



MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, & REMARRIAGE

[COURSE COMMENTARY]



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Course Requirements

- 1) Read Course Commentary
- 2) Take Mid Term Exam
- 3) Take Final Exam
- 4) Submit Exams & Paper to Dr. Gray @ graceESBS@bellsouth.net
- 5) Dr. Gray will email you your Course Grade

MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND REMARRIAGE IN BIBLICAL THOUGHT

The subject of Divorce and Remarriage is perhaps one of the most volatile subjects under discussion in the church today. Few, if any, do not have an opinion on the subject of Divorce and Remarriage. Dr. Craig S. Keener, in his book *...AND MARRIES ANOTHER*, states that the subject of Divorce and Remarriage is “both a pressing issue” and “one that much of the church of Jesus Christ has failed to address responsibly.”¹ This remains just as hot an issue today as it was then.

Why does Divorce and Remarriage remain such a controversial subject today? In the opinion of this student, it is due to three primary reasons. The first reason is that of lack of knowledge regarding the subject. The second reason is the misinformation that has been put out by those who oppose divorce and remarriage for any reason. The third reason is fear. Fear is often brought on by the first two reasons. People tend to fear people or things that they do not understand. People today are often ignorant of what scripture has to say on the subject.

There are at least four distinct questions concerning Divorce: Is divorce allowed by scripture? If divorce is allowed, under what circumstances? Can divorced persons remarry within the church? Can persons who are divorced and/or remarried serve in leadership within the church? May a divorced and/or remarried minister continue to serve as a pastor or other ministerial staff of a local church?

The purpose of this course is to clear up some of the misconceptions concerning Divorce, Remarriage and even Marriage. Because a better understanding of Marriage and God’s Grace and Love might just reduce the number of divorces. So, early on in this course we will be looking at what Holy Scripture says about marriage.

One cannot be a person of faith or integrity on this subject or any other for that matter, without a through biblical understanding of the topic. A large percentage of people seem to think Divorce and Remarriage makes one a second-class citizen in God's Kingdom, at least that is how divorced persons are often feel and are treated!² 'If the Church is going to use the Bible to decide whether divorce is legitimate in certain cases and whether divorced couples have the right to remarry with the approval and blessing of God's people, then the Bible must be studied without prejudice toward a particular answer.'³

¹ Craig S. Keener, ...*AND MARRIES ANOTHER* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991) 1.

² *Ibid*, rear cover.

³ Jay E. Adams, *MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND REMARRIAGE IN THE BIBLE* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980) rear cover.

Chapter One: Current And On Going Problems In The Church

The problem of divorce and/or remarriage is one of the most difficult issues that face today's church. The practice of divorce & remarriage is not a rare or isolated event in the history of the Church, so why is it such a problem for the church? Not because there is not clear scriptural teaching on the subject, but because of confusion and ignorance of what the scriptures have to say on the topic. Many in the church today have failed to adequately and responsibly address the issue. Too often it is much easier to cite certain proof texts, pass judgment and ignore the horrible and tragic character of divorce. For some it is simply far more convenient to ignore the situation because it is too messy an issue to deal with.⁴

Many loving, compassionate and Godly people have been wounded by spouses they trusted only to be wounded again by fellow Christians, who do not know what to do with them or how to respond. In some circumstances and in some churches, they would receive some level of support. While in another church with the exact same circumstances would be shunned. While in another church because of a person's position or financial contribution, it is completely ignored even if immorality is involved.⁵

At best, the response of the church is far too often confused. At worst, it is mean spirited and totally lacking in a sound scriptural response.

⁴ Keener, 1.

⁵ Adams. viii – ix.

Chapter Two: Marriage In Holy Scripture

The subject of divorce and remarriage cannot be reasonably discussed without including a through discussion of marriage. Contrary to popular thought, marriage is not principally a human experience. Marriage is of divine origin. It was not devised by man as a convenient way to sort out responsibility for children, etc. God himself tells us that He himself established, instituted, and ordained marriage.⁶

God designed marriage to be the foundational element of all human society. He did this before there was a church, a school or a business in existence. God instituted marriage by speaking the words, “For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.”⁷ But since God instituted marriage, *only* He has the right to set it aside. If marriage were of human origin, then humans would have the right to set one aside in favor of another, neither can marriage be subject to any human whim. Marriage (including individual marriages) is subject to the rules and regulations that God himself decreed. If God had said nothing further after establishing marriage we could proceed to set up our own rules to govern marriage. But God did not leave us in the dark. God revealed his will for marriage in the scriptures. Individuals may marry, divorce, and remarry without sin only as God has commanded. We must therefore study the scriptures to determine what the regulations are as well as the purpose for marriage.⁸ Now let us take a look at the purpose of marriage. There are a number of views on the purpose of marriage. Roman Catholics and some Protestants view the purpose of marriage as the propagation of the human race. While God did ordain that procreation is a duty of marriage (“Be fruitful, and multiply”) and only with in marriage, procreation is not the fundamental purpose of marriage.⁹

⁶ Adams, 3.

⁷ Genesis 2:24 NASB.

⁸ Adams, 3-4.

⁹ Ibid, 5.

To maintain the view of marriage as biologically necessary to procreation is nonsense and only serves to confuse the issue. In particular this view confuses marriage with mating. The human race could (like most animals) propagate itself quite effectively without the institution of marriage. Ghettos in which marriages are weak, if they exist at all, grow quite a lot from mating totally unconnected with marriage. The propagation of the race is but a sub-purpose of marriage. Without the institution of marriage, human beings would be even more prolific than they are currently.¹⁰

Another important thing to understand about marriage is that it should not be equated with sexual relations. A sexual union is not (as some who study the scriptures carelessly think) to be equated with a marriage union. Marriage is a union that does imply that sexual union is an obligation and as well as a pleasure (1 Cor. 7:3-5). Marriage is different from, larger than, and inclusive of sexual union (just as it is inclusive of the obligation to propagate the race) but the two are not the same. So, sexual union is yet another sub-purpose of marriage.¹¹

If marriage and sexual union were one and the same, then the bible could not speak of illicit sexual intercourse. Adultery would no longer be adultery, but rather informal bigamy (or perhaps polygamy). The bible does however speak of sexual sin outside of marriage. Through out the scriptures, marriage is referred to as something distinct from and other than sexual union. In addition, the words marriage and fornication (*porneia*, which means any and all sexual sin) cannot be equal.¹²

Marriage authorizes sexual relations. So, the honeymoon union is proper for a young couple because they are already married. Their union is already consummated at the marriage ceremony when the minister, priest or rabbi proclaims them husband and wife (otherwise he would be lying). Sexual relations

¹⁰ Ibid, 5.

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ibid

per say do not make a marriage nor does it break a marriage. Divorce following adultery is merely the consequence of and the formalization of an inner reality that has occurred. But divorce also does not have to occur. If forgiveness is sought and given then the marriage can continue.¹³

The point here is that sexual relations do not constitute a marriage. This understanding is absolutely essential to any proper understanding of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Marriage is much larger than simply sexual relations. If marriage is not to be equated with sexual relations or with the propagation of the human race then we must continue to look for the answer elsewhere. So, what is the answer to this all-important question?¹⁴

To find the answer to this question we must look to one of the primary bases of God's relationship with man. It is the concept of covenant. The very essence of marriage is a Covenant of Companionship. God made most of us so that we would be lonely without an intimate companion to live. God provided Eve not merely (or primarily) as Adam's helper (though help is one dimension of companionship), but as his companion.¹⁵

In the Bible marriage is often described in terms of companionship. In the book of Proverbs, for example we are told that the woman "That leaves the companion of her youth, and forget the covenant of her God;"¹⁶ The word translated companion conveys the idea of "one that has a close, intimate relationship with another." Companionship, at least in part, involves closeness.

The concept of marriage as companionship also appears in Malachi, where a different, but quite complementary, term is used:

"...the Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid, 6-7.

¹⁵ Ibid, 11.

¹⁶ Proverbs 2:17 NASB

youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.”¹⁷

The word here translated “companion” has at its core the idea of union or association. A companion, is therefore, one with whom one person enters into a close union (or relationship) with another person. In putting the two terms together we come to the full understanding of the idea of companionship. A companion is one with whom you are very intimately united in thoughts, goals, plans, efforts (and in the case of marriage, in bodies).¹⁸

These two passages, together, make it quite clear that for both husband and wife, companionship is the ideal. In Proverbs, the husband is referred to as the companion (showing that he also provides companionship for his wife). While in the book of Malachi, it is the wife that is called companion. For both then, entering into the Covenant of Marriage should mean the desire to meet each others need for companionship. Love, with in the marriage relationship, focuses on the giving to one’s spouse the companionship that he or she needs.

¹⁷ Malachi 2:14 NASB

¹⁸ Ibid, 11-12

Chapter Three: Biblical Attitude Toward Divorce

Contrary to the attitude of some, the concept of divorce is biblical. Certain provisions are made for divorce in scripture. There must be no ambiguity on this, no hesitation and clearly affirmation on this point to enter in to a biblical discussion on divorce and therefore to understand fully God's position on the topic. Because divorce is a biblical concept that is referred to and used in the teachings of scripture, Christians should do all they can to understand it and to apply the biblical principles to it and to teach what God has to say about this issue in His word.

There are some, unfortunately, whose concept of divorce is, (if you follow their line of thinking) you would conclude, that the bible makes no provision for divorce, but (rather) only condemns and renounces it. They would lead one to believe that the bible says nothing even remotely positive about divorce. Yet this would be to ignore Joseph, a just man, who was not condemned for wanting to divorce Mary. So, it would seem that there is more to the question of divorce than some think.¹⁹

To begin with, we need to clear up the misconception that the bible is silent on the subject of divorce. Far from being silent on the subject of divorce, scripture regulates it by telling us under what circumstances it may occur without condemnation.

While God says emphatically "I hate divorce" (Mal. 2:16), that statement cannot and should not be taken to mean, that there is nothing about divorce that is not detestable, because as shocking as it is to some, God, Himself tells us:

¹⁹ Ibid, 23

“And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce,”²⁰

If God believed He must enter into divorce proceedings against Israel, then it is surely wrong to condemn any and all divorce out of hand. Obviously from this passage (and Matthew 1) it is certain that sometimes, in some ways, divorce, for some persons, under some circumstances, is altogether proper and not condemned by God.²¹

For those who are considered the injured party in divorce, they should take comfort in the Jeremiah passage. To think that God is divorced and felt that He had no other choice but to divorce Israel. This should bring them to a place of identification with God that they had not previously known. Just as it does with human people who have been in a situation such as alcoholism or drug addiction, someone who has been there has instant credibility with someone going through the same thing. So, God’s words, in the scriptures, on the subject should receive an instant hearing on the topic of divorce. God knows because He has been there!

So, now that we have the biblical attitude toward divorce, what is divorce? If we go back to our earlier definition of marriage as being a Covenant of Companionship, then divorce is the formal repudiation and breaking of the Covenant of Companionship. Just as the marriage covenant is entered into formally and contractually, when separation does not occur by death, so must divorce be by a formal act. By obliterating these obligations, divorce is intended to free the parties of this obligation so they can enter into this relationship with someone else.²²

²⁰ Jeremiah 3:8, NASB

²¹ Adams, 23.

²² Ibid, 32-33

Chapter Four: The Biblical Concept of Divorce

When looking at biblical teaching on divorce, there are two passages that are most often looked at for a proper biblical perspective and they cannot be neglected here. The passages are Matthew 5:32 and I Corinthians 7: 12-17.

As we have already seen, God did not institute divorce, but He does regulate it. While God hates divorce, not as a process but because of its devastating consequences and its sinful causes. Though all divorces, in one way or another, are caused by sin, not all divorces are sinful. For example, as we have seen previously, God divorced Israel and since God does not sin and no sin is found in Him, therefore all divorces are not sinful.²³

Now let us turn to the Exceptional Clause in Matthew, Chapters 5 and 19 in which Jesus made it plain that there is one ground on which believers might divorce a spouse—fornication (or sexual sin). But, in this case no requirement to divorce is laid down. We must note at the outset that Jesus acknowledged one and only one, ground for divorce among believers: *porneia*, meaning fornication or sexual sin.

In understanding fully this passage of scripture, we must be aware of some of the background to Matthew's Gospel. It was written to a primarily Jewish audience. Also, the reader must understand that there was considerable controversy with in the Jewish community concerning the subject of divorce. This is seen both in scripture and non-biblical sources.²⁴ There were two principle schools of thought with in the Jewish community: the schools of Hillel and Shammai. The school of Shammai held to the position of a man divorcing his wife only on the grounds of adultery. The school of Hillel held the view that a man could divorce his wife “even if she should burn a cup of soup...” The school of Shammai was dominate

²³ Adams, 51.

²⁴ Ibid, 51.

during the time of Jesus, but by the end of the first century, Hillel had become the dominate school of thought.²⁵

Matthew is careful to include this exceptional clause because he wants to restrict divorce among believers. In contrast to the fears of some today, who think that divorce for any reason other than fornication (or adultery) is seen as a serious loosening of Christian morals, Matthew saw the inclusion of this exceptional clause in exactly the opposite light. In pointing out Christ's only exception, he knew that this would have a tightening effect on morality within the church. It is quite instructional to see that Matthew's inclusion of the passage that follows (Matthew 19:10ff) demonstrates just this type of response by the disciples (who would presumably be representative of society as they came from all walks of life):

“The disciples said to Him, ‘If the relationship of the man to his wife is like this, it is better not to marry.’”²⁶

It is quite obvious that the one-and-only exception, in the culture of the time, was a severe restriction upon divorce practices.²⁷

The two passages that state the exceptional clause (see Matt 5:32 & Matt. 19:9) read slightly differently, but the basic intent is the same (Both passages use the Greek word *porneia* meaning fornication or sexual sin.). Jesus would seem to have been far more in more in sympathy with the school of Shammai than that of Hillel.

Rightly Dividing The Word

The reason I say “would seem to be” is because there is a lot of confusion and wrong believing in the church today. This is because many Christians read their Bibles without rightly dividing the old and new covenants. They don't realize that

²⁵ Keener, 38-39.

²⁶ Matthew 12:10, NASB

²⁷ Adams, 52.

even some of the words which Jesus spoke in the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) are part of the old covenant. They were spoken before the cross as He had not yet died. The new covenant only begins after the cross, when the Holy Spirit was given on the day of Pentecost.

I know that our Bibles are divided into the Old Testament and the New Testament, which begins with the four gospels. However, it is important to realize that the cross made a difference! Some of what Jesus said before the cross and what He said after the cross were spoken under completely different covenants. You also need to see who Jesus was speaking to. At times, He was speaking to the Pharisees, who boasted in their perfect law-keeping. Which is who He is speaking to in the passages under discussion. With them, Jesus brought the law to its pristine standard, such that it was impossible for any man to keep.²⁸

“But Dr. Charles, I believe that we should do everything that Jesus said!”

My dear brother or sister, Jesus said, “If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you... And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.”⁵ Have you done that?

Do you think that Jesus expects us to do all that, or does He want us to rightly divide the Word, and understand who He was speaking to in that passage and what He meant? If the church were to obey everything that Jesus said in that passage, then it would look like a huge amputation ward! (I hope that I don’t hear you saying, “Dr. Charles, you should have preached this sermon earlier — I have already plucked out one eye and severed one arm!”)

Jesus said all that to bring the law back to its pristine standard, a standard that ensured that no man could keep the law. He said all that so that man would come to the end of depending on himself and begin to see that he desperately needs a

²⁸ Prince, *Destined to Reign*, p. 92-93.

savior. So when we read the words of Jesus in the four gospels, it is necessary for us to rightly divide the Word and understand who Jesus was speaking to.²⁹

Now let us look at the exceptional clause, the other major passage concerning divorce. It is clear by the words of Paul in I Corinthians 7:12-17 that there were areas related to divorce that Jesus did not address. In verse 12 Paul says,

“But to the rest I say, not the Lord...”

By this statement we have seen previously in this chapter (v 6) that Paul does not mean an uninspired or without authority opinion, but rather “I am about to take up an issue that Jesus did not address.” Many have assumed (including myself) that Paul was offering an opinion rather than saying he was about to discuss an issue not previously dealt with.³⁰

In chapter 7 Paul had previously dealt with other related issues. He had dealt with the widowed and unmarried (v 8 & 9), with married Christians (10 & 11) and now he speaks “to the rest.” Paul addresses some related issues (or circumstances) that the church previously did not have guidance to deal with. The first of these: Is it permissible for a believer to divorce, who is married to an unbeliever? This issue seems to have arisen because as the church spread to the Mediterranean world you would have a husband or wife accepting Christ while their spouse did not or in some cases steadfastly refused to do so. One of the questions put to Paul would seem to have been, Should the believer divorce the unbelieving spouse? Paul made it quite clear that the believer should remain married to the unbeliever if the unbeliever wished to maintain the relationship. That is if the unbeliever consents to live under the same roof and set themselves aside for an exclusive conjugal relationship with his or her spouse. Then the believer cannot break the marriage simply because of the unbelief of the spouse. The purpose of this was two-fold. First, for the sake of the children, the family should remain together so that the

²⁹ Ibid, p. 93.

³⁰ Ibid, 45.

believer might influence their children towards Christ. Second, for the sake of the unbeliever, the believing spouse might be a witness to the unbelieving spouse. So that they one day might be united in Christ. Paul also instructed them to only marry a believer.³¹

Paul then takes up the issue of: What should the believer do if the unbelieving spouse leaves? Paul's response is straight to the point and very simple, *let them leave*. Paul is a bit more eloquent. He responds simply:

“Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace.”³²

There are two interesting things to note here. First, the believer is not under bondage. They are then free to remarry without sin. Second, the believer is to allow the unbeliever to depart and to not have conflict with them. They are to be at peace with the unbeliever and allow them to depart.²⁹

Finally, Paul takes up the issue of What if a believer is abandoned by an unbelieving spouse? This is answered by 1 Corinthians 7:15. It is simply an extension of the unbeliever wishing to depart. In this case, the unbeliever moves out with no advance notice or simply disappears one day without a word. The believer is not under bondage in such cases. They may remarry without sin. In addition, adultery also comes into play, because abandonment is equal to adultery. There would be those who would ask What if the one who deserted the marriage did not commit adultery? It is very unlikely that an unbeliever would desert the believing spouse and not commit fornication or proceed to remarry. There is a difference between an adulterous spouse and a spouse who deserts the marriage partner. In the case of adultery, the innocent spouse can forgive and continue to live with such a spouse. In the case of desertion, the possibility of maintaining the marriage is taken away.³³

³¹ Spiros Zodhiates, *May I Divorce and Remarry?* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers) 129-140, 147.

³² 1 Cor. 7:15, NASB

³³ Zodhiates, 150-151.

When a Christian is forsaken by an unbelieving spouse, one should find great comfort in the fact that this has come as a result of one's living faith in Christ. It is good to remember that the union with Christ has brought about an eternal marriage which has become the reason for breaking an earthly marriage. A person who goes through such an experience can truly say with Paul: "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time (even desertion by my own husband or wife) are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18)³⁴

³⁴ Ibid, 153

Chapter Five: Remarriage In Biblical Thought

We have looked at the biblical teachings regarding marriage and divorce. Now let us look at the subject of remarriage. This issue, like divorce, is complex and controversial, and emotionally charged.

We are often told that you may only remarry if your spouse dies. The story changes, often from one of support to outright condemnation when it comes to a divorced person remarrying, even when adultery is involved. Many say that the New Testament says nothing positive about remarriage for divorced persons. This simply is not true. In I Corinthians 7:27-28a we read:

“Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife. But if you should marry, you have not sinned;” --- I Corinthians 7:27-28a NASB

There are several points regarding this passage that should be noted:

1. The word translated “released” in both instances is the same word, *luo*.
2. To be *released* from a wife in the second instance must mean what it does in the first or the intended contrast that is set up would be lost.
3. It is plain that divorce is in view in both circumstances. Clearly, when Paul says that one must not *seek* to be released from a wife he doesn’t mean by death! The release in view can mean only one thing—release by divorce. So too, the release in the second instance must refer to release from the bonds of marriage by divorce.
4. Paul allows for the remarriage of those released from marriage bonds (i.e. divorced) even in time of severe persecution when marriage, in general, is discouraged (v. 28).

5. And, in addition, he affirms that there is no sin in remarrying.³⁵

It is important to understand that the position of those who hold that under no circumstances whatever may a divorced person remarry, is totally unwarranted. This passage of scripture is fatal to that view. The scriptures contradict it by affirming just the opposite. There is no doubt that the Bible allows the remarriage of some divorced persons (and not just those described in Matthew 5, 19, etc.)³⁶

The question must be put more sharply. To call sin, what God has said is not sin (v. 28), whether one is cognizant of it or not, is a serious error that cannot be ignored or lightly passed over. This in effect, is to place the traditions of men (no matter how well intentioned they may be) above the Word of God by adding restrictions to it that God Himself has not required us to bear. This can (and often does) cause confusion, unrest, and division with in Christ's church.³⁷

Now let us turn our attention to the question of: Who may remarry after divorce and under what conditions. Put simply, all persons who were properly divorced may remarry. That is what I Corinthians 7:27-28a teaches and this in full agreement with I Corinthians 7:15 in which one who is divorced according to biblical provisions stated there is free and no longer bound. If he is free, he is free to remarry.³⁸

But you may also ask the question "Can I remarry my former spouse?" If the other person has Re-married, you cannot re-marry them. This would be breaking up another marriage!

"When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house, and

³⁵ Adams, 84.

³⁶ Ibid, 84-85.

³⁷ Ibid, 85.

³⁸ Ibid, 86.

she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man's wife, and if the later husband turns against her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her to be his wife, then her former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance.”

---Deuteronomy 24:1-4 NAS

Chapter Six: The Main Clause of The New Covenant

You have done it now! You have committed the “unpardonable sin”. You got a divorce! Have you heard this “unpardonable sin” teaching before? Whether it has been openly taught from the pulpit, or just through the actions of others, this is often taught in churches and all too often in our families as well.

This erroneous teaching says that all sins can be forgiven, but if you commit the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:31), there is no forgiveness. That’s how this sin came to be known as the “unpardonable sin”. My conscience was very sensitive and the more I thought about the possibility of committing the unpardonable sin, the more I was convinced that I had committed that sin! My thoughts became increasingly negative and I even started to doubt God. This gave me even more reason to believe that I had indeed blasphemed the Holy Spirit.

Discovering The Gospel Of Grace

The more I believed that I still had unforgiven sins, the more I believed that I had used up all of God’s grace in my life. No one taught me about the blood of Jesus, or showed me that my behavior was actually dishonoring the blood of Christ and negating Jesus’ work on the cross for me. No one preached the good news to me, so at that time, I really thought that my sins were greater than God’s grace.

Well, let me declare once and for all that there is no sin that a Christian is not forgiven of. When you understand why God sent the Holy Spirit, you will realize that the unpardonable sin is simply to consistently reject Jesus! The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit came to testify of and witness about Jesus Christ. Jesus said:

“The Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.” (John 15:26 NKJV)

To blaspheme the Holy Spirit is therefore to continually reject the person of Christ whom the Holy Spirit testifies of. Study the Word of God carefully. Who was Jesus speaking to when He spoke of the unpardonable sin? He was speaking to the Pharisees, who continually rejected Him as their Savior and plotted to kill Him on several occasions. They even accused Him of having an unclean spirit, saying, “He has Beelzebub. By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons.” (Mark 3:22). Jesus’ response was, “Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven... but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation.” (Mark 3:28-30). Why did He say that? The next verse tells us that it is “because they said, ‘He has an unclean spirit.’” The Holy Spirit is present even today to witness about Jesus. Therefore, to blaspheme the Holy Spirit is to keep on rejecting the gospel of Jesus and to depend on your own efforts to be saved. Jesus was warning the Pharisees not to commit this sin, and to stop rejecting Him. This clearly does not apply to the believer. You see, in reading the Bible, it is important to note who the words were spoken to and to ascertain if the words are relevant for the believer. In this case, Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees who had rejected Him and who even made claims that He had an unclean spirit. Imagine their audacity! As for you, my dear brother or sister, have full assurance in your heart that it is impossible for a believer to commit the unpardonable sin. A believer has already received the gift of eternal life and will never be “subject to eternal condemnation”.³⁹

Let me give you another example. You may have heard some preachers yelling at unbelievers and using the term “a brood of vipers”. But Jesus never called sinners — not even the prostitutes and corrupt tax collectors — “a brood of vipers”. Never! Those harsh words by Jesus were reserved only for the Pharisees (Matthew 12:34, 23:33) whose fixation on the law blinded them from seeing God in the flesh — Jesus, who gave the law in the first place and who came to fulfill the law on man’s behalf. So, learn to rightly divide the Word of God whenever you read the Bible. Not everything that Jesus said was spoken to the church.

³⁹ Prince, *Destined to Reign*, p. 91-92.

Feed On The Letters Of Apostle Paul

Have you noticed that Paul never mentioned the unpardonable sin? Not one time, in all his letters to the churches, did he warn Christians about the unpardonable sin. If Christians could commit the unpardonable sin, he should have mentioned it in every epistle that he wrote. On the other hand, Paul emphasized that Jesus, by His death on the cross, has made us “alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses” (Col. 2:13). I have checked the original Greek word for “all”⁴⁰ in this verse and guess what? “All” means ALL! Jesus, with His own blood, has forgiven you of ALL your sins, so there is no sin that is unpardonable! By one perfect sacrifice, Jesus has cleansed you of the sins of your entire life and you are now sealed with the promise of eternal life! Now, this is good news that will establish your heart with grace and confidence.

God does not leave you wondering whether you are saved or not. He tells you outright that you are His and that nothing can ever separate you from the love of Christ. Not even sin because His blood is greater than your sin! Knowing that all your sins are forgiven is crucial for your health, peace of mind, wholeness and wellness. My struggle with the unpardonable sin during my teenage years is a case in point. The more you believe that all your sins are forgiven by the blood of Jesus, the more you will become whole — body, soul and spirit!

Knowing that all your sins are forgiven is crucial for your health, peace of mind, wholeness and wellness.

I hope that by now, you can see the dangers of lifting the Word of God out of its context. We have to be careful not to take a verse out of its context and build a teaching or doctrine around it. Bible teachings have to be confirmed by several supporting verses and these have to be studied within their proper contexts. When you hear teachings that put fear in your heart and place you under bondage, don't

⁴⁰ Strong, NT: 3956

just swallow them hook, line, sinker, fisherman and boots. Look at the context of the verse and see if it is a new covenant truth or an old covenant teaching. Who was the verse spoken or written to, and how is it applicable to you today? Just remember that all new covenant truths exalt Jesus and His finished work. Hallelujah!⁴¹

The Main Clause Of The New Covenant

It is sad that you hardly hear the main clause of the new covenant being preached today:

Hebrews 8:8–12

“For finding fault with them, He says, “BEHOLD, DAYS ARE COMING, SAYS THE LORD, WHEN I WILL EFFECT A NEW COVENANT WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AND WITH THE HOUSE OF JUDAH; NOT LIKE THE COVENANT WHICH I MADE WITH THEIR FATHERS ON THE DAY WHEN I TOOK THEM BY THE HAND TO LEAD THEM OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT; FOR THEY DID NOT CONTINUE IN MY COVENANT, AND I DID NOT CARE FOR THEM, SAYS THE LORD. “FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS INTO THEIR MINDS, AND I WILL WRITE THEM ON THEIR HEARTS. AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. AND THEY SHALL NOT TEACH EVERYONE HIS FELLOW CITIZEN, AND EVERYONE HIS BROTHER, SAYING, ‘KNOW THE LORD,’ FOR ALL WILL KNOW ME, FROM THE LEAST TO THE GREATEST OF THEM. “FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR INIQUITIES, AND I WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE.”

⁴¹ Prince, *Destined to Reign*, p. 95.

“I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.” Memorize this, beloved, for this is the main and final clause of the new covenant!

Unfortunately, it seems that what the average Christian believes today is the complete opposite. They believe that God is not merciful to their sins. When something goes wrong, inwardly they think, “Well, the rooster has come home to roost. My past sins have caught up with me. All these terrible things are happening to me, to my family and to my finances because of the sins that I have committed.” When they have a flat tire, they start thinking to themselves, “What sin is God punishing me for now?” This kind of thinking is so prevalent in the church because Christians don’t really believe that they are under the new covenant.

The problem with the church today is wrong believing. I’m sorry to tell you this, but if you refuse to believe what God has said about the forgiveness of sins in the new covenant, then you are actually in disobedience. Jesus Himself defined the new covenant for us at the last supper when He said, “This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”(Matthew 26:28). The main clause of the new covenant is the forgiveness of all your sins because of the shed blood of Jesus Christ. I don’t care how many good deeds you have done, how much money you have given to charity or what leadership position you hold. If you do not believe the main clause of the new covenant, you are in disobedience.

God does not keep an itemized account of all your failures.

God put the main clause of the new covenant as the last clause to show us that it is this final clause that makes everything work. If you don’t believe the main and final clause, you are rejecting the new covenant and negating the finished work of Jesus. The new covenant says that God is merciful to all your unrighteousness and has forgotten your sins plus your lawless deeds. If God says that He has forgotten them, then He has truly forgotten them. Who are we to contradict Him? God cannot lie!

“But how can God forget my sins?”

He can because He is God! If He said it, then He has done it. You know that sin you committed many years ago? God has forgotten it. Contrary to what you might have been taught, God does not keep an itemized account of all your failures. There is no big projector screen in heaven to show all your sins from the day you were born to the day you return to heaven. All records of your sins have been incinerated by the blood of Jesus when He cried out, “It is finished!” (John 19:30). His blood has removed the sins of your entire life. When God looks at you today, He sees you covered with Jesus’ blood and completely righteous. ⁴²

Only the devil, you yourself and the people around you (especially “religious” people, but not true Christians) will bring your sins to your remembrance. So, when you are weighed down by the mistakes of your past, run to God and lean on His grace! Why?

“For He will be merciful to your unrighteousness, and your sins and your lawless deeds He will remember no more.” ---Hebrews 8:12

This is the main clause of the new covenant of grace!

⁴² Prince, *Destined to Reign*, p. 97-98.

Chapter Seven: A Waterfall of Forgiveness

In the previous chapter, we established that the main and final clause of the new covenant is captured in Hebrews 8:12 — “I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”

“Dr. Charles, if people know that all their sins have already been forgiven, won’t they go ahead and sin?”

Well, I have yet to encounter such a creature. I have yet to encounter anyone who, after receiving the grace of our Lord Jesus, says to himself, “Now I can go out and sin!” However, I have encountered people who have given up and walked away from God, not because they were evil and desired to sin, but because they were sincere and had consistently failed in their attempts to keep the laws of the old covenant and ended up feeling like hypocrites. On the other hand, because of the teaching of new covenant truths, I have received countless written testimonies and personally witnessed precious lives, marriages and families transformed by the grace of our Lord Jesus.

Let me share with you a story of restoration. This story was shared by the couple’s pastor. “I had a couple come up to me one time, telling me that they would like to be married in our church. I saw that they were accompanied by a few children and asked if they had been married before. (I was thinking that the kids might have come from their previous marriages.) Smiling widely, they told me that they had in fact been married to each other before, but that they had been separated for many years.

“Somehow, separately, they both started attending New Creation Church, and after listening to the teaching on forgiveness and God’s grace, God began to restore their relationship and they wanted to be remarried. Isn’t that wonderful? I also thought to myself that it must have been so wonderful for their children to actually

get to witness their parents' wedding ceremony. (How many kids have that privilege?)"⁴³

My brothers and sisters, that's the power of the gospel of Christ. It's about restoring marriages and mending broken lives! Though not all marriages will be restored, I guarantee that if we will allow Him, The Lord Jesus will restore our lives!

The Revelation Of Forgiveness

Brothers and sisters, knowing that you are completely forgiven destroys the power of sin in your life. I know how this revelation has changed me and transformed my life. Jesus Himself said that those who are forgiven much will love Him much. Those who are forgiven little (actually, these creatures do not exist because all of us have been forgiven much!), or I should say, those who think that they have been forgiven little will love Him only a little.

Do you remember the woman who brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil and anointed Jesus' feet? Jesus said to Simon, a Pharisee,

"A moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. Which of them will love him more? Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have judged correctly. Turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume. For this reason, I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little. Then He said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven.""

---Luke 7: 40-48 NASB

⁴³ Prince, *Destined to Reign*, p. 99-100.

The more you realize that you have been forgiven much, actually, of all your sins, the more you will love the Lord Jesus. Forgiveness does not lead to a lifestyle of sin. It leads to a life of glorifying the Lord Jesus. What do you think the woman's response would have been after she had departed from Jesus? Would she have desired to continue living a life of sin, or would she, knowing that she has been forgiven much by God's grace, be strengthened to live a life that honored and glorified Jesus?

All of us, including the author of this paper, have been forgiven much. All of us have broken the Ten Commandments many times over. If we have not done so in action, then we have done so in our hearts and minds. Jesus said that if you are angry with your brother without a cause, you have committed murder, and if you look at a woman in lust, you have committed adultery with her in your heart (Matthew 5:21–22, 27–28). My dear brothers and sisters, all of us have been forgiven much and there is no reason for us not to love Him much. The only reason people don't love Him much is that they don't understand just how much they have been forgiven. They are just like Simon the Pharisee, who was confident in his self-righteousness.

The Secret To Godliness

Many preachers are telling believers that they have to exhibit more Christian character, more self-control, more godliness and more brotherly kindness. My friend, I totally agree that all these qualities are good and necessary, but the question is, how do we develop them? How should we preachers help believers to exhibit more Christian character? When asked for the solution, most people would say, "Discipline! We need to focus more on the Ten Commandments and develop discipline, and then self-control, godliness and brotherly kindness will come." While all that sounds very good (to the flesh), that is not what the Word of God says, and I for one, want to go by what it says:

2 Peter 1:5–9

“Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge, and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness, and in *your* godliness, brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love. For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these *qualities* is blind *or* short-sighted, having forgotten *his* purification from his former sins.”

It is clear from these verses that if a person lacks good Christian qualities like self-control, godliness and brotherly kindness, it is not because he lacks discipline, but because he has forgotten the main clause of the new covenant. He has forgotten that the blood of Jesus has purchased for him the forgiveness of all his sins. I really like the way that the New King James Version puts verse 9: “For he ... has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.”

Beloved, if you remind yourself daily that you have been cleansed from all your sins, you will exhibit more and more of these Christian qualities. Your heart will overflow with self-control, godliness, perseverance, brotherly kindness and love. Pray like this every day and enjoy your forgiveness:

Dear Father, I thank You for the cross of Jesus. I thank You that today, because of Jesus' blood, I have been forgiven of all my sins, past, present and future. Today, You are merciful to my unrighteousness, and all my sins and lawless deeds, You will remember no more. You see me as completely righteous, not because of what I have done, but because of Jesus. I am greatly blessed, highly favored and deeply loved by You. Amen.

The secret behind every godly man and woman is their belief in the truth that they have been forgiven.

My dear brother or sister, the secret behind every godly man and woman is their belief in the truth that they have been forgiven. Their godliness stems from a revelation of their forgiveness. They are believers who believe and honor God's Word. When God says that He is merciful and that He has forgiven all their sins, they take Him at His Word. All day long, they are forgiveness-conscious. Even when they say the wrong thing, do the wrong thing or have a wrong thought, they continue to be forgiveness-conscious. They see the blood of Jesus continually washing them. They see God in His mercy and grace. Because of their forgiveness-consciousness, they experience victory over sin.⁴⁴

How Are You Forgiven Of Your Sins?

“Dr. Charles, are you saying that we don't have to confess our sins?”

Listen carefully: We don't have to confess our sins in order to be forgiven. We confess our sins because we are already forgiven! When I say “confess our sins”, I'm talking about being open with God. I don't go before Him begging for forgiveness. No, I talk to Him because I know that I have already been forgiven. I know that I can come to Him freely — He is my God, my Daddy God. Forgiveness is not dependent on what I do, but what Jesus has done. Confession in the new covenant is just being honest about your failures and your humanity. It is the result of being forgiven and not something you do in order to be forgiven.

My dear brothers and sisters, understanding this difference determines whether you experience “heaven on earth” or “hell on earth”! Let me explain what I mean. When I was growing up as a young believer, I was taught that unless I confessed all my sins, I would not be forgiven. I was even told that if someone dies without having confessed all his sins, he would end up in hell. Such teachings made the forgiveness of sins man's responsibility, instead of something that was dependent

⁴⁴ Prince, *Destined to Reign*, p. 103.

on what Jesus' blood had already accomplished. My brothers and sisters, such teachings are based on man's traditions and not the Scriptures.

Such teachings put me in severe bondage when I was a teenager and young adult. I was really sincere and wanted to always be "right with God" and not have any sin that was not forgiven. I did not want fellowship with God to be broken. So everywhere I went, I would confess my sins, and I mean EVERYWHERE!

This "keeping short accounts with God" put me into serious bondage. I really believed that I had to confess every bad thing that I thought or I had done, all the time. I took 1 John 1:9 to the limit and it nearly drove me insane.

But what does 1 John 1:9 really say and to whom was it actually written?

1 John 1:9

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." –1 John 1:9 NASB

People have taken this verse and built a whole doctrine around it when actually, chapter 1 of 1 John was written to the Gnostics, who were unbelievers. John was saying to these unbelievers that if they confessed their sins, God would be faithful and just to cleanse them from all unrighteousness.

We are not to live from confession to confession, but from faith to faith in Jesus Christ and His finished work.

For us believers, the moment we received Jesus, all our sins were forgiven. We are not to live from confession to confession, but from faith to faith in Jesus Christ and His finished work. You see, there are no two ways about it. If you believe that you have to confess your sins to be forgiven, then make sure that you confess everything! Make sure that you don't just confess the "big sins" ("big" in your own estimation). Make sure that you also confess your sins every time you are worried, fearful or in doubt. The Bible says that "whatsoever is not of faith is sin"

(Romans 14:23). Don't just confess what is convenient for you. Make sure that you confess everything.

If you really believe that you need to confess all your sins to be forgiven, do you know what you would be doing? You would be confessing your sins ALL THE TIME! How then can you have courage before God? How can you enjoy liberty as a child of God? I tried it and it is impossible!

Let's not build a whole doctrine on one verse. If confession of sins is vital for your forgiveness, then Apostle Paul, who wrote two-thirds of the New Testament, has done us a great injustice because he did not mention it even once — not once — in any of his letters to the church. When there were people in the Corinthian church living in sin, he did not say, "Go and confess your sins." Instead, he reminded them of their righteousness, saying, "Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you?" (1 Corinthians 6:19) Notice that in spite of their sins, Paul still considered them temples of the Holy Spirit and he reminded them of this truth.⁴⁵

The Waterfall Of Forgiveness

My dear brothers and sisters, this is the assurance that you can have today: The day you received Christ, you confessed all your sins once and for all. You acknowledged that you were a sinner in need of a Savior, and He is faithful and just to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. All the unrighteousness of your entire life was cleansed at that point!

Entire doctrines have been built around 1 John 1:9, but John actually made it clear in the same chapter that when it comes to believers, people who "walk in the light", the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses them from all sins:

⁴⁵ Prince, *Destined to Reign*, p. 107.

1 John 1:7

“but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

---1 John 1:7 NASB

Notice that for us believers who “walk in the light”, it is not our confessions that cleanse us from all sin, but by the blood that we have forgiveness of all our sins. It is time to stop being robbed by traditional teachings Notice that for us, believers who “walk in the light”, it is not our confessions that cleanse us from all sin, but the blood of Jesus! Notice also that this verse says “walk in the light” and not “walk according to the light”. Walking in the light means, walking in the realm of light, which Christ’s death has already translated us into. Christians often misconstrue this to mean walking according to the light, thinking that darkness will decrease and light will increase if we try to stay in the light. But that is not what the verse is talking about! It’s talking about us already being translated out of the realm of darkness into the realm of light. One little word makes all the difference! When we understand this verse, we realize that even when we sin, we sin in the realm of light! So, if we sin in the light, we are cleansed in the light, and we are kept in the light. This idea of us going into darkness when we sin is not from the Bible.⁴⁶

The Bible is so rich and full of treasures! Did you know that even the word “cleanses” in 1 John 1:7 is really beautiful? In the Greek, the tense for the word “cleanse” denotes a present and continuous action, which means that from the moment you receive Christ, the blood of Jesus keeps on cleansing you.⁴⁷ It is as if you are under a waterfall of His forgiveness. Even when you fail, this waterfall never stops. It keeps on keeping on, cleansing you from ALL your sins and unrighteousness.

Beloved, confessing your sins all the time will only make you more sin-conscious. But knowing that you are under Jesus’ waterfall of forgiveness will keep you

⁴⁶ Prince, *Destined to Reign*, p. 108.

forgiveness-conscious. And knowing that you are forgiven of all your sins will give you the power to reign over every destructive habit, every mistake, every failure (including have a divorce) and live a life of victory!

In 1 John 2:1, John addressed the believers as “My little children” (he never addressed the unbelievers whom he was writing to in chapter 1 as “My little children”) and went on to say, “These things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ.” Notice that John did not tell the believers, “If anyone sins, make sure that he confesses his sins.” No, his solution for a believer who sins is to point him to the finished work of Jesus. Jesus is our Advocate before God and it is because of His and to start enjoying the waterfall of His forgiveness, which perpetually cleanses us. It never stops. It keeps on cleansing us. You know that negative thought that you had of me a few minutes ago? Well, that has been cleansed too!

“Let me tell you a story about a little boy who used to play in the woods just a short distance away from the dilapidated hut that he lived in. His parents were too poor to buy him any toys, so he had to make do with whatever he could find. One day, he chanced upon a stone that was unlike any that he had ever seen. The polished surface of the stone glistened in his hands and winked at him each time he turned it around in the sunlight. It was his very own treasure and he loved it. The boy did not dare bring it back to his home as there was nowhere in the hut he could hide it. He decided to dig a deep hole under some bushes and hide his precious possession there.

“The next day, the boy couldn’t wait to retrieve his stone and ran to its hiding place as soon as the sun arose. But when his fingers finally found the stone in its muddy hideaway, it was all grubby and stained, without any of the luster that he loved so much. The boy took the stone to the stream and carefully dipped it in, allowing the dirt to be washed away. Finally, it was clean again and the boy’s heart swelled with pride at his coveted find. But all too soon, the time came for the boy to head home and he had to return the stone to its hiding place.

“Every day, the boy would rush to the spot where he had hidden the stone. And every day, he would find its shiny surface smeared with mud and he would trek to the river some distance away to wash it. This happened for a while before he decided to solve the problem. That day, when it was almost time for him to head home, the little boy took his stone to a small waterfall and wedged it carefully between two rocks, right in the middle of the steady flow of the waterfall. That night, the stone experienced a continual washing. And that little boy never had to wash the stone again. Every time he retrieved it, it gleamed in his hands, completely cleansed.⁴⁸

What the little boy did with the stone initially can be likened to what happens under the old covenant. Each time you sinned, you had to be cleansed. But before you knew it, you would sin again, and you would have to bring your sin offering of either a bullock or lamb to the priests to be cleansed again. Some believers still think that this is our covenant today but let me declare to you that Jesus’ blood is far greater than the blood of bulls and goats. The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, bought us eternal forgiveness⁶. The blood of bulls and goats in the old covenant could only offer temporal forgiveness, and that’s why the children of Israel had to keep bringing animal sacrifices to the priests over and over again, every time they failed.

Jesus, however, died on the cross once and for all⁷. When you were born again, you became a living stone and God placed you right under the waterfall of His Son’s blood. Hence, every thought you have that is amiss, every feeling that is not right, every action that is not correct, is washed away! You are always kept clean and forgiven because of the continuous cleansing of Jesus’ blood!

⁴⁸ Prince, *Destined to Reign*, p. 110-111.

Consciousness Of Jesus' Blood Brings Victory

Perhaps you are going through some challenges right now and you are wondering, “How can the blood of Jesus bring me healing, prosperity and victory in my marriage?”

My brothers and sisters, all you need to know is that you are being constantly cleansed of all your sins. Once you believe that all your sins are indeed forgiven and that God does not hold anything against you, faith will spring forth. Faith will be there for healing. Faith will be there for prosperity. Faith will be there for restoration in your marriage and family. The continuous washing of Jesus' blood qualifies you for any miracle that you need in your life right now. Jesus said to the paralytic man, “Son, your sins are forgiven you,” before He said, “Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.” (Mark 2:3–12). Why? Because Jesus knew that unless the man had the assurance that all his sins had been forgiven, he would not have faith to be healed. This is what people need to hear. This is what we need to teach in the church!

The devil's strategy is to make you feel like you are not qualified to enter God's presence. He will bombard you with thoughts of condemnation, accusing you of being unworthy for having wrong thoughts or saying harsh words against someone. He will give you a thousand and one reasons why you don't qualify for God's blessings. But the truth is that whatever wrong feelings you had or whatever bad habit you had succumbed to, (or even if you have gone through a divorce) the blood of Jesus keeps you clean.⁴⁹

The Blood of Jesus qualifies you to have constant access to the Most High God.

Because you are under this waterfall of forgiveness, every prayer that you make avails much. The blood of Jesus qualifies you to have constant access to the Most

⁴⁹ Prince, *Destined to Reign*, p. 115.

High God. We overcome the devil by the blood of the Lamb. When Monday comes and Tuesday rolls by, and your pastor is not there to preach to you, do you know what you need to remind yourself of?

1 John 1:7 — “but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.” ---1 John 1:7 NASB

His blood keeps on keeping on cleansing you from every sin. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, His blood is cleansing you. And any time and every time you pray, your prayer hits the mark.

My brothers and sisters cease from depending on your own efforts to maintain your forgiveness and begin to enjoy the extravagant waterfall of God’s forgiveness every moment of the day. You’ll find peace for your soul and the faith to reign in life will well up on the inside of you. You’ll see miracles begin to unfold in your life

Chapter Eight: The Gift of No Condemnation

The devil is smarter than many psychiatrists and psychologists because he does not deal with what is peripheral. He does not get distracted by superficial details. Do you know what the devil's name is? His name is not "murderer", even though he kills. It is not "thief", even though he steals. It is not "destroyer" either, even though he destroys. His name is Satan. In Hebrew, it means "the accuser".⁵⁰ He is the prosecutor against you. A prosecutor never talks about any of your good points. He is there to prosecute you for every one of your failures. He will bring back every piece of dirty laundry and show you evidence after evidence of your failures.

While we are trying to deal with stress and fear, the devil goes straight for the deepest root, and uses the law to heap guilt and condemnation on you. He knows that when you are under condemnation, fear, stress and all kinds of sicknesses will follow, so he goes straight for the jugular.

When you are under condemnation, fear, stress and all kinds of sicknesses will follow.

What should we do then? We should kill condemnation at its very root and eradicate it from our lives. When you hear the voice of the accuser, remind yourself that there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ (Romans 8:1). Why? Because no matter what the devil condemns you of, the truth is that the blood of Jesus has been shed for the forgiveness of all your sins. There is not a sin, not one iota of guilt or condemnation that the devil can throw at you today that Jesus' blood has not completely removed.

⁵⁰ OT: 7853, BibleSoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary.

No wonder Isaiah chapter 54 says that no weapon formed against you shall prosper. What is the weapon that the devil uses against you? We have learned that it is the law. The devil uses the law to condemn believers and remind them that they have fallen short. But the Word of God declares, “No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn.”(Isaiah 54:17). The devil uses his tongue to speak words of guilt and condemnation to you, but by the blood of Jesus, you have the authority and the power to condemn every word of judgment that comes against you!

The Gift Of No Condemnation

“Dr. Charles, if believers know that there is now no condemnation for them, won’t they go out and sin?”

Well, it is obvious that Jesus did not think so. Do you remember what He said to the woman who was caught in adultery?

John 8:10–11

“When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, “Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?” She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said to her, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.” –John 8:10-11 NKJV

Now, pay close attention to this: Jesus gave her the gift of “no condemnation” before He told her to go and sin no more. Yet, the church today says, “Go and sin no more first, and only then will we not condemn you.” That’s the reason people are shying away from churches. It is not because they are rebelling against Jesus. It is because they have not been introduced to the Jesus who gives the guilty sinner the gift of no condemnation!

Too often, non-believers have only been introduced to Christianity as a set of rules that only judges and condemns them. If you conduct a poll among non-believers to

find out what they know about Christianity, many of them would probably be familiar only with the Ten Commandments. They know only about the law that kills and not the Person who came to bring life!

But my dear brother or sister, Christianity is not about laws. It is about Jesus and how He shed His blood for the forgiveness of our sins, for without blood, the Bible says that there is no forgiveness of sins (Hebrews 9:22). That is why Christianity is a relationship based on the shed blood of Jesus Christ. His blood washed away all our sins, and the laws that we were supposed to fulfill, He fulfilled on our behalf. Even Jesus Himself came against legalism. His strongest words were said to the religious Pharisees and not the sinners. I challenge you to find any instance in the Bible where Jesus called tax collectors or prostitutes a “brood of vipers”!⁵¹

Now, let’s come back to the story of the woman caught in adultery. Let me ask you a question: Was the woman guilty? Yes, she was, absolutely. There is no doubt about that. The Bible states that she was “caught in adultery, in the very act”⁷. But instead of condemning her according to the law of Moses, which required her to be stoned to death. The law of Moses always ministers condemnation and death (--the same as many “religious” people today), it cannot save the guilty sinner, Jesus showed her grace and gave her the gift of no condemnation.

Do you think that the woman would go off, look for her lover, and jump back into bed with him after she had received the gift of no condemnation? No, of course not! It is obvious that Jesus believed that when someone really has a revelation that God does not condemn them, they would have the power to get out of the vicious circle of sin. They would have the power to “go and sin no more”!

What are you going to put your trust in today? Jesus’ grace which swallows up sin? Or man’s fears that believers would use “grace” as a license for them to sin?

⁵¹ Prince, *Destined to Reign*, p. 164-165.

Condemnation Perpetuates The Cycle Of Defeat

Let me tell you this: If you are under condemnation, you are doomed to repeat your sin. Why? Because when you are under condemnation, you feel guilty and condemned, and you believe that fellowship with God is broken. And since you believe that God is far away, you will end up committing that sin again. You may do something good that makes you feel that you have restored fellowship with God, but when you fail again, you start receiving condemnation again, and the cycle of defeat continues.

Jesus' method of countering sin is completely different. When you sin, He says to you, "Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more." When you receive the gift of no condemnation from Him, you will know beyond any doubt that fellowship with God is never broken because the blood of Jesus continually cleanses you. Believing that you are the righteousness of God through Christ Jesus and simply receiving the gift of no condemnation give you the power to go and sin no more.⁵²

Do Not Back Away From Grace

"Dr. Charles, I know of someone who says that he is under grace but is clearly living in sin. Can a person be under grace and still live in sin?"

My brother or sister, do not back away from the gospel of grace just because you see some negative examples. The Bible says that sin shall not have dominion over you when you are not under law but under grace⁸. If you are living in sin, you are definitely not under grace. You are not enjoying the gift of no condemnation and the free, unmerited favor of God. That is why sin has dominion over you. You cannot claim to be under grace when you continue to live in sin!" Such people become agents that the devil uses to instill suspicion and fear against the gospel of grace. But our part is not to back away from the gospel that Jesus preached just

⁵² Prince, *Destined to Reign*, p. 165-166.

because a very small group of people use grace as an excuse for their lifestyle of sin.

If someone has really known and experienced grace and the gift of no condemnation, he or she will NOT want to live in sin. Sin will be the last thing on their mind! Let me put it very clearly: Anyone who is living in sin is not under grace and has not experienced the gift of no condemnation. Grace always results in victory over sin!

The Power To Sin No More

I believe that most believers desire to live lives that are glorifying to God and that most of us normal, rational human beings are NOT looking for an excuse to sin. But there is a struggle which Paul himself wrote about: “For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.” (Romans 7:15).

I am writing to believers who have this genuine struggle with the law and who like Paul are crying out, “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Romans 7:24)

If this is your cry, then this is written especially for you: The person who will deliver you is Jesus. His amazing, incredible grace will save every “wretched man”. In all your helplessness, all your weaknesses and all your vulnerabilities, Jesus looks at you with His tender loving eyes and says to you, “Where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you? Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.” (John 8:10-11)

Every time you fail in thought, word or deed, receive this afresh: There is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ. When Jesus died on the cross, all your failures were already condemned in His body. Today, you are free to live a victorious life not because of your obedience to the law, but because of your obedience of faith in Jesus’ blood and righteousness.

Every time you fail in thought, word or deed, receive this afresh: There is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ.⁵³

Paul said, “For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His Own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh.” (Romans 8:3) What the law could not do, God did (notice the use of the past tense) by sending His Son. The law could not save the “wretched man” that we were. It could only condemn us. But God saved us by placing all the guilt, punishment and condemnation for our sins on Jesus’ body at Calvary.

Your inheritance today is no longer guilt, punishment and condemnation for your sins, but righteousness, peace and joy through Jesus Christ. This is God’s way for you to experience effortless success in your life. He has already done it all on your behalf. Your part is simply to believe and receive. That is how you walk in victory over sin, addictions, negative thoughts and every cycle of defeat that has you in bondage. Good news? That is the gospel of Jesus Christ!

⁵³ Prince, *Destined to Reign*, p. 168.

Chapter Nine: Condemnation Kills

One of the things that I was taught during my formative years as a Christian was that I had to search my heart for sin before I could worship the Lord. I was told to bow my head and search my heart for sin. Each time I did so, I felt like I was entering a dark and dingy storeroom filled with cobwebs. I pictured myself peering around and searching for all my sins with a little torchlight. And the more I searched, the more I felt unworthy to worship the Lord. The more I probed, the more I found, and I would start to feel too condemned to even think that I was qualified to enter His holy presence.

So instead of being more conscious of the love of my Savior, I became more and more self-conscious — more conscious of my sins, uncleanness, guilt and unworthiness. Initially, my hands would be raised and I'd be all ready to praise and worship God, but the more I searched my heart for sin, the more my hands would hang down with dejection and my head bow down with disappointment. How could I worship God? How could I have the courage and audacity to enter His courts with praise?

Come To Him Just As You Are

As I grew and matured in the things of God, I realized that the idea that you had to be “right” before you could worship Jesus is man’s tradition. The woman in Luke chapter 7, who came to Jesus with an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, simply fell at His feet and worshipped Him. She washed His feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair before anointing them with the oil. The Bible clearly records that the woman was a sinner, but it says nothing about her searching her heart or confessing her sins before she worshipped Jesus. She worshipped Him just as she was, and after that, Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”(Luke 7:37-39, 48).

Whatever your need is, come to Jesus. He is your Savior, your healer, your provider and your peace. He is your “I AM”. I think that the devil has tried to rob us of this tremendous truth. Whatever your need is, whether you are mired in debt, trapped in a particular sin or fearful for your future, come to Jesus. He is your Savior. He is your healer. He is your provider. He is your peace. He is your forgiveness. He is your “I AM”, which means that He is the great “I AM” for whatever situation you are facing in your life.

Whatever lack you may be facing right now, He is your solution. Come and worship Him just as you are, and He will meet you at your point of need. You don’t have to worry about your sin because you are worshipping your forgiver. You don’t have to worry about your sickness because you are worshipping your healer. If believers really knew this truth, even wild horses would not be able to stop them from coming to worship God!

Do you know anyone who cleans himself before he takes a bath? Sounds ridiculous, right? Yet, there are people who avoid going to Jesus because they feel that they should “straighten things out” in their lives first. Can’t they see that what they’re really saying is that they need to clean themselves before they can take a bath? Come on, Jesus is the “bath” that makes us clean! He is the solution and He will help us straighten out what we will never be able to straighten out on our own. The lie that you have to clean yourself first is so entrenched in the church that many believers say, “Pastor, I don’t want to come to Jesus until I make my life right.”⁵⁴

If that is your refrain, then the sad truth is that you will never come to Jesus because you will never come to a place where you can make your life “right”. Come to the bath and the bath will make you clean. Come just as you are with all your sins, and Jesus will wash you clean of all guilt and condemnation.

The world needs to hear this truth, and not be given a bunch of do’s and don’ts. Preach the truth and the world will come flocking to churches for their answers.

⁵⁴ Prince, *Destined to Reign*, p. 171.

They are searching for the real thing and that's what we can offer them. But the real thing is not found in two pieces of stone. You cannot have a relationship with the cold, hard and impersonal law engraved on stones. But you can definitely have a relationship with our Savior Jesus Christ. He is warm, loving and full of grace. People will flock to where the true gospel of Jesus is being preached — the gospel that God commissioned Paul to preach, the gospel of grace, forgiveness and no more condemnation!⁵⁵

God's Grace Will Teach You To Deny Ungodliness

Do you know what can produce character, godliness and the fruit of the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ? Contrary to what some preachers of the law are saying, it is the unadulterated gospel of the grace of God that will produce all these good fruit. The Bible states it plainly: “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.”(Titus 2:11-12). Clearly, it is the “grace of God” that will produce sober, righteous and godly living!

What I love about preaching the gospel of grace is that God's Word is always being preached in its context. I honestly don't understand how those who oppose grace can still teach within the context of the Scriptures. It is not the “law of God” that appeared to teach man how to deny ungodliness and worldly lust. Yet, this is what you hear being preached all the time.

It is time to emphasize what the Bible emphasizes. The new covenant is all about the grace of God that brings salvation. And grace is not a teaching. Grace is not a doctrine. Grace is not a topic in Bible school curricula. Grace is a person and His name is Jesus. Grace “appeared to all men” teaching us the secret to godliness, character and holiness. He showed us that it is all found in Him and His work on the cross. When you have Him, you are godly. When you have Him, you are made

⁵⁵ Ibid.

righteous. When you have Him, good character will manifest. When you have Him, you are made holy!⁵⁶

Understanding Holiness

What is holiness? The conventional understanding of holiness is that it is about doing right. But check the word “holiness” in the original Greek and you will find that it is the word *hagiasmos*, which means “separation to God”⁵⁷. Therefore, being holy means that you have been set apart, made uncommon from the rest of the world of unbelievers.

In the old covenant, when God set the children of Israel apart from the world, He insulated them from the plagues that were brought against Egypt. God takes care of His own. In the old covenant, He provided for the Israelites and protected them because they were made holy and set apart unto Him by the blood of bulls and goats. How much more for us in the new covenant, who are made holy and set apart unto God forever by the blood of the everlasting sacrifice of Jesus Christ!⁵⁸

My brother or sister, God does not require you to search your heart and locate your sins before you can worship Him. When the psalmist David cried out, “Search me, O God, and know my heart,” (Psalm 139:23) he was asking God to search him. He was not searching his heart himself. In any case, today, all that God will find if He searches you is your righteousness in Jesus Christ, for He sees you as righteous, holy and forgiven. He has already declared, “Your sins and your lawless deeds I will remember no more.” (Hebrews 8:12)

How do you see yourself today? Are you more conscious of your sins, or are you more conscious of your righteousness and what Jesus’ blood has done? Tradition has taught us to be occupied with self, but grace teaches us to be occupied with Christ. The more you are occupied with yourself, the more dejected, oppressed and

⁵⁶ Prince, *Destined to Reign*, p. 173.

⁵⁷ Strong, NT: 38.

⁵⁸ Prince, *Destined to Reign*, p. 173.

depressed you become. From whichever angle you see yourself, you'll see ugliness, unworthiness and disqualification.⁵⁹

To be occupied with Christ is to turn away from self and to see Jesus. He is like a precious diamond. When you hold Him up in the light of God's Word, whichever way you turn Him, He sparkles with rays of beauty, perfection, righteousness, holiness and wholeness. Can you see that? Look away from your own frailty and see Jesus because the Word of God says, "As He is, so are you in this world." (1 John 4:17) Is Jesus holy? Then so are you!

Just how holy are you? Earlier on, I explained that you are not made holy by your thoughts and actions. You are made holy because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. Now, let's go just a little deeper to examine the sacrifice that was made on your behalf.

The book of Leviticus talks about the five offerings of the old covenant: The burnt offering, peace offering, meal offering, sin offering and trespass offering. These offerings are shadows or typologies of what our Lord Jesus accomplished when He offered His life for us on the cross. Jesus, as our sacrificial offering, did such an amazing work that it takes five offerings to depict the one act of His sacrifice on the cross! I will just focus on two of the more important offerings in this book — the burnt offering and the sin offering.⁶⁰

The Sin Offering

Let's focus on the sin offering first. According to the law, a man must bring a sin offering to the priest whenever he sins. Imagine that you are living in Old Testament times. You have sinned and you are now bringing a lamb as your sin offering to the priest.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 174.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 173.

The first thing that will happen is that the priest will examine the lamb to ensure that it has no blemishes. The lamb must be without blemish and perfect because it speaks of Jesus' perfection. Jesus knew no sin and committed no sin. He is the true sacrificial Lamb without blemish.

After the priest has examined your sin offering, you must lay your hands on its head. Why must you lay your hands on the lamb's head? Laying hands on the animal that you bring to the priest is an act of identification. When you lay your hands on your sin offering, your sins are transferred to the innocent lamb. After you lay your hands on the lamb, you must kill it. The lamb must die because all your sins have been transferred to its body. And because it dies bearing your sins, you can go free.⁶¹

In the same way, Jesus had to die on the cross with your sins so that you might go free. He was not murdered. He came to lay down His life for you and me⁷. He chose to become our sin offering on the cross. That is why, when John the Baptist saw Jesus, he said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) That is why Apostle Paul said, "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us." (2 Cor. 5:21).

Do you know what all this means, my brothers and sisters? It means that the moment you received Jesus Christ into your life, all your sins were transferred to Jesus... forever! Jesus died in your place as your sin offering, so that you might go free. What a wonderful Savior we have!

By Jesus' one sacrifice, you are forever perfected, every single day for the rest of your life.

But there is a big difference between the sin offering in the Old Testament and Jesus' sacrifice for you on the cross. In the Old Testament, the blood of bulls and goats could only provide a temporary covering for sin. Every time man failed, he had to offer another sin offering. Praise be to God that in the new covenant, the

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 175-176.

Bible declares that “by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14).

The blood of bulls and goats could never take away sins, so the sacrifices had to be offered repeatedly. But Jesus’ sacrifice was “once for all” (Hebrews 10:10). It is a complete and finished work, and He never needs to be sacrificed again! Jesus is the perfect sin offering. His blood does not just cover your sins temporarily. All your sins have been removed permanently! Even if you fail tomorrow, Jesus would not need to be offered again. His sacrifice has perfected you... for how long? Forever! You are forever perfected, every single day for the rest of your life. The blood of Jesus is continually cleansing you. You are now under the waterfall of forgiveness and you are sanctified perpetually. Hallelujah!⁶²

The Burnt Offering

The sin offering speaks of your sins being transferred to the body of Jesus on the cross. That is why God does not want you to be conscious of your sins today. He wants you to be conscious of your forgiveness.

Let’s look at the burnt offering now. The burnt offering is beautiful because while the sin offering speaks of Jesus taking your sins on His own body, the burnt offering speaks of the righteousness of Jesus being transferred to you at the cross.

When you read the book of Leviticus, you will see that of the five offerings, God put the sin offering last and the burnt offering first. Man puts it the other way around — we first come to God with all our sins, and all our sins are judged as a sin offering at the cross of Jesus. There is nothing wrong with this order, but God does not expect us to stop there. He wants us to know that Jesus did not just die for our sins, He also died as our burnt offering to make us well-pleasing, righteous and favored before God. That is why when the burnt offering is offered, it ascends as a “sweet aroma” to the Lord (Leviticus 1:9,13, &17). (There is no sweet aroma

⁶² Prince, *Destined to Reign*, p. 177.

in the sin offering.) The sweet aroma from the burnt offering speaks of Jesus' beauty, perfection and loveliness to the Father.⁶³

This may be the first time you are hearing all this, so let me reiterate the difference. The sin offering speaks of your sins being transferred to Jesus, while the burnt offering speaks of Jesus' worthiness before God, His acceptance before God and His delight before His Father being transferred to you. Today, God favors you in exactly the same way He favors His Son.

If you believe that you don't deserve success but deserve to be punished, you will unconsciously punish yourself and cause yourself to fail.

Unfortunately, there are believers today who only understand that they have been forgiven. They do not understand that they have been made righteous as well by the cross of Jesus. Because of this, they have allowed themselves to come under condemnation. If this describes you, then rejoice — let the truth that God sees you clothed with the righteousness of His Son, because Jesus became your burnt offering at the cross, set you free today from every guilt and condemnation!⁶⁴

Self-Condensation Is Destructive

The reason that some believers are sick, depressed and oppressed is that instead of being conscious of their righteousness in Christ, they have sin on their conscience. The moment they sin, they unconsciously feel that someone (usually themselves) must pay.

If this describes you, then pay attention because I am going to tell you what happens to you when you are conscious of your sins, instead of your forgiveness and righteousness. When you sin and come under condemnation, your mind and body begin to say, "He wants to punish himself, so let's make him pay." Your

⁶³ Prince, *Destined to Reign*, p. 177-178.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 179.

body will respond to this need for punishment, and you may start to develop depression and sickness in your body. Many believers are sick today not because of sin, for sin has already been punished on the body of Jesus, but because of condemnation. In the earlier chapters, we looked at condemnation from the accuser, but now I am talking to you about self-condemnation and your unconscious desire to inflict punishment on yourself when you know that you have sinned.⁶⁵

My brother or sister, self-condemnation is destructive. When you fail to see that Jesus has already borne your punishment, you will punish yourself, or take it out on your family with verbal or even physical abuse. If you believe that you deserve to be punished and that you do not deserve success, you will unconsciously activate a self-sabotaging mechanism to punish yourself and cause yourself to fail. You could be on the brink of a lucrative business contract, or about to embark on an exciting career opportunity, but somehow, you find yourself doing something that sabotages the entire deal and causes it to crumble before your eyes. Why? Because deep down you think that you do not deserve it.

Self-condemnation also manifests itself with destructive effect in relationships. If you are in a wonderful relationship with somebody who really loves and cares for you, you will inevitably do something that sabotages the relationship because again, something inside tells you that you do not deserve to be loved by this person.

Psychiatrists will tell you that a person with such behavior is driven by guilt and has a perpetual sense of wanting to punish himself. The world has all kinds of fancy terms to describe people who exhibit an unconscious desire for punishment, but it cannot show you how to overcome it. It takes a revelation of the finished work of Jesus to overcome it.⁶⁶

Beloved, wake up and realize that Jesus has already been punished on your behalf. Stop condemning and punishing yourself because Jesus has already been

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 179.

condemned and punished on your behalf! If you say that you believe that God has forgiven you of all your sins, then why are you still feeling guilty? The existence of guilt and condemnation in your life tells you that you do not really believe that all your sins have been forgiven.⁶⁷

In the Old Testament, the Israelites had a consciousness of sins because their repeated sacrifices reminded them of their sins. The blood of bulls and goats just could not take away sins (Hebrews 10:1-4). However, today, believers have no business living with sin-consciousness because Jesus, their once-for-all sin offering, has already taken away all their sins! And because of the burnt offering of Jesus, they should be living with righteousness-consciousness!

Pay Attention If You Desire To Glorify God

Let me just qualify that I am writing to believers who have a desire to glorify God in their lives but are struggling with guilt and condemnation. If you are living in sin and have no desire to leave this kind of lifestyle, that's a different story. You can try not to be sin-conscious all you like, but you will not succeed simply because you are living in sin (for example, staying in an adulterous affair with no desire to terminate it). Get out of that lifestyle of sin by the grace of God!

Do you understand that there is a distinction? You can be struggling with sin-consciousness even though you are not living in sin. I am writing to those of you who desire to break out of the cycle of defeat that self-condemnation brings. I am writing to those of you who are trapped in the lie that you do not deserve success in life. I am writing to those of you who want to stop sabotaging yourself because of guilt and condemnation. I am writing to those of you who are not living in sin but are nevertheless struggling with sin-consciousness.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 180.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 181.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 181-182.

Beloved, I am writing to those of you who have been robbed of the boldness to enter God's presence and worship Him because after "searching your heart", you have convinced yourself that you do not qualify. If I am describing you, my friend, I pray that today will be the day of your freedom.

Jesus Was An Overpayment For All Your Sins

You and I owed God a sin debt that we could never pay. But Jesus has already paid our debt. In fact, He OVERPAID it so that we would never have the debt on our conscience ever again! Let me share an illustration with you that I pray will open your eyes to just how fully paid your debt is.

I'm going to use two of my friends for this illustration —Henry and Joe. Let's say that you borrowed \$50,000 from Joe and promised to pay him back in a month. But as time went by, you simply could not pay him the money. Now, even if Joe does not ask you for the money, what would happen to your relationship with him because of this debt on your conscience? Would you be going up to him and slapping him on the back, saying, "Hey, brother, how are you?" No way! If you ran into Joe, you would probably sheepishly mutter something like, "Oh, hi... er... sorry, I have to go now, see you around... er... sometime." Most of the time, you would probably go out of your way to avoid him.

Now, imagine that one day, Henry hears about your debt to Joe. And let's say that Henry is a billionaire and a good friend to you. He needs to fly off to Paris, but before he leaves, he goes to Joe to find out how much you owe him. Lawrence tells him that you owe him \$50,000. Henry gives him \$1 million! Of course, Joe is shocked. He protests, saying that you do not owe him that much money. But Henry insists on giving him US \$1 million because Henry loves you and wants to make sure that you will never feel the debt on your heart ever again.

Your debt is more than paid. But two things could still happen that would result in the debt remaining on your conscience. Let's imagine that Henry had to rush off to Paris and had no time to speak to you, so he tasks one of his assistants to inform

you that your debt has already been paid. But when the assistant speaks to you, he fails to fully convey the fact that your debt has been paid, and that Lawrence has in fact, been enriched by Henry because of the debt you owed him. The assistant says, “Er... I was told to tell you that your debt has been paid. But I’m not very sure of the details, so maybe it would be good for you to continue paying Lawrence whatever you can.”

What happened in this scenario? The messenger failed to convey the good news, and you are left with no assurance that your debt has really been paid and that you are free of it. This is sad, but do you know that this is precisely what is happening in the body of Christ? People are being told by preachers that Jesus did cry out “It is finished!” on the cross, but they are also being told that they still have to continue paying for their sin debts!

Let me ask you, once you have finished repaying the bank loan that you took for purchasing your house, do you still have to send in the monthly payments? Of course not! You should stop sending your checks to the bank because your debt has already been paid. If you continue to send those checks, you are wasting your time and money!

Let’s look at another possible scenario. Let’s say that Henry could not get in touch with you before flying off to Paris, so he tells a good friend of yours to tell you the good news that your debt has been fully paid. Your friend is so excited for you that he drives to your house even though it’s midnight and tells you, “Hallelujah! I’ve got good news for you! Your debt has been paid. In fact, it’s more than paid! You owed Lawrence \$50,000, but Henry gave Joe \$1 million to settle your debt!”

The messenger has conveyed the good news to you. It’s now up to you, the hearer, to believe the message. You can respond in disbelief, asking, “Are you sure? I’ve owed this debt for such a long time and now you’re telling me that it’s all paid up? You’re pulling my leg!” Or you can shout, “Hallelujah!” and rejoice over this unmerited gift from Henry that has cleared your debt completely! When the messenger has conveyed the good news to you, it’s now up to you to believe the message.

Let me ask you this: If you don't believe the good news, is your debt still paid? One more time: If you refuse to believe that your debt has already been paid, is it still paid? Yes! Your unbelief does not change the fact that your debt has been fully paid. BUT your unbelief means that you will still have debt on your conscience, and this will affect you negatively because every time you see Lawrence, you will still feel ashamed and want to avoid him! In contrast, if you believe the good news, you will not be avoiding Joe. In fact, knowing that he has become a millionaire because Henry overpaid your debt, you may even be bold enough to call him up and ask him for a treat!

My dear brothers and sisters, Jesus has already paid your sin debt fully. Do you know what you are doing each time you allow that debt to remain on your conscience? Every time you are sin-conscious, you are insulting the payment of our Lord Jesus Christ. You are saying that it is not enough. You are saying that the cross is not enough. And you know what? You are also insulting the One who received the payment for your sin debt. Each time you try to pay off your sin debt which has already been paid, you are saying that God is not satisfied with Jesus' payment even though the truth is that He is more than satisfied with Jesus' overpayment. Jesus is the beloved Son of the living God. How can you say that His sacrifice is not enough?

Does it really matter if you condemn yourself and allow your sin debt to remain on your conscience even after Jesus has overpaid it? Yes, it matters because apart from dishonoring the work of Jesus on the cross, sin-consciousness makes you avoid God, and can produce in you..... condemnation, sicknesses, diseases, depression and a cycle of sin!⁶⁹

Listen closely, my brothers and sisters, because of who Jesus is and the value of that one Man, the price that He paid for our sins was an overpayment. All the sinners put together cannot compare with the value of that one Man. Believe the good news and draw near to your Savior today! The Word of God declares to you

⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 185.

that you can have “boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus” (Hebrews 10:19). It declares to you that you can draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having your heart sprinkled from an evil conscience and your body washed with pure water¹⁵. Rejoice, beloved!

Listen More To The Gospel Of Jesus

“Dr. Charles, I want to stop being so conscious of my sins, but how can I do that?”

The way out of sin-consciousness is to hear more teaching on the finished work of Jesus, and how His blood has cleansed and forgiven you of all your sins. When you receive Jesus as your sin offering, your heart will be sprinkled with His blood from an “evil conscience” because your sins have already been punished on His body. An evil conscience is a conscience that is constantly conscious of your sins. As you listen to Christ-exalting teachings, you will begin to be more conscious of your forgiveness than of your sins. And the moment you stop carrying sin-consciousness and condemnation in your mind and heart, you will be washed with the pure water of God’s Word, which will begin to affect your physical body and bring healing to every part that is not well!

Some Christians are not able to receive healing because they are not able to receive forgiveness. They are still sin-conscious and doubt their forgiveness. They believe that God may have forgiven their past sins, but not the sins of their whole life. God knows that people need the assurance that their sins are forgiven before they can receive healing in their bodies, so the Bible makes this very clear. In Psalm 103, when the psalmist lists the “benefits” from the Lord, he starts with “who forgives all your iniquities” before moving on to “who heals all your diseases”.

When the man sick with the palsy was lowered through the roof and placed before Jesus, Jesus said, “Son, your sins are forgiven you,” before telling him to arise, take up his bed and go to his house (Matthew 9:2-7). Your sins are forgiven you, beloved. Stop punishing and condemning yourself! It’s time for you to freely

receive your miracle from God! “But I have sinned. How can there be no punishment for my sin?”

I do not deny that sin must be punished, but I am declaring to you that all your sins have already been punished on the body of Jesus. He is your perfect sin offering and we who have received His forgiveness should have no more consciousness of sins.

Stop examining yourself and searching your heart for sin. Remember that when someone brings his sin offering to the priest, the priest does not examine him. He examines the sin offering. The priest is a picture of God. When you go to Him today, God does not examine you. He examines your sin offering. He examines Jesus, who is completely perfect and sinless, without spot, wrinkle or blemish. God accepts Jesus as your sin offering, and every one of your sins has been transferred onto His body!

Stop punishing yourself. Jesus has already been punished for your sins. Believe it and let your conscience be satisfied! Start enjoying all His benefits because they are your blood-bought rights. Read Psalm 103 and realize that forgiveness is yours. Healing is yours. Redemption from destruction is yours. Being crowned with loving kindness and tender mercies is yours. Renewal of youth is yours. Hallelujah! Simply believe that your sin debt has been settled and walk in these blessings today!

Stop punishing yourself. Jesus has already been punished for your sins. Believe it and let your conscience be satisfied!⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Ibid, 187-188.

Chapter Ten: The God Who Seeks The Shunned

She waited patiently until the coast was clear and the service had stated. She didn't want to run into any of the other women who had made it painfully clear to her that her presence was repugnant to them. She could no longer stand the gossip, snide remarks, and disapproving eyes. Several weeks ago, as she was nearing the sanctuary, the other women, fully aware that she was within earshot, began warning one another to keep their husbands far away from her.

“She’s a seductress!” one had whispered loudly. “Do you know that she has had five husbands from other churches?” Another woman had chimed in: “And the man whom she’s living with now is not even her husband.”

Nursing each other’s insecurities, they began to make all kinds of baseless accusations about her.

“She’s a loose woman!”

“She’ll steal your husband in a heartbeat.”

“Don’t you be taken in by her innocent doe eyes and beguiling smile!”

Juicy variations of her “husband stealing” prowess had soon spread throughout the church where she lived like a swarm of locusts, devouring every remaining shred of her dignity.

She had quickly become an outcast in the church. No one dared to befriend her. Since moving to this church, she had tried everything to keep her past under wraps. However, once the news broke, no one cared to hear her side of the story. She was pigeonholed as the woman with a shady past. The verdict was already in— she was a home wrecker! What else was there to know?

It had been weeks since she had spoken to anyone. Wild stories about why she had had five husbands spread virally through the church grapevine. To insulate herself and avoid further contact with the other ladies, she had devised a system. Since all the women would be visiting at the reception table between Sunday School and the service, she would only take her seat in the service, after it had started. She would much rather a few minutes of the service than bear the heat of their scorn and ridicule or the cuts of their razor-sharp tongues. Every Sunday since then, she had come quietly to the church, interacting with no one at all, and faded back into nonexistence after getting her fill of the life-giving words each week.

Unbeknownst to her, on this day, as she was waiting patiently for the service to begin, the Sun of righteousness was already by the entrance waiting for her.

A Savior Who Reaches Out to the Imperfect

You can actually read about this woman in the Gospel of John (see John 4: 1– 42). When you read her story or any story in the Bible, I encourage you to activate your imagination— not to change the meaning of the biblical accounts, but to draw out the essence of the details and gems that God has for your benefit. Put yourself in the narrative. These characters are not part of a fictional story. They are real people, with real challenges and a very real Savior! I took the liberty of changing a few details in the story to illustrate that Jesus’ response to a person and their struggles, and the churches response to a person and their struggles is not always the same. And, it His response that is the one we need to focus on!

There are no insignificant details in the Bible. It tells us specifically that it was about noon when Jesus was at the well waiting for the woman. It also records that Jesus was traveling from Judea to Galilee and that “He had to go through Samaria” (John 4: 4 NLT). The New King James Version says that “He needed to go through Samaria,” and the King James Version puts it this way: “He must needs go through Samaria.”

Had to. Needed to. Must. Words that speak not just of necessity but underscore a steady resolve and even urgency!

Jesus' disciples must have been surprised when He said that He needed to go through Samaria. They had never taken that route before to Galilee. It was the custom of the Jews of that day to avoid any contact with the Samaritans, whom they perceived to be spiritually inferior. Jesus' disciples didn't know that He had deliberately scheduled a divine appointment with the woman at the well.⁷¹

We know from the account found in John chapter 4 that this ostracized, lonely woman had a life-transforming conversation with Jesus at the well. But make no mistake— it wasn't she who sought out Jesus to talk to Him. It was Jesus who pursued the one whom others shunned.

Do you know that He is still doing that today? Do you have a past that you are ashamed of? Are you struggling to overcome something that you know is destroying you? Do you feel all alone and that no one understands the pain you are going through?

I want you to know that Jesus hasn't changed. He is the same, yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). Just as He was for the Samaritan woman, the loving Savior is still your very present help in your time of need (see Ps. 46: 1). He knows the suffering, the shame, and the struggles you are going through right now. And even if what you are going through is a consequence of bad life choices and mistakes of your own doing, He doesn't abandon and forsake you. No! He goes out of the way, just like He did for this woman in Samaria, to have a personal appointment with you, to restore and rescue you. The fact that you are reading this right now is a confirmation that Jesus is reaching out to you with His love, grace, and forgiveness. My dear brother or sister, this is who Jesus is!⁷²

⁷¹ Prince, *The Power of Right Believing*, p. 20.

He Comes to You in the Midst of Your Storm

Our Jesus comes to you at your point of need. When His disciples were out at sea, caught in a turbulent storm and tossed by the waves, who came to them in their darkest hour? It was Jesus Himself. Jesus came in style, walking on the raging waters.

What does this tell you? That He is above the storms. He walks above— He is greater than— every adversity and every opposition that you may be facing right now, and He comes, to you, to rescue you!

With the billowing waves beneath His feet, His first words to His disciples were, “Don’t be afraid. Take courage. I am here!” (Matt. 14: 27 NLT).

What comfort those words must have brought to the disciples who were exhausted and shaking with fear. Storms are good at doing that to you. They overwhelm you. Wave after wave of relentless battering that knocks you off your feet till you don’t know which side is up. Till every ounce of energy is used up and you feel so weak, abandoned, and lonely.

But don’t go by these negative feelings and emotions you are experiencing, my brother or sister. Live by the truth of God’s Word, which encourages you to “be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid and do not panic... For the LORD your God will personally go ahead of you. He will neither fail you nor abandon you” (Deut. 31: 6 NLT). Our God is a personal and loving God who is with you in your boat. He knows what storms are ahead and how to lead you to victory every time. He cannot fail you!⁷³

⁷² Ibid, P.20-21.

⁷³ Prince, The Power of Right Believing, p. 22.

The Good Shepherd Goes Ahead of You

“Let me share with you a story from Jenny, about a golfing holiday she went on with her husband in a mountain resort. That morning as they stood at the first tee, there was a light mist overhanging the beautiful and serene green golf course. She had been meditating on the Lord being her shepherd in Psalm 23 and felt so loved by Him as she took in the picturesque, pastoral landscape and the cool, clean mountain air. She pictured herself being led by the good Shepherd, Jesus, who makes her lie down in tender green pastures and leads her beside still waters.

“Even though Jenny had never played on that course before, she ended up playing her best round of golf. How did that happen? It was because they had an experienced caddy with them, and she had benefitted from every bit of observation and advice that he had offered her. She wasn’t a regular golfer and had been a little anxious about the challenges ahead, but the caddy had assured her confidently, saying, “Don’t worry, I have thirty years of experience on this golf course. I have been all over this course, and I am familiar with every hazard and every trap that is ahead of you. I will show you what to avoid and where to aim.” And by just heeding his guidance, her golf ball landed on every fairway and she played the best round of golf in her life!”⁷⁴

My brothers and sisters, you have more than just an experienced caddy in your life. You have the One who created the universe as the shepherd of your life! This shepherd has been to your future. He knows every hazard and every trap that is ahead, and He has laid out a path for you that is filled with His favor. And even when you make a mistake or take a wrong turn in life, He is still with you to help and rescue you. Look at what the psalmist says:

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. —Psalm 23: 4
KJV

⁷⁴ Prince, The Power of Right Believing, p. 22-23.

The Door of Hope in Your Valley of Trouble

Notice from the verse that it was not the good shepherd who led the psalmist into the valley of trouble, as the psalmist says, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death...” Yet the Bible is so clear in stating that even if your trouble is due to your own willfulness, God is still with you. He has never left you, and He never will. He will never forsake you. You are precious in His eyes. Can you imagine living life with that kind of confidence, assurance, and peace? Then believe in no uncertain terms that God will never abandon you and leave you in the lurch!⁷⁵

In fact, the Bible says that God will turn the Valley of Achor into a door of hope for you (see Hosea 2: 15). In the Hebrew, “Achor” means “trouble.”⁷⁶ So even if you find yourself in the valley of trouble, you will not remain there for long. You will walk through it and not remain or camp there. God is opening a door of hope in your life today for you to step out of your darkness and into His marvelous light (see 1 Pet. 2: 9). Things are going to get better. The breakthroughs that you have been waiting for are coming your way. Step through the door of hope and out of your valley of trouble today. Jesus is your door of hope! Believe in His love for you and allow Him to lead you to freedom.

Some people think that when they fail, God leaves them and only returns when they get their act together. They think that they must clean up their lives and overcome all their struggles on their own before they can come before the presence of God. Well, I have a simple question for them: Do you clean yourself before you take a bath? Of course not!

God wants us to come to Him just as we are, with all our weaknesses, idiosyncrasies, wrong beliefs, hang-ups, and all our bondages, fears, and addictions. He is the bath! Don't try to clean yourself up before you come to Him.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 23-24

⁷⁶ Brown, Driver & Briggs, OT: 5911.

In the presence of His love, His joy, and His grace, you will find restoration, healing, and forgiveness. He will restore your life and transform you from the inside out. Right now, He is extending His hand of grace, love, and help to you. There is no shame in coming to Jesus just as you are. He who knows you perfectly loves you perfectly!

To Know the Truth, Go to the Source

“But Dr. Charles, isn’t God disappointed and angry with me for all my failings, mistakes, and sins? I’m too embarrassed to go to Him. I feel that I should sort out all this mess in my life before I can go back to church, read the Bible, and pray. “

I understand how you feel. And I can tell you that you are not alone in those sentiments. I have personally counseled with believers who feel exactly the same way. But the most effective way to address our problems and wrong beliefs is to go to God and find out the truth from His Word. In order to get our believing right, we need to first discover what the “right beliefs” are, based on the solid foundation of God’s Word. We can’t base our beliefs on feelings, circumstances, human conjectures, or what we may have heard someone say about God. We have to go to the source!

If you heard a rumor that someone you knew was saying horrible and negative things about you, don’t believe it immediately. Go to the source first. Ask this person if this is what he or she really said or if this is what he or she really meant. Many people allow precious friendships and relationships to become fractured because they believe the rumors. They become bitter, angry, and disappointed without ever verifying with the person if he or she had actually said those nasty things.

In the same way, in the world we live in, there are all kinds of wrong beliefs perpetuated about God: “God is angry at you.” “He is disappointed with you.”

“God is allowing all these negative things to happen to you because He’s punishing you for your past sins.”

Please, DO NOT believe all this baseless gossip about God! Such impressions of God have damaged many people’s relationships with Him, and they live with a distorted perspective of who God really is. Instead of receiving His love, His grace, and His forgiveness, they become afraid, distant, and fearful of Him. Instead of allowing Jesus to come into their situations, they live their life running away, avoiding and hiding from Him. Come on, let’s honor God and go to the source.

What does the Bible— God’s own Word— say about Him? Let me quote from one of my favorite psalms of David:

“The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy... He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” —Psalm 103: 8, 10–12 NKJV

Isn’t this a beautiful psalm? Don’t be thrown off by the phrase, “toward those who fear Him.” Jesus defined the word “fear” as “worship” (see Deut. 6: 13 and Matt. 4: 10). So “those who fear Him” speaks of those who reverence and honor God in their lives. It is not the practice of being fearful or afraid of God. The whole context of this passage is about who and what God really is— gracious and merciful. And I strongly encourage you to memorize verse 10 if you can:

“He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities.” ----Matthew 4:10 NKJV

God Abounds in Mercy Toward You

Let's get back to your earlier question: Is God disappointed and angry with you for your failures, mistakes, and sins? No! Read the above Scriptures again. The point here is that as a child of God, all your failures, all your mistakes, and all your sins have already been judged and punished on the body of Jesus at the cross! That's why God is no longer angry with you for your sins and He doesn't deal with you according to your sins. Because of the cross, He deals with you according to His bountiful mercy and grace.⁷⁷

Just in case you missed it, the psalm repeatedly stresses that God is merciful. It tells us that "the LORD is merciful" and goes on, almost immediately, to say again that He is "abounding in mercy." In the King James Version of the Bible, it says that God is "plenteous in mercy." I like the word "plenteous." It speaks of abundance, excess, and lavishness. His mercy toward you and I is plenteous. He abounds in mercy toward us!

My dear brother or sister, God has exhausted His anger toward all your sins at the cross. The cross is an act of His love. If you ever doubt or question God's love for you, just turn your eyes to the cross. If God wants to deal with us and punish us according to our sins, He wouldn't have sent His Son to be scourged, beaten, and crucified, but He did! This is the good news of the gospel of grace. God sent His only beloved and precious Son to redeem us from the penalty and punishment of sin.

Now, can you imagine how far the east is from the west? You cannot think just in terms of the geographical boundaries of the earth. God is the Creator of the universe. Let me ask you again, how far is the east side of the universe from the west side of the universe? Are you getting this? The human mind cannot fathom the distance between the east and the west. There are frontiers in the cosmos and galaxies beyond our own that our most advanced telescopes cannot see. God thinks in infinite terms that our finite minds cannot wrap around. And this God of

⁷⁷ Prince, *The Power of Right Believing*, p. 27.

the infinite universe declares in the psalm that “as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us!”

Let us reason together. How can God still be judging and punishing you for your transgressions if He Himself has removed them? I can hear the chains of your wrong beliefs about God falling to the ground as you read this! This is what I call the power of right believing. You start to believe right when you start to believe in His love for you. The truth is, we can't go further if you don't first begin to believe that God is for you and not against you. The first key to right believing is to be established in His grace, anchored in His love, and secure in His mercy toward you.

From Self-Conscious to Savior-Conscious

Let's return to the story of the woman at the well in Samaria, the one whom Jesus went deliberately to meet. This woman had a past that she was terribly ashamed of, which is why she came at noontime to draw water. She didn't want to meet anyone. What she didn't know was that Jesus was there and He wanted to meet her. He hadn't come all that way to embarrass, judge, or mock her. Read the account in John chapter 4 for yourself. Jesus drew her in with His love, His grace, and His compassion. She never felt exposed or ill at ease in His presence.

When she said that she had no husband, Jesus didn't call her out and humiliate her. Instead, knowing that she was self-conscious and insecure about her background, He commended her twice by saying, “You have well said, ‘I have no husband,’ for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly” (John 4: 17– 18). He sandwiched what He already knew about her between two compliments! Jesus must have spoken to her with so much

compassion and love in His eyes, and with no judgment or sarcasm in His voice, that it caused this woman to let down her defenses and open up to Him.⁷⁸

By the time she left His presence, this self-conscious lady who once feared meeting people was so occupied with Jesus' love and acceptance that she became an evangelist of Jesus and His grace. She went back to the village and testified about Jesus (to the very people she had been terrified of before), and the Bible records that "many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, 'He told me all that I ever did'" (John 4: 39). In the same way, my brothers and sisters, Jesus is not out to embarrass you today. He is here to meet you right where you are. He knows absolutely everything that you have ever done and still loves you with an everlasting love. Allow His love to change and transform you from within, just like it did for the woman at the well.

Perhaps like the Samaritan woman, you know what it's like to look for love in all the wrong places. Today Jesus offers you true intimacy that fully satisfies every aching need. He offers you a deep sense of rest that can only be found in His perfect and unconditional love. Perhaps you've had a past that has imprisoned you in shame, guilt, and self-loathing. Perhaps you've allowed the things that you have done to convince you that you'll never have God's acceptance or love. If you've always only known or heard of a hard and judgmental God, a God who holds every misdeed you've ever committed against you, then I challenge you to encounter the real Savior who has already forgiven you and invites you to discover, taste, and experience for yourself His unfailing love.

It doesn't matter how ugly a mess your life may have spiraled down into. If you will open your heart to Jesus and allow His love to heal you, He can change the trajectory of your life and give you a fresh start and fulfilling future. Everything can change for the better when you begin to believe right about His love for you and learn to draw upon it!

⁷⁸ Prince, *The Power of Right Believing*, p. 29-30.

God Is Pleased When You Draw On His Love

Do you know that Jesus finds great joy when you draw on His love? Look at how the Samaritan woman's encounter with Jesus ended. When the disciples left Jesus at the well to buy food, He was weary and tired from the journey. When they returned, they were amazed to find Him refreshed, and they wondered if someone had brought Him something to eat. Jesus answered them by saying, "I have food to eat of which you do not know" (John 4:32).

What food was Jesus referring to here? He had not eaten or drunk anything. All He had done was minister to the woman from Samaria. In other words, Jesus found nourishment, strength, and joy when He ministered His love to her. When you draw from men, they become depleted and weak. But the opposite is true of Jesus. When you draw from Him, He is strengthened, refreshed, and rejuvenated! Jesus wants us to know that He derives great joy and pleasure when we draw upon His love for us.⁷⁹

When the Samaritan woman asked Jesus why He (a Jew) would ask her (a Samaritan) for a drink of water, this is what He said to her: "If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water... Anyone who drinks this water [from the well] will soon become thirsty again. But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life" (John 4: 10, 13– 14 NLT).

Jesus is saying the same thing to you today: If you only knew who it is who comes to you in your darkest hour and weakest moments. If you only knew this gift of God who will never leave you nor forsake you, who has gone before you and who comes to you in the midst of your storms. If you only knew the One who reaches out to you even when you have failed and who doesn't hold your past mistakes or current failures against you.

⁷⁹ Prince, *The Power of Right Believing*, p. 31.

Beloved, if you only knew this gift of God who offers the living water of His unconditional, endless love to you and you drink of that love, you will never thirst again. You won't need to look for love and acceptance in all the wrong places and have your heart broken. You want need to be fearful about the future and have your life derailed. You can wake up with a fresh expectation of good every day. Jesus was essentially inviting the woman to ask Him for the living water of His love. Will you do that today? Your life will never be the same again when you personally experience His love!

Chapter Eleven: The God Who Loves The Prodigal

“He sat at the front porch every day, scanning the horizon for any sign of movement. He did this faithfully, even as the days rolled painfully into weeks and then months. When his friends came by to persuade him to give up and move on, he would simply smile and wave them on and persist unflinchingly. Keeping his gaze on the surrounding hills, he waited unwaveringly and patiently for the return of his son. As he waited, he rehearsed in his mind over and over again what he would do the moment he saw his son. And every day, as he looked earnestly across the fields, he wondered if that day would be the day.

“One evening the familiar silhouette of a lone figure appeared in the distance. Recognizing his son, he enacted without hesitation what he had done a thousand times before in his mind: he pulled up his robes, cast aside all dignity, and ran toward his son with all his might. He could feel his heart pumping wildly and his lungs expanding and contracting as his feet tried to outdo each other across the field. Tears streamed down his face as his son grew larger in his sight with each pace. And before any words could be traded, he had leaped forward, embraced the young man, and rained kisses on him.

“This unexpected, joyous reception from the father overwhelmed the young man. He had expected to be disowned and even had a rehearsed speech to tell his father to make him one of his hired servants. How could he have known that his father had a rehearsed plan of his own? Without waiting to hear the son’s rehearsed speech, his father commanded the servants to bring out the best robe for him, to place a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. The young man thought he had lost the right to be called a son because of the bad choices he had made that resulted in shame and loss to the family. But his father made it clear that wasn’t so and even called for a party to celebrate the homecoming of his beloved son.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Prince, The Power of Right Believing, p. 299-300.

Unveiling the Heart of the Father

What an incredible and moving story. Jesus shared this parable, and I think it's one of the most beautiful parables in the Bible. It's a parable that Jesus used to skillfully unveil to us the true heart of our gracious and loving heavenly Father.

Bible commentators call this the parable of the prodigal son, but the real hero of this story isn't the son, but the father. This is a story about the father and his love for his two sons. You may already have heard this parable shared a hundred times, but I want you to look at it again to see how this parable exposes the wrong beliefs that many believers today still have toward their Father in heaven.

Consider this for a moment: What is your opinion of God, especially when you've made a mistake? Do you see Him as an all-powerful, distant, and unfeeling judge who is angry whenever you fail and who constantly has to be appeased? Or do you know Him as your Daddy, your Abba Father whom you can run to anytime, even when you have fallen short? As I was studying the Word, the Lord revealed to me that many believers have come to a place where they have forgotten their heavenly Father. They have forgotten about His love, His grace, and His loving-kindness. They relate to God in a judicial and transactional fashion.

Today many believers come before Him with apprehension and trepidation, presenting their failings to Him and quickly leaving before they get the punishment and condemnation they think they rightly deserve from Him. They perceive Him exclusively as a God of holiness, judgment, and justice— His face steely and stern, His mighty arms folded in dissatisfaction and disapproval. They see a God who is easily displeased, quick to anger, perpetually disappointed with them, and waiting impatiently to be placated.

This wrong belief of who God really is has driven many into fear, guilt, depression, and insecurity. And that is why it's so vital we see the heart of the Father as unveiled by Jesus in this timeless parable. Let me share with you the

story of Lydia, a sister from South Africa. I believe that many of you will be able to identify with what she shared about her struggles in relating to God as her Father:

“I grew up with very low self-esteem, having been labeled the difficult child in my family. I was an unplanned baby, and my parents already had one child— a girl, so they really wanted a boy. They were disappointed when I turned out to be a girl and even considered giving me to a paternal family member who did not have children.

“My dad comes from a very cold, strict family, and he has a very bad temper, so I grew up naturally fearful of him and always felt like I was walking on eggshells around him. My mom also grew up in a household where she had not received love. Both my parents are extreme perfectionists and very organized. On top of that, they raised us with military discipline and no compassion. It was your own fault if you got hurt— you brought it on yourself. Thus, I could never relate to God as a Father. God was unapproachable and sitting with a lightning bolt ready to strike me whenever I wasn’t good enough, didn’t pray enough, or wasn’t obedient enough. I was under the impression that God was only pleased with me when I obeyed the law. Being a perfectionist myself, I felt that I never met His expectations and I was always under condemnation.

“Since encountering your teaching resources, the veil in my life has been torn. For the first time, I am free. I no longer walk under the heavy burden of condemnation. I learned that God loved us first and I can now have a love relationship with my heavenly Father and Jesus.

I have experienced victory over fear and sin that kept me captive for years— not by trying to be obedient, but by just learning that my sins have already been forgiven on the cross. And no, I am not sinning more now. I am actually overcoming more and sinning less, and I have a grateful heart for what Christ has done on the cross.”⁸¹

⁸¹ Prince, *The Power of Right Believing*, p. 302-303.

Do you feel the same way Lydia did about God?

Do you feel as though you are never good enough, can never do enough and be obedient enough for God to love and accept you?

Do you feel like you are always living under perpetual condemnation?

Perhaps you can't relate to God as a loving Father because you've never experienced the love of your earthly father or because your own father has hurt you terribly.

My brother or sister, I pray that as we study the Word of God together, you will supernaturally experience the intimate love of your heavenly Father in a deep and personal way like never before. I pray that this experience will heal, renew, restore, and transform you in a spectacular way because His love for you is nothing less than spectacular.

See the Father's Perfect Love

There is a space in our hearts that can only be filled by the Father's love. So stop trying to find love and approval in all the wrong places and getting entangled with all kinds of fears, insecurities, and addictions. I believe that if you would allow the Father to come into your heart today and fill you up with His perfect love, you will find the joy, the confidence, the fulfillment, and the freedom that you have been looking for in life.

God's precious Word declares, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4: 18–19 NKJV).

Today, under the new covenant of His amazing, incredible grace, our Father in heaven isn't looking to judge you for your failings because He has already judged your every failing, every mistake, and every sin in the body of His own Son, Jesus Christ. The name that Jesus came to reveal in the new covenant of grace is "Father." Today God wants to reach out to you as a caring and loving Father.

Do you know His heart of love toward you?

Do you know that it was His idea to send Jesus to be punished at the cross for you?

Read the most famous passage in the Bible and personalize it so that you can see God's heart for you: "For God so loved _____ that He gave His only begotten Son, that you who believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn _____, but that _____ through Him might be saved" (John 3: 16– 17).

Know beyond the shadow of a doubt today that your Father loves you and sent His Own Son to save you.

Understand that we are not belittling the work of Jesus at the cross when we talk about the Father and His love for you. The truth is Jesus came to reveal the love of the Father to you. God so loved you that He sent His one and only beloved Son to pay the heavy price at the cross to cleanse you of all your sins.⁸²

Do you know that God loves Jesus dearly? Jesus is God's darling Son, the apple of His eye. Now, if your Father in heaven didn't withhold His Precious Son, Jesus Christ, and sacrificed Him for you, how much do you think He loves you? You cannot begin to comprehend the intensity and sheer magnitude of your Father's love for you until you realize how much the Father loves Jesus— because He gave up Jesus to ransom you.

⁸² Prince, The Power of Right Believing, 304-305

I hope you are beginning to experience and see for yourself just how loved you are by the Father and how precious you are to Him! Don't fear Him— see the heart of your Father's love unveiled through Calvary's cross.

No Matter What You Have Done

“But Dr. Charles, you don't understand my past and all the mistakes I've made.”

You are absolutely right. I do not. But your Father in heaven surely does, and He who knows you perfectly, loves you perfectly.

At the very beginning of the parable of the prodigal son, the younger son came to his father and demanded his share of his inheritance. In the Jewish culture, this was tantamount to the young man telling his father to “drop dead.” He was effectively saying, “Give me my share of the inheritance right now. I can't wait for you to die.” It was a stinging slap to the face of his father. The young man completely humiliated and dishonored his father by making such an insolent request.

We need to understand this because if we are unable to grasp the extent to which this young man utterly rejected his father and chose his own way, we cannot appreciate the extent of his father's love and grace in receiving him back home as his son. In the same way today, if we don't realize how much we have rejected the Father through our sins, we cannot fully grasp, fully appreciate, or fully respond to the immense grace that He extends toward us in forgiving us totally. Those who think they have sinned little and are thus forgiven little, love little. But those who know they are forgiven much, love much (see Luke 7: 47). Remember who told this parable— our Lord and Savior Jesus, and He has firsthand knowledge of the Father's heart of love.⁸³

⁸³ Prince, *The Power of Right Believing*, p. 305-307.

Coming back to the story, upon his younger son's demand, the father divided to his two sons what was due them. We know that the younger son then spent all his inheritance on partying and wild living and, when a severe famine arose in the land, he became penniless and was reduced to feeding swine on a farm.

It's recorded for us that he was so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the swine looked good to him. Let's listen to what he says at his lowest point: "But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! 'I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.'" (Luke 15: 17–19 NASB).

Despite Your Hidden Agenda

Let me ask you a question. Based on what you have just read, was it the son's love for his father that made him journey home?

Do you think for one moment that he was truly contrite? Or that he even cared that he had broken his father's heart?

I don't think so! He was clearly motivated by his stomach. He wanted to go home because he remembered that even the hired servants in his father's house had more food than he did! The words that he planned to say to his father— "I have sinned against heaven and before you"— was what he thought would be the right dramatic, religious rhetoric to ensure that he would be allowed some benefits for returning home. You and I know that he wasn't genuinely remorseful. What we are hearing is his stomach talking, not his heart. We think it wasn't repentance that drove him home. It was his stomach and perhaps even his sense of pride that he deserved at least what his father's servants were getting.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Prince, *The Power of Right Believing*, p. 307-309.

When I was growing up, I would hear people teach about how the son repented and decided to go home to his father. The truth is there was no repentance here. The young man began the trek home because he was starving. He was even prepared to go through the motion of saying words like, “I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants,” with the sole intention of getting his stomach filled since he had reasoned that the “hired servants have bread enough and to spare.”

He never expressed any love for the father or said that he missed his father’s presence and love. This is important for us to note because God wants us to know that even when our motivations are wrong, even when we have a hidden (usually self-centered) agenda and our intentions are not completely pure, He still runs to us in our time of need, just as the father ran to the young man and showered upon him his unmerited, undeserved, and unearned favor.

Oh, how unsearchable are the depths of His love and grace toward us! It will never be about our love for God. It will always be about His magnificent and incredible love for us. The Bible makes this clear: “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4: 10 NASB). The hero in this parable is the father. It’s about the father’s perfect love for his imperfect son. It will never be about our love for God.

Some people think that fellowship with God can only be restored when you are perfectly contrite and have perfectly confessed all your sins. They think that you must apologize to God before He can be appeased. Please understand that I have nothing against saying “sorry” to God or confessing our sins. All I am saying is that we are not as important as we make ourselves out to be. The father was the initiator. Before the son even had thoughts of returning home, the father had already missed him, was already looking out for him, and had already forgiven him. Before the son could utter a single word of his rehearsed apology, the father had already run to him, embraced him, and welcomed him home.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Prince, *The Power of Right Believing*, p. 308-309.

It's All About His Love

We are not the heroes in this story. It will never be about our apologies to God, our repentance, our actions, our love, our confessions, or our obedience. In and of ourselves, our actions— even the best ones— are laced with imperfections and impure motives. For those who believe that one must apologize before fellowship with God can be restored, this parable will rock their theology.

Read the parable for yourself in Luke 15:11–32. Notice how the son never got to complete his rehearsed speech. He attempted to but was completely overwhelmed by his father's joyful response to his return. However impure his intentions or motivations were for coming home, the father lavished him with undeserved, unmerited, and unearned favor.

It's all about our Father's heart of grace, forgiveness, and love. Our Father God swallows up all our imperfections, and true repentance comes because of His goodness. Our Father is the hero— not us. Let's make it all about Him and not about us!

Do I say “sorry” to God and confess my sins when I have fallen short and failed? Of course, I do. But I do it not to be forgiven because I know that I am already forgiven through Jesus' finished work. The confession is out of the overflow of my heart because I have experienced His goodness and grace and because I know that as His son, I am forever righteous through Jesus' blood. It springs from being righteousness-conscious, not sin-conscious; from being forgiveness-conscious, not judgment-conscious. There is a massive difference.

You know, one can insist on the need to say “sorry” before we can be forgiven. But we all know that we can say “sorry” outwardly, yet deep in our hearts there is no true repentance. It's like the kid in school who, together with his buddy, has to see the principal for bad behavior. Told to sit down, he sits, but whispers to his friend, “Inside I am standing up!” It's like the account of Judas who betrayed

Jesus. It's recorded for us that he "Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See *to that* yourself!" And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself." (Matt. 27: 3–5 NASB). But there was no true repentance as it was merely outward. We know this because the word "repented" here is the Greek word *metamelomai*, which expresses one's desire that what has been done might be undone, but it is not accompanied with an effective change of heart.⁸⁶

That is why we are not interested in the outward. Let's go deep into the essence of our relationship with God and really experience His love when we have failed. If you understand this, you will begin experiencing new dimensions in your love walk with the Father. You will realize that your Daddy God is all about relationship and not religious protocol. He just loves being with you. Under grace, He doesn't demand perfection from you; He supplies perfection to you through the finished work of His Son, Jesus Christ. No matter how many mistakes you have made, don't be afraid of Him. He loves you. Your Father is running toward you to embrace you!

God Doesn't Want Hired Servants

The wrong belief of the younger son was that he wanted to come back and earn his own keep as a hired servant. He didn't want to receive his father's provision by grace or unmerited favor. In his own self-absorbed pride, he wanted to work as a hired servant and earn his own food in the father's house together with the rest of the servants. The father, of course, would have none of that.

You cannot merit by your own efforts the favor and blessings of God. They can only be received as gifts through His grace. He doesn't want you as His hired servant. Your identity is that of a child— God's child. He has a host of heavenly angels as His servants. What He desires of you is relationship. Instead of fearing

⁸⁶ Strong, G3338.

Him and thinking that you must walk on eggshells in His presence, He wants you to come boldly into His presence.⁸⁷

Your Father wants you to know that as His beloved child, washed by the blood of Jesus, you can “come boldly to the throne of grace” at any time to obtain mercy and find grace to help in your time of need (Heb. 4: 16). For a child of God under the new covenant, it’s not a throne of judgment; it’s a throne of grace.

Do you believe in His grace?

Do you believe that the blood of Jesus has washed away all your sins?

Do you believe that your Father in heaven loves you?

Then come boldly into His presence whenever you fail. Come just as you are to receive mercy and find grace. He has promised in His Word that He will help you in your time of need. What is your need today? Talk to your Father about it. What struggles, fears, and addictions overwhelm you today? Lay it all before your heavenly Father and let Him help you.

My dear brother or sister, you are no longer a slave to sin, you are a child of God. The Word says, “For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father’” (Romans 8:15). The word “adoption” is more accurately translated as “sonship.”⁸⁸ Through Jesus, you have received the Spirit of sonship by whom you cry out, “Abba, Father.” Did you notice that the Holy Spirit refused to translate the word “Abba” into English? The original Aramaic word Abba is retained. Do you know why? It’s because, to the Jews, Abba is the most intimate way in which you can address your father. It’s a beautiful picture. In Abba’s arms, a child is most secure, protected, and loved. No enemy can pull a child out of his or her Abba’s strong arms. That’s the image God wants us to have when we pray to Him and call Him “Abba.” Of

⁸⁷ Prince, *The Power of Right Believing*, p. 311.

⁸⁸ Vine, NT: 5206.

course, you can call Him “Daddy” or “Papa,” or whatever term helps you to see God as a warm, loving, and caring Father.

Unless you can see Him as your Abba Father, you will continue to have a “spirit of bondage again to fear” (Rom. 8: 15). This spirit of bondage refers to the Old Testament fear of God. It’s a slavish fear of judgment and punishment that brings you into bondage and makes you afraid of God. But God doesn’t want you to fear Him. He wants you to have a Spirit of sonship! Too many believers are living with an orphan, fatherless spirit. If you are entangled with all kinds of fears, guilt, and worries today, what you need is a good heavenly dose of the Father’s love for you!

Something amazing happens in your spirit when you see God as your Father. If your son or daughter has a nightmare, all they have to do is cry out, “Daddy!” and Daddy is there! And if there is a monster under her bed, that monster is about to be torn to pieces by Daddy! Your son or daughter doesn’t have to go, “O Father that liveth and inhabiteth the next room, I plead with thee to come to me at this time of peril, that thou mayest rescue me from this nightmare!” All he or she has to do is to cry out, “Daddy!” and you are there.⁸⁹

Similarly, in your moments of weakness you don’t have to approach God with perfect prayers. You just cry out, “Daddy!” and your heavenly Father runs to you! You are not coming before a judge. You are coming before your Father, your Daddy God, who embraces and loves you just the way you are.

Take time to come to your Abba Father today. Believe that He loves you unconditionally today. See Him welcoming you with a smile on His face and with outstretched arms. Run into His embrace, bask in His perfect love for you, and let it melt away every worry, fear, and insecurity. When you believe and receive your Father’s love for you, it will put unshakable peace and strength in your heart.

Chapter Twelve: Restoration

Before we actually get into restoration, we need to deal with the question of whether there is correction under the new covenant of grace. The short answer is that they are inextricably linked.

Is There Correction Under Grace?

There are also those who teach that being holy is not important since we are under grace. They claim that under grace there is no correction and no need to grow in holiness. Let me just say this: such “teachers” are propagating error! The truth of the matter is that you cannot become more righteous, but you can become more holy. True grace produces true holiness. That is why the apostle Paul exhorts the Corinthian church to “awake to righteousness, and sin not” (1 Cor. 15: 34 KJV). The more you are under grace—the more you are established in your righteousness in Christ—the more you will want to live a holy life and be open to God’s correction.

So, is there correction under grace? Absolutely! But I want you to be established in the fact that under the new covenant of grace, God does not correct His children by using accidents, sicknesses, and diseases. Correction in the new covenant takes place through His Word. Paul tells us, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness” (see 2 Tim. 3: 16 NASB). Notice how correction through God’s Word includes “training in righteousness,” which is believing that you have been justified or made righteous by faith in our Lord Jesus.⁹⁰ I have found that oftentimes the Holy Spirit uses God-appointed leadership to accomplish this (see Gal. 6: 1, 2 Tim. 4: 2, 2 Thess. 3: 15) to point you back to Jesus’ finished work and who you are in

⁸⁹ Prince, *The Power of Right Believing*, p. 313-314.

Christ. That is why it is so vital that you be a part of a local church with good leaders. Observe how the apostle Paul corrects those in the Corinthian church who got entangled in sin and sexual immorality:

“Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For “the two,” He says, “shall become one flesh.” But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” —1 Corinthians 6: 15– 20

How did Paul correct them? In saying, “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?” he corrected them by firmly reminding them of their righteous identity in Christ. He then went on to remind them that their bodies were temples of the Holy Spirit. What does all this tell us? It tells us that anyone who is reminded of and has a revelation of his or her righteousness in Christ will have the power to overcome sin!

It is those who have forgotten or who are not established in their righteous identities in Christ who get trapped by the destructive forces of sin. Under grace we are called to walk in newness of life as the righteous children of God. We are called to reign in life through the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness. We have been purchased with a price, a heavy price at the cross, and are now called to live for the glory of our Lord Jesus!

⁹⁰ Prince, *Grace Revolution*, p. 161.

Grace Frees You to Live a Christ-Glorifying Life

Earlier on I mentioned the importance of reading the Bible for yourself and being skillful in God's Word. Look at this passage from Romans 6:

“Our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise, you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.” —Romans 6: 6–14 NKJV

There is an erroneous thinking that preaching the Ten Commandments can produce holiness in people. In reality, if you read the passage above closely, you will see that it is actually the preaching of the gospel of grace and the finished work of Jesus that gives people victory over sin! Because of the cross at Calvary, you are no longer “slaves of sin.” You are “freed from sin” and “dead indeed to sin.”⁹¹

Also, in Christ, by the power of His glorious grace, you have the liberty and power to glorify your Lord by not letting “sin reign in your mortal body” and by presenting “your members as instruments of righteousness to God.” You can know beyond a shadow of a doubt that “sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace” (emphasis mine). That’s the glorious gospel of grace! Grace produces glorious, victorious, and holy lives.

⁹¹ Prince, *Grace Revolution*, p. 163-164.

Now, if you know people who are living in sin and claiming that they are under grace, you know that they are most definitely not living under grace! How can they be when the Bible states that sin shall not have dominion over those who are under grace? Grace is the power to go and sin no more (see John 8: 11). There is a grace revolution going on and it is liberating precious people from the power of sin!

Holiness Is a Fruit of God's Grace

There are people who think that preaching God's grace gives people a license to sin and endorses licentiousness. That is not what God's grace does at all! On the contrary, God's amazing grace transforms a person's heart and produces true holiness. By true holiness, I am referring to a holiness that isn't just outward, but also deep and intimate, beginning at the very core of a person's heart. Holiness is a fruit of God's grace.⁹²

The word "holiness" in the New Testament is the Greek word *hagiasmos*, which is sometimes translated also as "sanctification."⁹³ The moment you received Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you were justified by faith and made perfectly righteous. You were also made holy or sanctified, which is to be set apart unto the Lord. And as you grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus, you are progressively transformed into His image from glory to glory (see 2 Cor. 3: 18). Now, you cannot be more righteous, because you are already 100 percent righteous by Jesus' blood. But under grace you can grow in holiness in the way you live your life.

I am all for holiness and I am vehemently against sin. Where I differ from some preachers is in my focus on how we stop the power of sin and help God's people grow in holiness. For many preachers the answer to sin is preaching the Ten Commandments. I believe the answer is preaching Jesus and the gospel of grace.

⁹² Prince, *Grace Revolution*, p. 164-165.

⁹³ Strong, NT: 38.

When people experience Jesus' unconditional love, they fall in love with Him and inevitably out of love with sin. Why? Because when you are loved and in love, you desire to please, honor, and bring glory to the One Who loves you unconditionally. A woman who is loved by her husband, and who is in love with her husband, doesn't go around looking for ways to commit adultery.

In the same way, a church who knows she is loved by her Savior, and who is in love with her Savior, doesn't go around looking for ways to dishonor Him. That is why my mission, when I preach, is to preach the gospel of grace. My part is to unveil our Lord Jesus to the congregation and show them His beautiful grace in the Word of God. When they experience the undeserved, unmerited, and unearned favor of God, they will go on to live glorious, victorious, and holy lives.

We read in 1 John 4: 10, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Now, which comes first? Our love for God or God's love for us? God's love for us! Yet, there are so many are still preaching that Christianity is about our love for God. My dear brothers and sisters, Christianity is all about God's love for you. It is His love for and in you that results in inward heart transformation. Christianity is not a religion; it is a relationship. Christianity is not about a list of dos and don'ts; it is about intimacy, love, and a warm, beating heart. That is why you can't preach holiness and right conduct to someone who has not yet experienced and tasted the grace of God.⁹⁴

Holiness Is a Result of Growth

Suppose you have a son who is three years old. You can't demand a beard from your son. Some things can come only with growth. When your son wakes up in the morning, you don't expect him to make his bed, brush his teeth, and change his diapers. Do you love your son even though his behavior is not "perfect"? Of course, you do, but you recognize that some things come with growth.

⁹⁴ Prince, *Grace Revolution*, p. 166.

Similarly, holiness is a result of growth. Holiness is the fruit and not the root. The Apostle Paul says it this way: “But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” (Rom. 6: 22 KJV). Fruit comes with growth. You can’t demand fruit from a juvenile tree. So how do you cultivate the tree to produce fruit? Simply by watering and nourishing it. In the same way, a believer who is well rooted and established in the gospel of grace will bear fruit in due time. The more he grows in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, the more he will bear the fruit of holiness. Holiness is a by-product of grace.⁹⁵

Now I want to draw your attention to the next few verses:

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.
—1 John 4: 11 NASB

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. —Ephesians 5: 25 KJV

Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.
—Ephesians 5: 22 NIV

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.
—Ephesians 6: 1 KJV

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. —Ephesians 4: 32 NASB

What is the common denominator in all these verses? The common denominator is the person of Jesus and His love, His grace, and His finished work at the cross. We have no ability to love one another, love our spouse, honor our parents, and forgive one another except if we have first experienced His love and forgiveness

⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 167.

in our lives. Being occupied, consumed, and absorbed in the love of Jesus makes you holy. Jesus is your holiness!⁹⁶

Love Is the Fulfillment of the Law

There are those who think that preaching the gospel of grace makes you someone who is against the Ten Commandments. How far from that is from the truth! I have never told people to come against the Ten Commandments. What I have been preaching is that one cannot be justified by keeping the Ten Commandments. In the 1,500 years that God's people lived under the law, not a single man (apart from our Lord Jesus) could be justified by the Ten Commandments.

Now, listen carefully to what I am about to say. Under grace, when you experience the love of our Lord Jesus, you will end up fulfilling the law! Under grace you will end up being holy. Grace produces true holiness! As the apostle Paul boldly proclaims, "Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfillment of *the* law." (Rom. 13: 10 NASB).

When the love of Jesus is in you, you can't help but fulfill the law. When your heart is overflowing with God's grace and loving-kindness, you will have no desire to commit adultery or murder, bear false witness, or covet. You will have the power to love your neighbor as yourself. Where does this power come from? It comes from your being firmly rooted and established in the grace of God. You have the power to love, because He first loved you! This is why the Bible declares in Romans 13: 10 that "love is the fulfillment of the law."⁹⁷

In fact, when God's people are under grace, not only do they fulfill the letter of the law, they also exceed it and go the extra mile. The law commands you not to commit adultery, and there are people who can fulfill just the letter of the law and

⁹⁶ Prince, *Grace Revolution*, p. 168.

not commit adultery outwardly. However, inwardly they have no love for their spouses. Grace changes all that. Grace doesn't just deal with the surface; it goes deeper and teaches a man to love his wife as Christ loved the church. In the same way, the law can command a person not to covet, but it has no ability to make a person generous. Again, God's grace goes beyond the superficial to inwardly transform a covetous heart into a heart that is loving, compassionate, and generous.⁹⁸

Remember the story of Zacchaeus? Not a single commandment was given. Yet when the love and grace of our Lord Jesus touched his heart, the once-covetous tax collector wanted to give half of his wealth to the poor and repay fourfold every person he had stolen from. The love of money died when the love of Jesus came.

Say Yes to Jesus and His Grace

I want to encourage you to be consumed with the person of Jesus. God's Word says that "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption," (1 Cor. 1: 30 NASB). Jesus Himself is your wisdom, your righteousness, and also your holiness! The Greek word used here for "holiness" is *hagiasmos*, the same Greek word used for "sanctification." Our holiness or sanctification is found in the person of Jesus.

Whenever you have an unclean thought, a stirring in you, or a temptation to sin, stop for a while and look at Jesus. See the cross. See and experience His love, His forgiveness, and His grace for you afresh. Jesus is your victory over every temptation, every addiction, and every bondage!

There are people who believe that all you have to do is say no to temptation. But you know what? Your willpower is no match for sin. The reality is, the more you

⁹⁷ Prince, *Grace Revolution*, p. 169.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 169.

try to say no by your own efforts, the worse it becomes. The apostle Paul describes this very struggle, which he himself experienced:

“For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.” (Rom. 7: 19 NASB).

The answer is not to depend on your willpower to say no to temptation, but to depend on God’s grace and say yes to Jesus!⁹⁹

In the midst of your struggle and temptation, say YES to Jesus. Say, “Lord Jesus, I thank You that You are my righteousness, You are my holiness, and You are my redemption.” Turn every temptation into an opportunity to look to and praise Jesus! That’s what Paul did. Just look at what he says in Romans 7: 24–25:

“Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (NASB)

Paul’s answer for victory over sin is found in a person. His question is, “Who will deliver me?” He doesn’t say, “Which commandment will deliver me?” Your liberty from every sinful habit is found in the person of Jesus! Say yes to Him! He is your righteousness and holiness. Let Him come into the areas where you feel the weakest and allow His grace to transform you from the inside out.

Return to Grace

At this point you may be thinking, Dr. Charles, I want to believe you and just come to Jesus as you say, but isn’t there a place for repentance when you have fallen short? I’ve been cautioned that grace preachers like you don’t teach repentance.

⁹⁹ Prince, *Grace Revolution*, p. 170-171.

My dear brother or sister let me say this right from the start. I believe wholeheartedly in preaching repentance. Let me show you something beautiful about the word for repentance in the Hebrew language. The Hebrew alphabet is made up of twenty-two letters, from Aleph to Tav. And each Hebrew letter has a picture, numerical value, and meaning.

The Hebrew word for repentance is *teshuvah*,¹⁰⁰ which is made up of five Hebrew letters— *tav*, *shin*, *vav*, *bet*, and *hei*. The first letter, *tav*, has as its pictogram a cross.¹⁰¹ The last letter, *hei*, is the fifth letter in the Hebrew alphabet,¹⁰² and the number five in Bible numerics represents grace. Sandwiched between *tav* (cross) and *hei* (grace) are the letters *shin*, *vav*, and *bet*. These three letters form the word *shuv*, which means “to return.”¹⁰³ Putting it all together, *teshuvah* or repentance means this:

“Because of the cross of Jesus, return to grace”!¹⁰⁴ Taking note that Hebrew reads from right to left, we see that *teshuvah* (repentance) means this:

ה	ב	ו	ש	ת
<u>Hei</u>	<u>Bet</u>	<u>Vav</u>	<u>Shin</u>	<u>Tav</u>
Grace	To Return		Cross	

Isn't it amazing that hidden in the Hebrew letters we just saw are God's heart and explanation of what true repentance is? Repentance is all about returning to God's grace because of His goodness demonstrated at the cross of Jesus. It is not about

¹⁰⁰ Retrieved June 6, 2018, from www.hebrew4christians.com/Holidays/Fall_Holidays/Elul/Teshuvah/teshuvah.html.

¹⁰¹ Retrieved June 6, 2018, from www.hebrew4christians.com/Grammar/Unit_One/Pictograms/pictograms.html.

¹⁰² Retrieved April 27, 2015, from www.hebrew4christians.com/Grammar/Unit_One/Numeric_Values/numeric_values.html.

¹⁰³ Prince, *Grace Revolution*, p. 23.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

returning to the law of Moses. It is about turning to the cross and returning to His grace. His grace is your source of power and strength over every sin.

So, if you have made a mistake, or you are struggling with a sinful habit today, repent by turning to the cross— seeing that mistake punished in the body of Jesus— and receiving God’s unmerited favor to overcome this area of weakness. This is how you practice true repentance when you have failed. Don’t run away from Him. Run to Him! He is your solution. He is your answer. He loves you and longs for you to return to His loving embrace!

I hope what you have seen through the discussion in this chapter is that Correction and Restoration are part of the same process.

Chapter Thirteen: Divorce and Remarriage In Relation To Ministry

We have looked at the biblical teachings regarding marriage, divorce and remarriage. One final area remains to be considered, that of a biblical perspective on remarriage among ministers. So why did I make the subject of ministers and remarriage the final area of discussion for this topic? The subject of Divorce and Remarriage among ministers is probably even more controversial than among the laity. I decided that I would put the full weight of the argument first and then make the case for ministers and remarriage without permanent forfeiture of their office.

Some who would read the preceding pages would agree with everything said to this point (though others would assuredly disagree with it). They would agree that those who are divorced because of unrepentant affairs or abandonment were free to remarry. But they would still bar divorced persons from certain positions of leadership in the church, principally, those of pastor, priest, deacon, and (in the case of some churches) elder.

The case for this position is largely based on the phrase “husband of one wife” that occurs in two New Testament letters and is interpreted as “husband of one wife *during his lifetime*,” sometimes with an added qualification, “*unless she dies*.” Most churches that follow this interpretation have written their doctrine as if it is entirely clear, meaning just exactly what they have assumed it means. But unfortunately, the phrase “during his lifetime,” and the some times added “unless she dies” simply is not in the Greek text. And given that as discussed earlier, the validly divorced person is free to remarry in Christ. They are to be considered as having been married only once, even under Jesus’ strict teaching against divorce.¹⁰⁵ So this particular teaching of scripture is to be applied to all equally, even ministers, priests, deacons, and elders.

Chapter Fourteen: Ten Types Of People Christians Should Never Marry

Often in the quest towards marriage and finding “the one,” something happens. It’s easy to overlook things that may not seem that big of a deal while dating, but these things could be destructive patterns once married. But love doesn’t have to be blind. There’s no reason to settle for unhealthy or harmful relationships, simply to pursue being married.

We all have sin issues that we deal with on a daily basis. We’ve all made mistakes that we often wish we could do-over. We all need the grace and freedom that only Christ Himself can offer. But our marriages are healthier when we recognize red flags in our dating relationships, instead of choosing not to see problems at all.

God cares about the decisions we make. He cares about who we marry. And we can trust He will give guidance and help us see some red flags to be aware of along the way.

1. The Unbeliever

Marriage can be hard enough at times, add to that the pressure of deeper spiritual disconnect, and you may be in big trouble when the normal stressors of life occur. Missionary dating and marriage will be a road of extra struggle. If you hold vastly different spiritual beliefs now, don’t falsely assume you’ll get him to “turn around,” or change his ways later. It may happen, but it may not. Be careful not to settle for less than what God would want for the spiritual health and care of your marriage.

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?
-----2 Cor. 6:14

2. The Abuser

You are worth far too much to be abused by anyone. Ever. Move quickly away from anyone who brings you physical, verbal, or deep emotional harm. It's not worth it to attach yourself to one who desperately needs help and freedom himself. You are not his saving grace. That is God's work. Marriage is built on deep love and respect and this is most certainly no way to begin. See the warning signs for what they are. Believe you are valuable and precious to God. Say "no more" and move on.

The LORD tests the righteous and the wicked, And the one who loves violence His soul hates. ----Psalm 11:5

4. The Addict

This man needs freedom that can only come by admitting there's a problem and seeking counseling, professional help, and the strength that God can bring. Addiction to alcohol, drugs, or pornography will lead to destruction. And though your relationship may seem to challenge him in the right direction, don't be fooled that he'll so quickly "give it all up for you," without the aid and accountability of professional help. You are not the one to set him free and your role is not to try to change him. Only God can.

All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything. ----1 Cor. 6:12

4. The Narcissist

If your boyfriend or girlfriend cares more about what they look like in the mirror on any given day, than what you do, or can't seem to get enough of his or her "greatness," you may have trouble ahead. No matter how handsome, beautiful, talented, or charming someone may seem, marriage is built on the word "together." If the relationship before marriage seems a bit one-sided, emphasis on "his side," or "her side", it may be destined for struggle. Your life should be greatly cherished by the man or woman who calls you his wife or her husband. Humility, compassion, love, and respect towards others are much more admirable characteristics than simply the externals.

For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.

----2 Timothy 3:2-5

5. The Controller

What seems to be disguised early on as "I'm only trying to help," can really be a deep need for control and a heart of jealousy. This man will dominate and strive to make every decision for you, decide who you should spend time or who you should no longer see. The one driven by control needs will have continual issues with whether he can "trust you." Often, under the grasp of the controller, you may start to feel like you can hardly breath. It's suffocating. It's supposed to be, that's how he holds you in his grasp. Be free. This is not your problem to fix. It's God's.

For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. ----James 3:16

6. The Angry, Hot-tempered Man or Woman

A man or woman who cannot control his or her temper before you're married, will most certainly be a man or woman who cannot control his temper after you're married. In most cases, it will worsen. No matter what our personality type, it still doesn't give us room to plow over anyone in our pathway with harsh words and rants. Take time in different scenarios to see how he responds, especially under pressure. How does he act on the ball field? In traffic? When the waiter gets the order messed up? When the pressures mount at work? When you're running late? The key is – does he realize it's an area of weakness that he desires for God to help him change? If the answer is “no,” steer clear.

“Do not associate with a man *given* to anger; Or go with a hot-tempered man, Or you will learn his ways And find a snare for yourself.” ----*Prov. 22:24-25*

7. The Man or Woman Still Tied to Mama

There is deep respect for those who care for and show love to their parents. Yet sometimes the lines get blurred. When the person you are dating still has every bill paid by their parents, they control every decision he or she makes, and if he or she cares more about what Mama thinks than what you think - newsflash – struggle is ahead. One of the number one causes of divorce is relationship difficulty with in-laws. No family is perfect but be sure you're both on the same page when it comes to leaving, cleaving, and uniting as one. If there is trouble with drawing healthy boundaries before you're married, there most definitely will be trouble later.

“and said, ‘FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH’? So, they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.” ----*Matt. 19:5-6*

8. The Flirt, Cheat, Tempter

Behaviors established before marriage are not going to magically go away once you say “I do.” Sexual sin can be a deep trap of the enemy and once ensnared in these destructive patterns, they are difficult to break. The mistakes of the past should hold no control over our present and future. Watch for behaviors that signal trouble. Is he respectful to women? Does she act appropriately around men? Does he flirt with your best friend or the waitress at dinner? Does she focus more of her attention on other men than on you? Is he or she begging you to sleep together? Do you get the impression they are always on the lookout for the “Bigger, Better Deal”? Red flag!!! Be careful that you have wisdom to see their true heart before you enter covenant relationship with one entrenched in sexual sin. You are worthy of respect, the one who loves you, will wait for you.

Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body. ----1 Cor. 6:18-20

9. The Liar

Every marriage must be built on trust. Without this as a firm foundation, you’re in for trouble from the beginning. So, what about those “little white lies” you started noticing along the way? In reality, there’s no such thing as little white lies. Any lie is meant to hide, deceive, or manipulate truth. There is no room for dishonesty in a healthy, loving relationship. It’s a dangerous trap and you will always be left wondering what he’s hiding.

“A false witness will not go unpunished, And he who tells lies will perish.”
----Prov. 19:9

10. The One with Destructive Money or Work Habits

If you're supporting your boyfriend or girlfriend and paying for everything now - this may not change much later. Is he or she a hard worker? Does he or she have a job? Is he or she a workaholic? Does he or she have secretive spending habits? Does he or she have an addiction to gambling? Does he or she have insurmountable debt? Once married, these patterns can worsen when the stressors of family life and responsibilities mount high. Money problems and financial struggles are one of the main causes of divorce. Have these discussions before you're married. Decide upfront if the two of you can agree on the big issues.

He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will suffer harm. ----*Prov. 13:20*

While You Are Waiting

Pray that God will guide and give you wisdom. Ask for His protection and help in making the best choices about any relationship.

Believe the best about yourself. You are valuable, you are treasured by God. Do not believe the lies that you need to settle for one you can't fully trust, or may not treat you respectfully or lovingly.

Trust Him with your future. We may not have it all figured out or be able to see what, or who, is ahead. But He knows. His timing is perfect. His ways are good. He's often at work behind the scenes where we can't see. Don't think for a minute He's forgotten you. He cares. And He has the power to do great things.

Chapter Fifteen: Blessings In A Christ Centered Marriage

We have been studying Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage, and I pray that it has made a difference to you and helped you to live in greater freedom than ever before. If you're married but you and your spouse are constantly quarreling and getting upset with one another, it is hard to live the let-go life. That's why in this chapter, I want to look at God's heart for your marriage and how you can invite the Lord Jesus into your marriage so that you can live the victorious, let-go life as a couple. Don't try to deal with all your stress and anxieties on your own— learn to live better than ever before. If you're married but you and your spouse are constantly quarreling and getting upset with one another, it is hard to live the let-go life. That's why in this chapter, I want to look at God's heart for your marriage and how you can invite the Lord Jesus into your marriage so that you can live the victorious, let-go life as a couple. Don't try to deal with all your stress and anxieties on your own— learn to live the let-go life as a couple. Together, put into practice whatever you might have learned from this course.¹⁰⁶

For instance, you might make it a game to catch one another being anxious and remind each other not to let your hearts be troubled. Decide that both of you will always be quick to forgive one another and to let go of any hurts to the Lord. Find Christ-centered messages that you can listen to together and share the portions that spoke to you with your spouse. If you are going through a health or financial challenge, find promises in God's Word that you can meditate on as a couple. Ask the Lord, who is always for you, to help you both keep Him in your conversations and to always keep Him in the center of your marriage.

There is such power when you and your spouse are in agreement. Our Lord Jesus said:

¹⁰⁶ Prince, Live The Let-Go Life, p. 221-222.

“If two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven” (Matt. 18: 19).

Together, you can agree to cast all your cares to the Lord. Cast every care about providing for your family, about your children’s education, and about the bills to be paid, because He cares for you and your family. Together, you can agree to stay in rest instead of being stressed out and flustered. Remind each other that the Lord Himself fights your battles against any chronic sickness, any lack of time for one another, and against any addiction that has put a strain on your marriage. As you keep focusing on the Lord Jesus and His finished work instead of focusing on each other, I believe He will draw you closer to your spouse and cause your marriage to be stronger than ever before!

Days of Heaven in Your Family Life

Do you want to know what God promised would happen if you keep on remembering His goodness and listening to His Word? In the book of Deuteronomy, God tells the Israelites to “hearken diligently” to His commandments (Deut. 11: 13 KJV). If you study the verse in Hebrew, “hearken diligently” is made up of *shama shama*, which literally means “listen, listen.”¹⁰⁷ When we *shama shama*, this is what the Lord promises us:

“That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth.” —Deuteronomy 11: 21 NKJV

The promise that we can have “days of heaven upon the earth” is in the context of family life. Do you want to experience “days of heaven” in your marriage? Do you

¹⁰⁷ OT: 8085, Joseph Henry Thayer, Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, The Online Bible Thayer’s Greek Lexicon and Brown Driver & Briggs Hebrew Lexicon.

want to have a marriage that is full of love and affirmation, instead of strife and contention? Then keep on listening to His Word together!¹⁰⁸

Maybe you are thinking:

But my marriage feels more like hell than heaven on earth!

I know that with all the pressures and stress that you face on a daily basis, your family life and marriage may not always feel like heaven on earth. But it is a promise that you can cling to, and I pray that every person reading this book will walk in a greater and greater measure of this wonderful promise in the days to come.

Pressures on Marriages

God ordained marriage to be a powerful covenant. The Bible declares that one can chase a thousand, but two can put ten thousand to flight (see Deut. 32: 30). There is exponential power in a marriage. It comes as no surprise then that the enemy wants marriages to fail. Attacks on marriages come from various fronts. I read that the top reasons that marriages fail include dealing with financial problems; lack of communication; rifts stemming from the stress of raising children; the quality of physical intimacy; infidelity; problems related to addictions such as drugs, alcohol, and gambling; physical or emotional abuse; incompatibility in personalities; unrealistic expectations; and a lack of quality time spent together.¹⁰⁹

Perhaps many of these reasons sound familiar to you, and you are currently experiencing them in your own marriage. Perhaps you are reading this and you are crying out in your heart because your marriage is not in a good place. Maybe you can't remember the last time you and your spouse spoke nicely to one another, let

¹⁰⁸ Prince, *Live The Let-Go Life*, p. 223.

¹⁰⁹ Retrieved November 4, 2017, from <http://divorce.com/top-10-reasons-marriages-fail>.

alone held hands. Intimacy has been out of the question because of the constant tension between you and your spouse. Deep down, you believe you still love your spouse, but every conversation you have tried to have has ended with raised voices, angry words, and wounded hearts.

Or perhaps you feel like you are living a lie. On the outside, everything in your marriage looks fine. You live in a nice house, you do things as a family, and financially, you are doing okay. But inside, your heart has grown cold, and it feels like your spouse is just your roommate or worse— a stranger. Maybe you are wondering:

Where is God's supply and grace in all this?

My dear brothers and sisters, I want you to know that God cares. He cares about your family and He cares about your marriage. Don't give up. I believe God has a word for you in the next few pages that can supernaturally turn your marriage around!

Your Marriage Is Important to God

Family was God's first priority. Long before God ordained a church, God ordained the institution of the family in the garden of Eden. I don't believe it was by coincidence that the very first miracle Jesus performed when He walked on earth was at a wedding feast. Before He healed one person who was sick, before He multiplied bread and fish to feed the hungry, before He even raised the dead to life, our Lord started His ministry by turning water into wine at a wedding. Doesn't that give you a wonderful insight into God's heart for your marriage? God's Word is so full of truths about His supernatural supply for your marriage and I pray that as you read on, He will cause you to step into a whole new level of intimacy in your relationship with your spouse. No matter how wonderful the man you married is or how amazing your wife is, there will be times when you will go through valleys in your marriage. And whether you are in a valley right now or

not, there are so many truths that we can learn by studying what our Lord Jesus did at that wedding in Cana, and I want to start by highlighting this: Human love can run out. Just like the couple ran out of wine at their wedding feast in Cana, many marriages run out of love when they are built solely on human love. If you are a divorcée or divorcé, please know that, in Christ, there is therefore now no condemnation (see Rom. 8: 1). God loves you, and I pray you will experience His restoration and supply of grace in every area of your life.

You and I know that it is not our heavenly Father's heart for our marriages to be marked with strife, stress, and the loss of love. Just observe what our Lord Jesus did when He was a guest at a wedding and the wine ran out: He turned water into wine. In fact, the resultant wine was so good that when the master of ceremonies tasted it, he marveled that the bridegroom had kept the "best wine" for the end (see John 2: 1– 11 NLT). Perhaps the wine has run out in your marriage. Once upon a time, there was excitement and romance, but demands piled up and the wine ran out. Babies came. There were diapers to be changed and mouths to feed, and the wine ran out. There were bosses to please, deadlines to meet, and the wine ran out.

Demands, stress, and burdens can have a negative impact on our relationships and marriages. Worries can cause you to become short-tempered and irritable and lead you to start taking your stress out on each other. Your anxiety can put a large strain on your marriage and even affect intimacy.¹¹⁰ This is why it is so important for us to live the let-go life that is more conscious of God's abundant supply for us than the demands placed on us.

If it feels like the wine has run out, please know that every marriage needs a "third party" in order to thrive. His name is Jesus. The Bible tells us that "a threefold cord is not quickly broken" (Eccl. 4: 12). When you invite Him to take center place in your marriage and you each draw from Him instead of constantly making

¹¹⁰ Retrieved November 4, 2017, from www.healthcentral.com/anxiety/treatment-260009-5.html.

withdrawals from each other, your marriage can be strengthened instead of becoming depleted— even when demands pile up.

When you put your spouse in a place where all your happiness depends on your spouse, you will be disappointed. Only the Lord can take that place. Your spouse cannot be God. When you keep your eyes on the Lord instead of each other, you can minister to each other out of His unlimited strength and grace, instead of drawing from each other. When you invite Him to take center place in your marriage, He can cause that which is tasteless and bland to become sweet and intoxicating. He can infuse your marriage with more passion and love than when your marriage first started. He will ensure that the wine never runs out and that you are supplied exceedingly, abundantly, above all that you ask or think (see Eph. 3: 20)!¹¹¹

Dr. Charles, you don't understand. It has been too long. Too many hurtful words have been exchanged for too long. I've neglected my spouse for too long. Our marriage is beyond repair.

My Beloved brother or sister, let me share something with you:

When Jesus turned the water into wine, He was showing that He is the Lord of time. It takes years for high-quality wine to be produced, but He compressed time and, in an instant, produced the best wine. He can do in a short time what takes years through human effort. One moment of His favor can turn your whole marriage around. Right now, I speak His supernatural favor over your marriage. May you find favor in each other's sight and experience a new excitement and love for one another in Jesus' mighty name. Even if it has been years since there has been love in your marriage, the Lord can redeem the years that have been wasted. As you invite Him into your marriage, He declares to you today:

“I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten” (Joel 2:25 NKJV)!

¹¹¹ Prince, Live The Let-Go Life, p. 226-227.

Ask God for More Grace

One of the reasons marriages break up is that one of the spouses has been unfaithful. Adultery is destructive, and as a pastor and counselor, I have personally seen too many families torn apart by the painful betrayal of adultery. My heart has been broken by the tears, the unanswered questions, and the intense anger that infidelity leaves in its wake. I have seen the impact it has on children, who end up blaming themselves when they see their parents' marriage crumble before their eyes. The consequences are devastating and far-reaching.

Adultery is wrong, and I want to be clear that I do not in any way condone it. If you have fallen in this area, I pray that you will have a fresh revelation of all that our Lord Jesus has done for you and receive the grace and the strength to get out of that adulterous relationship. As for your marriage, I believe it is never too late for the Lord to work a miracle. Lazarus had been dead for days, but our Lord Jesus brought him back to life (see John 11: 38– 44). Even if it feels like your love for one another has died, His healing and restorative power can still flow into your marriage and resurrect whatever is dead.¹¹²

We can learn from the story that the Bible records of a man who fell into adultery. King David had many wives and concubines. Yet, he was not satisfied. If you think that your spouse is not good enough for you and that you would be happy if you had another spouse, learn from David. Having another person does not mean you will be satisfied. Satisfaction comes from the Lord!

When David saw how beautiful Bathsheba was, he committed adultery with her and she became pregnant. To cover up what he had done, he arranged for Bathsheba's husband to be killed. Isn't that so characteristic of the destructive nature of sin, which always takes you further than you want to go? God then sent

¹¹² Prince, *Live The Let-Go Life*, p. 227-228.

the prophet Nathan to correct David. I want you to pay attention to what Nathan said:

“Thus says the LORD God of Israel: “I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave you your master’s house and your master’s wives into your keeping, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if that had been too little, I also would have given you much more!”

—2 Samuel 12: 7– 8

Nathan reminded David of how God had supplied him abundantly in other areas. But David had not asked God to supply what he needed in the area of his marriage. Many times, people have the mistaken idea that God is concerned with more “important” things like salvation and they fail to bring more “mundane” areas like their marriage to the Lord. If that describes you, I pray that once and for all, you will see that God cares for your marriage and He wants to supply His grace for your marriage. Don’t forget, our Lord Jesus chose the first day of a marriage as the setting for His first miracle. Your marriage is important to Him! When you try to provide for yourself, you will end up in a deeper problem.

Today, if you are not satisfied with your marriage— the passion has run out and there is no more joy in your relationship— ask the Lord for more of His grace in your marriage. But let’s be clear that He won’t give you a relationship outside of your marriage. He will give you and your spouse a fresh desire for one another and infuse that which has become bland with His sweet love!¹¹³

Receive the Gift of a Blessed Marriage

Dr. Charles, you don’t know how I have failed. I don’t deserve to have a good marriage.

¹¹³ Prince, Live The Let-Go Life, p. 229.

My dear brother or sister, even if you have failed, the Lord can still turn things around. You may not deserve a good marriage, but the Lord can still bless your marriage because of His grace! As you experience His undeserved and unmerited love, I believe the Lord can cause you to be an even better spouse than ever before. You don't deserve it, but at the cross, He paid the price for you to experience His blessings in your marriage. He was your trespass offering, bearing every punishment that you deserved so that you can walk in every blessing that He deserved (see Eph. 2: 4– 7). In the Old Testament, wine was referred to as “the blood of the grapes” (Deut. 32: 14). Jesus Himself took a cup of wine and said:

“This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22: 20).

Jesus' first miracle in Cana was a picture of His blood being poured out abundantly, resulting in celebration.

The only reason you and I can celebrate today is because of His shed blood, which is the basis for every blessing we receive from God. The law was given by Moses. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. The first miracle that Moses performed under the law was to turn water into blood, resulting in death. Jesus' first miracle of grace was to turn water into wine, resulting in joy and festivity. Aren't you glad Jesus came? Beloved, it is time to let go of condemnation and receive His grace for your marriage today.¹¹⁴

Let His Supply Flow in Your Marriage

Every challenge that you can face in your marriage has been borne by your Savior at the cross. Your part is to let go of all your trying, all your worrying, and all your regrets. Let go and rest in His finished work. I am believing with you that as you put your trust in Him instead of all your efforts, His miracle working power will

¹¹⁴ Prince, Live The Let-Go Life, p. 230

begin to flow and you will see Him do a new thing in your marriage. Now, romance, paying attention to each other's needs, communicating with one another, and other pragmatic aspects of cultivating a healthy marriage are important and have their place. But the cross needs to take center place. May He build roadways where you see wilderness and cause rivers of love to spring forth in the deserts of your hearts (see Isa. 43: 18– 19), just as He did for this brother in Singapore:

“My relationship with my wife turned really bad after the birth of our second child. As young parents we were not able to cope with two young children who were a year apart. Things got worse when we became stressed at work. We quarreled frequently and had less time with each other. Our lives seemed to revolve around the children and work.

“We finally separated and engaged lawyers to end the relationship. My wife and children moved to stay with my in-laws. At this darkest point in our lives, God divinely arranged for us to attend New Creation Church without each other's knowledge. When I found out that my wife and children were attending the same church as me, I suggested fetching them to church every week.

“Though things were still gloomy, both my wife and I chose to fix our eyes on Jesus as our only way to salvation. Weeks of hearing and learning about what Jesus has done for us slowly set us free from stress and anger. We began to love each other again with Jesus in our midst. By the grace of God my wife and I eventually reconciled and our relationship is now better than ever before.

“Our third child was born within four years after we had separated, and my wife has found a new job that offers better work-life balance. She was also promoted within two years, and in the third year she was transferred to the department of her choice, where the work is easier to manage. Indeed, with Jesus, everything is possible!”¹¹⁵

Don't you just love how the Lord works in such supernaturally natural ways?

¹¹⁵ Prince, *Live The Let-Go Life*, p. 231-232.

This couple was not trying to solve the problems in their marriage. In fact, they had already engaged lawyers to end their marriage. But as they kept on hearing about what Jesus had done for them, the water turned into wine. Love returned to their marriage and their relationship became better than it was before! My friend, if God can do it for this couple, He can do it for you too!

I speak Jesus' blood of protection over the marriage of anyone reading this course commentary. For those who are married, may you never have to walk through the pain of a broken marriage because Jesus has paid the price for you to have a blessed marriage and family life. If you are single or divorced, you can also experience days of heaven on earth by listening and listening to the words of our Lord Jesus. Let His Word wash over you daily, washing away every fear and every burden that you find so hard to let go of.

My Beloved brother or sister, as you listen to Him, healing is imparted. As you listen to Him, He is cleansing you and renewing your mind. Keep looking to our heavenly Bridegroom, who showed us what love truly is and laid down His life to redeem us. And may you walk in a greater and greater measure of His promise that we can experience days of heaven on earth!

Closing Words

The subject of Divorce and Remarriage has been and remains a highly controversial subject. From looking at the various scriptures concerning Divorce and Remarriage we can conclude several things. First, Divorce was not instituted by God, but He does regulate it. Second, that there are circumstances under which God allows for both divorce and remarriage without sin. Third, that divorce is not the unpardonable sin (although many in the church act as if it is). Fourth, that divorce does not automatically disqualify one from ministry. God's ability to cover all the contingencies and take care of the difficulties will never cease to amaze this student.

This student was somewhat surprised when doing the research for this paper. One of the surprises was the purpose of marriage is principally for companionship. I was often taught that it was for procreation and that the Family was one of the first things instituted by God.

The subject of Divorce and Remarriage is both theologically and personally interesting to this student as I have experienced both the pain and rejection of divorce. This has been twofold: From the separation and divorce itself as well as from the church. This has been experienced both personally and professionally. Those who know me best are torn as to how to respond professionally. They have such a poor understanding of the scriptures on the subject that they are hard pressed to say I should not be allowed to serve but have always been taught that divorce automatically disqualifies one from ministry. It is hardest on those who have seen me minister to others, teach and preach the scriptures because they cannot deny my gifting for ministry.

Divorce and Remarriage are topics that need to be studied more in depth so that the principles regarding it is practice, and so that the church may minister more effectively to those who find themselves going through either or both. We may find that rediscovering the Biblical teachings about marriage, divorce and remarriage can enrich our ministries.

Throughout this course, I have endeavored to show you the gospel of Jesus Christ through the Scriptures as well as through the testimony of others. Because of Jesus' finished work at the cross, He will never be angry with you nor rebuke you even when you fail. So, don't ever forget the main clause of the new covenant, which says that your sins and your lawless deeds, He remembers no more!

Many believers are defeated today because they do not know the God of the new covenant of grace. I believe with all of my heart that because you took this wonderful journey with me you saw for yourself, all the things concerning Jesus Christ and His finished work, your heart would now burn with His extravagant love for you. Jesus truly puts the "amazing", the "wonderful" and the "marvelous" back into grace!

Today, God is all about blessing you with His grace — His undeserved, unearned and unmerited favor — in every area of your life. Stop trying to deserve and earn your own acceptance before God with your own works and efforts. It will only frustrate the grace of God and nullify the effects of the cross in your life. My Dear brother or sister, Jesus already finished the work! Believe with all your heart that it is not about what you need to do today, but about what has already been done and accomplished on your behalf.

My Beloved brothers and sisters, I have proclaimed to you the gospel of Jesus Christ and am fulfilling the commission He gave me to bring Jesus back to central place in the church by rolling away the stone and opening people's eyes to reveal more of Jesus and His finished work. I know that if you have believed this good news of His grace, your life has begun to be radically transformed, together with the countless believers around the world who have already been impacted by the Gospel Revolution. I pray that this course has torn down the fences of controversy that the enemy has erected around the teaching of God's grace and the gift of righteousness, so that you may indeed receive not just grace, but the "abundance of grace", and receive not just righteousness, but the "gift of righteousness", and start reigning in life. Start reigning over sin, over sickness, over condemnation, over financial lack and over the curse of the law through the ONE, Jesus Christ.

All that I have shared works most powerfully and effectively within the environment of the local church. These truths are for the greater good of the body of Christ and should never result in you becoming a law unto yourself. Beloved, I want to see you enjoying the safety of the covering of a local church where there is accountability and submission. This is where our blessings are tremendously multiplied.

I thank you for taking this journey with me and for giving me the opportunity to unveil more of Jesus to you. You have been a wonderful traveling companion. We should do this again soon! In the meantime, until the next course begins, BE BLESSED!!!

In His Grace,

Dr. Charles.

I look forward to hearing from you about how our Lord Jesus has touched and impacted your life with His amazing grace.

It is all about Jesus and His finished work!

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