

Session 6

We are Forgiven and Reconciled In Christ

Key Question: What is forgiveness and reconciliation?

Core Truth: In Christ our sins have been removed from us. This means that we have also been freed from the debt, guilt and shame of our sins. Because of the redemption, forgiveness and justification that comes to us in Christ, we are also reconciled—put at peace—with God. This peace is not just the absence of hostility, it is the presence of His personal blessing as He now deals with us as His beloved Children, whom He has given the mission of sharing His love and grace with others.

To Remember: “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, since we have been reconciled, will we be saved by his life?” [Romans 5:10]

Objective: This week we will consider two more “birthright blessings” that come to us in Christ: forgiveness and reconciliation. Discussing forgiveness will be a good we to bring together all that we have heard so far about redemption and justification. The truth of Reconciliation will be a good way to prepare for and transition into hearing about deliverance and glorification.

WORDwork / Day 1

What Do We See and Hear? and What Does It Mean?

6.1 You are Forgiven in Christ.

Matthew 26:27-28 And after taking the cup and giving thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you, 28 for this is my blood, the blood of the covenant, *that is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.*”

Forgiveness is probably the blessing that is most often associated with Jesus’ work on the Cross. At the Last Supper, Jesus initiated the New Covenant that would be established by His blood. The “pouring out” of His blood would also be the basis for many having their sins *forgiven*. Forgiveness is the result of a central, “first” truth of the Gospel: Jesus died for our sins (see 1 Corinthians 15:3).

When Jesus first appeared for His public ministry, John the Baptist said of Him, “...Look, the Lamb of God *who takes away the sin of the world!*” (John 1:29). In Ephesians 1:7 we heard, “In him (Christ) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses...” The redemption that we have in Christ’s blood is the basis of our forgiveness. Again, we must never forget that what God the Father gives to us freely, cost Jesus dearly. We are forgiven *because* Jesus died for us.

When Jesus died on the Cross in AD 30, you and I did not yet exist. Not only that, but we had not committed one sin. When Jesus died for us, all of our sins were still “future sins,” and yet on the Cross He paid the price that would release us from the debt of all of our sins. Jesus came *to take away* the sins of the world – all sin past, present and future. This means all your sins as well. This means that in Christ, you are released from the *debt, guilt and shame* of your sins and *you are free* to live for God’s glory and pleasure.

6.1.1 What is Forgiveness?

The basic idea of forgiveness is simply releasing someone from a debt. In our relationship with God, when He forgives us, He is releasing us from the debt, guilt and shame of our sins. In His death on the Cross, Jesus has died in our place to pay the debt that our sins had incurred. Consider the following passage:

Colossians 2:13-15* And you, who were dead in your *trespasses* and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, *by canceling the record of debt* that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

God has clearly revealed in His Word what is right and wrong. We have all *trespassed or transgressed*—stepped over, intentionally rebelled against—these standards because we were born spiritually dead and therefore insensitive to God’s truth, goodness and glory.

Because of these trespasses, we all have a record of debt that shows not only that we are guilty of breaking the wise instruction of God, but also the penalty that is incurred by these transgressions. But God, in His great mercy, has *cancelled this debt* by

nailing it to the Cross with Christ. He has released us from debt of our sins. He has cancelled our debt so that now we owe Him nothing as far as our sins are concerned. This is forgiveness.

6.1.2 **Our sins are removed from us in Christ.**

Notice, this is very different from what happened in the animal sacrifices. The blood of those animals only “covered” over the sins the people. Now, the blood of Christ actually provides the basis on which God actually *removes* or sins from us. It is amazing to discover that even David speaks about this removal of the guilt of our sins in the Psalms:

Psalms 103:7-12 The LORD is merciful and gracious,
 slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
 103:9 He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever.
 103:10 He does not deal with us according to our sins,
 nor repay us according to our iniquities (*perversions*).
 103:11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
 so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;
 103:12 as far as the east is from the west,
 so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

Although David does not actually use the word “forgiveness” in this Psalm, the idea is present. Hear what David says: God does not deal with us according to what our sins deserve. He does not repay us according to the debt of our sinfulness. Instead, He *removes* our transgressions from us, as far as the east is from the west.

This metaphor is important. If you are traveling North on the globe, you will eventually reach the point at which you are going South. But if you travel East you will never reach the point at which you will be traveling West. *East and West never meet. God removes our sins from us in such a way, that they never touch us again.* This is why Paul quotes David in Romans as he says:

Romans 4:7-8 “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds
 are forgiven, and whose sins are covered;
Blessed is the one against whom the Lord will never count sin.”

God, in Christ, has freed us from the debt of our sins so that now He deals with us according to His love and mercy and not His wrath and anger as our sins deserve. ***You are forgiven in Christ.*** Can you accept this and live free from your guilt as well?

This blessing, as all of our other blessings, became real and experiential for you the moment you received Jesus as your Savior: all of your past, present, and future sins were forgiven by God!!! Since we can be assured that God has forgiven us and will forgive us, we can have confidence to live our lives openly and honestly before Him. He has truly set us free from the burden of our sins.



Many people ask the questions about the relationship of confession and forgiveness. There is a dialogue in the appendix and that deals with this issue. Please go there if you would like to explore this issue.

WORDwork / Day 2

What Do We See and Hear? and What Does It Mean?

6.2 **You Are Reconciled to God the Father.**

Romans 5:1-11 1 Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ...

... 6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 (For rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person perhaps someone might possibly dare to die.) 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Much more then, because we have now been declared righteous by his blood, we will be saved through him from God's wrath. 10 *For if while we were enemies* we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, since we have been reconciled, will we be saved by his life? 11 Not only this, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received this reconciliation.

- ? 28 What is the result of our having "been declared righteous by faith" in verse 1?
- ? 29 When did Christ die for us according to this passage? Why is this timing significant? How does it display the reality of God's love for us?
- ? 30 What is another benefit of being declared righteous in verse 9?
- ? 31 What does Paul say that we were to God before our salvation in verse 10?
- ? 32 According to verse 11, How should we respond to the reconciling work of Christ?

6.2.1 **We were enemies of God.**

When two people are enemies with one another, their relationship is one of hostility and discord. In Romans 5:10 Paul states clearly that we were once God's enemies. Yet, God did not create us to live this way. The real problem is that each of us were hostile to God by *nature* and *choice*, despising His truth and goodness. We needed to have someone bring peace to this relationship, we needed someone to put an end to the hostility. Christ came to reconcile us to God our Father. Where there was once hostility and wrath, now there is *peace* and *salvation*.

6.2.2 **We are now justified in Christ and this brings peace.**

Christ has now *reconciled* us—put us on favorable and friendly terms—with God so that we are at peace with Him. Notice first of all that this blessing flows out of our justification. Earlier, we defined justification as being declared to be in right relationship with God on the basis of Christ's faith/faithfulness transferred to our credit through our faith. So now that we have been declared righteous, we now have peace

with God. We were born His enemies, but by the death of His Son, He is now able to call us His friends.

6.2.3 **God loves us to point of giving His Son for us.**

When did Christ do this for us? When we were helpless, ungodly, sinners!!! Christ saved us when we were at our worst. Paul highlights this point by saying that it is rare for somebody to give their life for a righteous or even a good person, but for someone to die for a useless and wicked person is unheard of. But this is the only kind of people God saves—the corrupt and the wicked. God saves us when we were confirmed enemies, hostile to Him, dead in sin, lost in the darkness.

All of this should overwhelm us with how much God loves us. Christ died for us when we were all at our lowest, helpless and hopeless, enslaved to sin. Yet God saves us *in our sin from our sins*. The awesome reality of God's gracious love is that He saves the very people that really deserve His wrath. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us and saved us.

6.2.4 **We Will Be Saved From God's Future Wrath**

Notice that being set right with God and reconciled to Him also results in our being saved from God's *present* and *future wrath* in Christ. This speaks to the truths of *propitiation* and *deliverance* that we will discuss next week. God's *present wrath* is the process in which He turns people over to their own corrupt desires which would ultimately lead to their self destruction. Christ has set us free from this process. We also have no fear of God's *future wrath* because we now have peace with Him *through Christ and in Christ*. Because of this we can now rejoice! As Paul says, if God reconciled us through Jesus' death while we were His enemies, then how much more will He save us by His life! Now that we are at peace with God, we can have hope that He will save us completely.

6.2.5 **The Terms of Reconciliation**

When we think about reconciliation, we need to understand that this speaks of bringing peace, harmony and fellowship back to a relationship in which one person has offended the other. In order to set the relationship right, terms for reconciliation need to be laid out. It is the *offended person* that gets to set the terms of reconciliation. When this happens in the context of human relationships, it is almost never the case that one party is completely right and the other party completely wrong. In fact, in most cases, both sides of the dispute have offended the other and both need forgiveness.

In the case of our relationship with God, we have sinned against God but He has been completely faithful to us. We were born in an alienated state, hostile to God. This being the case, it is God alone who gets to define the terms that will lead to reconciliation. What are the terms that God has set? – Trust in my Son Jesus!!!

WORDwork / Day 3

How Does this All Fit Together? and What are the Key Truths?

6.3 How Does Christ Establish Peace?

6.3.1 What is true peace?

Colossians 1:15-20 has one of the most awesome descriptions of Jesus in all the New Testament. We hear that He is the Creator of all things, through whom and for whom all things were created. We also hear that He is “above” all things; He is first in all things. At the end of this hymn of praise we hear:

Colossians 1:19-23 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in the Son 20 and through him to reconcile all things to himself by making peace through the blood of his cross—through him, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

Jesus has come to bring peace, not just on earth but also in the Heavens. In the Bible the concept of peace is not just the absence of warfare and hostility, it also speaks to the personal presence of God’s goodness and glory. In other words, *there will not be complete peace until all things are set right*.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, the word that is used to speak of this idea is *shalom*. There will be no complete peace until all things are set right and set in order. Jesus, by the blood of His cross, is the one that will complete this peace.

6.3.2 How is true peace established?

Historically, peace (*a fragile and fleeting peace*) has been maintained by warfare—by the *defeat* and *subjugation* of the enemies of peace. However, God has used a different strategy in Christ; He has brought peace by the blood of His Cross. This is something that we need to reflect on to understand God’s wisdom.

When Jesus went to the Cross, He did so to provide the means for God to reconcile fallen and rebellious humanity to Himself. He did not first fight the powers of evil with *power for power*, instead Christ submits to the worst that the powers can do to Him. *The peace of Jesus is not won through warfare, it is purchased in His self-sacrifice*. This is part of the “deeper wisdom” of God’s way of doing things.

If God wanted just to destroy His enemies, He could have spoken the word and killed us all. God, amazingly, wanted to redeem us—He wanted to save us who were by nature and choice His enemies. How does He do this? By sending Jesus to die for us; by sending Jesus to take the violence and wrath that was due us. God does not redeem us by acting in violence towards us; God redeems us by *exhausting* our violence and hatred that we would pour out upon Him.

Take note of this principle: *Violence and warfare cannot be used to redeem and save and produce and everlasting peace*. It can only bring about the judgment and destruction of one’s enemies. In order to save us, God uses the “secret weapon” of His Kingdom—*self-sacrificial love*!

On the Cross, Jesus submits himself to the violence and rage of His enemies in order to save His enemies!!! After He was beaten, mocked, tortured and murdered, He arose from the dead on the third day as if to say, “Is that all that you’ve got?” Jesus gives Himself to the powers of evil and allows them to exhaust their violence against Him and in the end, He triumphs over them!

We must remember that we are the ones who were Jesus’ enemies. The Roman soldiers who beat, mocked, stripped, shamed and ultimately nailed Jesus to the Cross were not His only enemies. Jesus willingly went to the Cross for our sins and rebellion as well. Notice what Paul goes on to say in this Colossians passage:

Colossians 1:21 And you were at one time strangers and enemies in your minds as expressed through your evil deeds, 22 but now he has reconciled you by his physical body through death to present you holy, without blemish, and blameless before him 23 if indeed you remain in the faith, established and firm, without shifting from the hope of the Gospel that you heard...

On the Cross, God exposes the vile nature of our own sinfulness. When we think on Jesus’ torture and death, God is holding up our wickedness for us to see in graphic terms. He exposes the horror that is our sin in the crucifixion of His Son. He does this in order to wake us up to the reality in which we live.

We were enemies of Christ. But He has now reconciled us through His death so that He may present us perfect before the Father!!! Jesus has saved us through His self-sacrifice. He has brought peace through His blood shed on the Cross. As we contemplate the mystery of the Cross, we can glimpse the deeper wisdom of God’s self-sacrificial love that leads to everlasting peace and salvation.

But one final point needs to be made: *Jesus will return to destroy His enemies:*

2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 For it is right for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 and to you who are being afflicted to give rest together with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels. 8 With flaming fire he will mete out punishment on those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will undergo the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his strength, 10 when he comes to be glorified among his saints and admired on that day among all who have believed and you did in fact believe our testimony.

This passage touches on both the complete salvation of Christ’s people and the destruction of His enemies – those who have rejected the offer of God in the Gospel of Christ. You must realize that God is not opposed to the use of violence. But this is always His last move. This is what He reserves for those who remain confirmed in their rebellion against Him. God’s wrath brings destruction; His self-sacrifice brings salvation and peace. When we obey the Gospel, we are put at peace with God because we are aligning our lives with reality. Praise Jesus for all that He has done for us!

WORDwork / Day 4

How Does This Work in Life? and How Does This Work in My Life?

6.4 **We are Cleansed in Christ!**

One of the great benefits that comes from the redemption and forgiveness that Jesus makes possible is that *our consciences are also cleansed by His blood*. Your conscience is that part of your spiritual self that gives moral direction, leading you to know what is right and wrong. It is also that part which brings our *feelings* of guilt or shame. Jesus has cleansed our consciences once for all so that we will be free to serve God!!!

Hebrews 9:12-14 ... so (Jesus) himself secured eternal redemption. 13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a young cow sprinkled on those who are defiled consecrated them and provided ritual purity, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, *purify our consciences from dead works to worship the living God*.

Notice the redemption that Jesus provides is eternal—it will last forever!!! The cleansing that comes to us on the basis of Jesus blood is one that reaches even to our consciences—that part of us that recognizes guilt and shame. The blood of Jesus tells us that we no longer have to bear the burden of our shame and guilt for sin. He has forgiven us of these things so that He no longer holds them against us and *He has cleansed us of these things so that we no longer have to hold our sins against ourselves*.

Now make note of this: *you cannot serve God out of guilt!!!* God wants us to serve Him out of our freedom. When we choose to dwell on our sins, we are choosing to reject the full benefit of what Christ has done for us. He wants us to be free so that we can become people who fully reflect His mercy, grace and glory in all that we are and do. This all comes from trusting Christ alone for all that He has done for us!

6.5 **We forgive because we have been forgiven.**

Colossians 3:12-13 Therefore, as the chosen of God, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, 3:13 bearing with one another and *forgiving one another*, if someone happens to have a complaint against anyone else. ***Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also forgive others.***

For followers of the Lord Jesus, forgiveness is not an option. As we claim and cling to the forgiveness that Father-God offers us in Christ, we *must* offer forgiveness to others. Forgiveness is a natural outcome of self-sacrificial love. Forgiveness is necessary because *we are all* in the *process* of transformation and therefore act in foolish, ignorant or sinful ways that offend, hurt and wound others. Because we experience the forgiveness of God in Christ, we are able to forgive others.

We are called to be people characterized by forgiveness. This is the way we express the love of Christ to one another and also the way we give the world that is

still lost and alienated from God a taste of his goodness and glory. Think about the Colossians passage above and then think about this:



Do you generally practice an attitude of forgiveness with all? Why or why not? Do you see how practicing forgiveness can open the door for others to experience the grace and love of God through you?

6.6

We are now Ambassadors of reconciliation.

In all that we have heard this week, we rejoice in all that God the Father has accomplished through and in Christ. He has reconciled us to Himself. Even more than that He desires that we share in spreading His message of reconciliation, The Gospel:

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 So then, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; what is old has passed away - look, what is new has come! 18 And all these things are from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and who has given us the ministry of reconciliation. 19 In other words, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, *not counting people's trespasses against them*, and he has given us the message of reconciliation.

20 *Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ*, as though God were making His plea through us. We plead with you on Christ's behalf, "Be reconciled to God!" 21 God made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we would become the righteousness of God.

In Christ, God has provided the basis by which He reconciles the World—all of Adam's rebellious and lost descendants—to Himself. Right now, God is working in Christ through the Spirit by the message of the Gospel, calling people to come to Him so that He will not have to ultimately "count their sins against them."

In the present age, God is "not counting people's sins against them..." as Paul says here in verse 19. We are living in the Age of Grace. There will be a day coming when all those who have not accepted the Father's terms of peace in Christ will have to "pay up." What a terrible day that will be for those who have rejected Christ.

Paul was entrusted with this ministry of reconciliation. He saw himself as an ambassador for Christ sent into hostile territory to preach the Gospel so that many could be saved. You and I should take up this same attitude. We may not have an apostolic ministry like Paul, but we can proclaim this truth so that those who are lost and alienated from God can be reconciled to Him.

As we close, consider the following questions:



Do you know others who need to discover this peace with God in Christ?



In what practical ways can you let others get a taste of God's love for them through you?



Would you be prepared to share the Gospel to someone who might ask you about why you live the way you do? Why or why not?

Session 7

We are Delivered and Transferred In Christ

Key Question: **What does it mean to be delivered out of the Dominion of Darkness and Transferred into the Kingdom of the Beloved Son?**

Core Truth: Through the self-sacrificial work of Jesus, Father-God has delivered from the Dominion of Darkness and transferred us to the Kingdom of His Beloved Son. Although we were held captive both by nature and by choice, Father-God has set us free in Christ from His wrath so that we may now serve Him through the power of His Spirit.

Core Truth: “He (Father-God) delivered us from the Dominion of darkness and transferred us to the Kingdom of His Beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”
[Colossians 1:13-14]

Objective: We need to understand that in Christ we have been set free. We have been delivered from the Tyranny of Satan’s dark and dying dominion to the glorious Kingdom of Christ. All of this comes to us on the basis of Jesus self-sacrifice for us. The blood of Jesus has provided a wrath annulling sacrifice that allows us to cry out in faith, “I am no longer condemned in Christ!” “I am a child of God and a citizen of Heaven!”

WORDwork / Day 1

What Do We See and Hear? and What Does It Mean?

7.1 **We Have been Delivered and Transferred.**

Colossians 1:9-14* ... from the day we heard about you, (we) have not ceased praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so that you may live worthily of the Lord and please him in all respects bearing fruit in every good deed, growing in the knowledge of God, 11 being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might for the display of all patience and steadfastness, joyfully 12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the saints' inheritance in the light. 13 **He delivered us from the power (dominion) of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His Beloved Son,** 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

? 33 With what does Paul pray for the Colossian church to be filled?

? 34 What should be the result of this filling? (vv10-12, 5 things)

? 35 What has the Father done for us? (verse 13)

7.1.1 **We Have Been Delivered From the Dominion of Darkness.**

In Christ, we have been delivered. We have been delivered out of the kingdom of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of God's beloved Son Jesus. We have also been delivered from God's wrath through the sacrifice of Jesus. Now that we are delivered, there is now no condemnation for all of us who are "in Christ."

First of all, notice what Paul says at the end of this passage from Colossians: He delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

We have been delivered by God to the Kingdom of His Beloved Son!!! Notice he again touches on what we have considered earlier: in Christ we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins. Because we are now in a New Kingdom, we have a new position before God, a new relationship to Him and that means that we have a new way of life. We will consider the first part of this passage in our application section later this week. For now, we are going to explore the last part of this passage.

7.1.2 **We were all once citizens of Satan's Dark Dominion.**

Most of us are not used to thinking in terms of "kingdoms" and "dominions." In fact, it may be a surprise to discover *that God's universe is not a democracy*. God is Sovereign King over all His creation. He does not submit to the popular vote of His subjects. Instead, He rules by His own perfect knowledge, wisdom and power expressed in His grace and righteousness.

On this present Earth, there is a Dark Dominion (a ruling power and authority)

that stands opposed to the truth, goodness and glory of God. This dominion has as its “king” Satan (the Adversary, the Devil)—the enemy of all who would love and worship the One True God. This World has temporarily been usurped by Him. Paul tells us that Satan now blinds non-believers to light of Gospel:

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 ... even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing, among whom the god of this age has blinded the minds of those who do not believe so they would not see the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God.

Satan is not God’s equal, but he is still very powerful nonetheless. The bad news for each of us is that we were born by natural birth into Satan’s Dominion of Darkness. This is the destiny our first parents chose for our human family. Each of us was born dead in sin, blind to God’s truth and incapacitated by our own pride and desire for total self-sufficiency. We were born enemies of God, “children of wrath,” “disobedient sons” (see Ephesians 2:3, 5:6).

7.1.3 **God has Delivered Us!**

But then God intervened:

2 Corinthians 4:6 For God, who said “Let light shine out of darkness,” is the one who shined in our hearts to give us the light of the glorious knowledge of God in the face of Christ!

God shined in our hearts, He illuminated us with the light that comes by way of the life and glory of the Lord Jesus. He called us to Himself by His love and grace and He opened our eyes to see the truth of the Gospel of Christ. When we received God’s gift of salvation through faith, we were transferred out of the Dominion of Darkness and transferred to The Kingdom of God’s Beloved Son Jesus.

You, just like every other Child of God, have been turned from the Darkness to the Light by the power of God’s Gospel, the “good news,” the “royal proclamation” of Jesus the King. By His grace, through faith, God has transferred us from the Darkness to the Light. Whereas Satan was once our King, now Christ is our Great King.

Those who remain enslaved to the Enemy in his dark dominion will finally enter into their eternal destiny, the Outer Darkness (see Matthew 22:13). To reject the One True God is to be cut off from all that is good, true and glorious. Yet all of us who have been transferred to the kingdom of Christ by His grace made real in the power of the Gospel will one day enter our eternal destiny: Reigning together with Christ in His Kingdom:

Revelation 5:9-10 (The Elders in Heaven) were singing a new song: “You (Christ) are worthy... and at the cost of your own blood you have purchased for God persons from every tribe, language, people, and nation. 5:10 *You have appointed them as a **kingdom** and **priests** to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.*”

WORDwork / Day 2

What Do We See and Hear? and What Does It Mean?

7.2 **We Are Delivered From God's Wrath. (Propitiation)**

7.2.1 **What is God's Wrath?**

The wrath of God is not a popular topic these days (nor has it ever been). People don't like to hear about God's wrath and assume that it is a part of His personality that He left behind in the Old Testament. But this is far from the truth. Take a look at the following passages:

Romans 1:18 For the *wrath of God* is presently revealed from heaven against all *ungodliness* and *unrighteousness* of people who suppress the truth by their unrighteousness, ...

Ephesians 5:6 Let nobody deceive you with empty words, for because of these things *God's wrath comes* on the sons of disobedience. (see Colossians 3:6 for a parallel statement of this)

Simply stated, God's wrath is his righteous way of dealing with sin and evil (all that is not in line with His truth, goodness and beauty) by allowing them to have their way. On a personal level, God's wrath is His turning people over to themselves which ultimately results in their own destruction.

There are two aspects of God's wrath that we need to consider: 1) His *present wrath*, and 2) His *future wrath*. God's *present wrath* is displayed in the way He is allowing rebellious humanity to cave in upon itself because of its own wicked and corrupt desires. God's *future wrath* is also coming. This wrath is displayed in the present reality of Hell and the coming eternal reality of the The Lake of Fire. This will be the eternal destiny of all those who ultimately and finally rejected the mercy and grace of the One True God made available in Christ.

The Biblical truth of God's wrath is not very popular because questions like "How could a loving God send anyone into eternal torment?" come up. In order to understand this we need to see how wrath is actually bound up with God's love and righteousness and desire.

7.2.2 **God's Wrath is related to God's love and desire.**

God's righteous wrath against sin and wickedness and His love for things good and pure are really two sides of the same coin. Since God *loves* what is true, good and beautiful, He *hates* all that stands contrary to these—all that is evil and twisted and corrupt. In fact, God loves what is good and glorious so much that His righteousness demands that He ultimately destroy all that is evil and corrupt. This is the reality of His *wrath*.

In Ephesians 2:2 Paul says that we all were "children of wrath." We were children who were destined for and deserving of wrath because we were born dead in Adam, enslaved to the Evil Powers of this world, and enslaved to our own sinful desires. We

too were once among the “sons of disobedience” who are worthy of God’s condemnation. But God has provided the means in Christ by which we escape His wrath.

7.2.3 **Christ’s sacrifice for us turns away God’s wrath.**

Earlier, we saw how Christ has redeemed us—He has given His blood to set us free from all that enslaved us. Jesus’ blood has also provided another great blessing for us: the *propitiation* of God’s wrath. Propitiation takes place when an acceptable blood sacrifice is given to satisfy God’s righteous wrath. For us, Christ is that sacrifice. Take a look at what John says about this:

1 John 4:10* In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be *the satisfying sacrifice (propitiation)* for our sins.

God displays his great love for us in that He sends His One Unique Son Jesus to be a satisfying sacrifice for our sins so that He can freely and lavishly accept us as His sons and daughters!!!

This is not a sacrifice that we have to bring to God and offer Him; this is a sacrifice that He makes for us and then offers it to us freely, without cost to us!!! There is no offering that you could possibly bring to God to accomplish propitiation. God Himself had to provide His own acceptable sacrifice.

There is an illustration that helps communicate this awesome concept. The plains Indians of North America lived under constant threat of wildfires that swept across the plains, fed by forceful winds. Wildfire could appear and encircle a village in a matter of minutes, preventing any escape. But the Indians learned that as wildfire rushed toward them, they could voluntarily burn a wide fire-ring around their village. When the wildfire met the fire-ring that had already been burned, it could not burn again where the fire had already burned. The wild fire would pass them by. All those who were inside the fire-ring of safety were passed by and saved.

In Christ, you are saved from God’s wrath because His wrath has already burned and been satisfied in Jesus’ suffering for you. He provides a “ring of safety” for all who trust in Him. When you accepted Him and stepped inside the family circle of all those in Christ, you entered into a position in which God’s wrath has been satisfied, never to burn again.

In 1 Thessalonians Paul encourages the community of believers with the blessings that have come to them in Christ in spite of some affliction that they were enduring. There he says:

1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 For people everywhere report how you welcomed us and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God 10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *Jesus our deliverer from the coming wrath.*

Jesus is our Deliverer from the coming, future wrath of God! Father-God will never abandon you to yourself; He will not turn you over to your un-purified desires. You are now in His care in Christ, delivered from both His *present* and *future* wrath!

WORDwork / Day 3

How Does this All Fit Together? and What are the Key Truths?

7.3 **There is Now No Condemnation In Christ!**

7.3.1 **Father-God now treats us as His beloved Children.**

In Romans 8:1 Paul makes a powerful and profound statement:

*“There is therefore **now no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus!”*

One of the great benefits of understanding *propitiation* is the reality that God now treats us as His children in love and compassion, not in anger and wrath. You may have been brought up in a tradition that teaches that when “bad things” happen to you, it is because God is angry with you and punishing you for your sins. *This is a lie.* If we are In Christ, we are no longer under any form of condemnation from God.

Hard times will come to us as followers of Christ. Bad things will happen. But these never come upon one of God’s children because He is wrathful and angry. *When He allows pain and suffering in our life, it is not intended to beat us down but to build us up.* And make no mistake about it, he will allow suffering and affliction to come to us because these are some of the primary tools that He uses to shape us into the likeness of Christ. Yet in all of this, He now treats us as beloved children, not as enemies. Consider this:

Hebrews 12:5-7 “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. 12:6 For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” 12:7 It is for discipline that you have to endure. **God is treating you as sons.** For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

Every good fathers disciplines his children in order to shape them into mature and honorable people. The author of Hebrews goes on to explain that our earthly fathers disciplined us as best they could, but our Heavenly Father disciplines us so that we may share in His holiness (Hebrews 12:13). The discipline of the our Heavenly Father may hurt us deeply, but we must be convinced that He does it because of how much He loves us.

The blood of Christ provided a righteous-wrath-satisfying-sacrifice that enables you to be assured of God’s love for you. He does not deal with you in His anger and wrath, only in His Holy love. Let’s explore these truths for a few minutes.

7.3.2 **Jesus is Our New Mercy Seat.**

Yesterday we discussed the concept of propitiation: a sacrifice that annuls wrath. Earlier when we were discussing justification we touched on a passage that also mentioned propitiation:

Romans 3:22-25 ... For there is no distinction, 23 for all have sinned and fall

short of the glory of God. 24 But they are justified (declared righteous) freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. 25 God publicly displayed Him as a *propitiation* (*hilasterion*) accessible through faith in His blood...

The word that is translated as “propitiation” here is the Greek term *hilasterion*. This term was used in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrews Scriptures) to refer to the covering to the Ark of the Covenant or the “Mercy Seat.” This is the way this term is used in Hebrews 9:5:

Hebrews 9:3-5 And after the second curtain (in the Tabernacle) there was a tent called the Holy of Holies. 9:4 It contained the golden altar of incense and the Ark of the Covenant covered entirely with gold. In this Ark were the golden urn containing the manna, Aaron’s rod that budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. 9:5 And above the Ark were the cherubim of glory overshadowing *the mercy seat* (*hilasterion*)....

This covering of the Ark of the Covenant, the “Mercy Seat” was the place where the High Priest would offer the blood of the sacrifice for the sins of the people one time a year, for the whole year, on the Day of Atonement. But why in the world are we talking about this?

Some translators have suggested that what is in reference in Romans 3:23 is Jesus work on the Cross as our New Mercy Seat. Consider the following translation:

Romans 3:23 God publicly displayed him (Christ) as the Mercy Seat accessible through faith in his blood.

The idea that God displayed Jesus on the Cross as the perfect, wrath annulling sacrifice. The Cross has now become for us the place where the final sacrifice for sin was made. Whereas under the Old Covenant only the High Priest could enter into the Holy of Holies and see the blood poured upon the Mercy Seat of the Ark, God has now displayed the sacrifice of His Son publicly for all to see, so to speak. We go to the Cross as the place to find mercy. There we find the blood of Jesus, the perfect sacrifice, poured out for us.

This place of sacrifice is now “accessible through faith.” We do not have to go anywhere to receive the benefits of this sacrifice. This offering is one that God makes for us and we accept it through faith. We trust that Christ Jesus has done for us what we cannot do for ourselves. His blood has purified us, redeemed us and has made it possible for God to treat us as his children not as His enemies who deserve only His wrath.

Although the translation of this verse is still a hotly debated issue, we believe that it is helpful to think about Jesus on the Cross as the place of final, perfect sacrifice—the New Way that God has displayed *publicly* for men and women to find peace with Him and deliverance from the tyranny of sin and death. Because of all that Jesus has done for us, we can cry out: “*There is now no condemnation for us in Christ!*”

WORDwork / Day 4

How Does This Work in Life? and How Does This Work in My Life?

7.4 How Can We Respond to Our Deliverance?

1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 For people everywhere report how you welcomed us and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God 10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *Jesus our deliverer from the coming wrath.*

Imagine that you were born into a country ruled by a wicked dictator. Living under the evils of his corrupt regime prohibits you from enjoying the quality of life that is the birthright of every citizen born into a free country. Imagine too that you have made repeated attempts to escape but with no success. Finally, you grow resigned to the reality that freeing yourself is humanly impossible. Deliverance from that corrupt country and evil dictator will have to come from a power greater than yourself.

Now imagine that a rescue team from the free world comes to your aid. You are successfully airlifted during the night and awake the following morning in a free country. Your “position” has changed dramatically, not by your efforts, but only through the mercy and power of someone who cared enough about you to come to your rescue and deliver you from your captivity. In Christ, we have now been rescued from the Dominion of Darkness and transferred to the Kingdom of Christ.

So how would we respond to the One who has set us free. Look back to what Paul prays for the Colossians (*and all of us*) in Chapter 1 of that letter:

9 (we) have not ceased praying for you
and **asking God to fill you** |
with the *knowledge of his will*
in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,
10 **so that you may live worthily** of the Lord
and please him in all respects
1) *bearing fruit* in every good deed,
2) *growing* in the knowledge of God,
11 3) *being strengthened* with all power
according to his glorious might
for the display of all *patience* and *steadfastness*,
12 4) *joyfully giving thanks* to the Father....

Paul prays for us to be filled with the knowledge of God’s will/desire. We have been created by Him and for Him and so we should be concerned about His desires for us. This knowledge comes to us in wisdom and understanding that is cultivated by the work of the Spirit with in us.

As we submit ourselves to this *knowledge* we learn to live in a way that is truly pleasing to God, a way that is worthy of God’s holy name and associated with us as His Children. Paul lists four specific things that we can do to cooperate with God’s

work in us: 1) bear fruit in every good deed, 2) grow in the knowledge of God, 3) live in the strength of His power so that we are patient and steadfast (we stick to things and don't give up), and 4) joyfully giving thanks to the Father.

In all that we have heard so far in this study, it should become more and more obvious that *we do not belong to ourselves*; we each belong to Father-God and we each belong to one another. Consider again what Paul says about this:

Titus 2:14 He (Christ) gave himself for us to redeem us from every kind of lawlessness and to purify for himself a people *for his own possession* who are zealous for good works.

As we continue to meditate on all of the ways that Father-God has blessed you in Christ, we need to continually cultivate a sense of humble gratitude that results in a life that is lived for the glory and pleasure of God. Think on the following:

Ephesians 5:6-10 Let nobody deceive you with empty words, for because of these things God's wrath comes on the sons of disobedience.

7 Therefore do not be partakers with them, 8 for you were at one time darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. *Walk as children of the light* 9 *for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth* 10 *trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.*

Here, as in the Colossians passage above, Paul wants us to understand that we have been liberated by God the Father from the wicked and dark dominion into which we were all born. In response to this deliverance, we should "walk" or "live" as children of the light seeking to please God in all that we do.

Right now, you have the ability to do this very thing. As your relationship with the Father in Christ grows and matures, He will guide you in ways for you can live out the reality of all of these truths. Ask Him for help. Give Him time to answer. He has given you His Holy Spirit to lead you in all things that are pleasing to Him. You should not be surprised to discover that in pursuing the things that are pleasing to God you will find satisfaction for your soul and freedom in all things.



Ask the Father to help you be aware of many ways that you can "bear fruit in every good deed" each day, realizing that the Spirit empowers you to do this.



Ask the Father to help you know Him in Christ through the Spirit in a deeper personal way.



Ask the Lord to make you aware that you have access to His "glorious power" (the same power that raised Jesus from the dead) to be patient in all things but also steadfast, persevering in all things.



As you see the Lord working in your life, give Him thanks for all that He has done, is doing and will do. Gratitude is the first step of true transformation.

