *set them apart* to Himself and His glorious, eternal purpose—and that in every circumstance of life He is *for* them

and not *against* them! There is no situation in their lives that cannot be faced with a free and clear spirit in the Son. And there never need be any personally demeaning decent into a state of anxiety and panic.

How excellent it is, for the children of God to be released from the tyranny of circumstantial fear. Their physical, financial, material, relational, vocational and political security is found in the presence of a sovereign Father—who has promised to be at work in every event of their lives, according to His wise purpose of love.

And once again, it must be said that this doesn't imply that the saints are to become passive and unengaged in the midst of difficulties. It just means that they are able to enjoy the security and serenity that is in Christ. And, in this, they may be free from desperate, idolatrous passions and able to respond truly, serenely and healthfully in the midst of all that life brings.¹⁰

secured by a redeeming Father and a great High Priest

Finally, in the following verses from Romans chapter 8 we have a strong word for God's sanctified children. This passage speaks powerfully in the light of what we learned in Study 6 about our Redeeming Father and the Ascended Son-Priest-King at His right hand.

Romans 8:31–39

What, then, shall we say in response to all this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then can condemn? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: 'For Your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered'. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Enough said.

So, all who are forgiven, cleansed, justified, adopted and sanctified in Christ have a new liberty, identity, security and serenity. But there's more! We may now look at the next two new covenant gifts that are lavishly imparted to all who have been united with the Exalted Son.

¹⁰ Later studies will speak of particular mechanisms that 'the world' has developed in order to deal with the fears, anxieties and difficulties that life brings: e.g. the many counterfeit personal solutions of 'wellness' philosophies etc. And, of course, it will also be increasingly shown how the grace of God brings strong and joyous personal liberty in the midst of all these things.

Thirdly, in Christ, enjoying the transforming wonder of the new covenant gifts of:

THE HOLY SPIRIT & (progressive) SANCTIFICATION

being receivers of a **NEW CAPACITY** (for HUMAN FULLNESS)

no longer having to bear with a dark spirited

sense of *deadness & futility*;

now able to say: **‘the Son is in me!’**

our moral, personal and vocational status being ‘wisely lived-out’

as we participate in the dynamic ‘operation’ of His righteousness:

His pure-hearted, joyous communion with His Father & His love

for all others—in His priestly heart, prophetic mind & kingly action

In Study 6 we saw the awesome event of Pentecost and its mighty affects upon all who were called into the Lord. Immediately, that day, over three thousand were *saved* from their sins and *filled* with the joy of true worship. This then, expressed itself in a deep love and concern for all others—and richly significant, vocational action. The life of the kingdom was revealed among them!

the promised gift of the Spirit

We have seen that during the Last Supper Jesus spoke much to His disciples about the Spirit, whom the Father was to give them. He said:

John 14:16–18, 26

“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of Truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you, and will be in you ... The Father will send [Him] in My name.”

At the time Jesus spoke these words to them the Spirit was *with* them. But afterwards He would be *in* them. Then they would understand and *experience* the truth of what it meant to be in Christ!

On the Day of Pentecost when the Spirit came upon them, we saw that Peter—after proclaiming the word of God to the crowd—passed on the immediate promise of the Spirit to those who were responding. He said:

Acts 2:38–39

“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

Well, there it is. All who are united with Christ receive the forgiveness of sins *and* the gift of the Holy Spirit! This gift was not only for Israel. It was for every person, within every nation, who repented and believed—expressing their faith, in receiving the covenant sign of baptism.

the indispensable gift

We have seen that the salvation of every person is a mighty regenerating act of the Holy Spirit. His work is, indeed, central to the saving operation of God’s mercy and grace towards those He has called to Himself.

Titus 3:5–6

He saved us through the washing of [regeneration] and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us [abundantly] through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

By His regenerating power the Spirit brings the elect into repentance and faith—cleansing, sanctifying and justifying them (1 Corinthians 6:11). And as the ‘Abundantly Poured Out One’, He *takes up residence within them, forever!*

Apart from the Spirit’s strong regenerating work and ongoing, intimate indwelling presence, nothing can be known of the salvation that is in Christ.

Galatians 3:14

He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

The blessing that was to come to the nations through Abraham was the gift of the Spirit. There is no fulfillment of ‘the blessing’ apart from this divine endowment. It is only by the Spirit that the covenant gifts of forgiveness, cleansing, justification, adoption and sanctification can be enjoyed.

This is what the LORD promised Israel through the prophet Isaiah:

Isaiah 44:3

“I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring, and My blessing on your descendants.”

God’s blessing of a person—equipping and enabling them to be restored to the ‘true human-ness’ lost in Adam—is dependent *wholly* upon the gift of the Spirit.

It is, in fact, impossible to be in Christ the Redeemer and not be indwelt by Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:9

If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, that person does not belong to Christ.

the Spirit as the Father’s seal

The indwelling presence of the Spirit is a powerful declaration by God Himself. Writing to the Ephesians the apostle Paul declared:

Ephesians 1:13–14

Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.

The moment a person believes, they receive the Spirit as a ‘seal’. In New Testament times the seal signified three things:

1) *genuineness*

Jesus said in John 6:27 that God the Father affirmed His genuineness as the Son of Man by placing His ‘seal of approval’ on Him. Even today the seal on a document indicates that it is genuine.

2) *ownership*

In the thickly wooded hills outside of Ephesus, people would fell trees and then float them downriver into the harbour of the city. In order to identify which logs were theirs they would put their ‘seal’ on them. At times there were thousands of logs floating in the harbour. But the issue of ownership was never in doubt because of the seal.

3) *security*

When Jesus was buried in the tomb, the utmost security arrangements were made. The authorities placed across the stone the Emperor's seal (Matt. 27:66). To violate this sign of security would mean death for the offender!

The seal of the Spirit, then, declares that a person is a *genuine* child of God, who *belongs* to Him and is eternally *secure* in the Son.

Romans 8:14

Those who are [carried along] by the Spirit of God are children of God.

The strong and intimate leading of the indwelling Spirit shows the Father's seal upon His children.

the Spirit as the Father's guarantee and foretaste of the future

As well as being 'the seal of God' the Spirit is also a divine *deposit* or *pledge*.

2 Corinthians 5:5

[God] has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

Ephesians 1:13–14

[The Spirit] is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of His glory.

All that the Father has promised those who are co-heirs with the Son is *guaranteed* by the indwelling of the Spirit. The ones He has set apart to Himself as His very own He will finally liberate into the *full enjoyment* of their eternal inheritance—to the praise of His Fatherly glory! The Holy Spirit is the deposit, down payment or pledge of this ultimate blessedness to come.

1 Peter 4:14

The Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

We've seen the stunning fact that in Christ a child of God is already glorified. This is guaranteed by the presence of the Spirit of glory Himself upon them!

Romans 8:23

[The children of God] have the first fruits of the Spirit.

The 'first fruits' of the Spirit are what He brings as the *beginning* of all that is to come. What He imparts now is a *sample* of the *full harvest* that will be enjoyed forever.

The Father's called, forgiven, cleansed, justified, adopted, (immediately) sanctified and Spirit-indwelt children have received an incredible new life. In the midst of all their difficulties, they should never expect anything *less* than what has been promised: an *abundant foretaste* of the glorious human freedom and fullness that awaits them!

the indwelling of the Son

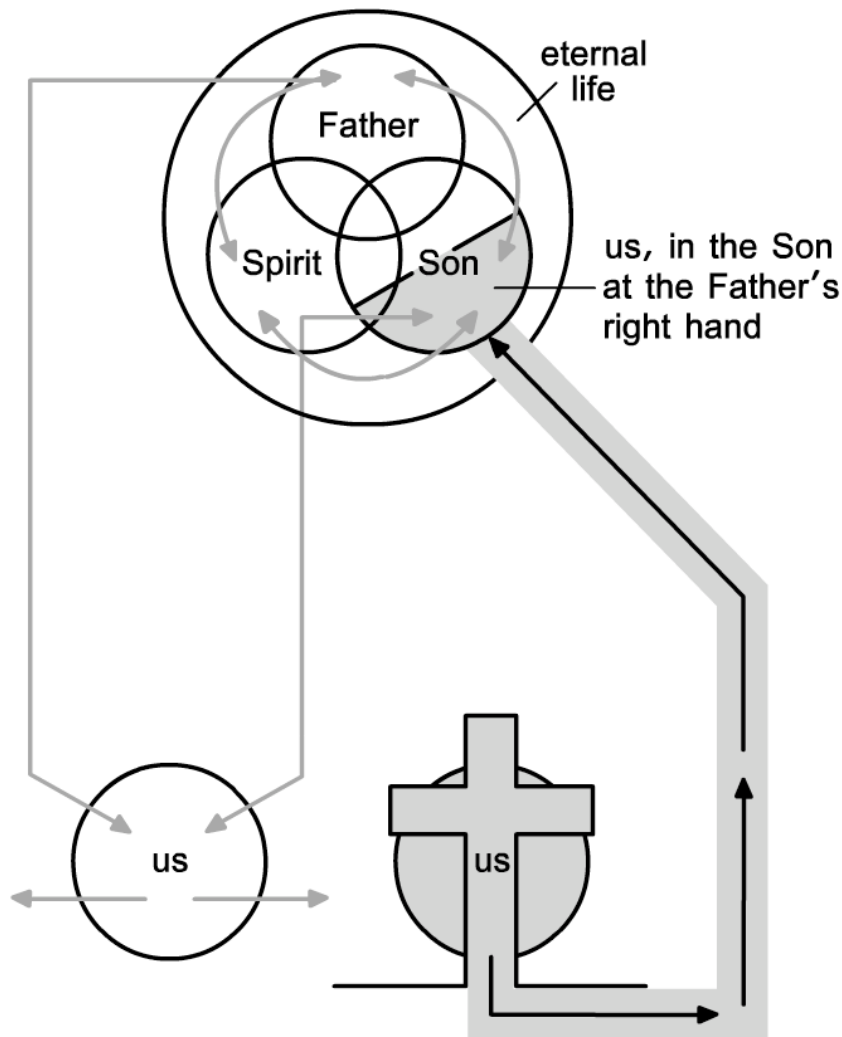
We have seen the amazing fact of forgiveness, cleansing, justification, adoption and (immediate) sanctification in Christ, with the new liberty, identity and security these bring. But now we are to see that the Spirit imparts to God's regenerate children the full and joyous *outworking* of these gifts. He gives them a NEW CAPACITY to fulfill the high human calling they have been liberated into, in the Son!

The Father doesn't merely say, "Well, I've adopted you as My child, now *live* like it!" He doesn't even say, "I've called you to be a child of God and now I'll help you to *be* one." He says something so very much better. His declaration is: "I HAVE MADE YOU TO BE ENTIRELY ONE WITH MY SON FOREVER. AND NOW I POUR THE HOLY

SPIRIT UPON YOU IN HIS NAME, SO THAT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO, ACTUALLY, PARTICIPATE IN *HIS* OWN SONSHIP!!!”

We saw in Study 4 (and in the section above on ‘justification’) that when Adam sinned it was as if the serpent’s poison entered into his humanity, and that what was so for him, tragically, became the case also for us from birth. But now, born anew by the Holy Spirit, it is the life of *the Son* that has entered into our being—to be more and more manifested within us and through us!

And so in the following diagram, we see again the union of the redeemed with Christ in His Death, Burial, Resurrection and Ascension. But, now also, it shows the gift of the Spirit indwelling each one as they live daily in His name.



the Son always calling His people to Himself

It was participation in His Sonship that Jesus constantly spoke of. This was to be the goal of His redemptive work, and the only basis upon which the redeemed could obey and enjoy *all* that He called and commanded them to.

Whenever Jesus called a person, it was never just to some *thing*: like ‘a way of life’. He always called them to *Himself*! His command was, “Come to Me.” He said:

Matthew 11:28–30

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.

Here, as will be seen in our next study, He was calling his hearers to take the yoke of His own Sonship upon themselves!

On another occasion using dynamic imagery (that we'll speak more of later in this section) He spoke of their relationship to Him in this way:

John 15:5

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing.

Life in Christ is never a matter of merely 'doing things'; it is bearing the fruit of a Spirit-given union with Himself.

one with the Son in the blessedness of His intimate covenant union with the Father

Jesus yearned for His people to be with Him in two things: His own *joyous communion* with the Father (on the vertical) and the dynamic *relational* and *vocational* fruits this produces (on the horizontal). We will speak here of the first of these.

In His perfect humanity the Son enjoyed an unceasing spirit of delight in His Father.

The people of God (Israel) had enjoyed the gift of worship down through the centuries. But the En-fleshed Son knew that the *true worship* redemption history had been leading towards, was something more wonderful than that. It would be a participation in the blessedness of His, own relational intimacy with the Father!

He said to a despised, dry-spirited seeker — 'the Samaritan woman at the well':

John 4:23

"A time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

A season was dawning when this woman, and all like her, would be able to enjoy the 'true worship' they had been created for.

This new worship would be 'in spirit'—coming from a person's deepest parts and fulfilling the most basic 'creational cry' within them. And in it, the *truth* of their humanity would be expressed in its fullest and most satisfying way.

Jesus said to His disciples:

Matthew 11:27

"No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son."

Only the Son knows the Father. He is the True Son, the True Worshipper. There is no intimate fellowship with the Father or joyous worship of Him apart from a participation in the Son Himself.

During the Last Supper He said to the twelve:

John 14:18, 20

"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you ... On that day you will realize that I am in My Father, and you are in Me, and I am in you."

Although Jesus was soon to leave this world, they would not be *orphaned*. With the gift of the Spirit they would actually be more intimately related to Him than they now were. By the Spirit He would dwell *within* them, and they would be one with Him in the boundless pleasure of His Sonship, within His eternal covenant union with the Father.

Later, as He prayed, He said to His Father:

John 17:23, 26

“I am coming to You now, but I say these things while I’m still in the world so that they may have the full measure of My joy within them. ... I have made You known to them, and will continue to make You known in order that the love You have for Me may be in them and that I Myself may be in them.”

His desire was that the twelve would have *His own joy*! He longed for them to know the Father’s love just as He Himself knew it! But this would only be possible as He *indwelt* them.

And so at Pentecost *that* is exactly what happened. And it’s what every person today may know as the Spirit is received.

the primal cry: ‘Abba, Father’!

Galatians 4:6

Because you are [His children], God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, [crying, “Abba! Father!”]

The word ‘Abba’ is one of intimate and tender affection—the cry of a child to its doting father. In human situations this, indeed, represents a most basic relationship. But to call upon our *Father-Creator* in this way is the most basic thing of all (the *primary, creational expression* of our calling as His image) bringing human fullness, wholeness and integration like nothing else can.

Having embraced them as His own, the Father sends into the hearts of the redeemed the Spirit of the Son. This is the wellspring of their *capacity* to live as the children of God!

Romans 8:15–16

The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by Him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.

The saints have not only received the gift of adoption but also the gift of the Spirit. He is the One who brings them into the intimate *experience* of their adoption. He is the inner-witness of their amazing status—in whatever they face.

We saw from Mark 14:36 that when Jesus was passing through His time of terrible sorrow in the garden of Gethsemane He cried, “Abba, Father”. In the midst of His travail, He immediately lifted up His heart to the One who had eternally loved Him. And in the same way, the children of God may lift up their voice to the One who has now sent the Spirit of His Son into their hearts.

By the Spirit they no longer need to have any fear of condemnation before the Father, nor do they need to feel demeaned in their humanity, nor be fearful in the circumstances of life. They are lovingly treasured and absolutely secure in His presence. THE JOYOUS CRY OF ‘ABBA, FATHER’ IS, IN FACT, THE ULTIMATE CRY OF INTIMACY AND PERSONAL FREEDOM!!!

Here, we have the sweet fruit of reconciliation. The old fear, dread and loneliness may be gone, and a new life of intimate friendship with the Father and the Son begun. The saints might be alone at times—but a ‘lonely spirit’ need be no more!

the life-giving Holy Spirit

In Study 7 we saw that those who are dead in their sins may be *made alive* by the Spirit’s mighty, regenerating work. Now—as we’ve been saying—it is the ongoing, life-

giving work of the Spirit that makes *dynamic* within regenerate people the gifts of forgiveness, cleansing, justification, adoption and sanctification. By the Spirit these gifts, themselves, become a *fountain of life* within them!

The LORD said through Ezekiel:

Ezekiel 37:14

“I will put My Spirit in you and you will live.”

In anticipation of the days of the new covenant, the Scriptures often used the imagery of *water* to describe the life-giving nature of the Spirit—either freshly flowing *into* or springing up *within* a believer.

David’s rich old covenant experience was a foreshadowing of what was to come:

Psalms 36:8–9

“[Both highborn and low] feast in the abundance of Your house; You give them drink from Your river of delights. For with You is the fountain of life.”

Isaiah sang out:

Isaiah 12:3

“With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.”

Then later, the LORD said through him:

Isaiah 43:19–20

“I am making streams in the wasteland ... to give drink to My people, My chosen.”

And, of course, Jesus Himself loved to use the imagery of water for the Spirit’s life-giving new covenant affects. He said:

John 4:13–14

“Those who drink the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling [and leaping] up to eternal life.”

The Spirit is to be like an incessantly bubbling spring within the redeemed—‘*leaping up* to eternal life’. Yes, He is *Himself* the presence of *eternal life* within a regenerate child of God! This is what He *imparts* as He facilitates a participation in the life of the Son’s eternal covenant union with His Father.

Jesus again used the imagery of water when He attended the Feast of the Tabernacles in Jerusalem. This feast celebrated the LORD’S faithfulness in guiding Israel throughout their ‘wilderness journey’ after the Exodus, and was also a festival of thanksgiving for the annual grape harvest that year.

On each of the seven days of the feast trumpets were blown. With this, water was drawn from the pool of Siloam and *poured out* on a burnt offering upon the altar in the temple—commemorating the refreshing stream that flowed miraculously from the rock at Meribah in the desert (Exodus 17:1–7). It was also done in anticipation of the promised blessing that God would someday pour out upon Israel and the nations.

There was powerful symbolism present here as Jesus looked forward to what He would soon accomplish through His Death, Resurrection and Ascension—and would then *pour out* on the Day of Pentecost! And it was probably at this point that He made a thrilling proclamation:

John 7:37–39

On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as

the Scripture has said, will have rivers of living water flowing from within.” By this He meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were later to receive. He was declaring what He yearned for all the redeemed to know: the Spirit dwelling within them, bringing the freedom of total forgiveness and *flowing out* in joyous, life-giving worship and vocational action in His love!

Then, in the very last chapter of the Bible, we have a vision given to the apostle John. In this he saw imagery of what would be a delightful reality throughout the ages of eternity among the glorified children of God.

Revelation 22:1

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

It is this same ‘river of the water of life’ that flows from the throne to the redeemed even today. There will always be battles for those who are in Christ, but that life-giving refreshment of the Spirit will, nevertheless, remain their heritage to enjoy.

a foreshadowing of Pentecost, in sight of Mount Sinai

We spoke above of the commemoration of water flowing from the rock at Meribah (before called Rephidim in Exodus 17). As Israel was encamped there, visible in the distance was Mount Sinai (where—as we saw in Study 6—the great powers of Pentecost were soon to be graphically foreshadowed). The people of Israel cried out in thirst there in that desert place because there was no water.

It was then that God commanded Moses, ‘Strike the rock and water will come out of it for the people to drink’ (Exodus 17:6). Centuries later, Paul told us: ‘that Rock was Christ’ (1 Corinthians 10:4).

Like the events of Sinai, this striking of the rock and the subsequent flow of water was also a powerful picture of the Outpoured Spirit to come. For after ‘Christ the Rock’ was *struck*, there was indeed *poured out* from Him on the Day of Pentecost a great torrent of ‘the water of life’—to flow out to those from among all the nations of the earth!

The rod that Moses struck the rock with in the LORD’S name was the same one with which he was enabled to perform great miracles in Egypt. Later, though, it was the ‘rod of God’ that struck His Son at Calvary and produced the *supreme miracle* of redemptive history—leading to the regeneration of those created to be the image of God.

As we saw in Revelation 22:1, the crystal-clear water of life flowed ‘from the throne of God and *the Lamb*’: the One *slain* to release His people into the invigorating and transforming life of the Spirit.

the Holy Spirit’s fullness

With all that the Spirit brings to the saints, it would be a great tragedy if they were not to allow Him to have His way with them. That’s why the apostle Paul gave this command:

Ephesians 5:18

“Be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Because of the various elements of the word ‘be filled’ in the original Koine Greek language of the New Testament, this command can be more literally rendered:

“All of you must go on allowing the Holy Spirit to fill you.”

To explain: ‘All’ (plural form), means ‘each one without exception’. ‘Must’ (imperative mood), means that it is not an option. It is unthinkable that a sanctified child of God would not fully co-operate with the Spirit! ‘Go on’ (present continuous tense), means that a continual response is to be made; ‘allowing’ (a passive mood), refers to the fact that no one can ‘fill themselves’ with the Spirit. *He* is the *Filler*—who is, every moment, taking the initiative. The saints need only to fully co-operate with what He is doing!

Paul (in Ephesians 5:18 above) also outlined some ways the Spirit’s filling may be expressed. They were to speak to one another with the words of songs that proclaim the wonders of God’s grace and the nature of their calling. In the light of such things they were to always have a song in their hearts to the Lord. And also, at all times, they were to—as those who live in the Son—*give thanks* to the Father for everything He has done, is doing and has promised to do.

To ‘be filled’ with the Spirit is to live completely under His influence—responding always to His *facilitation* of the Father’s purpose for us in the Beloved! It’s not about how much we have of the Spirit, but how much He has of us!

To the believers at Colossae, Paul said the same thing in a slightly different way:

Colossians 3:16

“Let the word of Christ [go on dwelling] in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, and hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.”

For the saints to have the word of Christ always ‘living richly’ in them is the same as being filled with the Spirit. It is the *wonder* of ‘the testimony of Jesus’ (Revelation 19:10)—regarding all that His Father has done, is doing and will do through Him—that the Spirit desires to bring to them. And it is, in the *full assurance* of these things that He imparts the joy of the Son’s own *relational intimacy* and *vocational partnership* with His Father.

In this regard Paul opened his soul to the believers at Ephesus, saying:

Ephesians 3:15–17

[I fall on my knees before the Father ... praying] that out of [the riches of His Fatherly glory] He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may [go on dwelling] in your hearts through faith.

The apostle’s fervent prayer was that the saints in godless Ephesus would be mightily sustained hour by hour, as the Spirit brought to them revelation of the great realities of Christ. His yearning desire was that these things would constantly dwell in their hearts through faith—thrilling their affections, filling their minds and captivating their wills! He knew how urgent the need was for the saints to go on being filled with the Spirit in this way.

The writer to the Hebrews put it like this, saying:

Hebrews 3:1

“Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest whom we confess.”

Again, the saints are to have their minds set upon Christ.

Once more, Paul urged the Ephesians to co-operate with the Spirit with this command:

Ephesians 4:30

“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the Day of redemption.”

The opposite of being filled with the Spirit is for the redeemed to ‘grieve’ Him by pursuing their own self-obsessed passions. How He must—with the Father and the Son—*burn with divine, holy grief* when those He has sealed for the great Day to come are dull and indifferent to all that He has for them!

To his Spirit-indwelt friends at Galatia, Paul simply said:

Galatians 5:25

“Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”

This is more like it! A life lived ‘step by step’ in the Spirit’s light and leading.

The En-fleshed Son among us wanted His disciples to have great expectation of the Father’s desire to give them the Spirit. And after speaking of a life lived in a disposition of prayer, He said:

Luke 11:11–13

“Which of you fathers if your children ask for a fish, will give them a snake instead? Or if they ask for an egg, will give them a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”

The Father’s good and lavish giving is seen, above all, in His desire to pour the Spirit upon His liberated children—enabling them to live grandly in their high calling!

the Holy Spirit’s transforming power

Here we are naturally following on from what has just been seen. The Spirit’s zeal regarding the saints is expressed by His *powerful action* on their behalf.

In Study 7 we saw that the power that raised Jesus from the dead was the same power required to raise a rebel human from death in sin. But now we may also see that it is this same resurrecting and regenerating power that is constantly at work within each redeemed child of God—to manifest the *life* and *glory* of the Son in their body!

This is what Paul was eager to proclaim to the believers in Rome. He said:

Romans 8:11

“If the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of His Spirit who lives in you.”

A redeemed person’s body is still mortal—doomed to die—because of the entrance of sin into the world. But because the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead lives within them, there is now the presence of a life-transforming resurrection power!

getting our facts straight about the power of sin

One thing is certain: if not for the grace of God in Christ the high human calling would be, absolutely, impossible to fulfill. The power of human sinfulness is so great!

In Study 4 we saw that ‘the flesh’ is our fallen humanity living apart from the Spirit, obsessed with self and opposed to God, His will and way; and that in its self-obsession the flesh is constantly driven by God-refusing and idolatrous *passions*.

The following Scriptures remind us of this tragic and powerful reality:

Genesis 8:21

—*God’s evaluation of the entire fallen human race*

Every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood.

Jeremiah 17:9

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

Mark 7:21–22

[Jesus said,] “From within, out of your hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.”

Romans 7:8, 18

—*the experience of the apostle Paul*

[Sin] produced in me every kind of [greedy desire]. ... I know that [nothing good dwells in me], that is, in my [flesh]. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.

Ecclesiastes 9:3

—*the irrational nature of our passions*

The hearts of people ... are full of evil and there is madness in their hearts while they live.

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 each other.

Just the *passions* of our own fallen humanity would be a dark enough situation. But added to this there is the fact of the *pressure* of the *world* upon us, seeking to conform us to its way. And then to complicate things further, the *power* of the *devil* and his demonic legions is always operating—to *incite* our passions and conform us to the system of the world.

These three things together form that dreadful dark dominion of Study 4—which locks every unbelieving person out of any possibility of enjoying a life of righteousness.

directing our mind towards a greater and more powerful reality

Yes, the fallen-human scene is a grim one indeed. But as we’ve already established in this study, there is a greater reality upon which we can set our attention—one that is far more dynamic and powerful than the dominion of darkness. It is what is true of a regenerate child of God in the *unseen spiritual realm: the kingdom of the Son!*

As every redeemed person’s baptism has declared: they have died with Christ, have been buried with Him, have been made alive with Him, raised up with Him and seated with the Father *in Him*, in the heavenly realms.

The old humanity in Adam has been put to death and believers have been incorporated into the humanity of the Glorified Son. Of themselves, they still have no more power to live in true righteousness than before. That will never be any different. But they may—by faith—count upon the *spiritual reality* that the word of God declares. Although this is unseen to the physical eye—and known only by faith—it is just as *substantial* as the reality of Jesus, Himself, reigning as Lord at the right hand of His Father!

As a redeemed child of God receives the Spirit’s revelation of what is so for them in Christ, they know at that point *all* that is needful for them to—by the Spirit—prevail over sin. That is, they are able to *count on* the fact that their *old humanity* in Adam—accursed and condemned under the dominion of darkness—is no more. It has been judged, damned, put to death and buried. And they, raised up with Christ, are now part of the *new humanity* that is in Him, their new and glorious Master!

Paul urged the believers in Rome to grasp this powerful fact, saying:

Romans 6:4, 11

“Don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ were baptized into His death? ... We know that our [old humanity] was crucified with Him ... [We

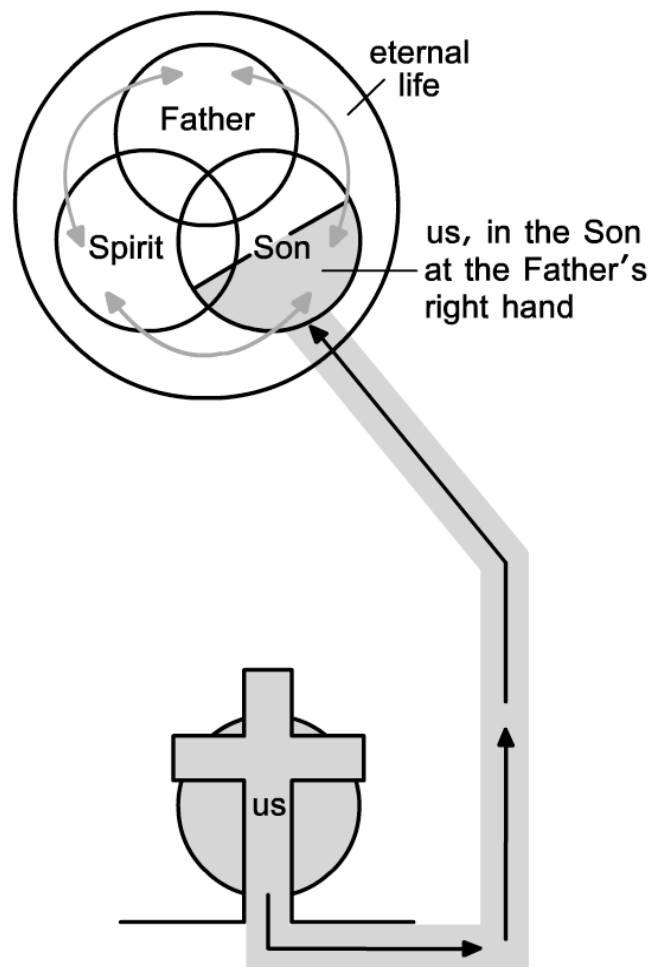
were] buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life ... [So then] count yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

To the Colossians he said:

Colossians 3:1–3

“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, [you must go on setting] your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. [You must go on setting] your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.”

Once again, we see this amazing unseen, spiritual reality in the following diagram.



The dark dominion of the world, the flesh and the devil does absolutely *lock* fallen, unbelieving humanity *out of* any possibility of a life of righteousness. But having our minds set upon Christ and our union with Him, this greater and more powerful certainty brings a whole new situation into being!

the transformation that all the redeemed may enjoy by the Spirit

By faith in all that has been declared, every redeemed person may exalt in the fact that they have been forgiven a whole lifetime of human failure, have had their entire being cleansed from every moral stain, and, having been totally acquitted of all blame, have also been credited with the Son's own righteousness in the Father's presence—one with Him in His Father's love, as treasured and sanctified children. And consequently, their spirit may be absolutely *free*!

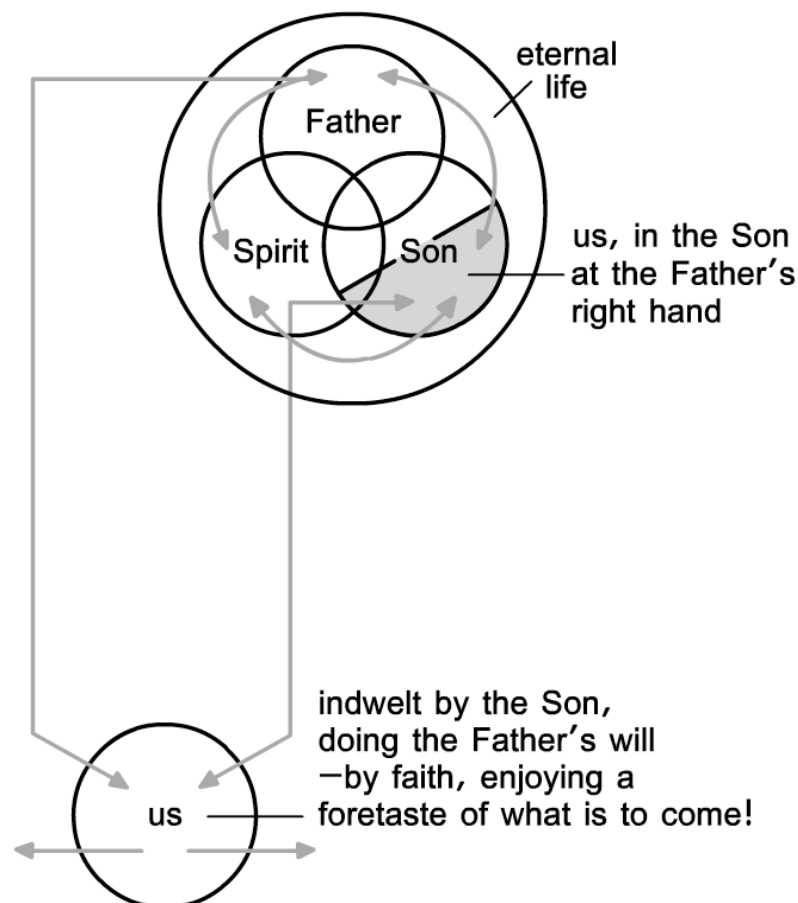
With the Holy Spirit then having been given in the name of the Son, the saints, in Him, although still living physically on the earth, may participate in the very life and action of His glorified humanity—tasting something of their future inheritance. And so, AN AMAZING MORAL, PERSONAL AND VOCATIONAL *STATUS* IS IMMEDIATELY JOINED BY AN, EQUALLY AMAZING, MORAL, PERSONAL AND VOCATIONAL *CAPACITY!!!*

Yes, with the joyous reality of the Son, by the Spirit, crying out within them, “Abba, Father!” each one—in the midst of the onslaughts of the world, the flesh and the devil—may, increasingly, enjoy a foretaste of all that is to be their glorious heritage in the coming eternal age!

And let it be said: when this is the case, there *is* no power of the world, the flesh or the devil that can keep them from *living out* the status gifts of righteousness and sanctification they have received—yes, being in the very *action* of their moral, personal and vocational status in the Son!

The children of God, then, are able to participate daily in the righteousness of their Divine-Human-Brother-King—*engaging* with Him in His *joyous communion* with the Father and in His *love* for every person.

The following diagram once more shows the wonder of this bonded union of love in which the saints have been dynamically embraced.



Let's sum it all up in this way in the light of Study 2: Sharing in the Son's great delight in His Father, the saints, then, also have within them His own jealous desire for the Father's glory and praise, together with His hatred for sin and grief at its intrusion into their own or another's heart, mind, words or actions. And in this they are able to share in the truth of the Son's thinking, and in their daily, relational living participate in His

own holy Self-giving in what they desire, think, say and do—*with* Him in His ongoing fulfillment of the Father's great purpose of wisdom and love in His world. IN CHRIST, BY THE SPIRIT, THEY TRULY DO HAVE A *NEW CAPACITY* TO FULFILL THE HIGH HUMAN CALLING!!!

And so, every redeemed person may obey this apostolic command:

Colossians 3:17

“Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

Furthermore, all in the Lord may joyously declare the following things:

Galatians 2:20

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by [the faithfulness of] the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

1 Timothy 1:14

The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus

Galatians 5:22–23

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, [longsuffering], kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Every element of the life, character and action of the Glorified Son may now—day by day—be expressed in the desires, thoughts, words and deeds of the redeemed. They may respond to the Father and all others in the name of Jesus—within every circumstance and relational situation of life!¹¹

being renewed as the image of God

In Study 2 we learned of our being created in the image and likeness of God, that we might—through relational intimacy with Him—reflect His glory through our humanity, and so, truly *represent* Him in His world. Then in Study 6 we saw that the En-fleshed Son was among us as the very Image and Likeness of His Father. To see Him was to behold, every moment, the Perfect Representation of His Father's Glory.

John 14:9

[Jesus said], “Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father.”

Colossians 1:15

The Son is the image of the invisible God.

Hebrews 1:3

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His Being.

We have been speaking of the grace lavished upon us that we too may, at last, by the indwelling Spirit be renewed in our calling as the image of God.

2 Corinthians 3:18

We ... are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

As we've been saying, the redeemed may *count upon* the spiritual reality that the word of God declares: that they have been crucified and put to death with Christ; that although still *physically* alive, they may know that THEIR OLD HUMANITY IS NO MORE—HAVING BEEN MERCILESSLY JUDGED IN THE CROSS, PUT TO DEATH

¹¹ It will be seen in Study 17 that some elements of participation in the 'actions' of the Son, will be in accordance with the gifts of the Spirit that are imparted to each one in His Name.

AND BURIED; and that NOW HAVING BEEN MADE ALIVE WITH CHRIST THEY MAY AT ANY TIME OPERATE UPON *THAT* BASIS—trusting in their Redeeming Lord to go on imparting to them, by the Spirit, His own capacity for true human response.

Colossians 3:9–10

[In Your union with Christ through faith you] have [put off the old humanity] with its practices and have put on the [new humanity], which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

the power of being fully assured of God's grace by the Spirit

Yes, the transforming power of the Spirit, may certainly, be increasingly experienced by every redeemed person. But let us again be reminded of that one thing which is always required: We must *go on joyously receiving* the Spirit's revelation of God's grace to us in the Lord Jesus—grasping hold of it and responding to it with all our heart. This is 'living by the Spirit'.

Galatians 5:16

Live by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the [flesh].

Romans 5:17

Those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and the gift of righteousness [will] reign in life.

As we saw earlier in this study, assured of the abundance of divine grace the saints may, indeed, 'reign in life'. To do so is to participate in the Son's ongoing kingly action—overcoming the world, the flesh and the devil (as Studies 9 and 10 will declare in some detail). Through the Spirit-given, redemptive word we truly have been rescued from 'this present evil age' (Galatians 1:4) and from the dominion of darkness into the kingdom of the Son (Colossians 1:13)!

2 Corinthians 3:17

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

By the Spirit's revelation there is freedom *from* guilt, condemnation, shame and gloom—and freedom *for* a life of righteousness!

1 Corinthians 6:9–11

Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Some of the believers in Corinth *were* these things; such habitual patterns had long gripped their lives. But they had received revelation of the grace of God that had come to them in Christ by the Spirit—and they *were* these things no more!

It can't be emphasized too much that a *full assurance of grace* is at the heart of the Spirit's transforming power.

We have been seeing throughout this study that because of the abundant grace of God towards us in His Son, we are NOW ABLE TO SAY certain things—fully assured of their incredible reality in the midst of the daily battles we face!¹²

And in the light of such confidence, we may restate this magnificent fact: FULLY CONVINCED OF PERSONALLY *NEEDING* 100% OF THE GRACE OF GOD 100%

¹² See the Study 8 outline.

OF THE TIME, TOGETHER WITH A 100% *ASSURANCE* OF IT HAVING BEEN RECEIVED, THERE IS A 100% *CAPACITY* TO FULFILL EVERY COMMAND HE HAS EVER GIVEN HIS PEOPLE!!!

This new capacity is one that does not, in any way, depend upon ideal circumstances—only a present revelation of the boundless riches of Christ (Ephesians 3:8). Yes, in the midst of all of life's complexities, the redeemed may increasingly enjoy the personal human freedom and fullness for which they were created—for the pleasure, glory and praise of God!¹³

by the Spirit, able to be dynamically with the Son in His priestly heart, prophetic mind and kingly action

We have spoken earlier in this study of the priestly, prophetic and kingly *vocational identity* that belongs to all in Christ. But now we are to speak of the *new capacity* that each one in Him has, by the Holy Spirit, to *dynamically fulfill* their priestly, prophetic and kingly calling.

In future studies the outworking of each element of this calling will be filled out in much greater detail. Here, however, it will suffice to briefly review what was portrayed in Study 6 of Jesus' own priestly, prophetic and kingly life (during the time of His Spirit-enabled Ministry among us). And then, to affirm the wonder of each redeemed person's new capacity, by the gift of the Spirit, to *participate* with Him in His ongoing manifestation of this life—in *their own daily living*!

As the section of Study 6 entitled 'His Ministry' began, it was said, "Now we are to see the glorious Being and action of the En-fleshed Son as He—moment by moment—does the will of His Father, in the power of the Holy Spirit." So, as we speak here of a redeemed person's own life in the Spirit, in Him, it will be fitting to reproduce the *outline* within that section. By doing so we may see something of the potentially, thrilling dimensions of His ongoing life and ministry within all who bear His name.

His priestly heart in His Father's presence and purpose of love

(an inner spring of adoring communion and full personal offering—with all holy affections, specific petition and yearning intercession):
the way and *aroma* of the kingdom revealed among us

Earlier in our section on *vocational identity* it was affirmed that a priest is a *worshipper* of God, and that for a true human being worship is a whole way of life—which was precisely how it was for Jesus. We saw that the En-fleshed Son's every desire, thought, word and act was a 'fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice' bringing pleasure to His Father. (Study 6 showed that the fruit of His *prophetic mind* and *kingly action* were, of course, also part of His priestly offering). In all of this, every moment of His days was a glorious manifestation of *the way and the aroma of the kingdom*!

In the same way then, each redeemed person in Christ has been set apart to continually participate with Him in the desires of His heart, the thoughts of His mind, the words He is speaking and the things He is doing by the Spirit in the world today—

¹³ In a future study, the matter of overcoming habitual patterns of unrighteous, fleshly and desperate living will be looked at in detail: the liberating reality of 'putting off the old' and 'putting on the new' by the power of the Spirit!

all of which is a manifestation of the glory of His Sonship and a pleasure-giving offering to the Father.

In the outline above, it is the inward and more private elements of priestly offering that are referred to. And what an awesome thing it is to participate with Him in these: His own 'inner spring of adoring communion' with His Father and the 'holy affections' of His own heart—that were the environment of His 'full personal offering', 'specific petition' and 'yearning intercession' among us.

Such holy affections are, in fact, those presented in the Study 2 outline: firstly, *a life-giving, inner spring of great delight in the Father*—with this being manifested in an *adoring spirit* of 'reverent awe', 'child-like trust', 'grateful affection' and 'unwavering obedience'.

Then it was seen how this inner spring of delight, at once, produces two further holy affections: a spring of both *divine moral purity* and *love*—bringing 'strong, jealous passion for the Father's glory and praise, with hatred for sin, and grief at its intrusion into our or another's heart, mind, words or actions', together with, 'pure-hearted yearning, self-giving desire for all to know the blessedness of communion with the Father—able, to live freely and fully as His image in His world'.¹⁴

The amazing thing is that all who are redeemed in the Son, may freely live with Him in His Father's presence and purpose, and, by the Spirit, participate in these deep and holy *inner-stirrings* of His own heart—manifesting the very *way* and *aroma* of the kingdom. Yes, indeed, how completely amazing is that!

As Study 2 showed, such priestly, holy affections are the wellspring of any human revelation of the likeness of God upon the earth. Apart from them, in fact, there is very limited capacity for a person to 'know God'—regardless of how much they may know 'about Him'. The purpose of this series is, actually, to progressively provide life-giving revelation that will enable an inner participation in these very things, within every area of authentic human vocation.

His prophetic mind
in His Father's presence and purpose of love
(communion-born thinking and incessant holy perception—with
authentic verbal communication and arresting proclamation):
the *words* and *wisdom* of the kingdom revealed among us

Again, earlier it was seen that although not everyone is called to be 'a prophet', all are definitely called to be *prophetic*. Each person in Christ has been set apart to be one who has God's word dwelling dynamically within them by the Holy Spirit, having a rich understanding of the nature of humanity: created, fallen, redeemed and, ultimately, glorified. And in all of this, having in their hearts the wonder of God's mighty works in history that are gloriously being brought to their goal in Christ!

In the outline above from Study 6, we see that the environment of the 'prophetic mind' of Jesus manifested among us was 'His Father's presence and purpose of love'. And in this, His 'thinking' was 'communion-born', producing the fruit of an 'incessant holy perception'.

For all today who have the Spirit of the Son sent into their hearts crying, "Abba, Father," it is this same communion that is the wellspring of a participation in the Son's own

¹⁴ A participation in the 'yearning intercession' of Christ will be dealt with in detail in Study 13, 'On The Way In The Action Of Divine Love'.

prophetic mind—together with that ‘incessant holy perception’ which keeps those in Him sharply responsive within the Father’s will.

Such thinking and perception very naturally then, enable participation with Jesus in His own ‘authentic verbal communication’ and ‘arresting proclamation’—bringing revelation of the ‘words’ and ‘wisdom’ of the kingdom! Both verbal communication and arresting proclamation will, of course, be spoken of in detail in studies to come.

His kingly action
in His Father’s presence and purpose of love

(joyous future expectation and present authority & power—with
undeniable dominion and triune, holy vocation made visible):
the *works* and *signs* of the kingdom revealed among us

Although not kings, those in Christ are certainly called to be ‘kingly’. The whole of Jesus’ life and all of His actions were kingly because He is the King! And it is because of this that those who are, in Him, are called to be kingly in the way they live and in the things they do. Hebrews 2:7–9 tells us that it was always the Father’s purpose that humanity as His image and likeness should be ‘crowned with glory and honour’. And it was to be empowered to fulfill this purpose that the redeemed were given the gift of the Holy Spirit.

In Study 6 we saw that the Son’s *kingly actions* were always accomplished within the exercise of a *joyous future expectation*: a sharp, abiding focus upon His Father’s presence and the wonders of His glorious, ultimate purpose! A careful reading of the four Gospels will show that in the ministry of Jesus, ‘joyous future expectation’ and ‘present authority and power’ were by nature inseparable. Everything He did was with a view to the fulfillment of His Father’s grand, unfolding plan. That’s why the final section of this study—which proclaims *the glorious hope* that belongs to the redeemed—must always be a *Spirit-given revelation* that is burning in the heart of those who seek to live in the Spirit’s present enabling!

In the Son’s ministry among us such joyous future expectation and present authority and power, was expressed in ‘undeniable dominion’ and ‘triune holy purpose’ being ‘made visible’—as in Matthew 6:10, His will manifestly being done ‘on earth as it is in heaven’! And it was within these two realities that the *works* and *signs* of the kingdom were revealed among us.

In Study 6 and earlier in this one, we saw how the works and signs of Jesus declared His authority as King over five things: sin, sickness and other physical dysfunction, dark spiritual powers, death and the creation. We saw too, that they also pointed forward to the ultimate kingdom to come at His Appearing, when the first four would be forever eliminated from God’s world, and the fifth, the creation, entirely renewed.

All who are ‘kingly’ in Christ become part of a ‘kingly community’ in the Son-King—in the midst of which they may expect to see ongoing revelation of the ‘works’ and ‘signs’ of the kingdom. Such works and signs may be of the same nature as those that Jesus performed, but also, together with these, the manifestation of other wonderfully powerful expressions of new covenant action.

John 14:12

[Jesus said], “Very truly I tell you, all who have faith in Me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.”

Together with the miraculous works that Jesus was doing, these *greater spiritual realities* that His physical signs symbolized would also be revealed through them—things that may be expressed within the kingly community in the following ways:

- The authority of Jesus over *sin* would be revealed not only in forgiveness, but also in His people's capacity to increasingly, say 'no' to it and overcome its oppressive, dominating power. They have been set apart and anointed by the Spirit to be liberated more and more from the corruption of sinful, idolatrous desires!
- Not only would there be *physical* healing,¹⁵ but the kingdom would be revealed through His Spirit-anointed people increasingly experiencing the *personal* healing and wholeness for which they were both created and redeemed! They have been set apart and anointed to enjoy more and more of a truly human, healthful and joyously integrated way of life as the image of God.
- There would be deliverance from demonization. But also, the redeemed would know in increasing measure the Son-Lamb-King's authority 'to overcome all the power of the enemy' in all areas of life (Luke 10:19). The children of God have been set apart and anointed by the Spirit to consistently prevail over the devil and his demonic legions, both in their personal living and service to others!
- At times, even the dead may be raised physically. But the community of the King will continually reveal His authority by the proclamation of His word, through which the *spiritually dead* will be raised to life! Christ's people are those who are set apart and indwelt by the Spirit to proclaim—in His name—the life-giving gospel of salvation among all the nations of the earth!
- There will ultimately be the physical renewal of all things. But through the kingly children of God the *spiritual* realities of the new creation are even now to be made known. This happens as they, by the Spirit, fulfill their calling in the four areas already mentioned. (A later study will also speak of their calling to be faithful stewards of the creation itself).

And so, we hear again that great declaration of the apostle Paul:

Romans 5:17

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

None of the above areas of 'kingly overcoming' will, of course, be fully realized in this age. It will be seen in the next study that all of this is being constantly *contested*. We are engaged in a 'relentless spiritual battle' with the world, the flesh and the devil. But through the abundance of God's grace, all who are united with the Son-Lamb-King may, nevertheless, 'reign in life'—as those who are seated in and with Him at the Father's right hand, and *upon the earth* are indwelt by the Holy Spirit! For such overcoming in Christ they have been called, set apart and anointed.¹⁶

¹⁵ A later study in the series will be devoted to the matter of physical healing.

¹⁶ In regard to this matter of our participation in the kingly action of Jesus, it will be helpful to point out that just as we saw that the operation of His priestly heart was part of the exercise of His prophetic mind and kingly action, so too, was His kingly action part of the exercise of His priestly heart and prophetic mind. That is, the *priestly action* of 'yearning intercession' and the *prophetic action* of 'arresting proclamation' were both expressions of His *kingly authority*. In a later study it will also be seen that a priestly life of *prayer* also has strong, *prophetic* elements within it. So then, although His priestly heart, prophetic mind and kingly action are described as three distinct things, they are, non-the-less, each part of *His one, integrated vocational life*.

the covenantal wisdom of the Justifier, Adopter and Sanctifier in first giving a glorious status in the Son—and then sending the Spirit to fulfill it

It will be helpful here to begin by simply stating the two central things we've seen thus far in this study: that according to His wise and gracious purpose, the Father has freely and fully given His redeemed people both the *status* they were created for as His image, and then the *capacity*—by the Spirit—to fulfill what their given status declares.

the all-surpassing glory of the new covenant

The apostle Paul contrasted the old and new covenants in this way:

2 Corinthians 3:9–10

If the ministry that brought condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness. For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory.

Under the old covenant, the people of Israel were given the status of being God's chosen and treasured people, in a land where He promised to be personally present with them. They were—by the LORD'S appointment—a 'son-nation', foreshadowing the coming of the Eternal Son who was to, ultimately, be En-fleshed among them for the blessing of all nations.

In order to acceptably fulfill this God-given status and identity, Israel was given the law: a *system of worship* to embrace and a *code of practice* to live by. For them righteousness (right, relational covenant action) was to receive the revelation of this good, merciful and gracious provision in *wholehearted and obedient faith*—in the same way that Abraham received the revelation he was given (Romans 4:3).

But through receiving the gifts of the *new* covenant, the identity of God's people is now much more glorious than under the old. This new covenant identity is, in fact, nothing less than a total union with the En-fleshed, Crucified, Risen and Glorified Eternal Son Himself. And in that union, being made entirely one with Him in His *personal* status as Beloved Son and Heir of all things, and in His *vocational* status as Priest, Prophet and King in His Father's purpose.

Because of the greater glory of the new covenant, the *calling* of those in Christ is also greater and more glorious than for those within the old. The vast vocational difference is seen in this: IN THE NEW COVENANT, RIGHTEOUSNESS—RIGHT RELATIONAL COVENANT ACTION—IS NOTHING LESS THAN AN ABSOLUTE CONFORMITY TO THE LIKENESS OF THE EN-FLESHED, ETERNAL SON!!!

This is where we see the *wisdom of God* in providing the new covenant gift of *justification*. The Father knew that if we were to have the freedom of spirit required to be restored to the righteousness we were created to express as His image and likeness, we would first need to be given the awesome *moral status* of His Son's *own righteousness* in His presence; that is, THE SON'S STATUS OF TOTAL COVENANT FAITHFULNESS AS THE RIGHTEOUS ONE AMONG US—MANIFESTING ON EARTH THE *RIGHT RELATIONAL CHOICES* HE HAD ALWAYS MADE AS THE DIVINE SON!!! Such a *status* of righteousness in the Father's presence truly does powerfully liberate the human spirit into a *life* of righteousness, which is in keeping with the glory of the new covenant (2 Corinthians 3:18).

The righteousness of Jesus, of course, fulfilled all the requirements of the old covenant. In glad and obedient faith He wholeheartedly embraced the law, with its system of worship and its code of practice. But much more than that: as the En-fleshed One, in

every moment of every day He lived in the blessedness of the Eternal Covenant Union of Love that He had always enjoyed with the Father and the Spirit. His covenantal living among us was such that HIS EVERY DESIRE, THOUGHT, WORD AND ACT WAS AN EN-FLESHED REVELATION OF THE VERY RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD—EVERYTHING THAT A HUMAN BEING WAS EVER CALLED TO EXPRESS AS THE DIVINE IMAGE AND LIKENESS!!!

Essentially the vast difference between the old and new covenants is this: Israel was a son-nation called to adhere to a preliminary system, whereas the new covenant people of God are called into both a present and ultimate *personal participation* in the glory of the En-fleshed Son Himself—by the indwelling power of the Spirit!

So this is how things are for every redeemed person: In the moment of regeneration they are made one with the Son in His own *moral status* as the Righteous One, His own *personal status* as Beloved Son and Heir and His own *vocational status* as Priest, Prophet and King. And each one has been given that amazing *moral status* in Him so that they may *freely* fulfill their *personal* and *vocational* status, by a *Spirit-given participation in His, own, ongoing action of righteousness*: that is, His own joyous communion with His Father and His love for every other person.

Yes, exalting in their freely given, amazing status of absolute righteousness in Christ, the redeemed are free to press on—in joyous humility—to fulfill the righteousness of their holy calling in Him! This is the all-surpassing glory of the new covenant compared to the old—at last bringing those created as the image of God into a fulfillment of their high and noble human calling. Just now this is only a foretaste of what will be—but a glorious one nonetheless!

In all this we certainly do see the *wisdom of God* towards those whom He calls. The three elements of their moral, personal and vocational status in Christ, together become—by the Spirit's revelation—a *thrilling relational reality* to be daily exalted in. And within that, they enjoy—by the Spirit—personal and vocational *participation* in the very glory of the Son. Having called His elect children to this, the Father's wise provision for its fulfillment is complete in every way.

the logical necessity of an imputed righteousness ^{17 18}

Having just seen above, and in the earlier section on justification, the supreme importance of this gift, it may now be helpful to very briefly look at it from a different angle. That is, to see the fact of an imputed righteousness in Christ as not only being *personally* and *vocationally* necessary, but also as being, itself, a *logical* necessity: an entirely *inevitable outcome* of our identification with Jesus in His Death, Burial, Resurrection and Ascension.

For example, in our total identification with Christ it is impossible that we would be given His *personal* and *vocational* status as Son and not also be given His *moral* status as the Righteous One—for His Sonship and His righteousness are inseparable realities.

The clear logic of an imputed righteousness in Christ can also be seen by stating it in this way: In His Death, Jesus embraced the *moral status of our unrighteousness*, so

¹⁷ For something to be 'logical' means that it is the reasonable conclusion we would come to on the basis of the facts.

¹⁸ To refresh our memory: to impute something is to credit it to another's account so that it now belongs to them.

that in His Resurrection we might be embraced within *His own moral status as the Righteous One!*

Simply put, *our* moral status was imputed to *Him*, so that, *His* might be imputed to *us* (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Furthermore, it must be evident that NO ONE IS COMMANDED TO FULFILL ANY ELEMENT OF THEIR *CALLING* IN CHRIST, FOR WHICH THEY HAVE NOT FIRST OF ALL RECEIVED A CORRESPONDING *STATUS* IN HIM!!! And this is most apparent when it comes to that element of calling that sums up all others: the pursuit of righteousness. So, a given moral status is clearly required.

a righteousness both imputed and imparted

Imputed righteousness—as we’ve been saying—is what is *credited* to us as our moral status in Christ in the Father’s presence. *Imparted* righteousness, on the other hand, is imputed righteousness coming to its goal—with that righteousness being *manifested* by the Holy Spirit in the way we live. It is the moral *status* of justification being ‘lived out’ in moral *action*. All of the status gifts are, in fact, with a view to the ‘imparting work’ of the Spirit!

It may be said that *imputation* has to do with our being *fully and joyously identified* with the righteousness of the Son, whereas *impartation* has to do with our new capacity to *fully and joyously participate* in His righteousness.

Both the *revelation* of our *imputed* righteousness in Christ and the *action* of His *imparted* righteousness are, indispensable parts of the Holy Spirit’s work in a new covenant believer’s life. They are both elements of the *new capacity* they have received.

the covenantal wisdom of emphasizing both indicative status and imperative command

For something to be ‘indicative’ means that it *indicates* the way things are: it speaks of the facts that describe the nature of something. When we talk of ‘the indicative statements’ of the Scriptures we are referring to those things that tell of what God has done or promised to do—particularly what He has done or promised in Christ. These are things that describe what He has accomplished or declared in history, and which form the basis for an authentic response to Him.

In this study we have been speaking in particular about the indicative realities of our *moral, personal* and *vocational* status in Christ: the things that are true of each one who is seated at the right hand of God in Him (Colossians 3:1–4). Each of these indicatives describes *the way things are* for every redeemed person, regardless of what they do or don’t do. All three have to do entirely with what God *has done!*

On the other hand, for something to be ‘imperative’ means that it is either what *must* be done, or *must not* be done, by *us*. An imperative command is not a suggestion. Nor does it refer to a preferred response. It is not a ‘challenge’ (something that you may seriously contemplate and well consider rising up to). Rather, it is an urgent, non-negotiable call to obedience—not to be refused, avoided or postponed. Such obedience to the imperative commands of the Scriptures is completely essential for any true fulfillment of our calling.

When it comes to our indicative status in Christ and the imperative commands that flow out of this, it must be seen that our emphasis is not to be upon either one or the other, but both. To illustrate: they are like the two wings of a plane—an essential twosome! It is also not a matter of ‘a bit of both’, but rather, 100% of both. A plane needs two whole

wings, not two pieces of wing. Without a total ongoing, joyous assurance of the indicatives and a total ongoing, joyous given-ness to the imperatives, we can never truly 'soar within the atmosphere' of God's glorious presence and purposes of love.¹⁹

Something incredibly wonderful has happened to all who are regenerate in Christ. And both the indicative proclamation of this and the imperative commands that naturally arise from it, are the superbly wise gift of the Father—by which He intends to manifest the glory of His Son in His redeemed children, by the Spirit!

the Spirit-given capacity for 'new covenant obedience'

Old Testament promises regarding the new covenant were magnificently fulfilled as God's regenerating, justifying and sanctifying grace in Christ was revealed. The enormous impact of this liberating revelation was foretold by Ezekiel and Jeremiah:

Ezekiel 36:26–27

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit in you and move you to follow My decrees and be careful to keep My laws.

Jeremiah 31:33

¹⁹ These further (more detailed) comments apply to a study much further on in the series (in regard to 'stewardship of the word'), but may be of interest to some here:

In this matter, we must also guard against two unfortunate possibilities: either falling into the trap of seeking to 'indicative-ize' everything on the one hand or 'imperative-ize' everything on the other. That is, seeking to squeeze whatever we can into either an indicative *statement* or an imperative *requirement*. Either extreme indicates a poor relationship to God's 'perfect law that gives freedom' (James 1:25).

Where everything is forced into the *indicative*, there is usually a merely legal use of God's grace to *silence* His law and its insistence ("Relax, God has done it all!"). And where all is made to be *imperative*, there is usually graceless wrestling with His law to *master* it—to conquer it by fulfilling its demands ("Rise up to the challenge!"). In both extremes there is no true delight in the glorious nature of the Father's good commands.

When, however, the indicative facts of what God has done become *a spring of worship and wonder within us*, and the imperative commands are *wholeheartedly embraced as a call to joyous participation in the vocational life of the Son*, then, authentic, free-spirited covenantal response may be made.

There are some other *polarizing statements* that must also be avoided in this regard. Such as, that 'indicative-izing' assertion: "If we rejoice in the *indicatives* then the *imperatives* will just happen automatically—and so they don't need to be emphasized." Or, on the other hand, the 'imperative-izing' insistence: "We can assume that the *indicatives* are *known* and don't need to be constantly spoken of. It's fine to just press on with the imperatives—and get things moving!" The fact is, however, that there needs always to be both a strong, worship-filled emphasis upon *assurance* of the indicatives, and a strong, free-spirited insistence upon *fulfillment* of the imperatives. One without the other is unthinkable!

Where there is the imperative without the indicative, there may very well be the presence of either personal oppression or vocational pride, or both. And where the indicative is held without the imperative, doctrinal pride and vocational indolence may be present. There is too much that puts authentic personal and vocational integrity at risk, wherever both the indicative and imperative are not given the 100% emphasis they require.

It must then be said that apart from this perspective regarding indicative status and imperative command, we will be in danger of engaging with the Scriptures apart from the wisdom they reveal—the very revelation that is essential for a true experience of the Spirit's transforming power.

I will put My law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be My people.

The fulfillment of these prophetic statements has come through union with the En-fleshed, Crucified, Risen and Ascended Son. And it is this union that brings a magnificent *freedom* to wholeheartedly pursue *the way of God*—as it is written upon each heart by the poured-out and indwelling Spirit!

The apostle Paul gave exalted witness to this new liberty after declaring the provision made in Christ for victory over the flesh:

Romans 8:1–2

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.

Within the old covenant, the law was something that the people of Israel were to operate *under*. They were to do all they could to have it upon their hearts—which from time to time and to a greater or lesser degree they succeeding in doing. We cannot but admire and seek to emulate such Old Testament responses as:

Psalms 40:8

I [delight] to do Your will, my God; Your law is within my heart.

Psalms 119:14

I rejoice in following Your statutes as one rejoices in great riches.

Psalms 119:32

I run in the path of Your commands, for You have set my heart free.

But as we've seen, Israel's history showed that the law—as 'holy, righteous and good' as it was—for so much of the time only stirred up sinful, death-dealing reaction within them. It was consistently for them 'the law of sin and death'—as Paul graphically portrayed in (Romans 7:7–12).

For all who are in Christ, however, there may be freedom from such reaction and painful consequence, through their response to 'the law of the Spirit who gives life'; that is, their response to the law / way that is written upon their hearts by the life-giving, indwelling Spirit!

So now the new covenant obedience of those in Christ may have all the beauty and zeal of the best responses within the old covenant—but also a *unique* kind of loved-besotted abandonment, which only comes from the revelation of new covenant wonders.

Romans 5:2, 5

We have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand ... [And] God's love has been [flooded] into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

How amazing, then, is the covenantal wisdom of 'the God of all grace'—who pours out the Spirit to fulfill the glorious moral, personal and vocational status He has bestowed upon those in His Son!

the Spirit of holiness who indwells the sanctified

The Holy Spirit, who has Himself *regenerated* those who believe and *set them apart* to the Father—in the Son—never ceases to be *at work within them* according to the Father's purpose. That is, as the Spirit has facilitated the *crisis* of sanctification at new birth, He will continue to facilitate the *process* of sanctification throughout the life of

every redeemed person. This *outworking* of the gift of ‘immediate’ sanctification is the gift of ‘progressive’ or ‘lived out’ sanctification that we are now speaking of.

In Study 1 we saw from Isaiah 5:16 that God shows His holiness by His righteousness. The same is true, of course, for those He has created in His likeness. We may live a holy life as we—sanctified in Christ—set ourselves apart *from* all that is unrighteous (what is *not* according to the way of God) and set ourselves apart *to* all that is righteous (what *is* according to His way).

sanctified bodies

An awesomely significant thing happens to a person’s *body* at the moment of new birth: it becomes a ‘holy place’. Paul declared this to the believers at Corinth:

1 Corinthians 6:19

“Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?”

Just as Jesus’ body was the very Dwelling Place of the glory of His Father, so too the body of every sanctified child of God becomes a ‘shrine of the Holy Spirit’: a PLACE where God is personally and dynamically present and which is set apart for worship. It is in their body that each redeemed person may fulfill their calling to participate in the ongoing priestly ministry of the Son—so that their life may continually be a fragrant, pleasure-giving offering of worship to the Father!

That’s why the apostle Paul—after eleven magnificent chapters proclaiming the salvation that is in Christ—said to the saints who lived in Rome:

Romans 12:1–2

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s [mercies], to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Bodies as living, sacrificial offerings to the Father: a sanctified child of God’s true worship in the midst of every circumstance of life!

A sanctified person is one who is set apart to worship God and do His will in His world. That is, they are set apart to *righteousness*: conformity to the image of the Son. To cooperate with the Spirit in His outworking of their sanctification, they must (as said above) actively set themselves apart *from* whatever is against the Father’s will and way and, at the same time, set themselves apart *to* righteousness.²⁰

Those whose body has been sanctified as a place of worship, must no longer be conformed to ‘the pattern of this world’. They must allow the Spirit to renew their mind according to the word of God. Then their lives will express the realities of the kingdom of God rather than those of the world’s dark and deadly system.

In the midst of all that comes their way the saints may go on delighting in all the goodness, mercy and grace of God. They may be taught to discern what their Father’s will is, and to always decisively and wholeheartedly pursue it. What a glorious venture the Spirit has embarked upon within each one!

reflecting our Maker’s own moral purity in our body and spirit

Because the body of a child of God is a sanctified vessel, this, obviously, makes abstaining from certain corrupt physical behaviours to be essential.

²⁰ The nature of such action will be spelt out in detail in Study 10 and beyond.

From the Scriptures we know that any sexual intimacy outside of the marriage union of a man and a woman is one such behaviour to be decisively renounced.

1 Thessalonians 4:3–8

It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honourable, not in passionate lust like [the unbelieving], who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister.

A holy—sanctified—life has, in fact, to do with refusing all kinds of passions that once governed one's behaviour. Peter exhorted the Lord's people in this regard, saying:

1 Peter 1:14–17

“As obedient children, do not conform to the [passions] you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’

Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear [and awe].”

To be God's holy children in this world is to be like an alien in a foreign land: a stranger. This is *God's* world and so is truly the home of the saints. Yet they must also know that a dark dominion has intruded into what belongs to God, and they can have nothing to do with its ways.

In fact, they must face the temptations around them in *a spirit of reverent fear and awe*. The One who has called them to be holy will not tolerate unholy living—and He will bring His strong discipline to bear upon those who are willfully disobedient to their calling.

We will see later that to live in persistent, open disregard for the way of God may, actually, show that a person has not yet come to new birth—and is in urgent need of true repentance and faith.

2 Corinthians 6:16–7:1

God has said: “I will live with them, and I will be their God, and they will be My people.”

“Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”

“I will be a Father to you, and you will be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”

Since we have these promises, [dearly loved] friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, [bringing the gift of holiness to its goal] out of reverence for God.

As the Spirit progressively imparts the salvation gift of a ‘lived-out sanctification’, He constantly strives with each child of God to bring His sanctifying work to its goal: a total conformity to the image of the Son. This goal, of course, will not be wholly reached until the Final Day. But the Spirit's zeal is unquenchable as He pursues His joyous and fiery agenda!

James 4:5 [margin]

The Spirit He caused to dwell in us [yearns] jealously.

As we have seen in Galatians 5:17, the Spirit in His holy passion for our ultimate sanctification is ‘contrary to the flesh’. He is vehemently opposed to all that is against the way and will of the Father—to anything that impedes the saint's participation in the glory of the Son!

the intrusions of the flesh

Although for all in Christ the old humanity has been put to death, the flesh nevertheless *relentlessly* tries to intrude its old ways into their new life in Him. And when this happens the flesh will be just as hideous and self-obsessed as it has always been—making them feel that nothing transforming has taken place at all! Which is absolutely true in terms of ‘the flesh’ itself. It will always be what it is: unredeemable—fit only to be damned and put to death (which, in Christ, it has been!).

And, furthermore, when those loathsome fruits of the flesh are produced within the heart, mind, speech and actions of a sanctified child of God, the evil one will take full advantage. He loves to get them fretfully focusing upon these things apart from the grace they’ve received (the ‘imperatives’ apart from the ‘indicatives’)—bringing a crushing sense of condemnation and a spirit of personal despair.

But such onslaughts need not lead to seasons of spiritual collapse. For every time the old humanity—in the flesh—raises its ugly head in desire, thought, word or deed, it needs only to be recognized, renounced and seen in the light of that supreme indicative reality: our glorious God-given identification with Christ. Then the wonders of forgiveness, cleansing, blamelessness, adoption and sanctification in Him, can be known afresh. And in the newness and freedom of that moment every element of His blessed life may be participated in!

pursuing a holy life—in the good of the true word and refusal of the false

We have been emphasizing the need for constant revelation of the word of God. It has been shown that apart from this there cannot be a true enjoyment of the new capacity that is in Christ. What is required is a resolute choice to—at all times—embrace the revelation we have received. That is, we are to *hold to* those declared *indicatives* of the way things are in Christ and the *imperatives* that enable us to be with Him in the revelation of His glory.

Study 5 told of how the evil one intruded into Eden—that holy garden sanctuary—with a false word that contained a false promise. It was a word that questioned and clouded the trustworthiness of what God had said. It also gave that primal couple the vision of a supposedly far grander human prospect than was currently theirs. The false word that came brought a wild moment of ‘enlightenment’. The word of God they knew and had delighted in immediately faded into the background, and all they could think was: “NOW WE KNOW THE WAY THINGS ARE AND WHAT WE *MUST DO!!!*” So they ate. And the tragic result was that the holiness of that sanctuary was violated, with history then being littered with the dark fruits of unholy passion: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

Today, as then, the constantly encroaching, deceptive words of the evil one, continue to communicate a false indication of the way things are and false action that must be taken—that is, a false ‘indicative’ and a false ‘imperative’.

Such false words may bring all kinds of affects: from a blazing hope and sharply focused intention, to a gloomy despair and a barren sense of obligation to pursue a certain course. The devil and his legions don’t mind what the experience is, as long as they can provoke the image of God into receiving their false indicatives, and the false imperatives these require. The evil one’s agenda is to keep every person from seeing the way things really are in Christ and the way ahead in Him.

And so, THE GREATEST NEED OF ANY SANCTIFIED CHILD OF GOD IS TO CONSTANTLY RECEIVE ALL THAT THE SANCTIFYING SPIRIT DELIGHTS TO

REVEAL: THOSE AWESOME REALITIES THAT ARE, IN FACT, *HOLY* INDICATIVES AND *HOLY* IMPERATIVES. How differently we would see our present situations and future prospects, if such holy understanding remained at the heart of our personal focus!

In later studies, so much more will be said in regard to the new capacity in Christ to live in the good of the true word and refusal of the false.

the key to holy living: ‘the promise of life’ in the face of all else

Paul, writing to his young co-worker Timothy, to encourage him in the holy calling he had received, introduced his letter with these significant words:

2 Timothy 1:1

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, in keeping with the promise of life in Christ Jesus.”

He was so keen for Timothy to freshly know—in the midst of his difficult circumstances—what the apostolic word was all about: THE PROMISE OF LIFE IN CHRIST!!! Paul knew that to constantly hold to this glorious promise is what, alone, keeps the heart joyously and confidently set apart to the Father and His will.

There is, indeed, a *relentless spiritual battle* raging in the lives of God’s sanctified children (as our next study will show). The world, the flesh and the devil are, at every point, conspiring *against the saints* to frustrate the work of the Spirit within them. But through assurance of the promise of life in Christ each one is able to mightily prevail!

The grand process of sanctification having begun, the ‘holy ones’ (in spite of the constant pressure of the world, the intrusive passions of the flesh, and the deceptive power of the devil) may participate more and more in their inheritance in the Son: His *joyous communion* with the Father and His *love* for every other person.

As we move towards the end of this section on the new covenant gift of the Holy Spirit and progressive, lived-out sanctification, it will be good to now further spell out the abundant nature of this participation.

sanctified children possessing their inheritance, through Spirit-given participation in the glory of the Son —finding there is always more to enjoy!

The inheritance of the holy children of God in Christ is possessed primarily in the Father’s presence, and then in the presence of others. Their inheritance in the Son is that new capacity by the Spirit to fulfill the two great commands: to love God with the whole of their being and to love everyone else as themselves—as if they were actually, *them*. This is the most basic biblical statement we have of both the righteousness we’ve been speaking of, and the inheritance to which the saints have been called.²¹

The thrilling thing is that until the Final Day of freedom and fullness in Christ, there will always be more and more to experience of this inheritance here and now. As the redeemed grow in the grace of God, they may—in the midst of all their ‘ups and downs’—at any time find themselves knowing God’s love more than they’ve ever done before, loving Him more than they’ve ever done before, and so, being with Him in His love, in loving *others* more than they’ve ever done before!

²¹ In Luke 10:25–28 Jesus showed that keeping the two great commands was the essence of any inheritance of eternal life, and that those who keep them will know what it means to live!

As God's children continue to press on in Jesus, the Spirit may suddenly act to open up a new horizon of participation in His glory! The nature of life in Him this side of the Final Day may, indeed, be one of increasing conformity to His likeness.

At the beginning and end of his second letter, the apostle Peter showed that this is what he expected to be the case among God's people:

2 Peter 1:2–3; 3:17–18

Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything we need for [life and godliness] through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness ... Therefore, [dearly loved] friends ... grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Yes, life in Christ is one of *growth* in the knowledge of Him. With the mighty act of regeneration, a glorious process has, indeed, begun!

In the New Testament there are not any *stages* of salvation. Every regenerate person in Christ has an immediate 'full salvation'. However, there *are* three *tenses* of salvation. One may say:

- I *was saved* when I believed;
- I *am being saved* now;
- and on the Final Day, I *will be saved*.

Salvation is *complete* right from the beginning of new life in Christ, but it is not *completed* until the End.

Paul expressed the *present tense* of salvation when declaring to the Corinthians:

2 Corinthians 2:15

[We] are among those who are being saved.

All in Christ have a complete salvation, but are also *growing up into* the salvation they have received (1 Peter 2:2). In that way they are in the process of *being* saved. This is the same as what we've seen in regard to the *process* of sanctification. The saints could never have a greater status of holiness than what they have already received in the *crisis* of sanctification. But the *process* of that holy status being manifested in their lives is a present, ongoing experience.

In all this then, the Spirit delights to *savingly act* towards the redeemed. He does this by revelation of the truth, releasing them more and more from what is fleshly—so that as co-heirs with the Son they may participate, more and more, in the boundless dimensions of their inheritance in Him!

a daily spirit of joyous anticipation

A child of God need never live any day of their life without a *glad anticipation* of the transforming work of the Spirit towards and within them. The purposeful nature of His presence makes *anything less* than this to be both unreasonable and unnecessary. Some recounting of New Testament events may be helpful at this point.

At Jesus' Baptism we are told that the heavens were 'torn open' (Mark 1:10) and that the Spirit descended upon Him like a dove. And with this the Father's voice came from heaven, "You are My Son, whom I love; with You I am well pleased" (1:11). That was a massively significant moment in history!

Hundreds of years before, the prophet Isaiah had cried out to the LORD, saying, "Oh, that You would rend (tear open) the heavens and come down" (Isaiah 64:1). And now at the Baptism that prayer was answered. This event at the River Jordon actually ushered in the Final Era of redemptive history in which the Spirit of God would be

bountifully poured out. In the Old Testament Era the Spirit came *upon* only a few chosen prophets; but from Pentecost onwards, He came to dwell permanently *within* every person from every nation who trusts in Jesus as Saviour and Lord!

Although Jesus had always lived by the Spirit, He—as the Representative Head of the race—at His Baptism, in a momentous way, received the Spirit on behalf of all of humankind. And then on the Day of Pentecost what He had received from the Father at His Baptism, He poured out upon each person who believed (Acts 3:33). We are told in John 3:34 that He had received the Spirit without limit, and this is precisely what happened for all whose hearts were opened to the gospel that day.

And today it is exactly the same. All who believe receive the Spirit without limit—the whole of Him! Actually no one can receive only a *part* of the Spirit, for He is a Person. Jesus told His disciples that they would be ‘baptized with the Holy Spirit’ (Acts 1:5), that is, that they would be initiated / immersed into the realm of the Spirit’s presence with and within them.

Although it is not possible to have more of the Spirit Himself, it is however, wonderfully the case that we may receive more *from* Him—as we yield more completely to His influence. This is why the Spirit-indwelt children of God may live in joyous anticipation of His activity each day.

The Spirit delights to go on revealing more of Christ to the redeemed and to manifest more of His glory within and through them. It is in this way that the reality of their initiation / immersion into the realm of the Spirit may be experienced more and more—not more *of* the Spirit Himself but certainly MORE AND MORE *FROM HIM!!!*

It must be said that to have a daily personal attitude of joyous anticipation is not about merely ‘being positive’—as ‘cheery’ as such an attitude may be. A *true, joyous anticipation* is one of living within the reality of what is, actually so, for those indwelt by the Spirit—that One whose holy agenda is to bring every sanctified child of God into A MAXIMUM POSSIBLE, PRESENT POSSESSION OF THEIR INHERITANCE IN THE SON!!!

an embraced position for maximum participation

Here we are speaking in yet another way of the need for the redeemed to see what it is to be *in Christ*, that they may know the reality of Him being *in them* by the Spirit: a dynamic, redemptive principle that we cannot have too clearly in our minds.

In John’s Gospel Jesus provided a powerful image of this when He proclaimed:

John 15:5

I am the Vine; you are the branches. If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing.

What Jesus said here is of very great significance. It reveals to us both the absolute nature of our union with Him, and the indispensability of this being constantly embraced in a conscious way.

To ‘remain in Jesus’ certainly doesn’t mean that believers must strive to maintain a union with Him; for that, has been established once and for all in their regeneration by the Spirit, and in the declaration of their baptism. THE REGENERATE ARE, IN CHRIST, JUST AS A BRANCH IS, IN THE VINE.

When Jesus referred to those “who remain in Me,” He was speaking of the union that would be, effected, between them and Himself on the Day of Pentecost—rather than some kind of ‘off and on union’ they themselves would need to initiate and maintain. As indicated above, what *does* have to be constantly and consciously maintained is

AN ASSURANCE OF THE INCREDIBLE FACT OF THIS UNION. And that doesn't involve any striving whatsoever—just celebration!

The key to remaining in the good of being *utterly one with Jesus* is to keep on remembering that it is, actually, the way things *are!* Yes, A GOD-GIVEN *POSITION* IN HIM—and to joyously count on that being *so* as often as possible throughout every day. Not a union maintained but a *supreme position savoured* at every opportunity.

Jesus said that those who enjoy the wonder of being united with Him in this way would bear MUCH FRUIT. That is, they would bear THE FRUIT OF HIS SONSHIP—IN ABUNDANCE!!! Which is, in every way, the very nature of the inheritance we are speaking of.

Without any shadow of doubt, the redeemed may be assured of this truth: that as they go on consciously embracing the reality of their *position* in Christ, they will enjoy a *maximum* capacity for *participation* with Him in all that *He is* and all that *is His*—and will find THERE IS ALWAYS MUCH MORE TO BE ENJOYED!!!

**enjoying more and more sight of the
greatest reality in all the world:
Jesus is Lord—and He is everything!**

Again, it must be emphasized that the most pressing need of every person is to receive *sight* of the glory of the En-fleshed, Crucified, Risen and Exalted Son: the One through whom, for whom and in whom all things were created and, are now, being brought to their goal through His absolute reign as Lord.

In His Father's glorious, eternal purpose of love, the Son has always yearned for us to be in Him and with Him. And it was in this love that He embraced our humanity and descended into the darkest depths of our accursedness—that He might exalt us, with Himself, into the heights of His own blessedness forever!

How complete is the salvation that is in Him! The redeemed have DIED with Him; their old humanity in Adam—condemned and accursed under the power of the devil—has been damned to death in His Death! They have been buried with Him in His Burial and RAISED TO LIFE with Him in His Resurrection: one with Him in His own moral status as the Righteous One in His Father's presence, one with Him in His glorious status as Beloved Son, and so, one with Him in Father's love, one with Him in His love for His Father—and one with Him in His love for all others!

Apart from Him the redeemed have NOTHING. But they are in Him as a branch in the Vine, and every moment of every day they have ALL OF HIM. As their new Lord and Master—reigning over all things on their behalf—HE IS *IN THEM AND FOR THEM EVERYTHING* THEY WERE EVER CREATED TO BE!!!

He is, indeed, all that any human being has ever dreamt of or longed for—or tried to crank themselves up to attain to. He is everything we have all been searching and yearning for all our lives. What we have sought to find in the creation and particularly in other human beings—even that 'one special person'—is what only *He* can be to us. Our greatest experiences of disappointment, exasperation and weariness have so often to do with frustrated human relationships—which promise all, but cannot deliver. Even the very best of these can never go close to fulfilling the deepest human need we have: to be filled up to the very image and likeness of God.

It is only Jesus—the En-fleshed, Crucified, Risen and Glorified Eternal Son—who can bring us with Himself into the blessedness of His Father's presence and supreme eternal purpose: into His own freedom and fullness as the Image of His Father!

There is nothing that is truly human apart from Him. We need nothing less than *all* of Him, all the time! The sanctified children of God are to be different to, separate from and other than anything that is less than Him. In essence, their lives are to consist of nothing but Him—and EVERYTHING OF HIM!!! That's why the apostle Paul was so keen to declare to his brothers and sisters in the Lord, "For to me, to live is Christ!" (Philippians 1:2)".

So it is either us or Jesus:

- the bondage of our own perpetual pursuit of self-righteousness, or the spirit-singing liberty of being with *Him* in his own moral status of *righteousness* before His Father;
- our own self-absorbed grasping after personal significance in the sight of others, or being with *Him* in His glorious personal and vocational *identity* as the Beloved Son;
- our own busy-minded attempts to secure ourselves in the circumstances of life, or *His* strong moment by moment calm and joyous *security* in His Father's purpose;
- our own frustrating endeavours to engage in fulfilling human activity, or *His capacity* to enjoy His Father's presence, and to be with His Father in His glorious actions of love towards every person.

Yes, it is always either us, or Him. And it is He, whom the Spirit has come to give us *sight* of, causing our redeemed human spirit to cry: "JESUS IS LORD!!! He reigns over all things to bring me to my goal in Him—and to me HE IS *EVERYTHING!!!*" This is the joyous assurance that the Spirit delights to impart to the saints more and more.

enjoying more and more of the Father's face —with less and less of an orphan spirit

We've already seen that the Son's intimate, Spirit-given cry within the saints, "Abba, Father," is the *primary expression* of their calling as the image of God—and is, in fact, the ultimate cry of personal human freedom!

We've also been seeing that there is, actually, *nothing* that the Son enjoys in His Father's presence, that He doesn't desire to *lavish* upon each one who has been united with Him; and that this has been the joyous and yearning anticipation of His heart from before the creation of the world.

Before anything was created the Word was 'face to face' with His Father (John 1:1). And 'in the fullness of time' it was from His Father's face that He was then sent into the world with a view to His desire being fulfilled (John 1:14; Galatians 4:4–6).

Then on the night before His awesome Act of liberation He prayed:

John 17:25–26

"Father, I want those You have given Me to be with Me where I am, and to see My glory ... I have made You known to them, and will continue to make You known in order that the love You have for Me may be in them and that I Myself may be in them."

Of course, it was the Father who initiated this passion and who, Himself, yearned for nothing less than to have such a glorious Family, filled with the blessedness of His Son, forever!

When Jesus was preparing His disciples for the time of His leaving, He assured them that they would not be left feeling like *orphans* in this world (John 14:18). It has, indeed, been an 'orphan spirit' that fallen humanity has languished under throughout its tragic history. But this would not now be the disciples' experience. On the Day of Pentecost there would be born within them a 'spirit of sonship' (Romans 8:15–16). By the gift of

the Holy Spirit, the Glorified Son would come to them and bring them with Himself into the very presence and heart of His Father!

He told them that in His Father's house 'there are many rooms' (John 14:2). We will see in the final section of this study, that in saying this He was referring to the ultimate experience of blessedness that was before them—when they would be, physically, in their future eternal Home. They could be absolutely certain that—in the Age to come—there would be a glorious PLACE there for them all.

As we've seen in Study 6, this eternal Home will be that *place* where God will be *present* to His *people*, who will be with Him forever in the enjoyment of His *purpose*. All other holy places—sanctuaries that He has provided throughout history—were symbols and fore-shadowings of this ultimate place of His glorious, manifest presence. However, as mentioned earlier, the saints' sanctified bodies in Christ have, even now, become places where God dwells by His Spirit. And because of this, the breathtaking reality is that *anywhere* a child of God is can become a place where they experience the intimacy of His presence—in a spirit of worship, able to know His love flooded into their heart by the Spirit (Romans 5:5).

Jesus Himself, although always consciously in His Father's presence, kept going out to lonely places where He prayed—enjoying special times of intimate communion (Luke 5:16). From His own gloriously enriching experience He told His disciples of rewards that are to be found in such secret places (Matthew 6:6).

And, today, for Him it is an ongoing foretaste of the joy that was set before Him (Hebrews 12:2) to bring His cherished co-heirs with Him into His Father's presence. In causing all that *fills His heart* before His Father's face to—at least to some degree—fill *theirs*, must be for Him an *inexpressible delight*. He wants *so much* for each one to taste more and more of what awaits them, together with Him, in that Eternal Home!

And clearly, the joy of the Spirit Himself must know no bounds in the presence of the Father and the Son, as He facilitates the blessedness of the treasured vessels He indwells!

Of course, it is also the Father who has a perfect, divine pleasure in having His redeemed and sanctified children come delightedly into His presence. How He adores each one and is enthralled with who they are—all without exception. He has no favourites. Well—if it comes to that—each one is a favourite! Regardless of how far they are 'along the way', or how much they have been struggling to love Him as they know they ought to.

With this amazing reality always present to the children of God—dearly loved co-heirs with the Son—it would be so tragic if they were to still languish under that old orphan spirit. For them there is *never* any need for a fearful heart or a troubled mind. They may live freely, every day, in the new liberty, identity, security and serenity that is, theirs, in Christ—in the presence of their Heavenly Father and within the perfection of His magnificent purpose of love. Their heart may be at rest and their mind at peace, even in the midst of the 'scary times' that suddenly arise. Regardless of their physical, financial, material, vocational, relational or political circumstances, they may know that as the objects of such love, all is well. None need ever feel deprived, neglected or vulnerable. The divine perfections of their sovereign Father—who is 'always at work for their sake'—makes such demeaning emotion totally unnecessary.

Yes, the sanctified children of God who are embraced forever in the Son and indwelt by the Spirit may, indeed, enjoy more and more of the Father's face—and less and less of that orphan spirit which, clearly, has no place among the saints!

enjoying more and more relational freedom —with less and less grasping for life

This matter of relational freedom has already been briefly mentioned in our earlier section on the *new identity* in Christ: there, in regard to freedom from ‘status anxiety’. In this section on the *new capacity* in Christ, we see how the Spirit enables the saints to *relate freely and truly to all other people*. And, that, more and more—even in testing environments that are far from ideal!

We saw in Study 4 how a frustrated, fallen humanity—given up to the futility of its God-refusing passions—finds itself falsely grasping after life in endless ways. This is especially so, of course, in the area of interpersonal relationships. In particular, when certain strongly desired relationships are painfully imperfect, such frustration-driven grasping becomes even more intense—and hearts are quickly angered and embittered by disappointment. But we are to see here that for those who are in Christ and indwelt by the Spirit, this no longer needs to be the case—regardless of how *testing* a particular relational environment may be.

The word ‘testing’ is being used here with a very significant purpose in mind. For it was never the Father’s purpose that humanity should come into its relational inheritance—of a full participation in the glory of the Son—without facing the implications of their calling within a *tested environment*.

We’ve seen that’s how things were from the very beginning. In the Garden of Eden there was the prohibition given to Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:16–17). Theirs was the most ideal environment of all, and yet with a test immediately introduced. For them to eat the prohibited fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil would be to *reject* their creaturely calling, and so, their Creator. It would amount to a refusal to honour Him as God and live in grateful dependence upon Him (Romans 1:21). To reject Him in this way would actually be to coldheartedly spurn His love—refusing Him as their indispensable Fountain of Wisdom for the fulfillment of their glorious calling. And, tragically, this was precisely what they did. Grasping after a false promise of life they failed the test set before them. The rest is history.

Moreover, it was always the Father’s purpose that THE *DIVINE LOVE OF THE TRIUNE COMMUNITY ITSELF*, WOULD BE *REVEALED* TO HIS IMAGE WITHIN ITS, OWN, TESTED ENVIRONMENT. He knew that humanity could never come to know the nature of His love merely through an experience of His *goodness* to them in a state of innocence. They could only truly know such a holy love in the face of its *violation*. That is, they would need to have the glory of its perfection unfolded to them when it was heinously rejected and spitefully scorned by *them*. Only in this could they begin to grasp the awesome nature of the Triune love—in its breathtaking *mercy* and *grace*!

And so, with the Lamb of God slain in the Father’s purpose before the creation, the great drama of redemption was unfolded in the midst of fallen-human history—unveiling the merciful and gracious heart of God in His yearning love for His image. That the Father should send the Son to abandon Himself up to the accursedness of a sinful humanity, and to liberate it into all the blessedness of His own Sonship forever, *could not even begin to have been imagined* within the innocence of the Garden of Eden. The primal couple’s free-spirited, warmhearted delight in their Creator before the Fall, could never be compared to the rapturous worship and adoring love of the *redeemed* children of God—in the face of the stunning mercy they’ve received and the boundless grace lavished upon them in the Son!

The saints now then, exalted with Christ, have as their primary relational environment nothing less than a participation in the Triune Community of Love itself! As we've seen, they have been regenerated by the Spirit to share in the life and blessedness of the Son's own bonded union of love with His Father. Every day—whatever their earthly relational environment—they are able to experience within them 'a spring of living water leaping up to eternal life'!

All horizontal relationships may now flow out of a life-giving, vertical intimacy with the Father and the Son, by the Spirit. AND SO, NO ONE NEED ENTER INTO ANY HORIZONTAL RELATIONSHIP IN ORDER TO *GET* LIFE, BUT ONLY TO *EXPRESS* THE LIFE THEY ALREADY *HAVE!!!*

Here there is freedom to enjoy the presence of others *without* a spirit of desperate self-interest. If relational situations are pleasant—and even thrilling—thanksgiving naturally rises to the Father. And if they are not, no demands need be made upon anyone. Where others bring hurt or disappointment, forgiveness may be freely given and warm-hearted, joyous affection toward them maintained. Nothing is withheld.²²

Having then, been initiated into the depths of the Triune Love, the saints—participating in the glory of the Son (that PLACE in Him at the Father's right hand)—are able to truly fulfill their awesome calling within the creation. Embraced now within the ideal relational environment of the Triune Community, there may be a freedom of spirit and a heart of adoring worship—one that enables authentic participation in the very love of God towards *every* other person, even within the most painfully imperfect, fallen-human situations.

And so, JUST AS THE DIVINE, TRIUNE LOVE HAS REVEALED THE NATURE OF ITS GLORY UNDER SUCH AWFUL TESTING (the 'supremely non-ideal environment' of our ongoing fallen-human treachery) SO TOO, THE SANCTIFIED CHILDREN OF GOD MAY NOW BRING REVELATION OF THAT VERY SAME LOVE, EVEN IN THEIR OWN SORELY TESTED SITUATIONS!!!

Such a glorious revelation of His love through His redeemed image is, in fact, the Father's primary purpose for human history, from Pentecost till the Final Day! This period of the Last Days is one in which we may see the glory of the Lord *more and more filling the earth*—as the saints manifest His love towards all others.

Anticipating all that He would accomplish within the hearts of His disciples, Jesus said to them:

Luke 6:27–36

To you who are listening I say: love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who ill-treat you. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great,

²² Nothing is withheld. Yet we will see in future studies, that where there is a responsibility given to have a part in authoring the development of another person, there may well—in the name and love of Jesus—be certain wise expressions of discipline that need to be applied.

and you will be children of the Most High, because He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

What an extraordinarily free-spirited life of love they were being called into! And how beautiful it is to hear the heart of the Son being expressed in this way. He so longed for that day when the Spirit would come to make his hearers participants with Him in the glory of His Father's love—regardless of the relational environments they found themselves in.

The apostle Paul understood the enormous importance of such manifestations of love within the fellowship of God's people. For the Philippians, who were passing through a relationally testing time, he revealed what was uppermost in his heart for them:

Philippians 1:9

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in [full] knowledge and [all perception].

Through the Spirit's revelation of all that was so for them in Christ, their love could abound more and more in the midst of their relational difficulties! He went on to say:

Philippians 2:1–4

Therefore, if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from His love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete ... by not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

And to the Thessalonians who were also passing through testing times, he wrote:

1 Thessalonians 4:9–10

About your love for one another we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other ... Yet we urge you, brothers and sisters, do so more and more.

Yes, there is always so much more for the saints to both experience and express in regard to the love of God. Exalted with the Son in His Father's presence, they may know at last that life is not to be found in wringing out every drop of personal stimulation from sensory experiences, accumulating magnificent things or gaining the esteem of others: understanding, that the 'grasping mode' is always idolatrous by nature and never an environment of love. In Christ all are free to *relate truly* to every other person and every created thing around them, in every situation of life.

By the indwelling Spirit there certainly is a *new capacity* for enjoyment of more and more relational freedom—and with this, less and less of loveless, humanly demeaning and orphan-spirited grasping after life!

enjoying more and more vocational fruitfulness —with less and less futile investment

In speaking now of the matter of vocational fruitfulness, we are actually gathering up all that has been said about an increasing experience of the inheritance that is in Christ; for vocational fruitfulness is simply a result of the relational freedom and fullness that has been described above—vertically and then horizontally. With these vertical and horizontal relationships so richly endowed, the saints are, indeed, set up for an abundantly, fruitful vocational life!

We may say that true vocational living is about nothing else than being wholly with the Son in His Father's love, wholly with Him in His love for His Father and wholly with Him in His love for every other person.

Yes, the Son has always lived in the abundance of His Father's love, has always abundantly returned it to Him, and the Father's love has always abundantly flowed out *through* Him towards the entire creation! And now, in these Last Days, He longs for all whom His Father has given Him to be with Him *vocationally* in this same glorious action of love—by the powerful stirrings of the Spirit within them.

In fulfilling His mission among us as the En-fleshed One, Jesus was living within the inheritance of the image of God: loving and obeying His Father with the whole of His Being and loving all others in the same way, fulfilling the two great commands. How relationally free He was in our midst—and how vocationally rich was every purposeful moment of His life!

In Study 6 we spoke of Jesus' vocational identity as Priest, Prophet and King. In the fullness of His Father's love He magnificently fulfilled His calling in these ways: as Priest, offering up to the Father every desire of His heart, thought of His mind, word of His mouth and action of His body—for the sheer joy of bringing His Father pleasure; as Prophet, speaking every word He received; and as King, exercising the authority He had been given over everything that has oppressively intruded into human experience—and, that, always, with the tender compassion (together with the burning zeal) of His Father's own yearning heart of love.

In this study we've seen that, united with Christ, the redeemed have been made one with Him in both His personal status as Beloved Heir and His vocational status as Priest, Prophet and King—and that the Spirit has been poured out upon them to make them *participants* in the very action of these incredible realities!

We can surely see by now, how *Jesus*, as the En-fleshed and Exalted Eternal Son, desires His sanctified servants to be wholly, vocationally engaged with Him. They are to be with Him in His ongoing priestly, prophetic and kingly action—gloriously manifesting the love of His Father in the midst of all the traumas and travails of this present world!

His redemptive agenda for the saints was arrestingly portrayed in the prayer He caused to flow from the heart of His servant Paul, when, on behalf of the church at Ephesus, the apostle prayed:

Ephesians 3:1–20

[I ask that the glorious Father will mightily] strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may [go on dwelling in] your hearts by faith [—thrilling your affections, filling your mind and captivating your will; and that you], being rooted and established in love, may have [full ability], together with all [the saints], to grasp [what is the breadth and length and height and depth of the boundless riches of Christ], and to know [the love of Christ] that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

What bold anticipation Paul had as he prayed! He expected that by the Spirit's mighty, strengthening power within the saints, *sight* of the boundless riches of Christ would fill their mind: awesome dimensions of revelation making His love known in ways that are far beyond what has been experienced before. And all this with a view to them being,

together, filled up to the measure of what the divine image was always meant to be: a humanly expressed revelation of the glory of God!²³

Paul could then only exclaim that such action of the Spirit is able to produce not only all that could be asked for or imagined—but *immeasurably more than that!* What immense, vocational outcomes the saints may *anticipate* as beloved co-heirs with the Son: their great Priest, Prophet and King.

In Study 3 we saw the tragic outcome of a life lived for the mere stimulation of sensory experience, the possession of magnificent things and the elevation of one's personal status in the eyes of others. There we saw the spine-chilling lament of one richly gifted man who had to say towards the end of his life:

Ecclesiastes 2:11

When I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, [short-lived, a mere breath], a chasing after the wind.

For the sanctified children of God to invest their divinely-given personal resources (of time, physical, mental and emotional energies and material wealth) in ways that yield nothing of lasting significance, is pure tragedy. The world, the flesh and the devil do, of course, conspire to habitually lock the saints into such futile investment.

But in grasping more and more of the glorious things of grace this may, thankfully, be less and less the case. Not one co-heir with the Son—free from that personally deadening orphan-spirit—need settle for anything less than a full-hearted engagement with Him in His Father's eternal purposes of love!

Yes, as participants in the indwelling glory of the Son by the Spirit, the saints have received a vast capacity for vocational fruitfulness. And they may, most certainly, know the blessedness of this more and more in the daily investment of their lives.

grace not cancelled out when the Spirit's transforming power is not enjoyed

We have rightly been speaking of the transforming power of the Spirit and urging an anticipation of His activity towards and within all who are in Christ. We adorn the grace of God and extol its riches, by showing the magnificent affects it may have in the hearts, minds and wills of His sanctified children.

But although all these indications of the Spirit's power are a marvelous reality, there is something that must be understood: To remain a *possessor* of this amazing salvation in Christ is not, in any way, dependent upon *enjoyment* of its powers at any particular time.

For all kinds of reasons, we can experience a sense of *numbness* to the wonders of the grace of God. In seasons of extreme adversity grace may seem to be nothing. Under the accusing and confusing assaults of the demonic realm, a regenerate person may actually feel themselves to be outside of its saving power. But, nevertheless, because it *is GRACE* it still holds us in Christ—even then!

We will continue to see throughout our series that by decisively taking hold of 'the word of grace' we are, actually, able to know the assurance, joy and vocational capacity it

²³ The word 'together' here is pointing towards the corporate / communal experience of life in Christ that will be filled out in Study 17. But this may also, of course, be, in principle, a personal reality for all in Christ.

brings, no matter what. But the fact remains that this saving grace is not cancelled out when—for whatever reason—we fail to enjoy it.

It must always be remembered that a redeemed child of God comes back into assurance and blessing *from* a place of 100% grace, not in order to be restored *to* that place. Although in Christ a person's *experience* may vary greatly, their glorious *position* remains totally unchanged!

We have been speaking of the wonderfully transforming power of the Spirit, then, not to bring condemnation. The purpose has been to *give sight* of that entirely new capacity that all have in Christ—so that each one may wholeheartedly embrace their present calling in Him.

It is so important to understand that the Father is *never* condemning of His chosen heirs. When they are struggling to resist the flesh, the attitude of His yearning heart of love is, "My child, you're so much better than that in My Son!"

In the light of all we've been seeing, the Father certainly doesn't want anyone remorsefully lamenting, "Oh, I've got such a long way to go. Others are so much further along than me!" Rather, He'd desire an exclamation in His presence like, "Now I can see afresh the miracle of Your grace and the vastness of my high calling in Christ. I fall so far short of this, but You are still *joyously at work* in Your love for me. I know where You are taking me—and it's so amazing!"

Wherever there is difficulty or discouragement the devil is always ready with a false indicative ("This is how things are—hopeless") and a false imperative ("This is what you must do—just give up, or grind on"). Such lies may, and must, be immediately set-aside in obedient faith.

Before the Final Day there is always 'a long way to go'. But there is also always TOTAL GRACE to restore and to enable the next step into 'new life in the kingdom of the Son'—no matter how little has been enjoyed of the Spirit before that time. Those in Christ may, at any moment, be renewed in a joyous spirit of anticipation!

Yes, where there is sorrow for sinfulness before a loving Father, there is never anything less than an entirely fresh beginning—with no condemning or gloomy gaze from Him. And it is within an environment of such perfect goodness, mercy and grace that the redeemed may freely press on and thrive, with a believing heart and an obedient spirit.

So, once again, there we have it. By the great grace of God, the dilemma of Study 4 may be exchanged for something so very much different—with those old diversional, wrath-averting mechanisms being seen to be the foolish and futile things they are.

Through the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit, the redeemed may daily share in the Son's joyous relational intimacy and vocational partnership with His Father: one with Him in His priestly heart, prophetic mind and kingly action. And in this their old sense of *deadness* and *futility* may be no more!

Now we are ready to look at the final pair of gifts that are possessed in union with the Exalted and Life-giving Son-Lamb-King. These, we will see, are further proclamation of the indicative reality of a person's position in Christ. It will be seen that they are, actually, the crowning gifts of salvation that, together with the other 'status gifts', enable the redeemed to presently live freely and fully in the power of the Spirit.

Fourthly, in Christ, enjoying the transforming wonder of the new covenant gifts of:

THE HOPE OF ETERNAL LIFE & GLORIFICATION

being receivers of a NEW DESTINY (in ETERNITY)

no longer having to bear with a

dark-spirited sense of *dread & doom*;

now able to say: **‘I have a great inheritance to possess!’**

*# eagerly anticipating the blessedness of a visible, uncontested
& perfect participation in the Son’s glorified humanity, forever!*

Here in this last section we will be seeing the ultimate manifestation of the gifts already described. And we’ll also see how these amazing *future certainties* powerfully *impact* the life of a redeemed person in the present.

Although the glorious wonders of eternity are all still to come, those who are regenerate in Christ already have everything that will ultimately be theirs. By faith they may look forward to this, and—as said previously—experience a *foretaste* of much of it, even now. But then, of course, at Jesus’ Appearing they will *visibly* receive the *total* revelation of it all and a perfect participation in its blessedness—which will be beyond their imagining!

In this concluding part of our study we will attempt to draw back the curtain, so to speak, and see what may be known of this incredible future of the redeemed children of God.

the Father’s purpose from eternity for eternity

We have come to understand that everything the redeemed have, and will forever enjoy, was in the Father’s heart and mind from before the Creation. All things were, in fact, brought into being with a view to the fulfillment of His *wise saving purpose*.

1 Corinthians 2:7–8

We speak of God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

Until the Day of Pentecost, the eternal marvels of the gospel were largely a hidden mystery. But now through the apostolic word there is rich revelation of what has been accomplished and what is to come—according to His great ‘grace-plan’!

1 Corinthians 2:9–10

It is written: “What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, what no human mind has conceived, [what] God has prepared for those who love Him”—[these things He] has revealed to us by His Spirit.

the Cross central to it all

It was said above that ‘the rulers of this age’—in their culpable ignorance—‘crucified the Lord of glory’. But this was, nevertheless, always at the heart of the Father’s saving intention. As Study 6 has shown, it was according to His ‘deliberate plan and foreordination’ prior to the Creation of the world (Acts 2:23; 1 Peter 1:20; Revelation 13:8).

Hebrews 2:10

In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the Author of their salvation perfect through suffering.

God's purpose was always that the glory of His grace would be revealed in the abandoning up of the Son for our sins. We've seen that although the Cross was the greatest tragedy of history, it was also the supreme revelation of the Father's love. The wonder of this will fill the hearts of His glorified children forever!

choosing from eternity—and in time, mercifully regenerating into an eternal inheritance

It has been shown that on the basis of the En-fleshed Son's Anointing, Death, Resurrection, Ascension and Outpouring of the Spirit, the Father's elect have experienced the merciful power of regeneration. And in this, an extraordinary reality has come into being for each one, with a glorious end in view:

Ephesians 2:6–7

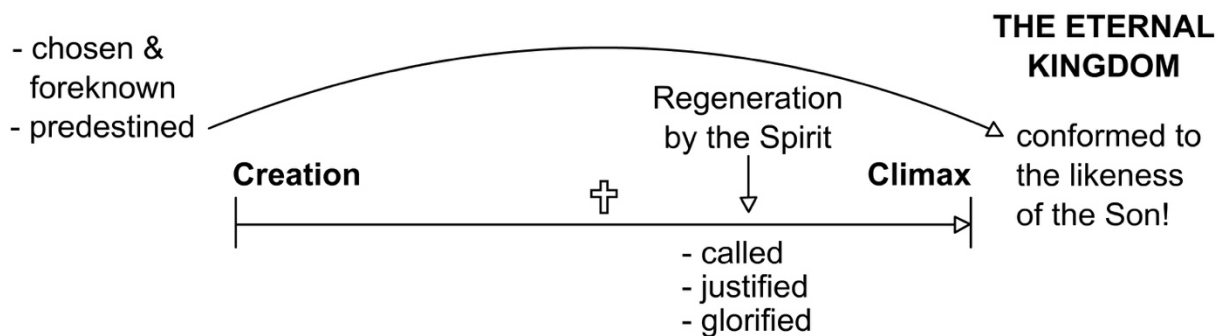
"God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in kindness to us in Christ Jesus."

Surely the redeemed could never tire of having this amazing fact set before their minds. Made alive with their reigning Lord, they have—spiritually—been enthroned with the Father, and in Him await the blessedness that eternity will bring. And yes, in that Eternal Day they will celebrate 'the incomparable riches' of the Father's grace—forever expressed in His boundless kindness towards them!

2 Timothy 1:9

This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.

Once again, the diagram below illustrates the eternal sweep of the Creator's redemptive purpose.



Ephesians 1:18 [NKJV]

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know [what is the hope of His calling].

The apostle Paul prayed fervently for the saints in Ephesus to fully grasp the nature of the hope set before them: that glorious, final outcome of the Father's merciful and effective call.

The writer to the Hebrews, also spoke of what awaits every divinely called person:

Hebrews 9:15

Christ is the Mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance.

Just as the covenant with Israel—mediated by Moses—guaranteed that Israel would be brought into their inheritance of the land of Canaan, so it would be with the *new covenant*. Through it, Christ, the Mediator guaranteed an *eternal inheritance* for all of the Father's 'called ones' from throughout history.

It was always purposed that the new covenant would bring the elect into what we've repeatedly referred to: an eternally, fully possessed PLACE within the blessedness of the Son's own bonded union of love with His Father!

the gift of eternal life

At the conclusion of His time of teaching after the Lord's Supper, Jesus prayed:

John 17:1–3

Father, the hour has come. Glorify You Son, that Your son may glorify You. For You granted Him authority over all people that He might give eternal life to all You have given Him. Now this is eternal life that they may know You, the Only True God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.

God the Son, en-fleshed among us as the new Head and Representative of humanity, pressed towards that Supreme Act of the Cross by which He would reveal the Father's glory. And His longing was that, out of this, all who had been given to Him would enjoy the eternal life of knowing both the Father and Himself. That is, that they would know Him as the Son in a way they'd never done before, and in this, be one with Him in His own knowledge of the Father.

As we've seen, the gift of eternal life is imparted to every believer when they receive the Spirit—bringing each one into the life of *relational intimacy* and *vocational partnership* within the Triune Community.

Eternal life is, then, not merely an eternal existence but an eternal *participation* in the richly glorious, relational and vocational life of God—with the saints enjoying the first fruits of this even now. AND IT IS THE *FINAL ENJOYMENT OF THIS ETERNAL LIFE* THAT IS, IN FACT, THE GOAL OF ALL THE GIFTS OF SALVATION!!!

What a contrast this amazing reality is to a present life lived 'in the shadow of death' (Matthew 4:16): 'dead in transgressions and sins' (Ephesians 2:1). Such is the wonder of redeeming grace!

Romans 5:20–21

Where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Jesus came in the life of His own eternal Sonship, and through His Father's righteousness brought 'super-abundant grace' to sinners. Yes, and to this glorious end: to bring the gift of His own eternal, covenantal communal life to all who believe.

1 John 5:11–12

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Those who have the Son have life; those who do not have the Son of God do not have life.

All who are united with the Son through faith possess the gift of eternal life as their *richest treasure*—a reality that the Father clearly loves to declare to His children!

Jesus, Himself, delighted to give a similar testimony. He said:

John 5:24

“I tell you the truth, those who hear My word and believe Him who sent Me have eternal life and will not be condemned; they have crossed over from death to life.”

Regenerate believers have been brought from the realm of death into the realm of life. Their present enjoyment of this eternal realm of life is *exactly opposite* to their old ‘death-like existence’, which was a life lived under the shadow of future condemnation.

Titus 3:5–7

[By His own mercy] He saved us through the washing of [regeneration] and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

As we’ve seen, the regenerating mercy and justifying grace of God have come to every believer by the generously outpoured Spirit. And this is *wholly* with a view to their becoming inheritors of a grand eternal hope!

In the Scriptures, of course, hope is not merely a matter of ‘wishful thinking’. It is a sure and certain expectation of what is to come, on the basis of the promise of God.

a place in the Father’s eternal home

The eternal life now possessed will, indeed, ultimately be fully known and enjoyed in the *home* that is to come. As previously mentioned, Jesus said to His disciples:

John 14:2

“In My Father’s house there are many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am [going to] prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with Me that you also may be where I am.”

There are plenty of rooms within the Father’s house! That is, there will be a place for every one of His children within His eternal household. There, all will forever enjoy the blessed covenantal, communal life of the Triune Community of Love, within the glorified humanity of the Son!

The ‘place’ He has gone to prepare is where He now is at the right hand of God. This ‘supreme relational position’—one with the Father in His authority over all things—is at the heart of our Maker’s incredible purpose for His family.

Spiritually, this place is already the abode of the redeemed in Christ. But in eternity it will be the position from which they forever, and entirely, participate by the Spirit in the Son’s relational intimacy and vocational partnership with His Father!

‘the place’ that has been prepared —an ultimate environment

In Study 6 we saw that at Jesus’ Appearing there will be a renewing of the entire heavens and earth. Just now, enjoyment of the ‘first-fruits’ of eternal life in Christ is experienced within the present state of the creation. But when He comes again to conclude this age, all of the saints will participate *fully* in the life of His glorified humanity *upon a gloriously renewed earth!* They will, actually, ‘inherit the earth’ (Matthew 5:5). It will be their eternal home—their Father’s house.

In this delightful situation the realities of the unseen spiritual realm will be manifested constantly, within the seen physical realm. There will be no sense of division between

the two. The Father's will, will indeed, be done 'on earth as it is in heaven' (Matthew 6:10). The heavenly and the earthly will be one forever.

What a mind-boggling future the children of God will have together: an eternal enjoyment of the Son's bonded union of love with His Father, participating wholly in the relational and vocational riches of His glorified humanity—all, within a gloriously renewed creation!

Revelation 21:3

They will be [God's] people, and [He] Himself will be with them and be their God. In the vision Jesus gave to the apostle John he declared the ultimate expression of this, saying:

Revelation 22:4

They will see His face.

This hope of seeing His face, that is, to have absolute relational knowledge of Him and intimacy with Him, was the supreme hope that the apostle Paul incessantly longed for. He said:

1 Corinthians 13:12

For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror [of polished metal]; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

Jesus declared:

Matthew 11:27b

No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son.

But on that final Day, and forever, **ALL WHO ARE IN THE SON WILL KNOW HIM AND HIS FATHER—TO THE VERY SAME DEGREE THAT THEY THEMSELVES ARE KNOWN BY BOTH THE FATHER AND THE SON!!!** For the redeemed to finally 'know as they are known' must surely be the most delectable prospect, each and every day of their life!

Yes, by the joyous Spirit, all the saints will endlessly delight in the intimate, manifest presence of the Father and the Son—as they live upon the renewed earth, fully and gloriously as the image of God.

The entire earth will become 'the holy city'—an eternal Eden—where the Father dwells with His family. In an ultimate way this city will manifestly come 'down to earth from heaven' (Revelation 21:2), and the whole earth will be filled with the glory of God (Psalm 72:19; Habakkuk 2:14).

WHAT A PLACE THE SON HAS PREPARED, IN HIMSELF, FOR THE FATHER'S CHILDREN IN THE GLORIOUS ENVIRONMENT OF THAT ETERNAL HOME TO COME!!!

the great Resurrection at the Son's Appearing

As foreshadowed in Study 6, one of the most magnificent realities to be anticipated by the saints is the fact of their future bodily resurrection. This will not be like the resurrection of Lazarus and others in the Gospels and Acts. Those were *resuscitations* of people who came to life only to die again. The resurrection of the redeemed at the Appearing of Jesus will be a resurrection to physical life—into which death will never again intrude!

Theirs will be a participation in the Resurrection of Jesus Himself, who said:

Revelation 1:18

“I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever.”

This great Resurrection Event will, in fact, be universal. As was seen in Study 6, it will include those who are eternally lost and condemned as well as the saved. Every person who has ever lived will be physically raised to life. But only the elect children of God will participate in the Son’s glorified humanity and enjoy the Father’s glorious kingdom of love upon the earth.

Daniel 12:2

Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.

Having already spoken of the eternal state of the condemned in Studies 4 and 6, our attention is directed now to all that is attached to the resurrection of the redeemed.

This matter of the bodily resurrection of the Lord’s people at His Appearing is, actually, *the great climax of the gift of adoption*. Paul longingly declared:

Romans 8:23

“We wait eagerly for our adoption, the redemption of our bodies.”

In the resurrected and glorified bodies of the saints there will be no possibility of death and decay—or of tragic fallen-human sinfulness! Then the children of God will be free to *forever* fully express His glory through their perfected, manifestly-sanctified physical humanity.

This is something to be longed for with great joy and anticipation!

Philippians 3:20–21

Our citizenship is in [the heavens]. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables Him to bring everything under His control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body.

Not only will the bodies of the redeemed be liberated from death and decay and from the corruption of human fallen-ness, they will also have a *human glory* previously unknown, even to Adam in Eden. Their bodies will be identical to the glorified body of the Lord Jesus Himself! (Not the one seen by the disciples after His Resurrection but the one He has at the Father’s right hand.)

Even now the redeemed have a ‘dual citizenship’. That is, they are both citizens of earth and of ‘the heavens’. Their earthly citizenship certainly has a place in their lives. But their true liberty, identity, security, capacity and destiny all flow to them from the unseen heavenly realms.

It is in the heavens—where the Glorified, En-fleshed Son is at His Father’s right hand—that the saints find their true rights, authority, opportunities, privileges and responsibilities. And it is also there that they find a *joyous expectation* of all that is to come.

THERE, WITH THE SON, AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, IS THE HOPE OF THE FATHER’S SANCTIFIED CHILDREN!!!

Paul was very keen to point out to the Corinthian believers, both the *fact* of the resurrection and the *amazing nature* of the glorified bodies they would someday enjoy. He said:

1 Corinthians 15:36–38, 42–49

“What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as He has determined ...”

“So it will be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.”

“If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So it is written: ‘The first Adam became a living being’; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. As was the earthly, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the One from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly, so shall we bear the likeness of the heavenly.”

In this life our bodies bear the earthly likeness of Adam. But in the life to come they will bear the likeness of the heavenly humanity of the Glorified One!

The precise nature of these bodies is beyond our comprehension at this stage. We know that although physical they will also be spiritual. They may, actually, be as different to the present body as a seed is different to the plant that grows from it. But, whatever their form, they will certainly be a fitting vehicle for the unique personality of each child of God—functioning magnificently in the midst of the pleasures of an eternally renewed creation!

Above all, we know that these bodies will be alive with the life of the Son and radiant with His heavenly glory! This is how Jesus described it:

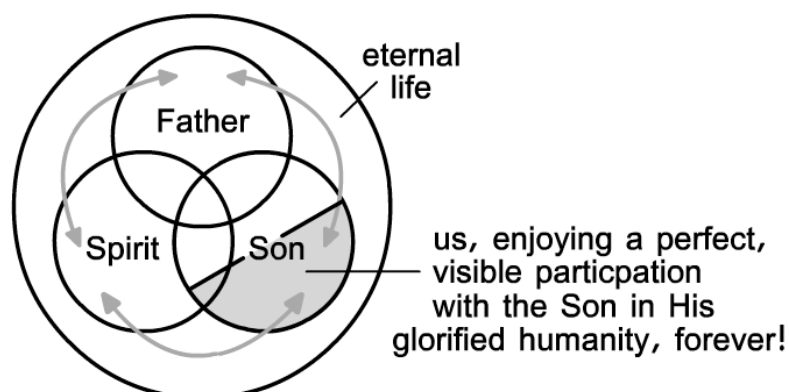
Matthew 13:43

“Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”

ultimate righteousness in glorified bodies

The glory of God will be perfectly reflected in the resurrected bodies of the saints. There will, in fact, be a constant, gloriously perfect revelation of *His own righteousness* through them!

The diagram below illustrates what will be the *relational* and *vocational* reality of the glorified children of God as they possess their eternal inheritance in the Son. All that they are, desire, think, say or do on the earth, will be a *visible, uncontested* and *perfect* participation in the righteousness of the Son.



Imagine what it must be like to have nothing of impurity anywhere in our entire being: free, every moment, with the Son to joyously love the Father with all that we are, and to ceaselessly love every other person with a perfect love. No more horrible self-obsession—forever!

THE JUSTIFYING GIFT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IN CHRIST WILL HAVE, AT LAST, COME TO ITS GLORIOUS GOAL!!!

In Study 1 we saw the awesome nature of God's righteousness. It was declared that His every fatherly action as the Righteous One is breathtakingly wonderful!

Well then, let us now hear this: ON THE GREAT DAY TO COME, THE HUMANITY OF THE REDEEMED WILL BE CROWNED FOREVER WITH NOTHING LESS THAN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD!!!

Galatians 5:5

By faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.

2 Timothy 4:8

—the long-awaited crown prepared for Paul and all the saints!

Now 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.

As said already, this is the nature of salvation. It is, indeed, what it means for the Redeemer to restore humankind to His image and likeness, in the Son!

As we saw in Study 6, the renewed heavens and earth will be 'the home of righteousness' (2 Peter 3:13). The abundant grace lavished upon the saints will be expressed in its totality. They will *reign in life* through the—now absolutely fulfilled—gift of righteousness (Romans 5:17).

The righteousness, peace and joy of the kingdom of God will be theirs (Romans 14:17)!

Daniel 7:18

The saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, forever and ever.

The life of God's holy ones will be a direct participation in the righteous reign and rule of the Triune Community of Love over the eternally renewed creation!

Revelation 5:10

They will reign on the earth.

Revelation 22:5

They will reign for ever and ever.

What a reign this will be—all exercised in a spirit of love, joy, peace, [longsuffering], kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22–23). The earth will truly be 'the home of righteousness'. No wonder all in Christ long for and eagerly anticipate this glorious hope!

ultimate enjoyment of the new identity in Christ

For all of the things we don't know about the life to come there is one thing we certainly *do* know: there will be no *status anxiety* in the eternal kingdom of God!

As seen earlier, the *new identity* that the redeemed have in Christ right now is truly magnificent. Each may know that they are one with the Son in His personal status as Beloved Heir and in His vocational status as Priest, Prophet and King.

These things, in this age, are known by *faith* and confirmed wonderfully in many ways by the Spirit's ministry. But in the age to come they will all be known by *sight* and *experience*—and the, undreamed of dimensions, of their ultimate fulfillment will bring indescribable pleasure in God's presence!

Within the glorified humanity of the Son the saints will perfectly fulfill their high human calling:

- The constant song of their hearts and every desire, thought, word and deed will be a fragrant, pleasure-giving, priestly offering to the Father;
- Each one always prophetically and joyously speaking the very word of their Father—one with Him in heart, mind and will;
- Together and forever engaged in delightful and purposeful kingly action—exercising a clear-spirited, gentle and fruitful authority within their Father's world.

In the eternal kingdom no one will be striving to '*be someone*'. There will be no fearful or competitive spirit. Every person will be freely enjoying all that they *are* as a glorified child of God—honouring and taking pleasure in all who are around them, as, by the Spirit, they do the will of the Father, in the Son!

images of a glorious identity

In speaking to the churches in the Book of the Revelation, Jesus used some striking images to describe the identity that the saints will ultimately enjoy. Such imagery is not meant to be taken in a strictly, literal way. But it does create a delightful, mental impression of what will be. He said:

Revelation 2:17

“[I will] give each of them a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it.”

In Roman times, being given a white stone signified that a person had received a privileged position. Here Jesus says that the white stone the saints receive will have a 'new name' written on it, known only to them. That is, it will be a unique name, given to no one else.

This name will be the Son's declaration to them of the *unique person* they have been created to be and their *unique place* within the eternal household of God. The sight of that name will immediately cause a massive eruption of joy within the receiver: “OH YES, THIS NAME DESCRIBES PERFECTLY WHO I AM AND WHAT I AM TO BE ABOUT, FOREVER, IN THE FATHER'S HOME! YES, YES—THIS IS ME!!!”

Each one will delight in the fact that this is how, in the Son, they are personally regarded and valued within the fellowship of the Triune Community of Love. And, of course, the enormously heightened sense of personal identity it brings, will also greatly enrich their fellowship with every other redeemed family member. All will be so absolutely *secure* in the personhood they have received—and free to wholly honour and rejoice in the blessedness of everyone else!

Jesus also said this:

Revelation 3:12

“I will write on them the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem which is coming down out of heaven from My God; and I will also write on them My new name.”

Speaking as the Glorified, En-fleshed Son—a fellow creature with the humanity He has redeemed—Jesus referred to the Father as His 'God'. Yes, the Son delights to remain

totally identified with us forever as the Divine/human One—so that the redeemed may forever participate in His glorious humanity!

Firstly, He says that He will write on them the name of His God—that is, the name of the Father. In Revelation 14:1 we are told that all such writing is upon the forehead. Again, this is not to be taken in a literal way. To say that it is on the forehead means that the person is openly identified with what is written. Here, it declares: “This one belongs to the Father!”

Secondly, He will write on them the name of the city of God: the new dwelling place of His people that comes down from heaven to the earth. This name declares that the one receiving it has a prime *place* within that eternal community.

And thirdly, He will write on them His *own new name*. What a revelation this new name will be!

All that a child of God has ever yearned to know of the Son’s glory will be expressed in this new name. The awesomely thrilling nature of that revelation will ravish their entire being. And it will be *written on their forehead*—declaring that THEY WILL FOREVER BE ONE WITH HIM, IN ALL THE VAST AND GLORIOUS DIMENSIONS OF HIS SONSHIP!!!

There will, indeed, be no status anxiety in the eternal kingdom of God!

away from the body and present with the Lord—awaiting the Resurrection

For those who die in Christ before His Appearing at the close of history, the Scriptures point to a blessed state of being ‘with the Lord’.

On the Cross Jesus gave this assurance to the repentant criminal being crucified alongside of Him:

Luke 23:43

“Truly I tell you, today you will be with Me in paradise.”

He was assuring this man that, at death, he would be immediately in the presence of the One in whom he had just put his trust. The man’s spirit would be with Jesus that very day in ‘paradise’—a place of great delight.

When Jesus Himself had died, His spirit passed into the Father’s presence. There His joy would have been unbounded as He celebrated the victory of the Cross and anticipated the moment of His Resurrection three days later.

The writer to the Hebrews spoke of significant unseen realities that those in Christ may be aware of. One of these was ‘the spirits of the righteous made perfect’ (Hebrews 12:23). And, of course, we have Moses and Elijah ‘appearing’ with Jesus at the Transfiguration.

Every believer can know that all who have died in Christ are in His presence—awaiting the great Final Day. Their bodies have yet to be resurrected but their spirit is ‘with the Lord’.

The apostle Paul was once taken up into paradise (whether ‘in the body or out of the body’ he wasn’t sure). There he ‘heard inexpressible things’ (2 Corinthians 12:1–4). On the basis of this he could say to the Philippian and Corinthian believers:

Philippians 1:23

“I desire to depart [from the body] and be with Christ.”

2 Corinthians 5:6, 8

“[We] know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord ... and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”

This is what is sometimes called ‘the intermediate state’. It will be a season of *absolute revelation* and *untellable delight* in the Lord’s presence: the thrilling personal freedom and fullness of an uncontested and perfect *participation* in His joyous communion with the Father and the Spirit—and in His love for all whom the Father has given Him. And with this, jubilant anticipation of the New Day of the Resurrection when all will be gloriously lived out in the renewed heavens and earth, forever! This is the blessedness of ‘perfected spirits’ in—what may be called—the ‘heavenly waiting-room’ of the redeemed.

no more fear of death

In the light of all that has been said, how foolish it would be for anyone in Christ to be afraid of dying!

Of course, as we saw in Study 4, the fear of death is a normal part of life for one who remains unredeemed. But for all who have been united with the One who came that ‘He might taste death for everyone’ (Hebrews 2:9) such fear is now a decidedly ‘abnormal part’ of their human experience.

The Scriptures do speak of death as ‘the last enemy’ (1 Corinthians 15:26). And it is true, that the whole process of human death and decay is certainly an intrusion into the dignity and vibrancy that our humanity was destined for. In that sense it is rightly declared an enemy. But certainly not one to be dreaded! As was said in Study 4, death does not have to be a *dark foe* to be feared. Rather—by God’s great grace—it may be a *dear friend* to be warmly welcomed when it comes. The old enemy will inevitably have its way. But it may only serve the glorious purpose of the Redeeming Father.

With the dread of future judgment removed through the gift of justification, there is nothing for the redeemed to fear in death, and everything to joyously anticipate!

Actually, when a redeemed child of God dies, others see what appears to be their death, but *they don’t*. It has been said that they don’t even ‘feel the bump’ in passing from one realm to the other! Jesus made this very clear when He declared:

John 8:51

“I tell you the truth, whoever keeps My word will never see death.”

For all who are in Christ physical death still takes place, but death itself is never known!

This, of course, doesn’t mean that there isn’t the sadness of parting and deep sorrow for those who no longer have the presence of their loved ones. It also doesn’t remove the pain and discomfort that the process of physical dying often brings. That’s why the apostle John’s vision of what will finally be, is so encouraging:

Revelation 21:1–4

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. ... I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with human beings ... There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

The destruction of death and its terrors is what the LORD had always been moving towards throughout the great Story of Redemption. Isaiah revealed this as he proclaimed:

Isaiah 25:7–8

“[The LORD] will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; He will swallow up death forever.”

The nations—in idolatrous rebellion against their Maker—have always lived under a dark shroud of death. But Jesus’ Death, Resurrection, Ascension and Outpouring of the Spirit, have opened the way for a *new day* in the lives of all who repent and believe the gospel, in every nation!

2 Timothy 1:10b

[Christ Jesus] has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

1 Corinthians 15:55

“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”

For the Father’s redeemed children death is like a *scorpion* that has had its ‘stinger’ removed. On their deathbed they may serenely allow that ‘old insect’ to crawl all over them. The fact is that it can do them no harm!

Yes, the ‘dark foe’ death may now indeed be a ‘dear friend’. As already said, when it finally comes it will usher the redeemed immediately into their Lord’s presence. There they will enjoy the blessedness of unimagined revelation and worship, along with *boundless delight* in anticipating their coming resurrection—and the ultimate wonders of their great, eternal inheritance together with all the saints.

How amazing that the children of God are born into a family that never dies! And each one may most certainly be free at last from an oppressive and humanly demeaning fear of that old, sting-less enemy’s arrival.

the needless fear that can come

In the light of all that has been proclaimed above, the future inheritance of the saints is clearly not to be viewed merely as a ‘calming thought’ in the face of death. It is, rather, something to be patiently yearned for until their final breath. And yet, even with such desire, fear may suddenly—and irrationally—seize the heart.

For example: When Israel was delivered from bondage in Egypt they were free at last! Taken to Mount Sinai they saw the glory of the LORD, heard His voice and received His word, together with the gift of the tabernacle and the promise of His presence with them—brought out of the horrible suffering of Egypt to this! Wonderful! But they were not content to remain there in transit. They yearned to *possess* their inheritance in *Canaan*—and were impatient to do so.

That is until they came to the border of the land. Then when they were confronted with terrifying descriptions of the enemy to be conquered before their possession of it, they were *irrationally* possessed by fear and dread of what lay ahead—and so, desperately wanted to postpone the entry! But in this they didn’t take into account the declaration of the LORD that, the enemy that stood between *them* and *possession* of the land was already a defeated foe! If they had gone in, in faith, they would have discovered that to be exactly the case!

In the same way, when co-heirs with the Son face death—that ‘last enemy’ to be confronted before they possess what is promised—*their* hearts too can ‘fail them for fear’, and they too, in panic, can want to postpone the event for as long as possible. But the fact remains: when they do finally encounter the enemy, and he comes against them with all his demeaning powers, he will actually be seen to be what he’s always been since the Messiah’s great victory: a defeated foe. The moment he strikes they

will immediately enter into what was promised. And they will surely wonder, why, they hesitated to press towards it all of their lives and with all of their being—without fear! This doesn't mean that we shouldn't seek medical treatment or prayer for healing. The point is that our spirit need not be oppressed with dread when death appears to be approaching. In the Lord there doesn't need to be any frantic grasping after anything—including our present physical existence.

freedom from the slavery that fear of death maintains

Study 4 showed how the evil one has always held a fallen and guilt-laden humanity in slavery to himself and his ways. And this, by frightening them with the prospect of death and the terrifying judgment it represents. In this way death has always been an incredibly mighty weapon in his hands. But the redeeming work of Jesus has brought an end to that, for all who believe.

Hebrews 2:14–15

Since the children have flesh and blood, He too shared in their humanity so that by His death He might break the power of him who holds the [might] of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

By wholly *embracing* our humanity and our sin and death, Jesus has wholly *broken* the devil's powerful hold. He has released all who believe from their guilt and condemnation, and so, has *liberated* them from the evil one's mighty tool of ongoing enslavement: their dread of dying.

the moral power of hope

The children of God are liberated not only *from* the enslaving power of the fear of death but also, *into* the transforming *moral power of hope!*

Hope of any kind is essential for every person. But nothing sustains, enlivens and integrates like the hope that has been set before the saints.

The redeemed children of God are able to eagerly look forward to an eternal and unlimited enjoyment of His grace—the boundless treasures of life in the Son! Such hope is the indispensable and urgent need of every human being, if they are to *live truly* in this present world.

the Holy Spirit powerfully at work

When the Spirit was poured out on the Day of Pentecost, He came to impart a liberating assurance of the grace of God in Christ. And this was to bring each regenerate person into an impassioned expectation—and joyous foretaste—of all that is to come. Yes, the Day of Pentecost truly was a 'Final Day' event: ushering in the dynamic first-fruits of the glorious Sonship into which every redeemed person has been brought!

Paul communicated that reality strongly to the believers in Rome, saying:

Romans 5:5

"We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God ... And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given to us."

The love of God for His children is poured out—flooded—into their hearts! We have spoken of this earlier, but now at least part of its cause is declared to be the hope of

all that is to come. The Spirit's longing is to bring each redeemed person, here and now, into maximum possible enjoyment of the love of God, this side of eternity.

To rejoice in the hope of forever participating in the glory of God never leaves a sanctified child of God disappointed. The more abundant the hope the more abundant the foretaste; and the more abundant the foretaste the more abundant the hope!

Again, Paul expressed his apostolic yearning for those in Rome:

Romans 15:13

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

The God of great grace is also the God of great hope! He is the One who in His purposeful Being has established a glorious future for His elect children. He has set in motion within them a *destiny* that will fulfill forever their *creational drive* to be the very image of God!

The present heritage of the redeemed is to *overflow* with the hope they have been given. And they may experience this as they are filled with the joy and peace that comes from trusting in the gospel. The Spirit is, indeed, powerfully at work within each one to bring about such enlivening future expectation.

the power of hope to liberate the saints into righteous living

As God's sanctified children overflow with hope, they have a marvellous capacity in Christ to increasingly fulfill their high human calling.

Paul made this very clear to the Colossians, urging them to decisive action in the light of it, saying:

Colossians 3:4–5

"When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature."

They were people with a grand future expectation. At His Appearing they would be *manifested* as the *glorious children of God*! So now they may, and *must*, put to death everything that doesn't express the glory of the Son within them. (There will be more of how this all works out in a future study.)

The apostle Peter brought a similar word to those facing fiery trials of persecution. He said:

1 Peter 1:13–14

"Prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the [passions] you had when you lived in ignorance."

They were to 'roll up the shirt-sleeves of their minds' and fix their attention upon all that was set before them. Then, as God's obedient children, they would be able to *set aside* the passions that once dominated their lives: the things that *drove* them when they were ignorant of what they now richly understood.

The apostle John wrote the same kind of thing to a number of believing communities, saying:

1 John 3:2–3

"[Dearly loved] friends, 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, for we shall see Him as He is. All who have this hope in them purify themselves, just as He is pure."

They were *now* the Father's beloved children, in the Son. What they were to ultimately *be* as such, would only be revealed at His Appearing. But as they set their hope upon this coming Day, they themselves, would even now increasingly participate in the purity of the Son's own glorious humanity.

John went on to say that this would show that they had been *saved* from a life of *unrighteousness* as unregenerate children of the devil—and now enabled to live a life of *righteousness* as regenerate children of God!

We may here receive again the declaration of the writer to the Hebrews':

Hebrews 2:14–15

"Since the children have flesh and blood, He too shared in their humanity so that by His death he might break the power of him who holds the [might] of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death."

Study 4 showed that what lay behind the fear of death was, in fact, the fear of judgment: a deeply disturbing sense of final accountability to the One who made us.

We also saw that fear of death locks those in its grip into idolatrous pursuits—inciting a desperate and slavish grasping after *life*, as the Day of final reckoning approaches. It was seen that nothing drives a person more powerfully to establish their own self-righteousness, and fulfill their self-extending, self-securing and self-enlivening passions, than this fear.

But through His redeeming work Jesus has broken the devil's power to any longer oppress the children of God in this way. The evil one's *mighty ability* to frighten the saints with the prospect of death and lock them into passion-filled futility has been taken away! They may be those who are no longer driven into habitual and desperate patterns of unrighteous living by *the cruel lash of the devil's whip*: a guilt-charged fear of death.

Having no dread of judgment in either time or eternity, they now have an inner spring of serenity and tranquility. And in the enlightening and enlivening work of the Spirit they may have great delight in the Father and the Son, bearing even now the first-fruits that will be theirs to enjoy, to perfection, forever!

Such is the power of hope!

It must be said that in all the circumstances of life IT IS ONLY WHEN—IN CHRIST—WE ARE FREE TO DIE HAPPILY THAT WE ARE FREE TO LIVE TRULY!!!

Paul underlined all that we've been saying here when writing to his fellow-worker, Titus. He said:

Titus 2:12–14

"[The grace of God] teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passion, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people who are His very own, eager to do what is good."

Titus 3:3–7

"At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of [regeneration] and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus

Christ our Saviour, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.”

Joyous possession of eternal hope, in Christ, certainly brings a *dynamic moral power* to the redeemed children of God. So, let’s now pursue the sustaining power of this hope a little further.

hope within the difficulties of this present world

Within the struggles that life in this present darkened world brings, the saints may enjoy the brilliant, inner light of that glorious hope they’ve received. In this regard the testimony of the apostle Paul to believers in Rome is very significant. He declared:

Romans 8:18

“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”

To live in a world that is set up against God and His way does, indeed, bring all kinds of suffering. But for the redeemed, whatever is suffered could never be compared with the glory that the Father has planned to reveal in them.

Notice that on the great Day to come the glory of God will not only be revealed *to* the redeemed but also *in* them. Again, what an astounding inheritance it is that awaits the saints!

Paul also had a similar word of encouragement for the Lord’s people in Corinth. He said:

2 Corinthians 4:16–18

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”

In the midst of *physical degeneration*, the Spirit of God is unrelentingly at work day after day to bring an inner *spiritual transformation*. In fact, the Spirit delights to use the difficulties experienced by believers, to work within them what is of glorious eternal significance: conformity to the image of the Son!

The troubles endured by the saints may appear to be heavy and endless. But compared to the enormous weight of what they will forever enjoy, these things are, in reality, merely ‘light-weight’ and lasting only for a moment—fleeting, ‘feather-weight’ present afflictions compared to eternal, ‘super-heavy-weight’ glory to come!

This is the view that God’s children must have of life while in the midst of the enduring complexities they face. Any hope in what is visible and temporary must be set aside for what is unseen and eternal.

The saints at Corinth needed to more decisively fix their hopes on the things of eternity rather than their present bodily existence. So Paul also said to them:

2 Corinthians 5:1–6, 8

“Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in [the heavens], not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with [the dwelling place that comes out of heaven], because when we are clothed we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed [but to be clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up

by life]. Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord ... and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”

Paul was encouraging the Corinthians here to look expectantly to what lies beyond the grave. But in this they were to have a hope that was *full* and *complete*—one that embraced the great, final goal of their redemption.

In their longings they were not to stop short at the ‘naked, disembodied intermediate state’. No, they were to look beyond this to the ultimate expression of their eternal inheritance in Christ: their gloriously, immortal resurrected bodies!

As already said, this is the same bodily form that is already reigning ‘in the heavens’ at the right hand of God: the body of the Glorified, En-fleshed Divine-Son. This same glorified form will finally come ‘out of heaven’ to be possessed by all the saints. And it is this glorious, eternal *bodily* state that they are to yearn for as their ultimate goal.

Paul still affirmed, of course, what has also been said above: that to be ‘away from the body and at home with the Lord’—awaiting the Final Day—is a wonderful thing to anticipate.

Here it is important to emphasize, once more, that the *ultimate hope* of the redeemed children of God in Christ is not a place called ‘heaven’. It is, rather, eternal life—united with the Son, in glorious immortal bodies, in which they will reign upon a gloriously renewed earth!

Again, on the same theme, Paul declared to those in Rome:

Romans 8:21–24

“The creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom [of the glory] of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is not hope at all. Who hopes for what one already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.”

This present world is never to be the focus of a believer’s hope. It is a world that has been given up to frustration: groaning like a mother about to give birth. But in the Father’s plan the whole creation is moving towards a great Day of liberation when it will be—like the finally glorified children of God—*free* at last to fulfill all that it was created for!

TO JOYOUSLY LIVE IN COMMUNION WITH THE TRUINE GOD FOREVER, WITHIN THE LIBERATED CREATION, WITH REDEEMED, IMMORTAL BODIES FROM HEAVEN—THROUGH WHICH THE GLORY OF GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS IS FULLY REVEALED—IS THE GRAND HOPE OF THE SAINTS. IT IS THE ULTIMATE PURPOSE OF THEIR SALVATION!!!

As God’s sanctified children, they enjoy, by the Spirit, the first fruits of their inheritance. But this only causes them to *long* for the full harvest. Together with the creation they *groan* like a mother in childbirth—a deep *inner* groaning that is never far from present experience.

Although what is hoped for is now unseen, it will be worth the long, patient wait. Pressing home the indispensability of eternal hope, Paul dramatically proclaimed to the Corinthian believers:

1 Corinthians 15:19

“If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all people.”

Those who place their hopes, only, in what can be gained here and now will, surely, be sorely disappointed. To live truly in Christ in this age is never easy, just as Paul and Barnabas said to the new converts in Asia Minor:

Acts 14:22

“We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.”

Yes, life in the Lord will be difficult at times; for some, even all the time. But—as the next section will show—the hope that has been set before the saints is the most powerfully sustaining thing in this world!

Peter knew how important it was to maintain this glorious, future expectation. He said:

2 Peter 1:19

“We have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.”

The word of the prophets regarding the Coming One was, indeed, a *certain word* for God’s people down through the centuries. And yet how much more certain is the word we have today. All that Jesus has fulfilled in His En-fleshed Life, Death, Resurrection, Ascension and Outpouring of the Spirit—to be climaxed at His promised Appearing—is like a glorious light shining in a dark, dank and gloomy place.

Those who fix their attention upon such *certain realities* will be wonderfully sustained in this present age, until that final Day dawns. And it will be at this great Climax of history, that the *full revelation* of the One who is the promise of the coming Dawn will rise in their hearts! (‘the Bright Morning Star’ of Revelation 22:16). What an indescribably thrilling revelation this will be!

Yes, but even now, the word we have received provides all the revelation needed to sustain us. No difficulty in this present world will be able to crush the spirit of one who has such a hope within them.

the preserving power of God towards His chosen children

The One who has chosen and called His family, has pledged Himself to bring each one safely to their goal in His eternal kingdom.

The Lord Jesus gave great assurance of this when speaking of Himself as the Good Shepherd. He said:

John 10:27–29

“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no-one can snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; no-one can snatch them out of My Father’s hand.”

The Son has received His flock from the hand of His Father, and not one of them will be lost or snatched away. The Great and Sovereign Father is surely able to keep them all!

The apostle Paul, loved to preach the gospel and see salvation come to the lost. And in it all he had the joy of knowing that both he and they would be kept forever in the grace they had received. He never tired of assuring his redeemed brothers and sisters of this marvellous fact. His letters have rightly been an encouragement to believers down through the centuries, containing bold-hearted statements like the following:

2 Corinthians 1:21–22

“It is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set His seal of ownership upon us, and put His Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.”

Philippians 1:6

“[I am] confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the Day of Christ.”

1 Corinthians 1:8–9

“He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.”

1 Thessalonians 5:23–24

“May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be [preserved] blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The One who calls you is faithful, and He will do it.”

Ephesians 1:18–19

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope [of His calling], the riches of His glorious inheritance in [the saints] and His incomparably great power [towards] us who believe.

In this prayer the apostle was asking that the Ephesians may be assured of the hope that is theirs because the Father has *called* them—and with this to know how richly glorious He considers them to be as His *own inheritance*. Thus, they may be absolutely certain of His *enormous power* at work towards them—that would surely to bring them to their destiny in His Son!

Yes, it was given to Paul to proclaim that the Father can be trusted to keep His children in His grace—with each one loving Him, hating sin and pressing on towards the goal of righteousness with all their hearts, till the Final Day!

Of course, as will be seen in a further study the Father also knows how to discipline His children towards that end.

The apostle Peter, also delighted to assure the saints of their eternal security. He began his first letter with an exalted proclamation of the Redeemer’s regenerating mercy and keeping power. He said:

1 Peter 1:3–4

“To God’s elect ... chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father ... Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, who [are shielded by God’s power through faith] until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.”

The writer to the Hebrews, too, affirmed the eternal security of the redeemed by, assuring them, of Jesus’ great and merciful, high-priestly ministry. He joyously declared:

Hebrews 7:25

“He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them.”

We'll let Jude have the final word in this regard:

Jude 1:1, 24

“[I am writing to] those who have been called, who are loved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ ...

[And so, to] Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and for evermore! Amen.”

The Father will faithfully keep and preserve all whom He has called. This strong and wonderful fact is a great comfort to the saints!

the need for every believer to persevere

Those who have received the gospel must persevere in the faith so as to show themselves to be truly the children of God. All who are ‘born of God’ will genuinely desire to co-operate with the Father in His faithful preservation of them. By God’s grace, the *preserved* will wholeheartedly *persevere*!

Perseverance involves holding on to what has been revealed, and in this, seeking to be faithful to the Father’s call.

the teaching of Jesus

Jesus spoke of the need for those who are to inherit the eternal kingdom to persevere in doing the will of God. In the Sermon on the Mount, He said:

Matthew 7:21–23

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that Day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name and in Your name drive out demons and in Your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from Me, you evildoers.’ ”

This, of course, will be the case for people like Judas. But there will be many others, who have appeared to be authentic believers but were actually not.

On other occasions He simply said:

Matthew 24:13

“Whoever stands firm to the end will be saved.”

In chapters 2 and 3 of the Book the Revelation Jesus brought a message to seven churches in Asia Minor. And at the conclusion of each message He spoke of their need to ‘overcome’ in order to inherit what He has for them. To overcome they were to hold to the word they had heard, in faith and obedience.

In the parable of the soils in Matthew 13:1–23, Jesus spoke of the seed of the word being sown in various places:

- Some seed was sown on the rock-hard path and was immediately eaten up by birds. This soil is the hard heart of the unregenerate, and the seed is snatched away by the evil one.
- Other seed was sown in shallow soil that had solid rock just below the surface. Falling on this soil the seed quickly took root and sprang up. But when the sun came out each plant withered because it had no depth. This, Jesus said, was

like those who immediately receive the word with joy, but ‘when trouble and persecution comes because of the word they quickly fall away’.

A person can respond to the gospel for all kinds of self-interested reasons. But it may be that no regenerating action of the Spirit has taken place in their heart.

- There was also thorny ‘heart soil’ in which the word is choked by ‘the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth’—and so the plant is unfruitful.
- Finally, He spoke of seed sown in good soil—a heart prepared by the Spirit. These ones ‘hear the word and understand it’ and *persevere* (Luke 8:15). And the seed yields a crop, one hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown!

Regenerate children of God may expect to bear abundant fruit in response to the word of His grace!

So, Jesus certainly made it clear that all must stand firm to the end in the word they have heard. He affirmed that those who have been born of God must—and, by God’s grace, will—persevere, bear fruit and be saved on the Final Day.

the apostle Peter’s call to perseverance

At the beginning of Peter’s first letter we see the Father as the Faithful Preserver of those He has chosen. Then in the first chapter of his second letter he continues with this theme, but also speaks much of the need for perseverance. We’ll take the passage a few verses at a time.

He begins with a proclamation of what has happened to the regenerate:

2 Peter 1:3–4

“His divine power has given us everything we need for [life and godliness] through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness. Through these He has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by [passion].”

By God’s regenerating power the saints have received all they need to fulfill their human vocation. Through His saving nature and action—His ‘glory and goodness’ by which they were called—they have also received ‘very great and precious promises’. And through these they have made a *great escape* from the realm of passion and corruption—with a view to sharing in the freedom and vocational life of God Himself!

Because this is what has happened to the regenerate, a generous spirit of co-operation with their Redeemer is, naturally, required of them. Peter continues:

2 Peter 1:5–7

“For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, [familial] affection; and to [familial] affection, love.”

The word ‘add’ here (associated with the lavish provision of sets and costumes within Greek Drama Festivals) means to ‘co-operate with by generously and lavishly supplying’.

‘With all diligence’ they must:

- Co-operate with God by generously supplying faith with *goodness*: with true and natural *energetic* believing. The word here for ‘goodness’ speaks of the dynamic functional action of something according to its nature. For example: the goodness of a horse is to run, and the goodness of a knife is to cut etc. The ‘goodness of faith’ then, is to wholeheartedly act upon what it believes;

- Co-operate with God by generously supplying goodness of faith with, *knowledge*: that is, knowledge of the truth that has been received. Functional, active and responsive faith alone enables us to enjoy a *rich understanding* of divinely revealed truth;
- Co-operate with God by generously supplying knowledge with *self-control*: the exercise of mental discipline that holds on to the truth no matter what is happening;
- Co-operate with God by generously supplying self-control with *perseverance*: continuing to hold on to the truth over the long haul, determined not to give-in to relentless pressures and passions;
- Co-operate with God by generously supplying perseverance with *godliness*: joyous fellowship with Him and given-ness to His will;
- Co-operate with God by generously supplying godliness with *familial affection*: a tender, loving regard for every brother and sister in the Lord, which naturally flows from joyous Spirit-given fellowship with the Father and the Son;
- Co-operate with God by generously supplying familial affection with *love*: a participation in the endless and gracious self-expending love of God Himself.

Yes, there is good reason why such generous co-operation is to take place: it causes *faith* to produce *love*!

Peter goes on to say:

2 Peter 1:8–9

“For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if any of you do not have them, you are near-sighted and blind, and you have [deliberately] forgotten that you have been cleansed from your past sins.”

Those who diligently co-operate with the Spirit’s work within them will live functionally in their knowledge of the Lord. Having their faith always culminating in the action of love, they will be kept from ‘sluggish ineffectiveness’ and personal unfruitfulness.

To not have faith that continuously culminates in love betrays three things:

- *Near-sightedness*: only seeing what is close at hand, having willfully lost sight of our glorious future hope in Christ;
- *Blindness*: being culpably unable to see the things of the unseen realm in the present;
- *Forgetfulness*: deliberate refusal to remember that old habitual patterns of sinful passion and personal corruption have all been cleansed and therefore ‘escaped from’.

These three states are totally inconsistent with the life of a regenerate believer and should be urgently corrected. Sharp focus upon the past, present and future realities of God’s grace must be diligently maintained if one is to remain in the way of the truth.

Finally, Peter says:

2 Peter 1:10–11

“Therefore, my brothers and sisters, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

Zealous desire to have energetic, responsive faith culminating in love is clear confirmation that a person has been called by God, as one chosen to be His own. This brings assurance of ‘an abundant entrance’ into the eternal kingdom!

In this letter Peter speaks of the horrendous possibility of a person knowing ‘the way of righteousness’, but then turning their back on ‘the holy commandment’ (to love God and others) that was passed on to them (2:21). By contrast, he then affirms those “who live holy and godly lives ... looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells” (3:11, 13).

As pointed out earlier, the apostle then concluded his letter with the words “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (3:18). This closing appeal, in many ways, sums up the essence of a life lived by God’s redeemed people. We could restate Peter’s words in this way: “Each one of you *must keep on growing* in your *life-giving experience* of all that has been *lavished* upon you in Christ—our Reigning Lord and Strong Deliverer!”

Earnestly and generously co-operating with the Spirit’s powerful ‘in-working’, the Father’s regenerate children may *persevere* in the truth and so make progress in their conformity to the likeness of the Son.

exhortations to struggling Hebrew believers

The writer to the Hebrews poured out his soul to those who were under great circumstantial and cultural pressure to turn away from the faith. In the light of the rich teaching he brought to them, he made the following declarations and urgent appeals:

Hebrews 3:14

“We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly to the end the confidence we had at first.”

Hebrews 6:11

“We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. We do not want you to be [dull and lazy-minded], but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.”

Hebrews 10:35–39

“Do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what He has promised. For in just a very little while,

‘He who is coming will come and will not delay. But My righteous one will live by faith. And I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back’.

But we are not those who shrink back and [come to ruin], but those who believe and are saved.”

In all of their hardships and discouragements the Hebrew believers had to hear the command to persevere to the very end. They needed to know that the greatness of grace should naturally bring a sharply focused response of faith.

Such faith would also cause them to set their hearts on a holy way of living. The writer further adds:

Hebrews 12:14

“Make every effort to ... be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.”

A zealous desire to ‘live out’ the gift of sanctification in Christ is what may be expected of every regenerate person. This will, of course, only be totally attained in the life to come—but eager pursuit of a holy life must be present even now.

How good it is that the One who chooses His children may command and exhort them to such co-operation with Himself—confident of His regenerating and preserving power towards them!

the apostle Paul's expectation of persevering faith and action

Paul was absolutely convinced of the saving and enlivening power of the gospel. He was always proclaiming the grace of God, and never hesitated to call every person who believed into an ongoing, decisive response to what it declared.

To those in the godless city of Corinth he brought this appeal:

1 Corinthians 15:1–2

“Now brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.”

How dreadful to have ‘believed in vain’! That is, to have believed in an empty, human-centred way that soon ‘runs out of steam’.

To his young fellow-worker, Timothy, he said:

1 Timothy 6:12

“Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called.”

Timothy was urged to not step back from the battle involved in holding to the faith. Eternal life was not to be some ‘limply dreamed of future benefit’. No, it was to be *seized* and substantially enjoyed here and now—as the supreme prize!

To the Philippian believers he made this magnificent plea:

Philippians 2:12–13

“Therefore, my [dearly loved] friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act [for] His good purpose.”

Their faith and action was not to be dependent upon his constant urging, but upon ‘the word of life’ that had come to them. They should never try to *work for* their salvation, but they were certainly *to ‘work out’* the salvation they’d freely received—‘with fear and trembling’.

Their salvation was not merely a matter of ‘personal interest’. The Living God Himself had *called* them into it, and had *commanded* them to live joyously according to it (Philippians 4:4).

The salvation they were to *work out* was the very salvation that God Himself was *working in*! Again, the saints were being called to generously co-operate with the ongoing, regenerating power of their Redeemer!

the apostle John's insistence upon perseverance by those who have been ‘born of God’

John spoke much of the need for believers to continue in what they had heard at first. He was also very clear about the fact that those who willfully and persistently lived against the truth, had never actually been born of God—regardless of what they claimed.

Of certain false teachers, who had obviously sounded very ‘Christian’, he said:

1 John 2:19

“They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.”

Only those who persevere in the truth of the apostles’ word—‘the faith once for all delivered to the saints’—show themselves to belong to the family of God.

And so, John brought the following exhortation:

1 John 2:24–25

“See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. And this is what He has promised us—eternal life.”

All who hold to the word they have received will, of course, remain in both the Father and the Son. But, as we’ve just seen, those who *don’t* continue in the word were clearly not in the Son or the Father to begin with. They have never known the great crisis of regeneration and truly come to repentance and faith.

We’ll let John bring this matter to its conclusion for us, as he says:

1 John 2:28–29

“And now, [dearly loved] children, continue in Him, so that when He appears we may be confident and unashamed before Him at His Coming. If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of Him.”

A life that expresses the fruit of the gift of righteousness in Christ, is what every regenerate child of God should desire and pursue with all their heart. To persevere in this—in the joy of God’s grace—is the way of eternal life itself.

the judgment of the saints—a vocational assessment

The children of God—being justified in Christ—will never be condemned. Their salvation is assured. But nevertheless, they will appear before the Judge of Heaven and Earth, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We could say that for the saints the Day of Judgment will be a time of *assessment*, when the nature of their ‘daily relational living’ is examined. It will be a judgment that has to do with receiving *eternal reward*—that is, ongoing, vocational privilege on the renewed earth.

Writing to the Corinthian believers Paul made this declaration:

2 Corinthians 5:10

“We must all appear before the judgment seat [that is, ‘the reward seat’] of Christ, that everyone may receive what is due to them for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”

This Day is, by no means, one for the saints to dread. But every reminder of it should definitely grip their attention and focus their minds upon the quality of their labours in Jesus’ name.

On that awesome Day every redeemed child and servant of God will ‘receive what is due to them’. All that they have done—hour after hour ‘while in the body’—will be assessed in the light of their calling.

Nothing good or bad will be overlooked. *Every moment* of life has been given as a *trust* to the steward-servants of God—and so will be put to the test.

building with a view to eternity

When speaking to the Corinthians of vocational investment it was given to Paul to illustrate the future assessment of believers in this way:

1 Corinthians 3:10–15

“Each one should build with care. For no one can lay a foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.”

Everyone in Christ is a builder, with each one building upon the foundation of Christ. According to this analogy, their building materials will either be gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw. Every moment of life—in desire, thought, word or deed—will fall into one category or another.

When the time for judgment arrives, what the Lord’s servants will have built over their lifetime in Him will stand before them. And then the purifying fire of God’s presence will fall upon it.

Everything that is made of wood, hay or straw will be instantly consumed! Only what is made of gold, silver or costly stones will remain; that is, only what has been the direct fruit of the Spirit will survive—the moments of authentic love for God and others.

Regarding the outcomes of this judgment, we will look first of all at what Paul says is the worst possible result. He tells us that everything a person has built over the years may be totally burnt up! But he is quick to add, if this is the case then that one will still be saved.

This judgment is not about salvation or condemnation, only reward. Each redeemed child of God has built upon the foundation of Christ. And so, regardless of the quality of their works, they will never be condemned.

However, a person whose work is totally destroyed is like one who scrambles from the window of a house before it burns to the ground. The owner is safe, but all that has been invested in that place is gone forever! Such a servant of the Lord, Paul says, will surely suffer great loss.

On the other hand, all that does survive this fiery test will receive its just reward! According to what they’ve done each one will receive the pleasure of vocational privilege in the eternal age. EVERY INSTANT OF DELIGHTED WORSHIP AND EVERY MOMENT OF PARTICIPATION IN DIVINE LOVE WILL BE RECOGNIZED BY THE LORD ON THAT DAY!!!

What the Spirit declares in Revelation 14:13 is true: the deeds of the saints will ‘follow them’!

This is why Paul, later in his letter, exhorted the believers:

1 Corinthians 15:58

“Therefore, my [dearly loved] brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.”

amazing promises of eternal reward given to Daniel

The old covenant prophet Daniel, who faithfully pressed on in the midst of a wicked environment, was given a beautiful assurance from the LORD—foreshadowing an openly revealed new covenant reality. He was told:

Daniel 12:13

“As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance.”

He needed only to continue on in the way of the LORD until he went to his rest, and then—at the Resurrection—he would receive all that was his to enjoy! And it’s as simple as that for every redeemed child of God.

Also in regard to the Day of the Resurrection, it was made known to Daniel that:

Daniel 12:3

“Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.”

To live in God’s wisdom in love and to invest in the salvation and human maturity of others will, bring the most glorious eternal reward!

‘investing wisely’ until the King returns

When Jesus was nearing Jerusalem before going to the Cross, He saw that people thought the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. So He told them this parable:

Luke 19:12–13, 15–26

“A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. ‘Put this money to work,’ He said, ‘until I come back.’ ...

He was made king ... and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it. The first one came and said, ‘Sir, your mina has earned ten more.’

‘Well done, my good servant!’ his master replied. ‘Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.’

The second came and said, ‘Sir, your mina has earned five more.’ His master answered, ‘You take charge of five cities.’

Then another servant came and said, ‘Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. I was afraid of you because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.’

His master replied, ‘I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in and reaping what I did not sow. Why didn’t you put the money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?’

Then he said to those standing by, ‘Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten!’

‘Sir,’ they said, ‘he already has ten!’

He replied, ‘I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away.’”

Each of these men was given a mina—about three months wages. Out of the three servants mentioned when the king returned, two had invested wisely and accordingly received privileged places within the kingdom.

The third, however, had done nothing with what had been entrusted to him and excused his laziness and indifference by accusing the king of harshness.

Even if it was *true* that his king was a hard man, the point of the parable is that the servant didn't act *wisely* according to his situation. He blithely continued on with his own agenda in life as if investment on behalf of his coming king was of no significance at all! This steward was not merely unfaithful—the king actually called him 'wicked'. And he was also a fool.

It was the one who had invested most wisely—making the best of the season—who then also received what had been entrusted to the mindlessly unfaithful steward.

The matter of rewards for the servants of Christ in the eternal kingdom will be incredibly significant. And they will be given on the basis of the degree to which their hearts, minds and energies have been wholeheartedly aligned to the cause of their returning King!

But, of course, if there were no reward then the love of Christ would still move His servants to give themselves in precisely the same way. IT'S PRIMARILY NOT ABOUT REWARDS, BUT RATHER THE JOY OF SERVING THE KING—IN BOTH TIME AND ETERNITY!!!

So that's it! God's redeemed children have the hope of eternal life and glorification in Christ—A NEW DESTINY!!! Each one will in the end receive the great inheritance that has been secured for them. They will enjoy the ultimate freedom of a visible and perfect participation in the Son's glorified humanity—and, that, *uncontested* by the world, the flesh and the devil, forever!

a final word

How the saints need to always hear of the perfect and complete salvation they have received. All three *tenses* of its manifestation are essential realities to be kept before them, as a focus of grateful and wholehearted celebration and worship: "I *was* saved by the mercy and grace of God!" "I *am being* saved by the enlightening and sustaining power of the Spirit!" and "I *will be* saved on the Great, Final Day of Salvation"!

Furthermore, as our proclamation of the amazing grace of God in Christ is brought to a close, it is important for us to see how this study relates—in a most significant way—to Study 1; for to embrace these thrilling gifts of salvation is, actually, to be given a most *intimate revelation* of the *perfections* of the Holy One!

When those who are regenerate meditate on each of these gifts, they see the glorious perfections of 'The God Who Is' in action towards *them personally*! Those perfections are made known most gloriously, of course, in Study 6—and supremely in the Cross. But the *outworking* of that revelation in a person's own experience is declared here in Study 8.

ONCE THE REDEEMED HAVE WHOLEHEARTEDLY EMBRACED THE GIFTS OF SALVATION IN CHRIST, THE PERFECTIONS OF GOD CAN NO LONGER BE MERE CONCEPTS. THEY ARE HIS *GLORY* IMPACTING *EACH ONE* AT THE DEEPEST LEVEL OF THEIR BEING!!!

All of God's new covenant gifts truly are PERFECT. A perfect *liberty* for our conscience, a perfect *identity* for our sense of personhood, a perfect *security* in the circumstances of life, a perfect *capacity* for human fullness and a perfect *destiny* to arrive at in eternity—when the saints will enjoy the perfect *experience* of them all!

As the title of this study declares, to receive these gifts is to be immediately set upon *the way* to ultimate human freedom and fullness in Christ. On that awesome Day to come, the *full revelation* of the glory of God's saving grace will be revealed *within* each of His redeemed children.

In Study 2, 'The High Human Calling', we saw that our 'holy calling' is 'the way of life, righteousness, freedom and rest'. We have also seen that Study 2 is, in fact, a portrayal of the very humanity of Jesus. In the light of this, and from what we have now seen in Studies 6 and 8, it is very clear that *He* is the only hope that any person has of enjoying a true humanity. Indeed, He is for every man, woman, boy or girl **THE ONLY HOPE OF LIFE, RIGHTEOUSNESS, FREEDOM AND REST—IN TIME OR ETERNITY!!!**

having heard all this, is there a response you need to make?

Quite extraordinary things have been proclaimed in these first eight studies that will certainly have brought various responses or reactions.

In Study 1, there was revelation of who God is, in Study 2, what humankind was created to be, in Study 3, what it has tragically become, and in Study 4, how this fallen situation impacts the life of every person. As said back then, these realities may well have been rather confronting and even deeply disturbing.

In Studies 5 & 6, the great Story of Redemption has also been told: one that includes the whole spectrum of human history from beginning to end. A Narrative that reveals the awesome glory of our Sovereign Father, Creator and King: His relentless goodness, mercy and grace, together with His rightful and often terrifying judgments. And with this, all that He has accomplished—by the Spirit, through the Beloved, En-fleshed Son—to deliver us from eternal condemnation and lostness, into a gloriously eternal freedom and fullness.

That grand Narrative was then followed in Study 7 by an account of the divinely merciful, *regenerating crisis* that every person must pass through—if they are to enjoy the liberation that has been accomplished for them.

And now in Study 8, we have seen the staggering nature of the grace of God that comes to all who are united with Christ. Grace that, immediately, releases every repentant believer into the awesome assurance of a *new and eternal life* within the kingdom of the Son!

If you have not yet welcomed this amazing salvation, the following Scriptures may be helpful in considering your next step:

Acts 2:38

[Peter said to those who had heard the gospel], "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." With many other words he warned them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Those who accepted his message were baptized.

Acts 3:19

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.

Acts 8:12

When they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized.

Acts 22:16

[Ananias said to Saul], "Now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on His name."

Acts 8:35–39

Philip ... told [the eunuch] the good news about Jesus. As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. Why shouldn’t I be baptized?” ... Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him ... The eunuch didn’t see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

Acts 16:30–34

[The jailer asked], “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved—you and your household.” Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house ... [Immediately] he and all his family were baptized ... He was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family.

Revelation 22:17

Come! Let those who are thirsty come; and let all who wish, take the free gift of the water of life.

Isaiah 55:1–3, 6–7

Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labour on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to Me, that you may live. I will [establish] an everlasting covenant with you ... Seek the LORD while He may found; call on Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the LORD, and He will have mercy on them, and to our God, for He will freely pardon.

Mark 16:16

Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Luke 13:24–27

—*a sympathetic understanding of the Lord Jesus Christ is not enough*

[Jesus said], “Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Once the Owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, ‘Sir, open the door for us.’

“But He will answer, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from.’

“Then you will say, ‘We ate and drank with You, and You taught in our streets.’

“But He will reply, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from. Away from Me, all you evil-doers!’ ”

John 3:16–18, 36

God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Those who believe in Him are not condemned, but those who do not believe are condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son ... Those who believe in the Son have eternal life, but those who reject the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on them.

John 8:24

[Jesus said,] “If you do not believe ... you will indeed die in your sins.”

2 Corinthians 5:20

We are ... Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.

Hebrews 2:1, 3

We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away, for ... how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?

Study 3 told of the basic tragedy of our fallen-human situation. Even more tragic than this, though, would be to hear the proclamation of God's saving and liberating grace and *not* wholeheartedly embrace it in repentance and faith.

Ultimate refusal of the grace of God in Christ has rightful consequences that are almost too tragic to contemplate. But reception of it brings the hope of eternal blessedness beyond our imagining!

How wonderful it would be if we could all receive this closing greeting from the apostle Paul:

Ephesians 1:2

"Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

CONCLUSION

In the light of all that has been revealed in Studies 1–8, the rest of the series will provide an ongoing journey into the Spirit-given out-workings of Divine grace. Studies 9–25 will bring a comprehensively proclaimed biblical pathway into the personal, relational and vocational outworking of all that Study 8 has declared. As always, the goal will be maximum enjoyment of that freedom and fullness into which the saints are called—for the pleasure, glory and praise of the Triune One who, every moment, gives us life and breath and everything else!

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