

IDENTIFICATION

To *identify* with someone means to make yourself *one* with someone.

This concept of identification is the key to a true understanding of the Easter message.

There are two sides to this process of identification, like the two opposite sides of a single coin, both of them relate to Jesus. On the one side, Jesus identified Himself with us, with sinners, with the whole fallen human race. On the other side, we are invited to identify ourselves with Jesus in all that followed His death. That is, burial, resurrection and even ascension to the very throne of God.

Learn how your life can be radically transformed in every aspect of human living by the work that Jesus did for us on the cross.

This is from an MP3 study by Bible teacher Derek Prince

This text study has been compiled is by Albert Chipps

Part 1 - Son of Man



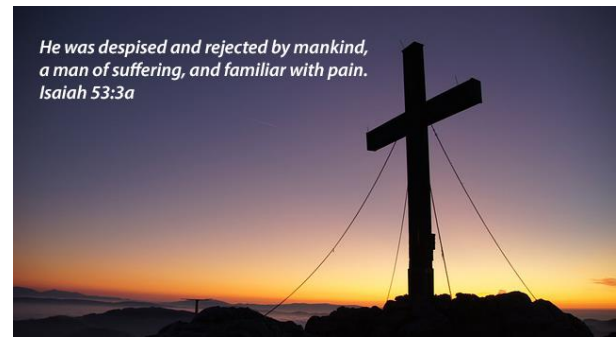
We're drawing near to the Easter season—that special season when Christians all around the world commemorate the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of this, I've chosen a theme for my talks, for the next four weeks, which will help you to understand more clearly the true significance of the death of Jesus and to enter more fully into all that He obtained for us by His death. The theme that I've chosen for this Easter season is *identification*. That needs a word of explanation. To *identify* with someone means to make yourself *one* with someone. This concept of identification is the key to a true understanding of the Easter message. There are two sides to this process of identification, like the two opposite sides of a single coin, both of them relate to Jesus. On the one side, Jesus identified Himself with us, with sinners, with the whole fallen human race. On the other side, we are invited to identify ourselves with Jesus in all that followed His death. That is, burial, resurrection and even ascension to the very throne of God. Today we'll begin by looking at the first side of the coin: the Identification of Jesus with Us.

Have you ever stopped to consider what title Jesus used most often of Himself? If I were to ask you to venture an answer, I question many of you would come up with the correct answer. The title Jesus used most often for Himself was not Savior or Messiah or Son of God, but Son of Man. Isn't that remarkable? Actually this title occurs about 80 times in the gospels. Now this phrase or title, *Son of Man*, has a background in the Old Testament Scriptures. It's found in the book of Daniel, chapter 7, verses 13 and 14. This chapter records a tremendous and wonderful vision that Daniel had of something that was going to happen in the future; something that was relating to the setting up of a kingdom that would never pass away, a kingdom that was to be ruled by a ruler specially chosen of God. And that ruler in the minds of the Jewish people became identified with Messiah. But, really the title that applies most accurately to what we're saying now is not Messiah, which means "the anointed one," but this title, *Son of Man*. Now I'll read those 2 verses from Daniel 7, verses 13 and 14. Daniel says: ***"I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days [that's God Himself] and He [this Son of Man] was presented before Him [the Ancient of Days]. And to Him [this Son of Man] was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed."*** (NASB)

Now I want to say just a word or two about the language used. I've been something of a student of languages most of my life. I've studied a number of different languages, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, to a little extent Aramaic, as well as a number of modern languages. You may or may not be aware, but the Old Testament as we know it was presented to us in two languages, mainly in Hebrew, but some passages in Aramaic, which was another Semitic dialect, which the Jews really picked up during Babylonian captivity. Now this particular passage of Daniel which I've read was written or presented to us in Aramaic not in Hebrew. In Hebrew the word for Son of Man is *ben adam*, that means "a son of Adam." It places that person right in descent from Adam, the forefather of the human race. But in Aramaic, the phrase for Son of Man is *bar anush*, where *anush* is, again, "man," bar is "son" in Aramaic. But *anush* means "man" essentially in his weakness, in his frailty. It always has that connotation as man as some kind of a mortal being that's subject to weakness and frailty. So there's a kind of deliberate paradox, this son of man this son of frailty and weakness, is portrayed here as being brought into the very presence of the almighty God and there a kingdom is bestowed upon Him which is going to be the kingdom of all kingdoms that will have dominion over all other kingdoms and will never pass away. Now this is the very title

that Jesus applied to Himself in His discourses recorded in the gospel. And personally I think it's very probable that Jesus spoke Aramaic so He would actually be using this title *bar anush*, the Aramaic form. And for the Jewish people for His day, the moment He used that phrase, *bar anush*, it was virtually, without any question, a claim to be the Messiah. Jesus used this title, "Son of Man," of Himself in two different aspects or contexts. He applied it to Himself in humility. For instance, in Matthew chapter 8, verse 20, Jesus said, **"Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."** (NIV) A kind of wanderer, without a fixed residence or abode. And in Matthew 20, verse 28, Jesus says, **"Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."** (NIV) So that's humility. But He also applies it to Himself in glory, for the future. He says in Matthew 16, verse 27, **"For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done."** (NIV) And in Matthew 26, verse 64, **"In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."** (NIV) That's very close to Daniel's vision. There it speaks of the Son of Man in His glorified, revealed being as the appointed ruler by God for the whole universe. So we have this interesting paradox of the Son of Man representing frailty and weakness and yet being the one whom the Jewish people looked forward to as the one who would restore the kingdom to Israel and become the ruler of all nations. This phrase that we're talking about, Son of Man, when applied to Jesus, who was also Son of God, portrays a unique combination of humanity with divinity. He's perfectly God, but He's also perfectly man. Now this was predicted in various places in the Old Testament. For instance, in the well-known passage in Isaiah 7:14, **"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign, the virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."** (NIV) Immanuel, **"God with us."** So this child born of a virgin, though He's a human child, is also *God with us*. And that word, that main title, Immanuel, is not two words; it's one, which beautifully portrays humanity and divinity blended into one person. And then a little further on, Isaiah 9:6, **"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he [this child] will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace"**. (NIV) So here's this person, born as a child, but given as the eternal son, and yet this child is also the mighty God. So there we have *bar anush*, human frailty and yet divine authority and might, blended in the same person. This is also beautifully brought out in the genealogy of Jesus. For instance, in Luke, chapter 3, where His genealogy is given in the fullest form, He's traced right back to **"the son of Adam, the son of God."** He was the representative of the *whole* human race. He became totally identified with all humanity, not merely with His own Jewish people. Interestingly, in Matthew, which is a gospel primarily addressed to the Jewish people, His genealogy is traced back only to Abraham. But in Luke, which is the message in a sense to all humanity, His genealogy is traced back to Adam the Son of God. And then in 1 Corinthians 15:45, Paul bestows upon Him this exciting title which contains so much in it. He speaks about Him as the *Last Adam*. What does that mean? Well as the last Adam, first of all, He's perfectly a member of the human race, He's totally identified, He's perfectly human, and then He's the last, not the last in time because millions and millions of descendants have been born since the time of Jesus. But He's the last in a sense that when He died on the cross, all the sins, all the frailties, all weaknesses, all the problems that stem from the sin of Adam and all His descendants, both past and future. All that came upon Jesus when He died on the cross. This is the point I want to emphasize throughout this week; it *all* came on Jesus. He became our substitute. He was the Son of Man, He was the last Adam. And when He died, it was all terminated. It was finished, it was dealt with, *all problems were solved by the death of Jesus on the cross!*

Part 2 - The Suffering Servant



To identify with someone means to make yourself one with someone. This concept of identification is the key to a true understanding of the Easter message. There are two sides to this process of identification, like the two opposite sides of a single coin. On the one side, Jesus identified Himself with us, with sinners, with the whole fallen human race. On the other side, we are invited to identify ourselves with Jesus in all that followed His death. That is, burial, resurrection, and even ascension to the very throne of God. Today I'm going to speak about the ultimate purpose for which Jesus became the *Son of Man*. Just how God's purpose could only be fulfilled in this way. Even the closest disciples of Jesus failed to understand this purpose until after His death and resurrection. Nevertheless, the whole plan of God was unfolded in amazing detail and accuracy by the prophet Isaiah 700 years before it was actually fulfilled in history. This prophetic revelation is contained in Isaiah, chapter 53. In my message I'm going to read that entire chapter, but I'm going to read it in four successive sections, each section containing three verses. I'll begin now with the first three verses of Isaiah 53, ***"Who has believed our message, and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? He [He, that's the arm of the Lord, this person] grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not"*** (NIV)

Let's pick out just a few of the main features of that part of the prophetic revelation, see how they apply to Jesus. First of all, we're warned right at the beginning against unbelief. *"Who has believed our message,"* that's very important. The great barrier to understanding this is unbelief. And then we see that a person is unfolded who's called, *"the arm of the LORD."* The arm of the Lord is that 'part' of God, if I may use that phrase, with which He acts, with which He operates, with which He performs His will. So this person is somehow God's main instrument to perform His will. And then it speaks about His own frailty, *"he was like a tender shoot."* And you remember in my talk yesterday I emphasized how the type of *bar anush*, (*"Son of Man"* in Aramaic), particularly focuses on human frailty. And then it speaks about the spiritual barrenness of the situation, *"he was like a root out of a dry ground."* And then it emphasizes His humility as a person and also His social humility. He was not a prince, He was not a ruler, He was not from the priestly tribe or caste. He was just a humble man; He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him. Furthermore, He went lower still, *"He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering."* Then we go on to the next three verses, verse 4, 5, and 6, about this same person, this *bar anush*, this *"Son of Man"*, ***"Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all"*** (NIV) This passage particularly emphasizes that the sufferings of Jesus on the cross so vividly described there were *substitutionary*, it was not for His own sake. It's emphasized all the way through, *"he took our infirmities."* The Hebrew language used particularly emphasizes the "he." There's a form of speech I won't go into which places all the emphasis on the "he." *"He took all our infirmities,"* *"He was pierced for transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace*

was upon *Him*,” “we *all* have gone astray,” “the Lord has laid on *Him* the iniquity of us all.” So we see that in everything that came upon Jesus on the cross, it was not that it was due to *Him*, it was due to *us*, the judgment, the punishment, the humiliation, the shame. But though it is due to *us* by divine appointment, it came upon *Him*, upon Jesus. Where it says “*the LORD laid on him the iniquity of us all*,” that Hebrew word that “*has laid on*” means “has made to *meet together*.” So the shame, the sin, the rebellion and all the evil consequences thereof, were made by God to *meet upon* Jesus. He became the last Adam, as I said in my talk yesterday. In Him the *entire evil inheritance* due to the sin of the Adamic race was exhausted. He left nothing that He did not take upon Himself. He bore *every* burden, He was *totally* our substitute, He was our God appointed representative, Son of Man, bearing in Himself the imperfect nature of humanity, and all humanity’s problems, griefs, and agony.

I’m going on with Isaiah, chapter 53, verses 7, 8, and 9, “**He [this Son of Man] *was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment, he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.***” There are various things emphasized there, all of which applied with perfect accuracy to the trial and the death of Jesus. First of all, His innocence is consistently emphasized. It says in the closing verse, “**he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.**” Also it’s emphasized that He did not attempt to defend Himself or to plead His own cause, “**as a sheep before her shearers is silent so he did not open his mouth.**” He did not justify Himself, He did not defend Himself, He was the lamb led willingly to the slaughter. Then it’s emphasized that His trial was unjust, *by oppression and judgment He was taken away*. It was a judgment but it was a judgment of oppression, it was unjust. And it emphasizes that He died, He was cut off from the land of the living but He didn’t die for Himself. “*For the transgression of my people*,” Isaiah says, “*he was stricken.*” And then with amazing accuracy it gives the details of His death. It says “*he was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death*,” but the remarkable fact is that in the original Hebrew the word “wicked” is in the plural but the word “rich” is singular. True enough in the record of the gospels, Jesus was crucified with the two thieves, the two wicked men, but then His tomb was the tomb of Joseph Arimathea, the one rich man. So we see every detail exactly fulfilled in Jesus.

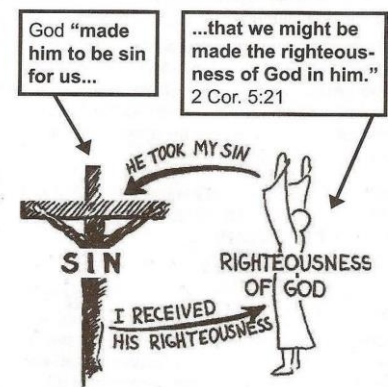
Now we go onto the last three verses which sum it all up, Isaiah 53, verses 10, 11, and 12, “**Yet it was the LORD’S will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life [or his soul] a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life [or His soul] unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.**” (NIV)

We see that although there was oppression and injustice, yet it was the fulfillment of God’s *purpose*, it was the Lord’s *will* to crush Him; God had *foreordained* that it should be this way. Then we see by implication His resurrection. But it says after His death “*he will see his offspring and prolong his days.*” That’s *after* death. And then it says in the next verse “*he will see the light of life and be satisfied.*” And then it’s emphasized that all this was to justify many, to acquit them of their guilt. It says “*my righteous servant will justify many.*” And then it goes on to say “*he will bear their iniquities.*” That’s how justification or righteousness or acquittal is made possible to us, by the knowledge of Jesus. The Lord’s righteous servant bore our iniquities, suffered our punishment, and therefore turned away the wrath and judgment of God from us. It says also “**he poured out his life** [or his soul] **unto death.**” That’s so vivid because in Leviticus it says “*the life of the flesh is in the blood.*” And on the cross Jesus poured out His whole life, His entire blood, as the sinners’ substitute. It says also that He “*was numbered with the transgressors.*” We pointed out already that He was crucified with the thieves. And finally,

that He *made intercession for the transgressors*. And that began even while He was on the cross. He said, "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*"

So you see how *perfectly accurate in every detail* is this amazing picture of Messiah suffering, the sufferings of the Son of Man given *700 years before it took place!*

Part 3 - The Divinely Ordained Exchange



Yesterday we looked at the marvelous prophetic preview of the sufferings and death of Jesus contained in chapter 53 of the prophet Isaiah. Today I want to focus in greater detail on just three verses, verses 4, 5, and 6, which are the very heart of the prophetic message. I believe that no human mind can ever fully fathom all the mysteries of divine grace and wisdom that are contained in these three verses. So I'm going to read them again, rather slowly and carefully, ***"Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."*** (NIV) Again I want to emphasize the substitutionary character of the death of Jesus here portrayed. The emphasis is on "He" and then by contrast "us" and "our." So He *became* our representative, the Son of Man, the humble one, the one who fully partook of humanity. And then as our representative, *ben adam*, the Son of Adam, *bar anush*, the Son of human frailty, there on the cross He took upon Himself *all our burdens*: our guilt, our shame, our pain, our sickness, our sorrow, our grief. As I said already, the human mind, I believe, can never fully comprehend all that transpired and all that was accomplished by this substitutionary death of Jesus. But let us bear in mind that Isaiah begins this chapter by warning us against unbelief, ***"who has believed out message."*** So let us deliberately, by an act of our will, renounce unbelief. Let us not reject the message because it's difficult for little puny, finite minds to comprehend the infinite nature of God's love, mercy and wisdom. Let us be willing to *believe*. In the New Testament, one of the writers says, *"Through faith we understand."* First comes faith, then comes understanding. I want to urge that upon you. Don't grapple with this thing with your own little, natural, carnal mind and fail to receive the message of God's love and mercy. Let's look at the beautiful phrases there, ***"Surely he,"*** as I said yesterday but I want to emphasize again, the Hebrew wording is such that all the emphasis is placed on the "he" — ***"Surely he."*** In other words, look away from yourself. There is no solution to your problems in yourself. Don't dwell on your problems. Don't bend and bow beneath the burden of your guilt and all your problems. The solution is in looking away from yourself, looking away to Him, the substitute, the sacrifice, the Son of Man. ***"Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows."*** A better more accurate translation for sorrows is pains. ***"He took our infirmities," He carried our pain, "yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted."*** You see, unbelief only sees the outward facts of the death of Jesus, does not understand the inner meaning. I remember once speaking to a Jewish man in the land of Israel, and I told him that I believe Jesus is the Messiah. His comment was interesting. He was not opposed, but he said, "I can't believe that He was the Messiah because God would not have allowed Him to suffer so terribly. It must have been a judgment upon Him by God." And immediately there came to me these words, ***"We considered him stricken by God, smitten by him and afflicted."*** But Isaiah goes on ***"he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities,"*** It wasn't for His *own* sins, but it was for *our* sins. ***"The punishment that brought us peace was upon him and by his wounds we are healed."*** And then we come to that sixth verse which really is the absolute center of the message, ***"We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."*** (NIV) That word iniquity is better translated in modern

English “rebellion.” But it’s also used in the earlier passages of the Old Testament for the guilt offering, for guilt. So it is not just the rebellion of the human race, but also the *punishment* for that rebellion, and the *remedy* for that rebellion. *All* of that was laid upon Jesus. You see, the common basic guilt of the human race is rebellion. “*We all like sheep have gone astray, each of us is turned to his own way.*” It’s not that we’ve all committed certain specific sins, like murder, adultery, or stealing. There may be many fine people by human standards who’ve never committed sins like that. But the one thing we’ve *all* done is we’ve all turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid upon *him* the rebellion and *all its evil consequences*. The Lord made it all *meet* together upon Him; I want you to ponder that phrase. The Lord made it *meet together*, every act of sin, every feeling of guilt, every kind of shame and humiliation, and the *physical* consequences too, our pains, our infirmities. In the eternal will and counsel of God “*it pleased the LORD,*” it says, “*to crush him.*” That crushing burden came upon Jesus, our substitute, the Son of Man.

There’s a picture in the book of Lamentations which really speaks so vividly of this. I just want to read these words and when I read them I want you to think of Jesus. Lamentation, chapter 1, verses 12 through 14, “***Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look around and see. Is any suffering like my suffering that was inflicted on me, that the LORD brought on me in the day of his fierce anger? From on high he sent fire, sent it down into my bones. He spread a net for my feet and turned me back. He made me desolate, faint all the day long.*** [Every one of those phrases is exactly true of Jesus there on the cross.] ***My sins have been bound into a yoke; by his hands they were woven together. They have come upon my neck and the LORD has sapped my strength. He has handed me over to those I cannot withstand.*** (NIV) Every single detail applies to Jesus. The yoke of our sins was woven by the hand of the Lord, Almighty God, and then laid on the neck of Jesus. And the Lord handed Jesus over to sinners, to evil men, to men He could not withstand and willingly He submitted to their hands and became the sin offering. The Lord made to *meet together* upon Him the rebellion of us all and all its evil consequences.

Now let us ask ourselves: What is *our* part of the exchange? Our rebellion and all its evil consequences came upon Jesus. He became our substitute, the Son of Man, the last Adam. He took all the evil that was due to us that we might receive the good that was due to Him, that’s the essence of the exchange. How shall we sum up, what phrase or word can we use to describe that which God has made available to us on the basis of the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus on the cross? If I were to pick *one* word, the word that I would pick in English would be *peace*. But peace does not fully represent what I’m trying to communicate. The Hebrew word for peace I’m sure many of you know is ‘shalom’, that’s the famous Hebrew greeting today, “Shalom.” But shalom means much more in Hebrew than the word peace means in English. Peace is almost just the absence of war of conflict of strife. Many times we talk about peace when there is really very little real harmony between people. But shalom means *completeness, fulfillment, perfection*. The root thought is to complete or to perfect or to make full. So what is offered to us is completeness, wholeness, harmony—much more than just peace. It’s not just spiritual, it’s not just inward, it’s total wholeness—spirit, soul, and body. “***By his wounds we were healed.***” Physical healing is offered to us through the physical suffering of Jesus. He bore our transgressions; He was punished for iniquities that we might have this inner peace. But the whole thing is summed into one word: *peace . . . shalom . . . wholeness . . . completeness . . . harmony . . . reconciliation with God . . . reconciliation with our fellow believers, with all mankind . . . a deep settled inner peace of heart and mind . . . a condition of harmony that makes for the healthiness of the body. All that* is included in that beautiful word—peace, shalom—which is offered to us.

Part 4 - From Punishment to Peace (Forgiveness)



I emphasized particularly in my last talk the sixth verse of Isaiah chapter 53 where Isaiah says, ***“We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him [on Jesus] the iniquity [the rebellion] of us all”***. I emphasized that the root problem of the human race is self-will—it’s going our own way. It’s not necessarily committing some dramatic sin like murder, or adultery, or stealing. But it’s just turning from God’s way, and going our own way, turning our back on God, doing our own thing, living by our own standards, pleasing ourselves, making ourselves the center of the universe.

Well, in my talk today, and the talks that will follow, both this week and next, until Easter, I will be pointing out to you in succession various specific aspects of this divinely ordained exchange that was accomplished through the death of Jesus. I don’t know of any theme better suited to the Easter season, or more helpful in enabling us to enter *personally* into all that was obtained for us through the death of Jesus. The aspect of the exchange that I want to focus on today is contained in Isaiah 53, verse 5, ***“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.”*** (NIV) I want to focus particularly on that statement, ***“The punishment that brought us peace was upon him.”*** Jesus was punished for our sins because He became our substitute. You see, man’s sin and God’s mercy together created a problem that only God Himself could solve. God longs to be merciful. He longs to forgive. But at the same time justice is the very foundation of His throne, and God cannot forgive on any other basis but that of perfect justice. He cannot compromise His own justice to forgive. This paradox, this tension, is stated in a revelation that the Lord gave to Moses. In Exodus chapter 34, verses 5 through 7, Moses have cried out to God. He said, ***“Let me see your glory.”*** And then the Lord came down and gave him a personal revelation of Himself. And these are the words in which it’s described there in Exodus 34, ***“Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him [that’s with Moses] and proclaimed his name [the Lord proclaimed his own name, and he said this] the LORD. And then he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, [that’s the sacred name] the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished. . . .”*** (NIV) Notice the tension. God forgives wickedness, rebellion and sin, but because of His justice He cannot leave the guilty unpunished. So there’s the great, if I may call it, the great problem for God. He wants to forgive the sinner, but He cannot condone his sin. His justice demands the punishment of the sin, His mercy longs to offer the sinner forgiveness and pardon. How could that problem be resolved? Only *one* person could resolve that problem, God Himself! There was only one way that He could resolve that problem. It was through the sinner substitute, through Jesus, the Son of Man, the last Adam, who became legitimately and totally identified with the sins that we’d committed and then suffered their full penalty so that God’s justice was satisfied, and He was free without compromising His justice to offer forgiveness.

Paul states this in Romans, chapter three verses 25 and 26 speaking about the substitutionary death of Jesus, ***“God presented him [Jesus] as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood”*** That word *sacrifice of atonement* is also used to denote the Mercy Seat that covered the Ark in the tabernacle of Moses. Now that

Mercy Seat was the only place where God appeared to man in the tabernacle and where God could offer man peace, where the blood was sprinkled each Day of Atonement, each year, and that Mercy Seat was over the Ark, which contained the Ten Commandments, which was the Law that the sinner had broken. So the Mercy Seat was the covering of God's mercy that hid the broken Law. But Jesus on the cross *became* that Mercy Seat, that sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His blood. And then it goes on to say, ***"He [God] did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished, he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just the one who justifies the man who has faith in Jesus."*** (NIV) So God had this problem: He had passed over sin in past generations where there had been true repentance, but the sin had never been finally dealt with. It was God's forbearance, it was His longsuffering. It says about the sacrifices that were offered under the old covenant, they could not finally take away sin. But in them there was a remembrance again made of sins every year and each Day of Atonement for the Jewish people, their sins were covered for one more year, but *never finally dealt with*. The *only* way that sin could be finally be dealt with was by the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus on the cross where God *demonstrated* His justice. He demonstrated his *total uncompromising hatred for sin even* in the person of His beloved Son. But at the same time, having demonstrated His justice, He made the way open for Him to offer His pardon, His forgiveness, His peace.

What then is the practical result for the one who, as a sinner, believes in this substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus, has faith in His blood as the final sin offering, where He poured out His life, His soul, and His blood? It was the guilt offering. What happens? What's the result? It's beautifully described in many passages of Scripture. I will just choose two. The first one is Psalm 32, verses 1 and 2, ***"Blessed is the he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sins the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit."*** (NIV) Where it says in English "blessed is he" the Hebrew phrase is stronger—it's "Oh, the blessedness's, the countless blessings" that come to the man whose transgressions are forgiven whose sins are covered by that Mercy Seat that covered the broken Law that I spoke about just a little earlier. ***"Blessed is the man whose sins the LORD does not count against him."*** Notice, there isn't a man who hasn't sinned, that's not the blessedness, because there is not such a man. But ***"blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him,"*** whose sin has been covered by the Mercy Seat, whose punishment has come upon another, the sinner substitute, ***"and in whose spirit there is no deceit."*** We have to bear in mind that we have to be absolutely sincere, open and honest with God. It's no good trying to trick God; it's no good trying to fool God with mere external religious appearance. There has to be absolute *openness* and *honesty* in our spirit toward God. We cannot cover anything up, we cannot excuse anything. We simply have to put our faith solely and totally in the sinner substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then in the New Testament in Romans chapter 5, verses 1 and 2, these words are used to describe the consequences of this transaction whereby we accept the fact the Jesus was punished for our sins that we might have peace, shalom, wholeness, completeness. I've spoken about that word. This is what Paul says there in Romans 5, ***"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith [acquitted, counted righteous], 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. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God."*** (NIV) There are some of the consequences. When we have accepted this sacrificial atoning death of Jesus on our behalf, we have peace with God. God's wrath has been dealt with. He no longer counts our sins against us; we no longer need to tremble as guilty sinners. We no longer need to feel guilty and unworthy. We've been justified, we've been acquitted, we're accepted, we have the right to the presence of God. We can move by faith into the grace of God in which we stand, something that is, that we can stand in, something that's solid, that's permanent. And finally, we *rejoice* in hope of the glory of God. So it's *peace*, it's *joy*, it's *stability*, it's *firmness*, it's *assurance*!

Part 5 - From Sin to Righteousness



I've spoken about how Jesus became identified with the human race as the Son of Man, the last Adam, how the Lord visited upon Him the rebellion of the whole Adamic race. Not only the rebellion but the evil consequences of rebellion. How the Lord made it *meet* altogether upon Jesus as He hung there on the cross. And then yesterday I spoke about one particular aspect of the exchange that was accomplished there, how Jesus was *punished* for our sins that we might have *forgiveness*, how God's *justice* was satisfied perfectly by the death of Jesus as our representative, bearing the responsibility for our sins, that in turn without compromising His justice, God might offer to us *forgiveness*. Today I'm going to focus on yet another aspect of this wonderful exchange accomplished by the death of Jesus. It's one that is related to yesterday's and yet it's significantly different. I'm going to read now verse 10 of Isaiah, chapter 53 which contains this particular aspect of the exchange that I'm talking about today, ***"Yet it was the LORD'S will to crush him [Jesus] and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life [or his soul] a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand."*** (NIV) So the Lord made the *soul* of Jesus on the cross a *guilt offering*. Now the word in Hebrew that's translated "guilt offering" means both guilt and guilt offering. It's one and the same word. To understand that, we have to look at the picture of how sin offerings and guilt offerings were carried out under the Mosaic Law. The person who was 'guilty', who had something that he had to expiate before God, would bring his offering, might be a sheep, might be a goat, might be a bullock, and he would acknowledge the sin or the guilt that he had. And the priest, as his representative and acting on behalf of God at the same time, would lay his hands upon the head of the offering, the animal (sheep, goat, or bullock) and then as the man truly repented and confessed his sin to the priest, by that act of the hands laid on the head of the sacrificial offering, symbolically the man's guilt was transferred to the animal. And then the animal was slain, paying the penalty for the man's guilt and thus the man could receive pardon and forgiveness. However, of course, that was only 'symbolical'. It was a preview of what was actually accomplished in reality, by the death of Jesus on the cross. So on the cross, Jesus *became* the sin offering, the *guilt offering*. In a certain sense, Almighty God laid His hand on the head of Jesus, transferred to Him our guilt and our sin. And then Jesus died—He poured out His soul unto death. Again in the Old Testament, Leviticus 17:11 says, ***"The soul of all flesh is in the blood."*** So as Jesus poured out His blood, drop by drop on the cross, until He'd emptied out the blood out of His body, He had poured out His soul, His total life, as the *guilt offering*, the *substitute*, the one who bore the guilt of the entire human race. I'm deeply impressed and touched by the phrase with which that verse opens, ***"Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer."*** I've pondered on that word 'crush'. I've meditated on it and I've thought to myself, "Of course, Jesus suffered terribly physically, but I believe that 'crushing' was not so much physical as spiritual. I believe that fearful burden of the guilt of all humanity as by the Father's hand was laid upon the Son on the cross. I believe it was *crushing*. I believe it was more than even Jesus could endure. I believe it *crushed the very life out of Him*." And it says it was the Lord's *will* to crush him. That's an astonishing statement, isn't it? Because how could God take pleasure in that awful scene of suffering? And yet it *was* so. It *was* the Lord's will because that was the only way, through that divinely ordained exchange, by which Jesus became the guilt offering. Only in *that* way could peace and pardon and righteousness be made available to us. And significantly

there in that 53rd chapter of Isaiah there is no relieving of the darkness, the awful darkness that permeates that chapter up till the 10th verse. But where it speaks about the Lord making His soul a guilt offering, then the darkness breaks and light comes. And the next words are, ***“He will see his offspring, prolong his days, the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.”*** So once that has happened then the way is open for the light to break forth, eternal light, reconciliation, peace and healing but *only when this sin offering had been fully consummated could that take place.*

This is referred to by the apostle Paul in the New Testament in 2 Corinthians 5:21, but many Christians don’t understand that because they don’t realize that the same word means guilt and guilt offering or sin and sin offering. What Paul says referring to the death of Jesus in 2 Corinthians 5:21 is this, ***“God made him [Jesus] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”*** (NIV) He’s actually quoting Isaiah 53:10. Most people don’t perceive that, because the word used in Isaiah is a guilt offering or a sin offering. But bear in mind it’s one and the same word. The sin offering was the sin, the sin was the offering, the offering was the sin. They were identical. So Jesus was made the sin offering, He was made sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. Note the exchange: Jesus became sin that we might have His righteousness.

Against this background of Jesus as the sin offering on the cross, I want to look with you briefly at two other passages in Isaiah. The first is Isaiah 64 verse 6 and it speaks of the futility of self-righteousness, ***“All of us have become like one who is unclean, all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away”*** (NIV) Notice, this true is of the entire human race. In Isaiah 53 it says, *“We have all gone astray like sheep.”* Here it says we have *all* become one who is unclean and all our righteous acts are like *filthy rags*. The *best* that we can do in our own righteousness is nothing but a filthy rag in God’s sight. It is totally vain to come to God with our own righteousness. But God has made provision through the death of Jesus that we may receive *His* righteousness. Compare this other passage in Isaiah chapter, 61 verse 10, ***“I will rejoice greatly in the LORD. My soul will exult in my God; For He [the Lord] has clothed me with garments of salvation, he has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.”*** (NIV) Here is an expression of intense, tremendous joy. *“I will rejoice greatly,” “my soul will exult.”* What’s the reason? The reason is the outcome of this exchange. For God has *clothed* me with garments of salvation, He saved me from the consequences of my own sin. But not just that, after salvation there comes righteousness. He has *wrapped* me with a robe of righteousness. What a beautiful expression! That righteousness is not our own righteousness. It’s the righteousness of God, it’s the righteousness that’s made available to us through that substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus. And God doesn’t just put that robe of righteousness on us. The language there is so beautiful. He *wraps* us with the robe of righteousness. He covers us *totally*. Every area of our old sinful, carnal nature, every mistake, every transgression, every sin is totally covered under that all-embracing robe of the righteousness of Jesus. We need to bear this in mind that salvation in itself is not all. Or put it in another way, there’s many different aspects to salvation. It’s not just that we get (quote) *“saved,”* that our sins are forgiven and it ends there. But when we have salvation, then we have the robe of righteousness. We don’t any longer come to God in our own righteousness. We’re not concerned about trying to do the best that we can. There’s something much higher than that. There’s the righteousness of God made available to us through faith in Jesus. He wraps us around with His own righteousness. We never have to feel sinful or ashamed or apologetic any longer. And it’s all so beautifully summed up in that one verse in Romans chapter 8, verse 1, one of my favorite verses, ***“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”*** (NIV) No condemnation, there’s *nothing* held against us. We’re not guilty on any charge; we’re acquitted on all accounts. We don’t appear before God trying to do our best or brushing up our own righteousness, but we’re wrapped around with the robe of God’s righteousness in Jesus.

Part 6 - From Curse to Blessing



To identify with someone means to make yourself one with someone. This concept of identification is the key to a true understanding of the Easter message. There are two sides to this process of identification, like the two opposite sides of a single coin. On the one side, Jesus identified Himself with us, with sinners, with the whole fallen human race. On the other side, we are invited to identify ourselves with Jesus in all that followed His death, that is, burial, resurrection, and even ascension to the very throne of God. The key verse of Scripture that opens up for us this theme of identification is Isaiah, chapter 53, verse 6, which prophetically foreshows the atoning death of Jesus, ***“We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him [that’s Jesus] the iniquity [or the rebellion] of us all.”*** (NIV) So, when Jesus died on the cross, God made to meet together upon Him the rebellion of the whole sinful, fallen human race. Not only the rebellion, but *all the evil consequences that follow from rebellion*, they all came upon Jesus. God made them *meet together* upon Him, the rebellion of previous generations. Through an act which transcended the limitations of time, all these were laid upon Jesus and He died as our personal representative. He died *our* death to deliver us from rebellion and all its evil consequences. So in that one act, foreordained by God, all the evil that was due to all of us came upon Jesus that all the good that was due by eternal right to Jesus might be made available to us. That’s the essence of the exchange.

The evil due to us came upon Jesus that the good due to Jesus might be available to us.

I want you to think continually in terms of a divinely ordained exchange. In my talks at the end of last week, I dealt with specific aspects of this divinely ordained exchange that was accomplished through the death. I mentioned two specific aspects. First, Jesus was *punished* that we might be *forgiven*, that we might have peace. The punishment due to our sins came upon Jesus that we might have forgiveness and peace with God. Second, Jesus was made *sin for us* that *we might have His righteousness*. The exchange there is between sin and righteousness.

Today we are going to look at another aspect of the exchange: from *curse* to *blessing*. Jesus was made a curse that we might receive the blessing. This is very clearly unfolded in Galatians, chapter 3. First of all, in verse 10, Paul says, ***“All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.”*** (NIV) In other words, if you’re relying on keeping the law to make you righteous, then you have to keep the *entire law all the time*, but if you fail in *any point* at *any time*, then you come under the curse which is due to those who break the law. Then he goes on in verses 13 and 14, ***“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.”*** [That’s a quotation from the Law, from the book of Deuteronomy]. ***He [Christ] 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.*** (NIV) That’s a very clear statement. All the curses of the broken law came upon Jesus that all the *blessings* of *obeying* the law might be made available to us. We saw last week the exchange between sin and righteousness. Second Corinthians 5:21, ***“God made him [Jesus] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”*** (NIV)

Well, there follows a logical progression. Because Christ was made sin, inevitably also, He was made a curse. From the beginning of human history, sin has always been followed by the curse and always will be. The record of man's fall and rebellion is contained in Genesis, chapter 3 and as we study God's response and God's judgment, we see that the word 'curse' appears for the first time in the Bible. First of all, in Genesis 3:14, ***"The LORD said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals."*** (NIV) And then a little further on in the same context, God said to Adam, in verse 17, ***"Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you."*** (NIV) First *cursed is the serpent*, then *cursed is the ground*. And in the next chapter, after Cain had murdered his brother Abel, we read in Genesis 4:10 and 11, ***"The LORD said, [to Cain] "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand."*** (NIV) So you see, the curse came first upon the serpent, the author of temptation, then upon the ground which was Adam's inheritance, and then in the next generation the curse came upon Adam's own son. So bear that in mind, *wherever sin enters, the curse follows*.

We need to know just exactly what is included in the curse for the broken law and there's one chapter in the Bible which tells us very exactly and completely. It's Deuteronomy chapter 28. Make a note to look it up for yourself when you have opportunity. Read through it carefully. I'm just going to pick out some verses from it. It contains, first of all, *all the blessings* for *obeying* the law, then all the *curses* for *breaking* the law. We look briefly at the blessings first. Deuteronomy 28, verses 1 through 6, ***"If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands, I give you today, the LORD your God will set you on high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God: [Now, these are the blessings] You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country. The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock, the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed. You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out."*** (NIV) Those blessings are total. They cover every area of the life of the person who's obedient.

A little further on we begin to see the curses. Deuteronomy 28, verses 15 through 22. Again, I'm only going to be able to give you a kind of brief selection. I recommend you to study this more fully for yourself. Deuteronomy 28, verse 15 and following, ***"However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: You will be cursed in the city and cursed in the country. Your basket and your kneading trough will be cursed. The fruit of your womb will be cursed, and the crops of your land, and the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. You will be cursed when you come in and cursed when you go out. The Lord will send on you curses, confusion and rebuke in everything you put your hand to, until you are destroyed and come to sudden ruin because of the evil you have done in forsaking him."*** [Now listen . . . we're still reading the curses]. ***The LORD will plague you with diseases until he has destroyed you from the land you are entering to possess. The LORD will strike you with wasting disease, with fever and inflammation, with scorching heat and drought, with blight and mildew, which will plague you until you perish."*** (NIV)

Now, on my own, I've made a careful study of all the curses and I've summed them up under certain headings, which I will pass on to you. I would say this is a summation of these curses:

1. humiliation
2. mental and physical sickness
3. family breakdown
4. poverty
5. defeat
6. oppression

7. failure
8. God's disfavor.

Those are all the curses for the broken law. Now, in the light of that list, that summation let me ask you. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, could it be that you are enduring curses instead of enjoying blessings? Could it be that you've never realized what Christ accomplished for you on the cross when He redeemed you from all the curses of the broken law and made open to you all the blessings of His obedience? I suggest to you, you need to ponder and ask yourself that question, *"am I enduring curses when I should be enjoying blessings?"*

Part 7 - From Sickness to Healing



In previous talks I've explained that when Jesus died on the cross there was a two-way identification. Now we've been studying together various aspects of this exchange. I've explained that when Jesus died and hung on the cross, He was made a curse and all the evil that was due to us came upon Him that we in turn might receive all the good, all the blessings that were eternally due to Him. I've explained this exchange from curse to blessing in the words of Paul in Galatians, chapter 3, verses 13 and 14, ***"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.'"*** (NIV) That's a quotation from the law, from the book of Deuteronomy, that when Jesus hung on the cross, it was the outward and visible evidence to everyone who knew the law that He had been made a curse on our behalf. Then Paul continues in verse 14, ***"He [that's Christ] 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."*** (NIV) I want to make that very clear once more. Jesus took all the curses of the broken law upon Himself that we in return might receive all the blessings due for obedience to the Lord. And in my talk yesterday, I summed up all the curses which are listed in Deuteronomy, chapter 28 and this was the summation that I gave and I'll repeat it again today because it's very important that we're clear in our minds as to what constitutes a curse and what constitutes a blessing. This is the summation of the curses:

1. Humiliation
2. mental and physical sickness
3. family breakdown
4. poverty
5. defeat
6. oppression
7. failure
8. God's disfavor.

It's so important; Think about it. Ponder on it as you hear it and ask yourself, Do I experience those things, any of them in my life? If so, could it be that I'm still enduring a curse when, if I'm a believer in Jesus Christ and his atoning death, I should be enjoying a blessing.

If you ponder on that list, even more so if you read the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy on which it's based, you'll find that one major element in the curses is *mental and physical sickness*. I'll develop this a little further by reading some passages from Deuteronomy 28 where the curses are specified and many times in great detail. Beginning in Deuteronomy 28, verses 21 and 22, ***"The LORD will plague you with diseases until he has destroyed you from the land you are entering to possess. The LORD will strike you with wasting disease, with fever and inflammation, scorching heat and drought, with blight and mildew, which will plague you until you***

perish.” (NIV) Notice that it specifies these diseases in general, and then particularly, wasting disease, fever and inflammation. Then in verses 27 and 28, **“The LORD will afflict you with the boils of Egypt and with tumors, festering sores and the itch, from which you cannot be cured. The LORD will afflict you with madness, blindness and confusion of the mind.”** (NIV) Just pick out the significant words there, all part of the curse: boils, tumors, festering sores and the itch, madness, blindness, and confusion of the mind. All those are part of the curse. Then on in verse 35, **“The LORD will afflict your knees and legs with painful boils that cannot be cured, spreading from the soles of your feet to the top of your head.”** (NIV) All that’s part of the curse: skin diseases. Deuteronomy 28, verses 59 through 61, still listing the curses, **“The LORD will send fearful plagues on you and your descendants, harsh and prolonged disasters, and severe and lingering illness. He will bring upon you all the diseases of Egypt that you dreaded, and they will cling to you. The LORD will also bring on you every kind of sickness and disaster not recorded in this book of the law until you are destroyed.”** (NIV) Notice again the items listed there: severe and lingering illness and then all the diseases of Egypt. I’ve lived in Egypt. I’ve spent more than three years of my life in Egypt. Believe me, there are few diseases that are not experienced in Egypt, and it says, all the diseases of Egypt. And then it goes on to say, if there should be any diseases not included in that, **“The LORD will also bring on you every kind of sickness and disaster not recorded in this book of the Law.”** (NIV) In other words, every kind of sickness, disease is part of the curse. Logically, therefore, and the Bible is the most logical book I have ever read (and I used to be a professor of logic), logically, therefore, if Jesus bore the curse for us, then He bore our sicknesses, both mental and physical, and sure enough, that’s *exactly what the Bible declares*.

We look first of all in Isaiah 53, verses 4 and 5. Again, this is the prophetic preview of the sufferings of Jesus on the cross, **“Surely he [that’s Jesus] took our infirmities and carried our sorrows [but the more literal translation is ‘pains’]. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our pains, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.”** (NIV) Notice there it speaks of ‘infirmities’ and ‘pains’. We need to know that infirmities are what we might call ‘congenital weaknesses’, like many people have a hereditary tendency to diabetes or to arthritis. That would be an ‘infirmity’. A sickness would be the specific condition that we are exposed to through the infirmity. Jesus took our infirmities, our sicknesses, and our pains. He made *complete provision*. If you look there, in that passage in Isaiah 53, you’ll see there are three words that describe the spiritual, three words that describe the physical: *transgressions* and *iniquities* and then *peace*, that’s spiritual. Because Jesus was pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities, He offers us peace. Then there are three physical words: *infirmities*, *pains*, and *healing*. Because Jesus took our physical infirmities, bore our physical pains, therefore He offers us *physical healing*. All that I’ve said about the death of Jesus and His provision of healing, which I quoted from the Old Testament, from Isaiah, chapter 53, is fully confirmed in the New Testament. The two records are absolutely harmonious. We look, first of all, in Matthew 8:16 and 17, speaking about the earthly ministry of Jesus, **“When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick.”** (NIV) Notice there’s deliverance from physical infirmity and sickness, also from mental and emotional conditions caused by evil spirits. Jesus dealt with all of them. There was nothing He could not handle. And then, the inspired commentary of Matthew goes on, **“This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: ‘He [Jesus] took up our infirmities and carried our diseases.’”** (NIV) So, Jesus’ coming in fulfillment of the prophecies of the Scripture for the Messiah, the deliverer, fulfilled all that was written in Isaiah 53 including this aspect of physical deliverance: *He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases*. And again, in 1 Peter, chapter 2, verse 24, the apostle Peter again refers back to Isaiah 53, verses 4 and 5, the passage that we read earlier, and he applies it to Jesus and he makes this clear, plain statement of what Jesus accomplished in the *physical realm* on our behalf. First Peter, chapter 2, verse 24, **“He himself [that’s Jesus] bore our sins in his own body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.”** (NIV) Notice, He bore the spiritual, the sins, but He also bore the physical. *By His wounds you have been healed*. Jesus endured the physical wounding of His body that He might be able to offer

us physical healing for our bodies and it's significant, I think, that Peter places that in the perfect tense. It's a finished fact; *by His wounds you have been healed*. The wounds of Jesus have *already* obtained for us the right to physical healing. That word that Peter uses in Greek in the New Testament is directly related to the Greek word for a 'doctor'. It still is today. It *specifically means physical healing*.

By the physical wounds of Jesus, physical healing has been obtained for you and me.

Part 8 - From Poverty to Prosperity



We've been studying together various aspects of the divinely ordained exchange that took place when Jesus, as *"the last Adam,"* died on our behalf, in behalf of our whole fallen human race. I've explained very simply and very basically that on the cross, this divinely ordained exchange took place; *that all the evil that was due to our rebelliousness was visited upon Jesus.* God made to *meet together* upon Him the rebellion of us all, rebellion and all its evil consequences, that in return, because of this, all the good that was due by divine eternal right to Jesus, as the obedient Son of God, might be made available to you and me as believers through our faith. In my two previous talks this week, the two specific aspects of this exchange that I shared with you were: from *curse* to *blessing*. Jesus was made a curse; He hung there on the cross, the evidence of the curse, that we might receive the blessing. He endured the curses of the broken law that we might receive the blessings due to obedience. And, specifically, the second aspect of the exchange, He made it possible for us to be *healed of our sicknesses*. The exchange is between *sickness* and *healing*. On the cross He took up our infirmities, He bore our sicknesses, and as Peter said, *"With his wounds, we have been healed."* I just want to emphasize that perfect tense, *"we have been healed."* As far as God's concerned, healing has been provided. It remains for us to appropriate what God has provided and that's why it's so important that we really know the basis of God's provision and we have understanding and faith to appropriate it. That's the real purpose of my talks this week.

Today I want to share with you yet another way in which Jesus endured the curse that we might receive the blessing. Another *aspect* of the curse and the exchange that I'm going to speak about today is the exchange between *poverty* and *prosperity*.

Poverty is one of the curses of the broken law. Jesus endured that curse that we might have the blessing which is prosperity. Let's look again at the list of curses in Deuteronomy, chapter 28 and I want to keep emphasizing, *you need to read this chapter for yourself.* It's a long chapter. It's got 68 verses and you need to read those verses and you need to say to yourself, *"This is a blessing, but this is a curse,"* and then ask yourself, *"Am I enjoying a blessing or am I enduring a curse?"* Because if you are a redeemed child of God, the curses do not belong to you, but the blessings do.

All right. We'll look now at the curses listed and we'll focus particularly on those which relate to poverty. Going to Deuteronomy 28, beginning at verse 15 again, ***"However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: You will be cursed in the city and cursed in the country. Your basket and your kneading trough will be cursed. The fruit of your womb will be cursed, and the crops of your land, and the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. You will be cursed when you come in and cursed when you go out.*** Every aspect of your life will be cursed!

And then specially, in relationship to poverty, verse 29, ***"You shall grope at noon, as the blind man gropes in darkness, and you shall not prosper in your ways."*** (NIV; v. 29 NASB) Notice, not prospering is a curse. Not being able to find your way, being confused, perplexed, uncertain, groping. And groping almost inevitably leads to not prospering. That's a curse!

And then, a little further on in the same chapter, verses 47 and 48, ***"Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and a glad heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore you shall serve your enemies whom***

the LORD shall send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in the lack of all things; and He will put an iron yoke on your neck until He has destroyed you. (NASB)

Notice the will of God for His people. The will of God is expressed in verse 47, that we should serve the Lord our God with joy and a glad heart for the abundance of all things. 'Abundance' is a beautiful word. It occurs many times in the Bible. In essence, abundance means you've got all you need and something over for others, and the will of God is that we, as His people, should serve Him with joy and gladness for the abundance of all things. You see, Jesus said, ***"It's more blessed to give than to receive."*** If you're always receiving and never giving, you're not enjoying the greater blessings and God wants all His people to enjoy that greater blessing so He wants us all to have abundance: *more* than enough for ourselves that we may share with others. That's His will that we may serve Him with joy and gladness for the abundance of all things but the alternative, the curse, is this, ***"You shall serve your enemies whom the LORD shall send against you,"*** and let me remind you, if the Lord sends enemies against you, you have no option but to serve them! There is no other way. ***"You shall serve your enemies in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in the lack of all things."*** That's the curse! Sum up that: hunger, thirst, nakedness, lack of all things. What is it? It's absolute, total poverty. You can't have greater poverty than hunger, thirst, nakedness, and lack of all things. And that's the curse, the poverty curse. Christ has redeemed us from the poverty curse.

This was made real to me in a most dramatic way. Some years back I was speaking in the country of New Zealand and I'd been asked to speak to a group of Christians on a certain financial need so I was unfolding to them God's provision for the financial needs of His people and how we enter into them. And, I had my outline, and I was going through it, but as I was doing this, in what I would call my mind's eye, I saw something and the Holy Spirit showed me Jesus as He actually hung on the cross, no pretty religious picture, stripped of all His clothes, naked, forsaken, and as I went through the curse of poverty, the Holy Spirit, as it were 'checked off', each item: hunger, thirst, nakedness, lack of all things. Jesus was hungry, He hadn't eaten for nearly twenty-four hours. He was thirsty, one of His last utterances was, *"I thirst."* He was naked, they'd taken from Him all His clothing and divided it amongst themselves. He was in lack of all things, He had nothing. He was buried in a borrowed tomb and in a borrowed burial robe. He didn't have anything left at all. He *exhausted* the poverty curse as He hung on the cross. And, when I saw that, something happened in my spirit. *I was able to attain a greater level of faith for God's financial and material provision than ever before.* When I saw it, it was all based on what Jesus did on the cross, that on the cross, on our behalf, as our representative. He exhausted the poverty curse that we might in return have the blessing of prosperity.

This exchange from poverty to prosperity that I've been speaking to you about is fully confirmed in the New Testament. It's not something that's just in the Old Testament. I want to give you two verses from the second epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. First of all, chapter 8, verse 9, and then chapter 9, verse 8. That makes it easier to remember. First of all, chapter 8, verse 9. I want you to notice the key word is 'grace', ***"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich."*** (NIV) But the Greek says, *"might be rich,"* which is even stronger. So there's the exchange, very simple, on the cross Jesus became poor with absolute poverty. He was hungry, thirsty, naked, and in want of everything. Why? That we, through His poverty, might become rich; that we might have the abundance that is the legitimate blessing of obedience to the Law of God. And, Paul explains the outworking of this exchange very clearly in the next chapter, 2 Corinthians, chapter 9, verse 8, where he says this, ***"God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."*** (NIV) That's a fantastic verse, isn't it? The word 'abound' occurs twice. The word 'all', in the original Greek, occurs *five times*. That's God's abundance. Let me read it to you again, *"God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound to every good work."* All things at all times, you have all that you need. That's prosperity. Abundance is, you have more than you need so you're able to give and share with others. It's not for selfish ends; it's not to gratify materialism or selfishness, it's to enable us to enjoy the greater blessing of *giving*. So many Christians are just receivers, they

never give. They miss that greater blessing because they haven't entered into God's abundance and understood its purpose as it's provided for us through the death of Jesus. And, note again that key word, *grace*. The Scripture says the Law came through Moses but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. This provision of grace came through the *death of Jesus on the cross*. It's not something we can earn, but it's something we can receive by faith and by meeting the conditions.

Part 9 - From Rejection to Acceptance



In my previous talks this week, we've looked together at three specific aspects of this exchange. First of all, from *curse* to *blessing*. Jesus was made a curse when He hung on the cross that we might receive the blessing. Second, from *sickness* to *healing*. Jesus took our infirmities, our sicknesses, and our pains and with His wounds we have been healed. Thirdly, from *poverty* to *prosperity*. When Jesus hung on the cross, He exhausted the poverty curse. We looked at that yesterday. The poverty curse was hunger, thirst, nakedness, and lack of all things. And very exactly, very literally, on the cross, Jesus fulfilled all that. He was hungry. He was thirsty. He was naked. He was in want of all things. That was no accident. It was part of the divine design. The poverty curse, in its fullness, came upon Jesus that in return, through faith, we might receive the blessing of prosperity.

Today we're going to look at yet another aspect of this exchange summed up in the phrase - from *rejection* to *acceptance*. I need to begin by explaining what I mean by rejection. This is something which all of us experience at some time, but often we do not recognize it. Personally, I would say that *rejection is the commonest emotional and spiritual problem and cause of suffering in our contemporary culture*.

What do I mean by rejection? It can be defined in various ways with various phrases. Essentially, rejection is the feeling of being unwanted, unworthy, not really belonging, somehow being excluded. I think of the person who suffers from this wound of rejection as one who is always on the outside looking in, the one who would like to be inside, the one who would like to be part of the family, part of the joy, part of the acceptance, part of the love, but always somehow feels unable or unworthy to enter in. And, with rejection, there go many other things, loneliness, misery, self-pity, often even more terrible things like despair and suicide. But they all spring from that bitter root of rejection.

Now, this condition of rejection is described in various places in the Bible but there's a kind of *general rejection* which belongs to all who are not rightly related to God. This is described rather vividly by Paul in Ephesians, chapter 2, verse 12. He's speaking to believers from a non-Jewish background and he says, ***"Before you became believers, remember at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel, foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world."*** (NIV) What terrible words those are at the end, *without hope and without God*. Truly, everyone who is without Christ is without hope and without God. An alien, stranger, an orphan. Somebody for whom full provision isn't made, somebody who's not worthy to be in but is on the outside looking in with longing and unfulfilled expectations. That's the condition of those who, through sin, have lost a right relationship with God, who need to be reconciled back to God.

We need to bear in mind that it was our sin that caused our original and basic rejection. In Habakkuk, chapter 1, verse 13, the prophet speaks to the Lord and says, ***"Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong."*** (NIV) So, wherever evil comes, and wrong, then God averts His eyes. He cannot accept it. He cannot admit it into His presence. He rejects it. His infinite holiness and righteousness makes it necessary that He reject all forms of sin, of evil and wrong, and for that reason, we were in this condition of rejection - outside, aliens, not belonging. But, thank God, the death of Jesus changed all this and that next verse in Ephesians, chapter 2, verse 13, Paul speaks about this transformation, ***"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have***

been brought near through the blood of Christ. (NIV) That's the transition from rejection to acceptance. We were far away, we were outside the family, we didn't belong, we were aliens and strangers, we had no rights. If we came to God at all it was as beggars, not as children. But now, through the death of Jesus, through His shed blood, we, who were once far away, have been brought near to God. That's the transition from rejection to acceptance. Jesus made possible this transition from rejection to acceptance because on the cross He bore our rejection. Actually, that was His ultimate agony. That was the thing that broke His heart and caused Him to die. This is very vividly set forth in the Gospels, in the account of the crucifixion. We look in Matthew 27, verses 45 and 46, the account of the crucifixion, **"From the sixth hour [that's midday] until the ninth hour [that's three p.m.] darkness came over all the land. About the ninth hour [three p.m.], out of that darkness, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"** That's Aramaic. It's a quotation from Psalm 22. It means, **"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"** It always touches my heart that Jesus cried out in Aramaic. I think it's a fact that we come to understand and experience that when people are in desperate agony, and particularly at the point of death, their mind frequently goes back to the language they first learned in childhood and that's how I understand that. Jesus used His mother tongue, the tongue that He learned in His home. He cried out, not to a human being, but to God, **"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"** And remember, no answer came from Heaven. That was the first time that Jesus had ever prayed or cried to God and did not receive an immediate answer. Heaven was silent. God averted His eyes. God stopped His ears. Why? Because God is too pure to look upon sin and cannot tolerate wrong and when Jesus became identified with our sin, because of His own justice and righteousness, God had to avert His eyes and stop His ears and there came no answer from Heaven but the result was for our good. It's very vividly stated in just a few verses further on in Matthew 27, verse 51, **"At that moment [that was the moment that Jesus died] the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.** (NIV) What did that curtain of the temple represent? It represented the separation between a holy God and sinful man but through the death of Jesus, because He bore our rejection, He obtained for us acceptance and the evidence of acceptance was the splitting of that curtain. And it was split, the Scripture says, carefully, from top to bottom. It was done not by man, but by God. Jesus had endured our rejection that we might enter into His acceptance.

Now this acceptance through the death of Jesus is described by Paul in various places, especially Ephesians, chapter 1, verses 4 through 8, where he says this, **"For God chose us in him [that's in Jesus] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.** [Isn't that beautiful, to be holy and blameless in God's sight? How could we ever achieve that by our own effort? It's not possible by anything but through the substitutionary death of Jesus.] **In love God predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.** Note, we're to be *sons*, we're to be *children*. We're not aliens or strangers. We're *members of the family*. God is our Father, heaven is our home - *we belong to the best family in the universe!* Paul continues, **"to the praise of his glorious grace which he has freely given us in the One he loves.** (NIV) I always like the King James Version of that verse, it says, **"God has made us accepted in the Beloved."** There's the exact translation, from rejection to acceptance as God's children, members of His family. Verse 7, Paul goes on, **"In him [Jesus] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.** (NIV)

Notice the emphasis on grace. It cannot be earned. Notice the emphasis on redemption. We have redemption through His blood, redeemed from the curse to enjoy the blessing; redeemed from rejection to enjoy acceptance.

Part 10 - From Death to Life



All through this week we've been looking at the exchange that was accomplished when Jesus died on the cross. We've looked so far this week at four successive specific aspects of this exchange. The first, from *curse* to *blessing*. Jesus was made a curse that we might receive the blessing. He endured the curses of the broken law that the blessings of obedience might be made available to us. Second, from *sickness* to *healing*. Jesus, on the cross, took our infirmities, our sicknesses, our pains. He endured the physical wounds in His body that through that we might have physical healing. The third aspect of the exchange, from *poverty* to *prosperity*. On the cross, Jesus exhausted the poverty curse that comes upon those who are disobedient to the law. The curse is summed up in Deuteronomy 28, verse 48; hunger, thirst, nakedness, lack of all things, and that's exactly what Jesus endured on the cross. He was hungry. He was thirsty. He was naked. He lacked absolutely everything. He exhausted the poverty curse that in return we might enter into prosperity which was due to His obedience. The fourth aspect of the exchange we looked at yesterday, from *rejection* to *acceptance*. Our sin had excluded us from the grace and the favor and the family of God. We were aliens. We were strangers. We were outside looking in, nothing better than beggars, but Jesus endured that rejection which was due to our sin. On the cross He cried out to God, "*Why have You forsaken Me; why am I rejected?*" and there came no answer from God because the rejection was due to our sin with which Jesus was identified. And then He died of a broken heart caused by the rejection of His Father. But, at that moment that He died, the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom, signifying the way was opened up for us to enter into the acceptance which belonged to Jesus by divine eternal right as God's beloved Son.

Today we're going to look at the final aspect of the exchange, summed up in the words: from *death* to *life*. Jesus died our death that we might enter into His life. In my talk yesterday, I explained that it was our sin that caused our rejection. The same applies to death. The original cause of death is always, and only sin. *If there'd never been any sin, there would never be any death*. This relationship between sin and death is stated many, many times over in the Bible. I'll just select three passages which sum it up very briefly. The first is in the prophet Ezekiel, chapter 18, verse 4: "***The soul who sins will die.***" That's very clear. Romans 6:23: "***The wages of sin is death.***" The due, just reward for sin is death. And, James 1, verse 15: "***When sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.***" The final outcome of sin is invariably and inevitably death. And death in the Bible is not merely physical death; that's just the first part of death. But the Bible speaks of something far worse, the *second death*, which is not just the death of the body but it's final and eternal banishment from the presence of God. That's the second death. Both the physical death of the body and the second death are the *inevitable consequences of sin*. But in this also, on the cross, Jesus was our substitute. Hebrews chapter 2, verse 9 says this, "***We see Jesus . . . made a little lower than the angels . . . that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*** (NIV) Notice, this is the *grace* of God. It's not something we can earn or claim as a due reward for our obedience because we have been disobedient. We have broken the law. Our due reward, our wages for our sin, was death but, by the *grace* of God, on the cross Jesus tasted the death, *personally entered into* the death that was due to every one of us.

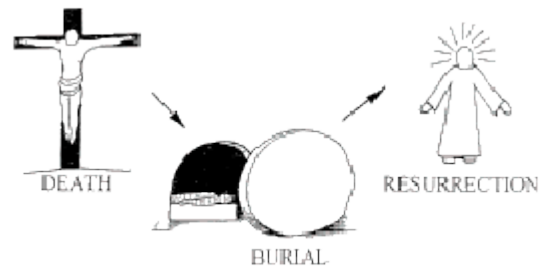
You see, in every child of Adam, from Adam himself onwards, there has dwelled a rebel, a person. He's called "*the old man*" or "*the old self*." He's incorrigible. He cannot be reformed. He is in continual, ineradicable rebellion against God and God's holy Law and God only has *one* remedy for that rebel. He doesn't reform him.

He doesn't send him to church. He doesn't teach him the Golden Rule. He doesn't teach him to memorize Scripture. God's remedy is very simple, very radical; it's *execution!* That must be the end of that rebel. But the gracious message of the Gospel is that on the cross our old man, our old self, was executed in Jesus. Jesus identified himself with that rebel. God made to *meet together* upon Him the rebellion of us all and all its evil consequences. He was actually identified with the rebel and then He paid the penalty for the rebel's sin. Our old, rebellious, fallen, incorrigible nature was put to death in Jesus. This is so vividly stated by Paul in Romans, chapter 6, verses 6 through 8, ***"For we know that our old self [the King James says "our old man" that's the inner rebel that's in every one of us], our old self was crucified with him [that's with Jesus], so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin [this is the escape from the slavery of sin; it's through the death of Jesus], because anyone who has died has been freed from sin [and we're freed from sin because Jesus died our death and we identify ourselves with him and we are freed from sin], now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.*** (NIV) Notice the exchange. We die with Him that we may live with Him. He died our death that we may live His life. Through His death for us, on our behalf, His life is now made available to us. The exchange is from *death* to *life*. This exchange from death to life, which has been made possible by the death of Jesus, is very beautifully stated by Paul in Galatians, chapter 2, verse 20. What makes Paul's summation so beautiful is that he doesn't state it as a general principle or a doctrine, but he states it in personal testimony, as a matter of his own experience. This is what he says, ***"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 faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*** That's the substitution. Christ gave himself for us. He took our place. He was identified with our rebellion and He paid the penalty of the rebel. He was executed under God's judgment in our place. And then, Paul sees, not only the identification of Jesus with us, but *our* identification with Jesus and he states it: ***"I have been crucified with Christ."*** "When Christ died," he said, "I died, that was my death." "As a consequence," he goes on, "I no longer live." Then how are you still alive? The answer is, ***"But Christ lives in me."*** It's now Christ living out His life in me. It's no longer my old, rebellious, fallen nature that's at work, but it's the new nature, the divine nature of Jesus working out in me the righteousness of Jesus, enabling me to live an entirely different kind of life. That's the exchange, *from death to life*.

Paul also states it again very vividly and beautifully in Colossians, chapter 3, verses 3 and 4, writing to Christian believers. He says, ***"For you died,*** [I like that simple past tense, *you died*. When did we die? We died when Jesus died; that was our death]. ***For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.*** [You don't have your own life any longer, you have a hidden life, a secret life, a life that this world, which is restricted to the senses, cannot appreciate or understand, but you have a hidden life] Then Paul goes on to say, ***When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*** (NIV) Notice that beautiful, simple statement, "Christ is your life." There are two such simple statements there. Put them together, ***"for you died,"*** and then, ***"Christ is your life."*** Jesus died our death that we might have His life. Paul said, ***"It's no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. The life I live now, in this present age, in this present body, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me."***

That's the exchange from death to life. Jesus died our death that He might live out His life in us. *We've passed, the Scripture says, from death to life*

Part 11 - Buried and Resurrected



This word identification is the one that I've chosen to describe as simply as possible and as comprehensively as possible, all that Jesus did through His death on the cross. To 'identify' means to make yourself *one* with someone else. And on the cross, for the sake of our deliverance, for delivering us from all the consequences of sin, Jesus made Himself one with us. With every one of us individually, with our whole fallen human race collectively. He was the *last Adam*. In Him was poured out and summed up all the evil inheritance that sin had brought upon an entire Adamic race. It was consummated, it came to its conclusion, it was exhausted in Jesus. When He died, that was the end of that whole inheritance that had come out of the sin of Adam, compounded by the sin of each descendant of Adam. So that was the identification of Jesus with us in our sin, in our desperate need. He was made one with us. In Isaiah 53:6 it says, ***"The LORD made to meet together upon Him the iniquity, the rebellion of us all, and all the evil consequences of rebellion."*** There was a divinely appointed exchange. Jesus took all the *evil* that was due by justice to *us* that in return *we* might be able to enter into all the good that was due to Him by eternal right. And this exchange has many difference aspects. In my talks over the last two weeks I dealt with various specific aspects of the exchange. First, Jesus was *punished* that *we* might be *forgiven*. Second, Jesus was made *sin* that *we* might have *His righteousness*. Third, He was made a *curse* that *we* might receive the *blessing*. Fourth, He was *wounded* that *we* might be *healed*. Fifth, He became *poor* that *we* might be *rich*. Sixth, He was *rejected* that *we* might be *accepted*. And seventh, He tasted *death* that *we* might have *life*.

In my talks this week I'm going to deal with the opposite side of the coin, the other half of identification: our identification with Jesus in all that followed His death. I'm going to go first of all to the summation of the gospel which is given very briefly, very comprehensively by Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 15:1–4, ***"Now, brothers, 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. [Now Paul sums up the gospel] For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. . . . (NIV)*** That's the essence of the gospel. It centers all in Christ and what He did and it contains three successive statements about Christ:

1. Christ *died*
2. He was *buried*
3. He was *raised* on the third day.

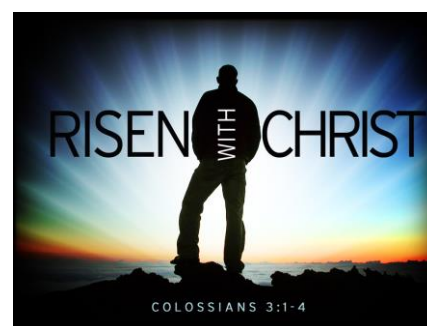
That is the absolute heart and essence of the gospel. Let me repeat again, it centers in Christ and in what *He* did. It does not depend on human contribution. It says of the third statement, ***"He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."*** In Paul's time and context, ***"according to the Scriptures"*** meant ***"according to the Old Testament."*** We may ask ourselves, ***"Where does it say in the Old Testament that Jesus would be raised on the third day?"*** I wonder if you've ever considered that question. It puzzled me for many years, but God, I believe, showed me the answer. First of all, Jesus said that He would be like Jonah. And that as Jonah was three days in the belly of the fish, so He would be three days in the belly of the earth. That's a kind of pictorial

presentation of the truth that Jesus would be raised on the third day. But the only place I know in the Old Testament where it's specifically stated, is in the prophet Hosea chapter 6, verses 1 and 2. This is what it says, ***"Come, let us return to the LORD. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us. He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day that we may live before Him."*** (NASB) There's a very clear statement. What has been killed will be revived, will be brought back to life and it will happen after two days, it will happen on the third day. But you see the very significant thing that I want to emphasize is that *all* of it is applied to *us*, not just to Him. It doesn't say that He will raise Him up, but that He will raise *us* up. Do you get the point? It's *identification*. Jesus was identified with us in our sin and in His death for our sin. As we accept that identification and we identify ourselves with Him in death, we say like Paul, ***"I am crucified with Christ,"*** then the way is open for us to be identified with Jesus in all that followed. In His burial, His resurrection and even in His ascension. In the next verse of Hosea, that's chapter 6 verse 3, the prophet goes on, ***"So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; and He will come to us like the rain, like the spring rain watering the earth."*** (NASB) You see, the revelation of this is only granted to those who *press on to know the Lord*. And then there's a further picture of the resurrection of Jesus. ***"His going forth is as certain as the dawn."*** The resurrection was like the dawn after the long, dark night. And then it says, ***"He will come to us like the rain, like the spring rain watering the earth."*** The spring rain and the rain coming down on the earth is a picture of the coming down of the Holy Spirit used many times in the Bible. So we get here a preview, not merely of the resurrection, but of that which took place 50 days after the resurrection, the *coming of the Holy Spirit*. So this Scripture in Hosea shows us that Jesus was to die, was to be buried, was to be raised the third day, but that we were to be identified with Him in death, in burial and in resurrection from the dead, and that as we followed on to know we would not only know the dawn of His resurrection but we would know the rain of the coming of the Holy Spirit. So there is the essence of the New Testament message contained in those three verses in Hosea chapter 6.

There is one specific act by which God requires us and enables us to be identified with Jesus in death, in burial and resurrection. This outward act of identification is the act of *baptism*. Listen to what Paul says in Romans 6:3–5, ***"Or don't you know that 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. If we have been united with him in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection."*** Being baptized is being buried with Christ. It's being united with Him in His death and the Scriptures gives us the guarantee, if we are united with Him in burial, then we will also follow through with Him into resurrection, into a new life. The same is stated in Colossians 2 verse 12 briefly, ***"Having been buried with him [Christ] in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead."*** So we're identified with Jesus, first in His burial and then in His resurrection. We go down into the water for burial. We come up out of the water for resurrection. We are symbolically united with Jesus in burial and in resurrection.

I was in a big hotel once, some years back, and I got a very vivid picture of this that I want to share with you. I was in an elevator and I was looking at all the buttons on the elevator and I was on the first floor and I saw "1." And then above one, I saw "M" for mezzanine and then "2" and "3" and all the way up to "15." And I thought to myself, that's like being in Christ. When we get into the elevator we go wherever the elevator takes us. We're not dependent on our own effort or power. We're dependent on the elevator. And then I looked again at the buttons and I saw that below "1" was another button with the letter "B" on it. And I said to myself, "What does 'B' stand for?" And just at that moment it was like the Holy Spirit said to me, "B stands for basement, baptism and burial." And I saw so clearly that if we come into Christ, first of all we go down into the basement, we're buried with Him and then we just go to whatever button we press. We're in Christ and wherever the elevator goes, we're going to go with Him.

Part 12 - Born Again out of Death



Isaiah 53:6, ***“The LORD made to meet together upon Him, [Jesus] the iniquity of us all”***, our rebellion and all its evil consequences. God brought upon Jesus in that moment of identification all the evil that was due by justice to us, that in return the way might be open for us to receive all the good that was due to Jesus. The Lord opened the way for us to be identified on our side with Jesus, not only in His death but in all that followed His death: *burial, resurrection, and even ascension to the very throne of God!* And at the end of my talk yesterday I used a little example which I want to return to today, the example of the elevator. I mentioned how I’d found myself in an elevator in a large hotel on the ground floor which was getting ready to go up, and how I’d looked at the buttons that selected the floor and I saw that above “1” where I was there was “M” which was for ‘mezzanine’, and then there was “2” and “3” and “4” all the way up, I believe, to the 15th floor, which was the top. And so I was there meditating on the Gospel, I was in that city to preach, and as I looked at those buttons and considered my position in the elevator, I thought, that’s just like entering by faith into Christ, entering into the elevator. And once you are in the elevator you go wherever the elevator takes you. You’re not dependent on your own power to get there. You just depend on the elevator to take you. And I thought, that’s like being in Christ. And then as I looked at the buttons again, I saw below “1” another button which had a letter on it, the letter “B.” And I was inwardly asking myself, “Well, what does ‘B’ stand for?” And it was really almost comical. It was like immediately the Holy Spirit gave me an inward answer and He said this, “‘B’ stands for *basement, baptism and burial.*” And I saw it so vividly. When we step into Christ we don’t begin by going up, but we begin by going down. That’s the whole law of spiritual progress everywhere in the universe. If you want to go up you start by going down. See, we step into Christ by faith and we go down with Christ into the basement, which is baptism, which is burial. We’re identified with Him in His burial, but out of His burial we enter into His resurrection. And then we just press whichever button we want and we go up to that. I was sharing this with a friend of mine, a businessman in the city where I was preaching, and he made a rather good comment. He said, “Brother Prince,” he said, “that’s a very vivid picture.” And I was emphasizing how we could select any floor and go where we wanted in the elevator. And he said, “Brother Prince, that’s a very vivid picture, but isn’t it a tragedy that so many Christians when they get into the elevator they just press ‘M’ for mezzanine and get off at the next floor. *They never go to the heights that are available in Christ.*” And I’ve always carried that thought with me.

Well, today I’m going to show you how this truth that I’ve illustrated from the elevator is more fully unfolded in various passages of the New Testament. First of all, I’d like to turn to Ephesians chapter 2 verses 4–6, ***“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—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.”*** (NIV) There’s one key word there which is the little word ‘with’. It’s *with Christ, with Christ, with Christ*. It’s our identification with Christ that makes all the difference. And in the light of that identification, it says that God brings us through into three successive experiences that we share with Jesus. The first one is God *made us alive*. When we were dead in transgressions and sins, God made us alive. Second, God *raised us up*. He *resurrected* us. But third, it says, *“God seated us with Him (still with Him).”* Now *where is Christ seated?* We know the answer. He’s seated on the throne with God. So if we are seated with Him, where are we? We’re on the throne. There’s one translation, the New English Bible, that says, ***“God enthroned us with***

Him. That's the truth! Now that's where you can go in that elevator if you press that button. "Alas," as my friend said, "so many Christians never realize the possibilities that are open to them through their identification with Jesus." But the Scripture has given us this that we can lay hold of. God made us *alive with Christ*, He *resurrected us with Christ*, and He *enthroned us with Christ*. In other words, when we enter into Christ through faith, when we share with Him in His burial, then we are entitled to share with Him in *everything* that followed burial: in being made *alive*, in being *resurrected* and in being *raised up to the throne of God*. Isn't that amazing? Isn't that stupendous?

I want to show you this also in Colossians chapter 1 verses 15–18, which is a picture of who Jesus is and what He did. There are seven unique aspects of Jesus unfolded. Five relate to His eternal nature and the remaining two to His redemptive work. Beginning at verse 15, **"And He is the image of the invisible God, [that's the first] He is the firstborn of all creation. [that's the second] For in Him all things were created, [that's the third, and then every created thing is listed by categories, so He created all things] he is before all things, [He's eternally existent. He was never created. He exists eternally before all things were created. And fifth, in Him all things hold together."** (NASB) There are five eternal facts about Jesus:

1. He's the image of the invisible God.
2. He's the firstborn before all creation.
3. He created all things.
4. He is, He exists, eternally before all things.
5. In Him all things hold together. He holds the *whole universe* together!

Now the last two statements that we have not yet looked at apply to that which *followed* His atoning sacrificial death. Verse 18 of Colossians chapter 1, **"He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead . . ."** (NASB) So, the sixth fact is that Jesus is the head of the body, the body is the church, and the seventh, that He's the beginning of a new order because He's the firstborn from the dead. In other words, death was in a certain sense the womb out of which God brought forth a totally new order, Jesus being the first one in this order, the head of the body.

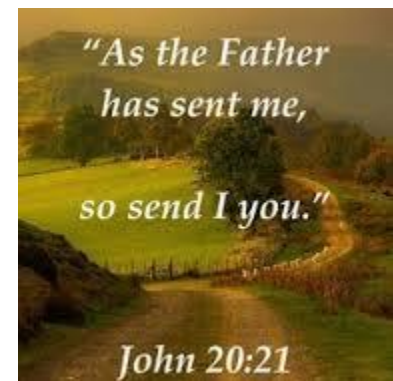
Now let me illustrate this from nature in a very beautiful way, I believe. In a natural birth, what part of the body comes forth first? We all know, it's the head. But when the head emerges, we all know the *body is going to follow*. And so in this spiritual birth, out of death, Jesus, the head of the body emerged first. But what does that tell us? That *we* who are *united* with Him as our head, will follow Him in that birth into that new order of creation. We'll follow Him into all that He entered into through death and resurrection from the dead. So with Jesus as our head, we as the members of the body united with Him, *follow* Him in rebirth, out of death into a totally new order, a totally new life, into a union with Him that takes us wherever He goes. Not only into resurrection but into ascension into heaven's glory into the place of authority at God's right hand.

Listen to how Peter expresses this in 1 Peter chapter 1 verses 3 and 4, **"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead . . ."** (NASB) That's the essence of the message. We are born again *through* the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We are *identified* with Jesus in His *death*, His *burial* and then His *resurrection*. And His resurrection is called a '*rebirth*'. It's a birth out of the old order into a new order, a new way of life, a new kind of life. And it says in connection with this in the next verse of 1 Peter, **". . . to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you."** (NASB) So through our identification with Jesus, we pass through death, we are born again through His resurrection, into a new life and into a new order. And this order is totally different. There are three words used to describe it, all of which are not true of the old order of life with which we've been familiar. It's an inheritance which is *imperishable* and *undefiled* and *will not fade away*.

It cannot be touched by corruption, by decay, by the contamination of sin. It cannot be defiled. It will never fade. It's not subject to all the evil, corrupting forces that we have been familiar with all through our lives that have pulled us down, that have defeated us. We've passed out of that realm into a new realm in Jesus through identification with Him.

We've been born again to a living hope.

Part 13 - As the Father Has Sent Me...



The Scripture says in Ephesians, chapter 2, ***“We were dead in our transgressions and our sins but God, in His mercy, made us alive with Christ, raised us up with Christ and seated us with Christ.”*** The key word all through, the key phrase is *“with Christ.”* It’s totally dependent upon our identification with Jesus. I emphasized right at the beginning of my messages this week the gospel centers in Christ and what He did. There’s no human contribution to the gospel. But when we are identified with Christ and what He did, then that identification takes us all the way out of the tomb into resurrection and even into ascension, to the very throne of God. As I explained in my last two talks, it’s like being in the elevator. Once you get in the elevator, you go wherever the elevator goes. It doesn’t depend on your own power or ability or cleverness. It just depends on the ability of the elevator. And the elevator’s destination is *your* destination. So why settle for less? If the elevator is going to the *throne*, why do you want to step off before that? That’s at least my philosophy and my viewpoint, and I want to tell you it works in experience.

Well, today I’m going to speak about that very question. About the practical outworking of our identification with Jesus in our daily living as believers or as disciples. How does it affect the way we live? What kind of a persons should we be? I’m going to commence with what I personally consider to be one of the most exciting and also challenging statements of the New Testament. It’s found in John chapter 20, verses 19–22. It describes the first appearance of Jesus after His resurrection to His disciples collectively in a group. It happened on the evening of the Sunday of the resurrection. The disciples were shut away in a locked room for fear of the Jews and suddenly Jesus was right there in their midst. This is what happened, ***“On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!”*** [That’s the typical Oriental greeting. That’s still what they say today, *“Peace be with you.”*] ***After he said this, he showed them his hands and side,*** [to prove to them that that was the very same person that they had seen hanging on the cross.] ***The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you!”*** [And I’m sure they needed the repetition of that message, Peace. Their hearts were pounding. They were half fearful, half afraid. They could scarcely believe what was happening. They needed that reiteration, *“Peace be with you!”*] ***Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you!”*** [And then He went on, and these are the words I want to focus on:] ***As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”*** (NIV) And through that inbreathed breath of the resurrected Christ in a totally new way the Holy Spirit entered into each of those disciples and through the Holy Spirit the very life and nature of Jesus was imparted to them. And on the basis of that impartation of His own life and nature, Jesus was able to say to them those astonishing words, ***“As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you.”*** The Father sent Jesus into the world to fulfill a unique task which no one else could fulfill. Jesus fulfilled the task and was about to return to the Father, but He didn’t leave Himself without representatives on the earth. He said to those disciples, “Just in the same way that the Father originally sent Me to fulfill a special task, now in turn I am sending you, My disciples, to fulfill a special task. I will be returning to the Father, but I’ll be leaving you on earth as My representatives to fulfill a special task.” And He said, ***“Just as the Father sent Me, I am sending you.”*** What is included in that phrase, *“Just as the Father sent Me”*?

I want to turn to another passage a little earlier on in John's gospel to illustrate that. John chapter 14, verses 8–10. Philip said to Jesus: ***“Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.”*** (NIV)

That brings out three aspects of the relationship of Jesus with the Father:

1. Jesus did not speak His own words, but He spoke words that had been committed to Him to speak by the Father who sent Him.
2. Jesus did not do anything in His miraculous ministry through His own power or ability. He said, “Really, it isn’t I who am doing it, but it’s the Father who is performing His works through Me.”
3. This is even more amazing - to see Jesus was to see the Father. He said, ***“You don’t need to see the Father. You’ve seen Me. And if you’ve seen Me, you’ve seen the Father.”***

Now, here’s the application. Jesus said, ***“Just as the Father sent Me, I’m sending you.*** In other words, the relationship that existed between the Father and Me, will be the same relationship that will exist between Me and you, My disciples.” What does that mean? It means that exactly what was true of the relationship of Jesus to the Father should be true of us to Jesus:

1. We do not speak our own words. We speak words proceeding from Jesus.
2. It isn’t we who do what’s done, in any significant sense, it’s Jesus in us performing His works, just as it was the Father in Jesus performing His works.
3. To see us is to see Jesus. Isn’t that a challenge and a responsibility?

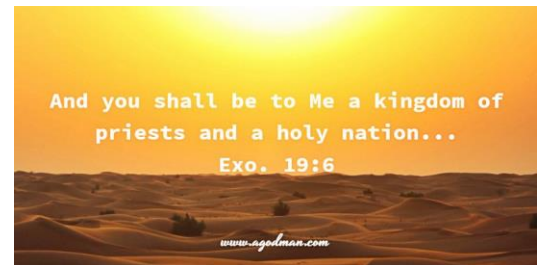
That’s to be His representatives on earth at this time. So we are Christ’s official representatives here on earth. This same truth is beautifully presented by Paul in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verses 17–21, ***“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him [Jesus] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*** (NIV) First of all, it starts with a *new creation*. This is passing out of death into a new life. If anyone is in Christ, he’s a *new creation*. Then in that new creation we become the official representatives of God and of Christ on the earth. God has given to *us* the ministry of reconciliation. Just as God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, so now Christ is in us reconciling the world to God. We are Christ’s ambassadors, Paul says. As though God were making His appeal through us. ***“We implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.”*** And the basis of the message is this very theme that we’re taking, Identification. This is the only basis for reconciliation. And so the closing verse says, ***“God made Him [Jesus] who had no sin to be sin for us, that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*** (NIV)

Notice two essential points:

1. We cannot become Christ’s representatives until we have first been transformed ourselves. We must enter into the new creation. We must be created anew. The old creation has no message for itself. It’s the new creation that has the message.
2. Our message is based on that divine exchange that took place at the cross, when God made Jesus who had no sin for us, to be sin that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Think of yourself as a reconciled reconciler. First, you have to be reconciled to God through Christ, then *you* become God’s agents and messengers of reconciliation through Christ to the *rest of this world!*

Part 14 - A Kingdom of Priests



As Jesus hung on the cross as the last Adam, God made to meet together upon Him the iniquity, the rebellion of us all, and all its evil consequences. Jesus bore them all in that one great atoning sacrifice. He was identified with all the evil that was due to us that we, in return, might be able to enter in through His death into all the good that was His by eternal right. On the second side (that's our identification with Jesus) we've seen that through His death the way is open for us to follow Him in each successive experience that came after His death: His *burial*, His *resurrection* and His *ascension*. In Ephesians chapter 2, Paul says, ***"God made us alive with Christ, raised us up or resurrected us with Christ [and then it says] made us sit together with Christ."*** I pointed out to you that Christ is sitting on the throne with His Father. And the New English Bible beautifully translates that last phrase, ***"God enthroned us together with Christ."*** So when by faith we identify ourselves with Jesus in His death for our sins, and we publicly identify ourselves with Him in His burial through our baptism, then the way is open for us to follow into *everything that succeeds*. We're *made alive*, we're *resurrected* and we are *enthroned together with Jesus*.

In my talk yesterday I explained how this works out practically in our daily living. I quoted the words of Jesus on the Resurrection Sunday evening spoken to His disciples there when He said, ***"Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."*** Just as Jesus was the personal representative of the Father on earth, so before He went back to the Father in heaven, He appointed His disciples to be His *personal representatives on earth*. They were related to Jesus in the same way that Jesus was related to the Father. And I pointed out three things about the relationship of Jesus to the Father:

1. That Jesus did not speak His own words; He spoke words given by the Father.
2. It was the Father in Jesus who did the works
3. and that those who had seen Jesus had seen the Father.

I pointed out, these should all apply to us. We should not speak our own words, but the words of Jesus. It should not be we who do it but Jesus dwelling in us. And that anyone who has seen us should in that have seen Jesus. Today I want to take this one step further, to show you how we are identified not only with the resurrection life and ministry of Jesus, but also with His ascension life and His ministry in heaven. You see when Jesus ascended to heaven and took His place on the throne with the Father, He entered into His two supreme, unique and final ministries. He became *King* and *Priest*. And in this also, we are invited to *identify ourselves with Jesus*.

I'll read a couple of passages from the book of Revelation which express this truth. Revelation 1, verses 5 and 6, ***"To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. (NIV)*** Notice that when Jesus has freed us from our sins by His own blood, by that very act He has made us to be a kingdom and priests to God and the Father, or kings and priests, or a kingdom of priests. The same is brought out again in Revelation 5:9–10, ***"And they sang a new song: 'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, [of course these words are addressed to Jesus] because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, [Notice when we are purchased or redeemed by the blood of Jesus, through that we are made to be a kingdom and priests or a kingdom of priests to God]. (NIV)*** And then in 1 Peter chapter 2 verse

9: Peter states it very briefly and clearly writing to believers, ***“You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood . . .”*** [A kingly priesthood. You are kings and priests, a kingdom of priests.] As I’ve said already, these are the two ministries of Jesus in eternity at the throne. He rules as King, He intercedes as Priest.

What are the special particular responsibilities of kings and priests? I think it’s pretty clear with regard to kings. The responsibility: the task of a king is to *rule*. Many people don’t so clearly see the task of a priest but it’s made clear in Scripture. The responsibility of priests is to *offer sacrifices*. *Only* priests could offer sacrifices to God in God’s order. So we are made kings to rule and priests to offer sacrifices. With regard to our offering sacrifices as priests, I just quote another passage from 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 5, just a few verses above the one already quoted which said, ***“We are a chosen people, a royal priesthood. . . .”*** In 1 Peter 2:5, he says this, ***“You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*** (NIV) Notice that the moment we are called a holy priesthood, the next truth that comes out is that as priests we *must have sacrifices to offer to God*. Because that is the special ministry confined to priests, to be able to offer sacrifices to God. And Peter says, ***“They are spiritual sacrifices.”*** In other words, they are not like the sacrifices of the Mosaic law, they are not animals. But we offer spiritual sacrifices. And particularly we follow the example of Jesus who in heaven offers to God the spiritual sacrifice of His intercession and prayer on our behalf. For it says, ***“He ever liveth that He may make intercession for those who come to God through Him.”*** You see, Jesus’ earthly ministry only lasted three and a half years. But His ministry as a King and a Priest has already lasted nearly *two thousand years* and it’s going to go on throughout eternity. And we’re invited not only to share with Jesus His earthly ministry, but through our *identification* with Him, to enter His eternal heavenly ministry as kings and priests. Spiritually, our identification with Jesus makes us already citizens of the heavenly Zion. This is not something that is going to happen, it’s something that has already taken place through our identification with Jesus. Wherever you’re listening right now, you may be in your kitchen, you may be in your living room, you may be in your automobile, you may be in a factory, that’s your earthly location. That’s the location of your body. You may not realize it, but your spirit has another location. Your spirit is with Jesus. Your spirit is on the throne in Him. You are already come to the Mount Zion, the heavenly Zion. This is so beautifully stated in Hebrews chapter 12, verses 22–24. I want you to notice the tense. ***“But you have come to Mount Zion*** [this is written to believers on earth but it doesn’t say you’re going to come—it says] ***you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven.”*** [There’s a great assembly of angels and there is also the church of the firstborn, all those who have been born again out of death into a new creation through faith in Jesus Christ, the true church, is there in spirit.] ***You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.”*** So that’s our spiritual location. We’re already there in that glorious assembly with the angels and all the firstborn in the heavenly Zion. And *out* of the heavenly Zion through our identification with Jesus, we rule on God’s behalf through our prayers. We are a kingdom of priests. We *rule through prayer*. This is vividly stated in Psalm 110, verses 1 and 2, ***“The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”*** That’s perhaps one of the most quoted passages of the Old Testament in the New and it’s always applied to Jesus. God the Father invited Jesus Christ, the Son, our Lord, to sit at His right hand until His dominion is established over all His enemies. The next verse says, ***“The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; rule in the midst of your enemies.”*** You see, Jesus is already ruling, although the enemies are still there. And the scepter of His authority is extended out of Zion. That’s a spiritual scepter. ***And as we take our place in Zion through identification with Jesus on the throne, then through our prayers in the power of the Holy Spirit, we extend that scepter of His kingdom over the earth!*** We become identified with Jesus in His authority over the nations. Through our prayers we exercise that authority. The rod of authority is placed in the hands of God’s people as they take their place in Zion. And out of Zion the rod of authority goes forth over the nations of the earth. ***And we are thus identified with Jesus, even now, in His two great final ministries as King and Priest.***

Part 15 - The Secret Hidden Wisdom



We've seen how the way has been opened for us through the death of Jesus to share with Jesus both in His resurrection ministry on earth and also in His ascension ministry in heaven. With regard to our sharing in the continuing ministry of Jesus on earth, our key Scripture was that in John 20:21, where Jesus said to His disciples, ***"Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."*** (NIV) In other words, on earth we are Jesus' personal representatives just as He, during His ministry on earth, was the personal representative of the Father. With regard to our sharing in the *ascension* ministry of Jesus in heaven, our key Scripture was Revelation 1:5–6, ***"To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen."*** (NIV) So you see there, through being released from our sins by the blood of Jesus, we have become in God's sight a kingdom and priests, or a kingdom of priests. We have the right to enter into the two great ascension ministries of Jesus, where He rules as King and intercedes as Priest. We have the right through His death to move all the way up into heaven's glory with Him and share the kingly ministry and the priestly ministry.

Today I'm going to share with you about what I call God's secret, hidden wisdom, through which alone we can comprehend all that has been made ours through our identification with Jesus. This is really one of my favorite themes in the New Testament, because before God revealed Himself to me I was a professional philosopher and I was seeking after the very thing that Paul speaks about here, the '*wisdom of this world*'. In fact, it was identical, because my special field of study was Greek philosophy. For seven years I immersed myself in Greek philosophy. That's exactly what Paul in the New Testament refers to as *wisdom* or the *wisdom of this world*. It is precisely that, philosophy. So out of my own background and experience, I think I can appreciate better than most exactly how true these words of Paul are about the hidden wisdom of God. You see, I was searching for wisdom but I never found that hidden wisdom of God until God completely changed me, until I became a new creation in Jesus Christ. Then the door was opened up for me to search out this hidden wisdom.

This is what Paul says now in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verses 4–10, ***"My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with the demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power."*** Oh, how well I appreciate that. Paul didn't use long complicated, sophisticated intellectual phrases that only a few people could claim to understand. I remember reading once in the German philosopher, Emmanuel Kant, there was one sentence of his that extended for more than two pages without a period. How many of you would like to study that? Aren't you glad that God didn't put His wisdom in that form? However, Paul goes on to say in verse 6, ***"We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing."*** It's a different kind of wisdom that relates to ruling, that's the *theme* of this wisdom, but it's not understood by the rulers of this present age. Then Paul describes this wisdom, ***"No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began."*** Notice, it's a *secret wisdom*, it's a *hidden wisdom*, but there's a special purpose to this wisdom. God destined it for *our glory*! That's a breathtaking phrase! Paul goes on, ***"None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."*** In other words, they didn't have the wisdom to see through the external and

recognize who Jesus really was. Through the lack of that secret hidden wisdom, they missed the Lord of glory. They actually crucified the ruler of the universe. Verse 9, ***“However, as it is written: ‘No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him’—but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.”*** The natural senses of man cannot appreciate this wisdom, his natural reasoning cannot attain to this wisdom, all that is excluded. But there is another way to attain to this wisdom, *God has revealed it to us by His Holy Spirit*. And then Paul concludes, ***“The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.”*** (NIV) Now let’s look back at that phrase, ***“God . . . destined this wisdom for our glory.”*** What does that mean? I tell you, frankly, I’ve read those words many, many times before I really began to see what was meant as I believe. I believe that the whole purpose of this wisdom was to *bring us into glory with God*, to lift us above the earthly realm and into the heavenly realm. To place us there *on the throne together with Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory*. It staggers my mind to think that God devised this secret wisdom before time began, that He had you and me in view when He devised this wisdom. But you see, there’s only one door to this wisdom. You can search and you can grope, you can theorize and you can speculate, you can philosophize as long as you please, but you will never attain to this hidden wisdom until you find the door. Do you know what the door is? *It’s the cross of Jesus!* And when you come to the cross, when you see the purpose of the death of Jesus, when you see yourself identified with Jesus in His death and then follow on to be identified with Him in burial by baptism, then *that’s the door that leads to this secret wisdom*. You find that you’re made *alive* with Him. You’re *resurrected* with Him, and you’re *enthroned* with Him. But until you’ve found the door which is the cross, that is all shut off from you.

There’s another passage in the writing of Paul that speaks about this secret hidden wisdom that’s ordained for our glory. It’s in Romans chapter 8, verses 28–32, ***“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; and those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. What, then, shall we say in response to 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?”*** (NIV) Notice there that key phrase again, *“with Him, with Jesus.”* It’s when we are *identified with Jesus in His death*, then we *enter into* the inheritance with Jesus. God graciously bestows upon us all things. We become *heirs of God* and *joint heirs with Jesus Christ*. But there’s a process and there are five stages outlined by Paul in this process here in Romans chapter 8:

1. God foreknew us.
2. He predestined us.
3. He called us.
4. He justified
5. He glorified.

And *all* those are in the past tense. Now those first two steps in the process took place in eternity before time ever began. Before time began God foreknew us, God predestined us, He arranged the circumstances of our lives. Then in time God intervened, He called us through the preaching of the gospel. He invited us to accept our identification with Jesus. When we responded to the call, He justified us. He acquitted us of all guilt. He set us free from our sin. But when He had justified us, He didn’t stop there. And so many Christians have never seen this, He *glorified us*. He brought us up to share glory with Jesus in heaven as kings and priests. Not in the future. Notice, it’s *“He glorified us”* past tense. Just like every one of the others is past tense, so is that, *“He glorified us together with Jesus.”*

This is again beautifully expressed by Paul in another passage, in Colossians 1, 3 and 4, ***“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.*** [Notice, it’s the identification with the seated Christ on the throne.] ***Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died,*** [that’s your identification with Jesus in the historical past: when Jesus died, you

died. That's finished.] ***For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.*** [That's the secret hidden wisdom. Our life is hidden with Christ in God. The world can't see it, but for you and me that have experienced it, it's the most real thing there is.] ***You died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*** (NIV) We *already share* His glory, but it can't be seen. It's in the unseen invisible world. But when Christ appears in visible glory, then our glory too will be manifested. But already, we share it.

We died, our life is hid with Christ in God. Where Jesus is, we are.

Part 16 - Recapitulation

Over the past three weeks I've been showing you how this concept of identification is the key that opens up for us a full understanding of the purpose of the death of Jesus and so enables us to enter into all that He obtained for us through His death.

The New Testament consistently emphasizes that the death of Jesus was no accident. For example— speaking to the people of Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost after the Holy Spirit had descended and a crowd had gathered to find out what was taking place—Peter referred the crowd to Jesus. He spoke about His ministry, His life and His death. And in Acts chapter 2, verse 23 he said this of Jesus, ***“This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.”*** (NIV) You see the phrase there, ***“God’s set purpose and foreknowledge.”*** The death of Jesus was no accident. It was the fulfillment of the set purpose of God. What was God's set purpose in the death of Jesus? This is what we have been dealing with over the past three weeks. Let me recapitulate briefly at the beginning of this week the ground that we have covered over the past three weeks. The essence of what I've been saying is that the death of Jesus represented a divinely ordained exchange—the expression of God's infinite grace and mercy to the human race. By this exchange God made to *meet together* upon Jesus, on the cross, the rebellion of the whole human race, and then the punishment for the rebellion of the whole human race and all the evil consequences of that rebellion. So that when Jesus died on the cross He exhausted the curse of rebellion. He took upon *Himself* the *whole evil inheritance*. And as the last Adam, He put an end to that inheritance. When He died He made it possible for that inheritance to be terminated and for those who believed, to be *released* from that evil inheritance.

Now the other side of the identification is that through the death of Jesus, God has opened the way for you and me as believers to enter into all that Jesus entered into *after* death. Summed up briefly—that is *burial, resurrection and ascension*. The way is open for us to follow Him into all that. Just as He was first identified with us in our sin and all its consequences, so we are to be identified with Him in His resurrection and all its consequences. That's the second side of the coin—the opposite side of the exchange.

Let me briefly recapitulate this theme of identification in its two aspects. First of all, the identification of Jesus with us in our *sin*, our *desperate need*. There are seven specific aspects of this identification that we touched on in the previous two weeks and I will briefly enumerate them.

1. Jesus was ***punished*** that we might be ***forgiven***. Punishment came upon Him—forgiveness is offered to us.
2. Jesus was made sin as the sin offering that we might have His righteousness. He took our sinfulness that we might have His righteousness.
3. Jesus was made a ***curse*** that we might receive the ***blessing***. As Paul says in Galatians 3:13 and 14: ***“The Law says, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree.”*** When Jesus hung on the cross it was the outward visible evidence that He was taking the curse of the broken Law. He took the curse that we might have the blessing.

4. Jesus was **wounded**—physically—that we might be **healed**—physically. “*With His wounds,*” the Scripture says, “*we are healed.*”
5. Jesus became **poor** that we might be **rich**. On the cross He exhausted the poverty curse. The poverty curse is summed up in “*hungry, thirsty, naked and in want of all things.*” And on the cross Jesus exhausted that curse; He was hungry, He was thirsty, He was naked, He was in want of all things—that we might in return enter into the abundance that was His by right.
6. Jesus was **rejected** that we might be **accepted**. On the cross, in those last awful moments, He cried out to His Father and His Father did not answer His cry. He was left alone, rejected by men, forsaken by God. But He bore our rejection that we might have His acceptance. The Scripture says, “God has made us accepted in the Beloved.”
7. Seventh, and last, He tasted our **death** that we might have His **life**.

And then *our* identification with Jesus in four successive phases:

1. We are **buried** with Him in **baptism**. That’s the *meaning* of baptism. We share Jesus’ death. And then the expression of death, the evidence of death—burial by baptism. So we are buried with Him by baptism.
2. We’re made **alive** with Him. Just as He was made alive, we enter into that new life.
3. We are **resurrected** with Him. We come forth out of the tomb into a *totally* new life. We’ve passed from death into life.
4. This is something so many people overlook—we are **seated** with Him, we’re **enthroned** with Him. He takes us all the way up to the throne with Him and seats us there to share with Him His authority and His rule, both in this age and throughout the endless ages that are to follow.

I’ve been saying that we followed Jesus through death and burial; first into resurrection, and then into ascension. Through resurrection, the way has opened up for us to represent Jesus on earth just as He represented the Father. After He appeared after resurrection to His disciples, He breathed on them His own divine resurrection life. Then He said, “*As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.*” That’s a *brehtaking* statement. But it means that just as Jesus represented the Father on earth, so in turn through His resurrection life imparted to us, *we* are to represent *Him* on earth.

I pointed out three important aspects of the relationship between Jesus and the Father.

1. Jesus did not speak His own words. He spoke the words that the Father gave Him.
2. It was the Father in Jesus that did the miraculous works.
3. Seeing Jesus was equivalent to seeing the Father.

So when Jesus says, “*As My Father sent Me, so I am sending you,*” we have to apply those aspects of the relationship to our relationship with Jesus. And that means that we are not to speak the words of our own thinking, but we’re to speak the words that Jesus gives us. It’s not we who are to do the work, but Jesus dwelling in us who’s to do the work. And seeing us becomes equivalent to seeing Jesus. All that we enter into through identification with Jesus in His resurrection. But *beyond* that there is *ascension*. Not *only* are we resurrected, we are *ascended*. We’re *enthroned*! And through our enthronement, we share the two great ministries of Jesus on the throne as king and priest. We become a kingdom of priests. We share with Him the ruling of the universe. In Psalm 110 it says, “*The scepter of His strength* [or authority] *will go forth out of Zion.*” And in Hebrews 12 it says, “*We have come to the heavenly Zion.*”

So as we pray, as we are sharing Jesus’ authority and life with Him there on the throne. Through our prayers as priests, the rod of His authority goes out over the nations of the earth to bring them into subjection to the will of God. So we become a *kingdom of priests*. As kings, we rule. As priests, we offer the sacrifice of intercessions. And so through our prayer life we *rule the universe with Jesus!*

Now, of course, as I've outlined them today, these are tremendous truths. They stretch our power to believe and comprehend. That is true for every one of us. *We* could *never* have devised such a gospel. But you remember Paul said the gospel he preached was *not* devised by men. It wasn't on a human level. It originated with God. It's on a divine level. Every time we bring the gospel down to a human level, we misrepresent it.

These truths are tremendous, they're hard to believe, hard to comprehend, but they're real, and they really work in daily living. And this is going to be the theme of my talks now through the rest of this week. I'm going to be explaining to you in practical, simple language how you can make these glorious truths work in your own daily living. How you can enter into the resurrection life of Jesus. And how, moving even beyond His resurrection life, you can be seated with Him on the throne and learn to rule the universe with Him through your prayers.

Part 17 - The First Barrier: Ignorance

In my talk yesterday I emphasized that the death of Jesus on the cross was not an accident, but the fulfillment of a divine purpose, conceived in eternity, then worked out on the stage of human history. This divine purpose was worked out through a two-way identification, which is really the theme that I have been dealing with for the past three weeks, this theme of identification. A two-way identification. First, Jesus was identified with us in our sin and all its consequences. He became the sin offering, He became the last Adam. As a representative of the whole human race, He took upon Himself all the evil that was due to our entire race. That's the first side of the identification. Finally, He died our death. He tasted death for every man. Then the other side of the coin, the opposite side of identification: through faith in His death on our behalf we are invited to enter into all that followed for Him after death. That is, *burial*, which is baptism; then *resurrection*; and then *ascension to the very throne of God*. We're invited, actually, to share the throne with Jesus.

Now in my talks today and throughout the rest of this week, I'm going to explain just how you can make these truths work in your own daily living. It's one thing to hear them, it's one thing to say, "Amen," it's one thing to say, "That's wonderful!" but it's another thing, so to grasp these truths, that you can apply them and make them work in your daily living. That's what really matters and that's going to be the purpose and thrust of my talks throughout this week, how you can make these truths real in your own life.

I believe there are two great barriers that commonly keep God's people from their inheritance, from entering into all God has provided for us through the death of Jesus. These two great barriers are first, *ignorance* and second *unbelief*.

Today I'm going to deal with the first of these barriers, *the barrier of ignorance*. This is no new problem. The problem of ignorance already troubled God's people under the old covenant. Under the old covenant, too, God had made *total provision* for the needs of all His people that they might live in peace, in prosperity, in health, in joy and in thankful worship and praise to God. But because of ignorance, the majority of God's people never enjoyed God's provision. I'll just read you two passages from the prophets that emphasize this problem of ignorance. The first is in Isaiah 5:13, where God says, **"Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge . . ."** (KJV) They were living as captives, as slaves, as oppressed, when they should have been living as free, and ruling as kings with God. They had gone into a satanic captivity because they had no knowledge. And then the same thought in Hosea chapter 4 verse 6, where God says, **"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge . . ."** (NASB) So that was their initial basic problem, lack of knowledge. Lack of knowledge of God's Word, lack of knowledge of God's provision, lack of knowledge of how to live in God's provision.

Now this carries over into the New Testament. The same problem troubles God's people in the New Testament just as it did in the Old. The problem of ignorance, of lack of knowledge. I want to read the words of Paul in Colossians chapter 2, verses 1 through 4, where we can see he is struggling against this spiritual ignorance which is such a tremendous, almost universal problem to the people of God. He speaks about a struggle for them to come into the knowledge and understanding of what God has provided. This is what he says, **"I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ.** See, Paul's purpose there that they may have the full riches of complete understanding and that they may know the mystery, the hidden secret provision of God which is in Christ. And then Paul goes on to say of Christ, **in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.** We must continually bear in mind that all the treasures of God's wisdom and knowledge are contained in Jesus. We never need to look outside of Jesus. And Paul goes on to say, **"I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine sounding arguments.** (NIV) There's a lot of fine sounding language that's used from pulpits and in churches which sounds very good, sounds very learned, but it just doesn't open up for us the treasures of wisdom and knowledge which are hidden in Christ and so we are kept from our real inheritance. This was a problem in the time of Jesus and Jesus rebuked the teachers of the

law because they were not meeting the needs of God's people. In Luke 11:52, He says, "**Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key of knowledge. You yourselves have not entered and you have hindered those who were entering.**" (NIV) That's a terrible condemnation, but I'm afraid it's true of many who profess to interpret the truth of the gospel today. They have taken away the key of knowledge, they haven't entered in themselves, they're not living in the fullness of God's provision, and they actually hinder those who would try to enter in with their fine-sounding arguments and reasoning, all of which is not in line with the simple truth of the gospel of Jesus. They've taken away the key. What is the key? I believe the key is the *cross*. That's the only key that we can use to enter into the fullness of God's provision in Christ. If we don't avail ourselves of what Jesus accomplished for us on the cross, then we have no key. The treasures are there, but we can't enter it. And anyone who in any way takes away from the truths revealed in Scripture concerning the death of Jesus on the cross and its purpose, anyone who does that is taking away the key of knowledge and keeping God's people from their inheritance.

How then can we enter into this knowledge which is so essential? I believe the answer is simple and practical. *We must give ourselves to the study of God's Word.* The knowledge is contained in God's Word, the Bible. It is not contained anywhere else. There is no other book which is a substitute for the Bible.

I want to read to you three passages from the book of Proverbs which emphasize our need for this kind of knowledge. The first is in Proverbs, chapter 2, verses 1 through 6, and I want you to understand as I speak these words, the tremendous emphasis that these words place on making the appropriate effort to receive what God has for us in His Word. And these words are spoken to the child of God, by God Himself. They begin with the words, "**My son . . .: My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.**" (NIV) There's a tremendous build up of words, all of which indicate tremendous earnestness and concentrated effort to achieve this knowledge. There are eight successive phrases that are used:

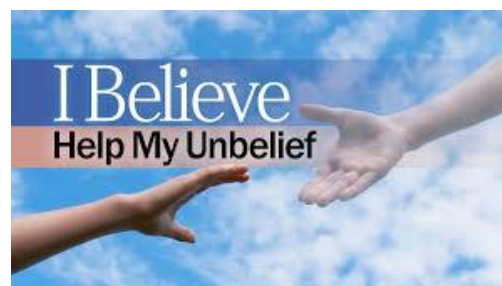
1. to accept
2. to store up
3. to turn your ear
4. to apply your heart
5. to call out
6. to cry aloud
7. to look for
8. to search for

In eight different ways God says, "If you're going to get this kind of knowledge, you're going to have to *devote* yourself with your *whole heart* to finding it. It's *in My Word*. It's *available*. You've got to get it." And then in the next chapter of Proverbs, Proverbs chapter 3, verses 1 and 2, again it's addressed to the child of God, "**My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity.**" (NIV) The emphasis there is not so much on acquiring as on retaining. The warnings are, "*Do not forget, but keep.*" How important that is! And then in the next chapter of Proverbs chapter 4, again the same emphasis. Proverbs 4:4–5, "**Lay hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands and you will live. Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget or swerve from them.**" (NIV) The language could hardly be more emphatic. Just note the words that are used. "*Lay hold — keep — get.*" Those are the positives. The negatives: "*Do not forget — do not swerve from.*" In other words, it's *all there in the Word of God*. It's *available*, but it's not granted to those who do not *apply* themselves. We have to *apply* our heart, we have to *turn our ear*, we have to *call out*, we have to *cry out*, we have to *look for*, we have to *search as for hidden treasure*. It's

something so precious and wonderful that God will make it available *only to those whose heart attitude is right*, to those who *earnestly seek Him*. The Scripture says in the New Testament, “**God is a rewarder of those who earnestly seek Him.**” It’s the *earnest* seeking of the truth of God’s Word, prizing it above all other forms of knowledge.

That’s the way into this inheritance of ours in Christ.

Part 18 - The Second Barrier: Unbelief



For the past three weeks, my talks have focused on the divinely ordained exchange that was accomplished through the death of Jesus, how God made to *meet together* upon Jesus as He hung on the cross the whole rebellion of an entire fallen race and all the evil consequences of that rebellion. How Jesus as the *last Adam* took them upon Himself, exhausted that evil inheritance and terminated it, so that through His death, by the opposite side of the exchange, we might enter into all that Jesus entered into after death: *burial, resurrection and ascension*. That we might *follow* Him through the womb of death into a new birth, into a new inheritance, into a new life, lived not only on the plane of resurrection on this earth, but even lifting us up to the plane of the throne of God to share the authority and the rule of Jesus as kings and priests.

Well, this week I'm focusing on the practical application of these truths, just how you can make them work in your own daily living. Yesterday I said that there were two great barriers, ignorance and unbelief. And I showed you how to overcome the first barrier, 'ignorance'. I showed you that the key is in the Word of God, in knowing the Word of God, in giving yourself without reservation, in crying aloud, in praying, in seeking God, in letting God write the truths of His Word on your heart until they're so real that they're *more real than the things you see around you*.

Now today I want to deal with the second great barrier which is *unbelief*. It's not enough to *know* the truth. We must also *believe* the truth. This is what the apostle John says in his first epistle, chapter 4 verse 16, "***And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us . . .***" (NASB) Notice, we have come to *know*, but that's not enough. We have also *believed* the love which God has for us. There are many people who know in theory that God loves them, but they've never really believed it as a reality for them personally. So, through knowledge we must move on into faith. We must not merely know, we must believe. If I could express it this way, knowledge puts the key into your hand, but it's faith that turns the key in the lock and opens up the treasure house of God's riches in Christ. So first you need knowledge, but together with that to make knowledge work, you need *faith*. And when this message of the divine exchange was first given through the prophet Isaiah, chapter 53 of Isaiah which we studied together in earlier weeks, the very first phrase of the message is a warning against unbelief. Isaiah begins that 53rd chapter, "***Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?***" Jesus is the arm of the Lord. He's God's strength. He's the way God comes to our help and provides for us. But to whom has that arm been revealed? *Only to those who believe*. So the barrier there is unbelief. And Isaiah warns us, "***Who has believed our message?***" You see, we need to understand that unbelief is a *sin*. So many Christians accept the condition of unbelief as if it's something a little unfortunate, a little regrettable, but, after all, I'll get by anyhow. You may, I don't promise you that you will. That's between you and God. But I want to tell you that God's Word tells you that *unbelief is a sin*. It's not just a harmless weakness. It's not just a failure of religious people. There are two passages in Hebrews chapter 3 that deal with this. In Hebrews 3:12, "***Take care, brethren lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God.***" (NASB) What kind of a heart is an unbelieving heart? It's an *evil heart*. It's not just a little weakness that we can accept. It's an evil that keeps us from what God has ordained for us. The same chapter of Hebrews, chapter 3 verse 19, speaking about Israel and their entrance into the inheritance that God had promised for them in the promised land, speaking about the generation that came out of Egypt, that never entered the promised land, Hebrews sums up the reason why they didn't enter in one very

short, terse phrase, ***“And so we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.”*** (NASB) What kept them out? *Unbelief!* What can keep us out of our inheritance in Christ? Precisely the same barrier: *Unbelief!* We have to overcome that barrier of unbelief. And today I’m going to explain to you very simply, and on the basis of personal experience, how you can overcome the barrier of unbelief. What then is the remedy for unbelief? It’s contained in one brief verse of the epistle to the Romans, chapter 10 verse 17, ***“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.”*** (NASB) Note, the opening phrase, *“Faith comes.”* If you don’t have faith, you can get it. I learned this from personal experience. In World War II as a soldier serving with the British forces in North Africa, I contracted a disease which the doctors, in that climate, apparently were not able to heal. And I lay in British military hospitals in Egypt as a patient just about one year. One year is a long time to spend in hospital. And as I lay there I wrestled through many spiritual battles and problems. One of the main problems was unbelief. I had just about a year previously come to know the Lord Jesus Christ in a very real and personal way. I’d come to accept the Bible as the Word of God. It was the only book I had with me, the only thing I had to read. And as I lay there, I knew enough of God’s power to be sure that God could heal me. And I believed that God would heal me *if I had faith*. And so over and over again I would say to myself, “I know God would heal me if I had faith.” But the next thing I would say to myself was, “But I *don’t have faith*.” And every time I said that I was in what John Bunyan calls “*The Slough of Despond*”—the dark valley of despair. And as I lay there in that dark valley, I think I tasted despair and loneliness as really as you could ever taste them. But one day a flash of light came into the darkness of that valley. That flash of light was contained in Romans 10:17: ***“So faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ.”*** As I read those words in the Bible open before me on my lap as I sat up in bed, I grasped those words, ***“Faith comes from hearing.”*** If you don’t have faith, *you can get it!* And I made up my mind at that moment that I would get faith, that I would hear, that I would focus on the Word of God, that I would listen to what God was saying with all my heart and with all my mind, until faith came. And I want to tell you that faith *did come*. Faith came through another passage of Scripture that I want to quote to you. It’s the passage that got me out of hospital. It’s the passage that got me out of that “Slough of Despond. And it’s such a perfect example of how faith comes, I want to quote it to you. It’s in Proverbs chapter 4, verses 20 through 22, ***“My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. For they [that’s God’s words and sayings] are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.”*** (KJV) And I saw as I read those words, “*... health to all their flesh*” - that’s the answer to my need. That’s a promise of complete healing and health for every part of my body. And I looked back and I saw the promise was in the words and sayings of God. If I could receive them aright they would provide healing and health for my *whole body*. And God showed me what it meant to receive them aright. He said, ***“Attend to my words; incline thine ear to my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.”***

There are four instructions:

1. Attend
2. incline (or bow down your ear, listen, be *humble*, be *teachable*)
3. let them not depart from thine eyes (*focus* your eyes on them, don’t look at *anything else* but the promises of God)
4. keep them in the midst of your heart (that’s *hearing*).

That’s what Paul calls hearing in Romans 10:17: ***“Faith comes by hearing, hearing by the word of Christ.”*** As we really hear the word of Christ, the message of what Jesus has done, as we close our ears to every source of unbelief, to everything that questions, to everything that criticizes, to everything that undermines, and as we listen with focused attention to what the Bible is saying to us about what Jesus has done on the cross, *faith comes*.

Now the good news is that God has no favorites. He didn’t do something special for me that he wouldn’t do for you. I simply discovered and met the conditions. God in His mercy showed me how faith comes. Faith comes to

anyone who meets those conditions. Faith will come to you just as it came to me. If you will make up your mind that you're going to *fasten your thoughts*, your *attention*, your *eyes*, your *ears*, on what God says in His Word. That's the *source of faith*. It's the *Word of Christ*. It's what God has *done* for us through Jesus Christ, ***"faith comes by hearing. . ."*** Don't be discouraged. Get out of that lonely valley of despair. Don't give way to unbelief.

"Faith comes by hearing."

Part 19 - Faith must Be Confessed

"Faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ." In my talk yesterday I related how I proved that in my own experience. After I'd lain sick in hospital for a year on end with a condition that doctors were unable to heal, I realized that if I listened to what God said in His Word and acted on it, faith would come, and *through faith God would heal me*. I met the conditions, God fulfilled His part and in due course, through that simple scriptural remedy I was *completely and permanently healed*.

Today I'm going to explain how our faith must be *expressed*. There's something else very important about faith that I'm going to deal with in my talk today. It's not enough just to *believe in your heart*. You must *express with your mouth what you believe in your heart*. Paul states this so clearly in Romans chapter 10, verses 8 through 10 where he says this, ***"But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach.*** In this passage, Paul deals with two things, the mouth and the heart and both of them have to cooperate before our faith becomes truly affective. He goes on to say in verse 9, ***"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, [or confess Jesus as Lord] and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."*** Notice there are two requirements for being saved. One is to believe in the heart, but the second is to confess with the mouth, to say it out with your mouth. All through this passage there's the cooperation with the heart and mouth. And then in the next verse, verse 10, Paul goes on, ***"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."*** Believing in the heart enables us to achieve righteousness, but it does not bring us into the fullness of salvation. That is only achieved as we confess with our mouth what we believe in our heart. There are two words that we need to understand, confession and salvation. Each of them has a specific and important meaning. To confess means "to say the same as." Therefore confession, in this sense, means that we, with our mouth, say the same as God says in His Word. We make the words of our mouth agree with the Word of God. God's Word doesn't change. So if there are any changes needed, they're going to be in us, not in the Word. We've got to make the *words of our mouth agree with the written Word of God*. That's confession.

And then the word salvation, it's one glorious, all-inclusive word for all the benefits that Jesus has obtained for us through His death. The very thing we're talking about. Salvation covers:

1. the forgiveness of sins
2. the gift of eternal life
3. the healing of your physical body
4. deliverance from demon power
5. the preserving power of God to keep you in every situation in life.

It's all wrapped up in one glorious word, SALVATION. Just to reduce salvation to having your sins forgiven is to whittle it down in a way that Scripture does not justify. Salvation is the full, inclusive provision of God for us through the death of Jesus Christ, the very thing we're talking about, our inheritance. Now, to enter into our inheritance we have to confess with our mouth. *Confession is made unto salvation*. The suggestion is progress. You start by having your sins forgiven, by receiving the gift of eternal life. And as you go on confessing with your mouth everything that God says in His Word, you move into the fullness of God's complete salvation which covers every area of your life, the whole of time and the whole of eternity, and all of which is made available to

us on the basis of the death of Jesus Christ. We need to understand that Jesus has a ministry in heaven which is very important and is often overlooked. In heaven, Jesus is our High Priest. He represents us directly to God the Father, but He's the High Priest of our confession. He only can minister as High Priest on our behalf when we make the right confession with our mouths on earth. If we say the wrong thing or if we say nothing about our faith, then we tie the hands of Jesus as our High Priest. He loves us, He wants to bless us. But He cannot do all that He would like to because we have not made the right confession.

Listen to what it says in Hebrews chapter 3, verse 1, ***"Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession."*** (NASB) So you see, we're told to fix our eyes on Jesus and think of Him as the High Priest of our confession. So if we want His High Priestly ministry on our behalf, making effective the promises of God's Word and the provision of His atonement, *we have to make the right confession*. It's confession that releases His ministry as High Priest on our behalf.

And then in the next chapter of Hebrews, chapter 4 and verse 14 the writer says again, ***"Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession."*** (NASB) That's an important word, *"hold fast."* If they say to you in some situation, "Fasten your seat belt," it's a kind of warning that there's going to be motion and you may need to be firmly held in your seat. And so when the Bible says, *"Hold fast your confession,"* it's really a kind of warning you're going to be subjected to pressures that might cause you to back off what you've said. But *don't* back off, hold fast your profession or confession, it's the same word. So first, we make the right confession, we make the words of our mouth agree with the words of Scripture. We say about what Jesus has done for us exactly what the Word of God says. We say, ***"By His stripes we are healed . . . He became poor that we might be rich . . . He tasted death that we might have life . . . He took the curse that we might receive the blessing. . . ."*** That's the right confession. We make it and then *no matter what pressures come against us*, no matter how much things may seem to go the wrong way, we hold fast our confession. That's what makes our faith effective and that's what *releases* the High Priestly ministry of Jesus on our behalf in heaven.

There's one more important thing that I need to say in this talk today about faith. It's simple but very important. *Faith relates us to what our senses cannot perceive*. As long as we are the *slaves of our senses* we really cannot move in faith. Paul says this clearly in 2 Corinthians 5:7, ***" . . . for we walk by faith, not by sight..."*** (NASB) In other words, what we do as Christians, the way we live is based on faith, on what we believe, not on what we see, not on what our senses tell us. Because our senses may tell us one thing, our faith may tell us another, and that's where we come into conflict. We *all* come into conflict. There's no exception. That's why the writer of Hebrews says, *"Make your confession"* and then *"hold it fast."* Even if your senses tell you it isn't so, if God's Word says it is so, *it is so*. The same truth about the tension between faith and the revelation of the senses is contained in Hebrews chapter 11, the great faith chapter. Let me read two verses there, 1 and 3, ***"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."*** You see, faith is a *strong persuasion*, a *conviction*, something *unshakable*. But it relates, not to what we see, but to things that are not seen. And then in the third verse of that chapter, ***"By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible."*** (NASB) Again, notice, *through faith* we understand. That's so important. We don't understand and *then* believe. We believe and through believing we understand. *Through faith* we come to understand that the great, eternal, underlying reality behind the whole visible created universe is the invisible Word of God. The universe was made by the Word of God, so that everything that is seen was made out of something that is not seen, the invisible Word of God. Now faith does not relate us to the visible world. We don't need faith to relate us to the visible world. We have five senses to do that. But faith relates us to that invisible word which is the word of eternal unchanging truth, the truth that is behind the whole visible world. So in faith, we relate to something that brought the visible world into being. And if we hold onto that faith, that faith will bring the visible world, that which the senses reveal to us, into line with what we believe.

I want to say that what the senses reveal is not unreal. But it's *impermanent*. It can *change*. What faith perceives is *unchangeable*. It's *eternal*. So we are walking by faith, not by the senses. We believe what God says and that brings what our senses show us *into line with what God says*.

So we walk by faith, not by sight.

Part 20 - The Romans Recipe

In yesterday's talk I shared two important facts about faith:

1. Faith must be confessed with the mouth
2. Faith relates us to what our senses cannot perceive.

We walk by faith, not by sight. There's a tension.

Today I'm going to sum up and conclude my talks on the theme of identification by giving you what I call "*the Romans Recipe*." I use the word 'recipe' deliberately. It suggests to us a housewife with her cookbook, planning to make a cake or something else to eat. I wish that we Christians could use the Bible in such a simple and practical way as a housewife uses her cookbook. If we would, we'd find that God's recipes *always work*. They *always* produce just exactly what God says they will produce. So today, I'm going to talk about the Romans Recipe, in other words; God's way to make these truths work in our lives that we've been discussing for the past three weeks or more. This Romans Recipe is found in Romans chapter 6, verses 1 through 14. I'm going to read those 14 verses straight off and then I'm going to go back over them and show you in a simple way just how they help you to make these truths work in your life.

Romans 6 beginning at verse 1, ***"What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that 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. If we have been united with him in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer is mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace."*** (NIV) That's a tremendous statement, that final statement, "*sin shall not be your master.*" Sin is no longer going to dominate you and control you. There's a way of deliverance from sin and all its evil consequences. And that way is through our identification with Jesus Christ in *death, burial, resurrection* and *ascension*.

Now I'll go back and briefly point out to you the successive phases of this Romans Recipe that I've read out to you from God's divine cookbook, the Scriptures. First of all, we notice at the beginning of that passage the successive points of identification. Verse 1 says, ***"We died to sin."*** When did we die to sin? When *Jesus* died. That was our death. He died, we identify ourselves with His death. Verse 6 says it again, ***"Our old self was crucified."*** When did *that* happen? When *Jesus* was crucified, our old self, that rebel that lives inside every one of us, inherited from Adam, that old rebel was crucified when Jesus was crucified. Second, it says we were *buried* with Him. How? By *baptism into His death*. So we not only die with Him, we are *buried* with Him. And

then verses 4 and 5 it says: ***“We are also united with Him in resurrection.”*** Following Him through death and burial, we move out into His resurrection life. We *share* His life with Him. Then the next section, verses 6 through 8, tells us the practical successive consequences of this identification with Jesus in death, burial and resurrection. Verse 6, it says, ***“The body of sin is rendered powerless.”*** That old, corrupt, evil nature which enslaved us, which made us do the wrong thing even, many times, against our desire to do the right thing, that body of sin is rendered powerless. It no longer has power. Why? It’s been *crucified*! It’s been *put to death*! The next consequence. We are no longer *slaves* to sin. *The most terrible slavery in the universe is the slavery to sin!* Being compelled by sin to do things you don’t want to do, things which are harmful, things which are destructive, things which will ultimately bring tremendous disasters upon you, both in time and ultimately even in eternity. That’s the *slavery of sin*. But through this identification with Jesus we come to the place where we are *no longer slaves of sin*! And the next consequence, verse 7, says we are free from sin. More literally, we are *justified*. We are acquitted. Jesus *paid the final penalty for our sin*. When that final penalty is paid, there’s *no more penalty to pay*! There’s *no more condemnation*! We’re *not even guilty*! We’re not merely released from the *power* of sin, we’re released from the *guilt* of sin. *We have a good conscience*! We can stand, even, before the throne of Almighty God *without fear*! We’re *acquitted*! We’re *justified*! Christ’s righteousness has become *our* righteousness because first of all He was made sin with *our* sinfulness. And then the final consequence in verse 8, ***“We will live with Christ.”*** What tremendous words. We will share His eternal resurrection life. In that He died, He died once to sin. He can’t die again. Now He lives forever to God, and we enter into that eternal life that Christ lives toward God. We share His eternal resurrection life.

The third part of this Romans Recipe is found in verses 11 through 13. This is the practical ‘how-to’. This is where I want you to focus your attention with me now for the remainder of this talk. There are five steps in this ‘how-to’ as outlined by Paul.

In verse 11, ***“count yourself dead.”*** Believe it, *reckon* yourself dead, the Bible says you’re dead, *believe* you’re dead. *Talk* about yourself as dead. That’s what Paul did. He said, ***“I’m crucified with Christ, but nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me.”*** So he *counted* himself dead. He saw Christ’s crucifixion and death as his *own* crucifixion and death. Not merely did he think that way, but as I pointed out yesterday, he *talked* that way. He *reckoned* it true. He reckoned himself dead, but also alive. You have to do the same. Count, believe, reckon yourself dead and also alive.

Steps two and three are negative, “Do not let sin reign in your body,” and the next, “Do not offer the parts of your body to sin.” There is a very important negative in this recipe. You must *not* yield to sin. Before, you couldn’t *help* yielding to sin. Now you have the *choice*. There’s a power in you that’s *greater* than sin. You’ve been *liberated*, you’ve been justified. But you *still have to exercise your will*. When *sin* comes, when *temptation* comes, you have to say a *firm* and *final* ***“NO! NO, I WILL NOT! I WILL NOT YIELD MY BODY! I WILL NOT YIELD MY MEMBERS! I HAVE BEEN FREED, I BELONG TO JESUS. I’M LIVING JESUS’ LIFE AND SIN, YOU HAVE NO MORE POWER OVER ME. I DO NOT YIELD TO YOU! SATAN, I DO NOT YIELD TO YOU.”***

You know, one thing I’ve learned by experience about the devil? He *knows* when you mean it. And when you really say it and mean it, he’ll leave you alone. But if he thinks he’s got any chance of persuading you just temporarily to change your mind, he’ll keep on bothering you. This is the way we recultivate our will which has been weakened and enslaved by sin. It’s by saying, ***“NO!” NO TO SIN, NO TO SATAN. “SATAN, YOU CAN’T HAVE MY BODY, YOU CAN’T HAVE THE PARTS OF MY BODY.”***

And then the next two, the last two steps in this recipe, the positive ones, steps four and five: *offer yourself to God*. You can’t remain an independent agent and be free from sin. That’s not a choice that’s valid. You have to *choose* whether you’ll serve Satan or whether you’ll serve God. Delivered from the service of Satan, you have to *offer yourself as a sacrifice to God*. In Romans 12 Paul says, ***“Present your body as a living sacrifice to God. . . .”*** Give yourself *totally*, all you are and all you have, present it to God. Hold *nothing* back. And then he says, ***“Offer the parts of your body to God.”*** Yield every part of your body to God for Him to use it as *He* wants for *His* glory.

And then this glorious promise which is the result, that which the recipe promises to accomplish, “***Sin shall not be your master.***” You will be set *free* from the *shame*, the *degradation*, the *agony*, *all the evils that sin brings*, you’ll be *delivered from them* if you follow this Romans Recipe, ***if you’ll work through your identification with Jesus in death, burial and resurrection!***