

Lesson 1 – Knowing Who You Are in Christ

I. Salvation is a Gift. It Cannot Be Earned

- A. Salvation cannot be earned; it is a gift we accept by faith in Christ Jesus.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:8-10 (NKJV)

- B. Jesus redeemed (purchased) our salvation for us with His blood and suffering. He paid the price for our sins so that we could be free from the wages of sin and have eternal life.

"He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs. And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Isaiah 53:3-6 (NKJV)

II. MAN'S GREAT NEED

When studying God's redemption of man, it is vital that we understand what it is that we were redeemed from! Paul told the Ephesians that before they were saved, they were by nature the children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3); he said that they were without hope and without God in the world (Ephesians 2:12). Man was under *the dominion of darkness* and needed to be delivered (Colossians 1:13). As we shall see, only God could accomplish this deliverance.

A. Man before the Fall

When God created Adam, He created him without sin and without flaw, in His own image (Genesis 1:27), and breathed into

him His own Spirit (Genesis 2:7). Adam was a perfect creation (Genesis 1:31), able to stand in God's presence without guilt or fear and enjoy fellowship with Him.

1. Created in God's image

Adam was made in the *image of God*, which set him apart from all the other creatures God had created. He was in God's image in that he was created a *spiritual being* (Genesis 1:27). God is a spirit and can only have fellowship with a creature of like kind. So, He made man "a little lower" than Himself, a spirit being with whom He could fellowship.

2. God's under-ruler

Adam was a creature of *authority*, for God gave him dominion over all the works of His hands (Genesis 1:26,28). We have little appreciated the extent of his dominion. David said:

Psalms 8:5-6 (NKJV) ⁵ *For You have made him a little lower than the angels, And You have crowned him with glory and honor.* ⁶ *You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet,*

Adam was God's under-ruler on the earth, and it was his responsibility to take care of it.

3. Freedom of choice

Adam was also given *freedom of choice*. It was his prerogative to choose to obey God or to disobey Him. The forbidden tree was placed in the garden (Genesis 2:9) to insure that Adam had this freedom. Without it he would have been little more than a robot, obeying God simply because he had no other option.

The New Testament reveals that before the foundations of the world, God had wanted a family (Ephesians 1:4-5), which is why He called us to fellowship with Himself and His Son (I Corinthians 1:9; I John 1:3). So He created a being like Himself (in His image), giving him dominion and freedom of choice. With such a creation, He could have fellowship.

B. Man After the Fall

God told Adam that if he disobeyed and ate of the forbidden tree, he would die that very day he did so (Genesis 2:17). Simple reading of the Bible text will show that God was not referring to mere physical death, for Adam continued to live physically after

his disobedience. The immediate effect of this first sin was *inward*. The outward manifestation of the inward effect did not occur until nine hundred and thirty years later (Genesis 5:5).

1. Spiritual death

The death to which God referred was *spiritual death*. The entrance of sin into Adam's life brought separation from God, the source of all life; "*for the wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23). The effect of this corruption of Adam's nature is immediately apparent; Adam tried to hide himself from the presence of God (Genesis 3:8). The *unrighteousness* which came into Adam as a result of his disobedience made it impossible for him to come freely into God's presence.

2. The inheritance

The effects of Adam's disobedience go far beyond the life of Adam and Eve. We are told in the New Testament that because of Adam, we *all* died spiritually. For "*as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive*" (1 Corinthians 15:22). Through one man's sin, death (i.e. spiritual death) entered the world and passed upon all men (Romans 5:12). All men have inherited spiritual death from Adam, because they are born with *Adam's likeness and image* (i.e. his fallen nature) as was Seth (Genesis 5:3).

Thus, the curse of sin passed onto the entire human race as a result of Adam's transgression. David was so aware of this curse that he stated in his prayer of repentance: "*Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me*" (Psalm 51:5).

C. Man's Inability to Help Himself

Not only did spiritual death pass upon all men, but man was also left powerless to overcome this inward condition. The creature which God had created to rule became a *slave to sin*, unable to break free and get back into fellowship with God. No amount of good works could ever re-establish the right-standing that Adam had with God before the fall. Man was now by nature an unrighteous creature.

"*For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God...*" (Romans 3:23). Paul says that there is none righteous, not *one* (Romans 3:10). Those who wish to establish their own righteousness by good works are destined to fail and might well cry out as did Paul

before his conversion: *“Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?”* (Romans 7:24).

III. GOD’S ANSWER TO MAN’S NEED

God didn’t cease to love man when he fell and was lost in unrighteousness. If that were the case, no way of salvation would ever have been made by God. God’s love for man was too great for Him to let man go to destruction without making a way of deliverance available.

“For while we were still helpless, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:6). Man was helpless to regain that position of right-standing with God that Adam had originally enjoyed. God Himself would have to do it for man.

A. Jesus, God’s Solution

God’s redemption of man revolves around the person of His Son, Jesus. Jesus was God’s plan for our redemption from the very beginning. He is the promised redeemer who was to bruise (crush) the serpent’s head (Genesis 3:15). On the day that man fell, God had no other redeemer in mind but Jesus. This is why Jesus called *“the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.”* (Revelation 13:8 NIV)

B. Scriptural Steps to Salvation

1. Admit that you are a sinner and that only Christ can save you. – **Romans 3:23**
2. Repent of your sins. Repentance is turning away from sin and submitting to God and His plan for you. – **Luke 13:5**
3. Believe that Jesus died for you and shed his blood to pay the price for your sins and that He rose again – **Romans 10:9-10**
4. Ask God to save you – **Romans 10:13**
5. Commit yourself to Christ and ask Him to be the Lord of your life. – **Romans 12:1-2**

IV. GOD’S WORD OF TRUTH

A. God loves us in spite of the failures and poor choices that we have made in the past.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16 (NKJV)

I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance. Luke 15:7 (NKJV)

B. God created you and knows all your strengths and weaknesses.

"I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them. How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them!" Psalms 139:14-17 (NKJV)

C. God has a plan for your life

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future". Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

D. God loves you even when you stumble and fall.

"If the Lord delights in a man's way, he makes his steps firm; though he stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand." Psalms 37:23-24 (NIV)

"for though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again, but the wicked are brought down by calamity." Proverbs 24:16 (NIV)

E. God will give you beauty for ashes of your past. He will give you joy to replace your mourning.

". . . and provide for those who grieve in Zion-- to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor. ⁴They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations." Isaiah 61:3-4 (NIV)

F. God will take the things that the devil would have used to destroy you and use them to bring abundance into your life.

"Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt!"⁵ And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.⁶ For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping.⁷ But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.⁸ "So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt."
Genesis 45:4-8 (NIV)

G. It is not "who" we are in ourselves, but "whose" we are that is important.

"It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption."
1 Corinthians 1:30 (NIV)

"So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir."
Galatians 4:7 (NIV)

Personal Reflection: Knowing Who You Are in Christ

In Luke 15, Jesus tells the story which we now call the story of the prodigal son. A man had two sons and the younger son asked for his share of his father's estate. The father divided his wealth between his two sons.

The younger son took his portion, went into a distant country and squandered his money with loose living. He became so impoverished that he hired himself out to feed swine, an unclean and abhorrent animal to a Hebrew. He was so destitute and hungry that he thought of eating the food the swine were eating.

In this state of brokenness and humiliation, he decided to go back home to his father and ask to be a servant in his father's house. But when his father saw him while he was still a long way off, the father ran to him, embraced him and kissed him. The son was repentant and humbled.

Under the Law of Moses, the young man's punishment for his rebellion and dishonoring his father was to be death by stoning. Yet the father covered him with the best robe, put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet – all of which were symbols of the father's love and restoration of the young man to the status of his son.

Many of us have been rebellious against the commandments of God, gone our own willful ways and made poor decisions that resulted in impoverished relationships, finances and health. The good news is that regardless of what a mess we have made of our lives, our heavenly Father still longs for us and waits for us to humble ourselves and return to Him. He has made provision for our sins through Jesus and longs to embrace us as his children and restore the broken places in our lives.

Self-Evaluation Worksheet: Summary Questions

- a. Have you had moments of rebelling against God's plan for your life? How?
- b. Do you still carry guilt from things you've done in the past? How have you dealt with it?
- c. What consequences are you still suffering from poor choices made in the past?

Small Group Exercise: Knowing Who You Are in Christ

In your small groups, discuss what each of these mean for you being “in Christ”.

YOU ARE	REFERENCE
FORGIVEN	Ephesians 4:32 (NIV) Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.
FREE FROM THE LAW OF SIN AND DEATH	Romans 8:1-3 (NIV) ¹Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man,
A NEW CREATURE, THE PAST IS GONE	2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!
JUSTIFIED, DECLARED RIGHT AND APPROVED BY GOD IN RIGHT STANDING WITH HIM	Romans 3:23-25 (NIV) ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— 1 Corinthians 1:30 (NIV) It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.
THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN CHRIST	Philippians 3:9 (NIV) and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. 2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV) God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
SEATED IN HEAVENLY PLACES	Ephesians 2:6 (NIV) And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,
NEAR TO GOD	Ephesians 2:13 (NIV) But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.
A CHILD OF GOD; AN HEIR OF GOD	Galatians 3:26 (NIV) You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, Galatians 4:7 (NIV) So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.
IN THE BODY OF CHRIST	Romans 12:5 (NIV) so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.
UNABLE TO BE SEPARATED FROM THE LOVE OF GOD	Romans 8:38-39 (NIV) ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
COMPLETE IN CHRIST	Colossians 2:9-10 (NIV) ⁹ For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, ¹⁰ and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.

Personal Reflection Worksheet: Knowing Who You Are in Christ

1. Take the Completed Reading Exercise "Knowing Who You Are" and lay it before God in your time with Him.

- Ask Him to forgive you for any rebellious activity and help you walk with Him in submission and obedience.
- Ask Him to release you from the guilt you are carrying (if any). Jesus already paid for your sins and you are set free; which includes being free from the guilt that originated from the sin.
- Ask Him to take the things that Satan intended to destroy you and turn them into stepping stones of great victory in your life.

2. Write the following scripture verses on card and carry them with you. (Choose whichever Bible translation you prefer). Whenever you feel down or cannot see how God is going to bring you out, read the cards, if possible – out loud.

- **Isaiah 54:17 (NKJV)** *No weapon formed against you shall prosper, And every tongue which rises against you in judgment You shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, And their righteousness is from Me," Says the Lord.*
- **Philippians 4:13 (NKJV)** - *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*
- **2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV)** *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*
- **Romans 8:38-39 (NKJV)** ³⁸ *For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come,* ³⁹ *nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
- **Ephesians 3:20 (NKJV)** *Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,*
- **Jeremiah 29:11 (NKJV)** *For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.*