



## Core Seminar Systematic Theology II Session 19: Plan of Redemption (pt. 1)

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### PRAYER

#### I. INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM OF SALVATION

In recent weeks, we've looked at God—especially the person of the Holy Spirit. Today, we begin a survey of how God worked from eternity past and is working into eternity future to reconcile a chosen people to Himself through the atoning work of Christ on the cross. But first I want to talk about one common word—“salvation.”

That very word “salvation” poses a problem in our postmodern culture, a culture that says that truth is relative. What is the problem? Well, salvation presumes we have a predicament. It presumes we need to be saved. But *saved from what? Saved to what? Saved by whom?*

Our culture has lost the vocabulary of words like “sin” and “holiness.” In our therapeutic culture “sin” is defined no longer by who we are *in here [heart]*, but rather those wrongs and injustices that have been committed against us out there. There are no real conspirators, only victims.

Our fundamental problem, our culture says, is not spiritual conceit but poor self-esteem. But this is the essence of pride. Our culture tells everyone to express yourself; to reward yourself ... but what does the Lord say? He calls us to deny ourselves, not to forsake God in order to find in ourselves what we once found in God and can only find in God.

That kind of forsaking lies at the heart of that first sin in the garden, the desire to no longer live *for* God but to *be* God. In Eden, our first parents tried to take God's job from him, and we do that all the time. Too often we don't see ourselves as dependent creatures. Instead, we see ourselves as the authors of our own existence, the judge of our own values, and the master of our own destinies. As sin has vanished, so has God from our consciousness.

It's not until we grasp the depths of our depravity, of our sin, — it's not until we understand the evil that resides in here (*the heart*), that we can properly understand that we need to be saved not merely from ourselves, but from God. And that remedy for salvation doesn't lie inside of us, but outside of us.

I like the way Spurgeon put it: he said, “he who thinks lightly of sin, will think lightly of the savior.” ... Let us be those who think deeply about salvation because we understand what the Bible says about us – that we're sinful and so in need of salvation.

## II. ORDER OF SALVATION

So how does salvation happen? What actually happens when someone gets saved? We're in point two on your hand out: The Order of Salvation.

In earlier classes, we talked about the fact that we all have sinned and deserve eternal punishment from God. Yet, in obedience to dying on the cross, Christ accomplished the *redemption* of his people. By "redemption" I mean that Christ paid the price to buy us back from our captivity to sin; when one redeems something, like someone at a pawnshop, they are paying a price to get something of theirs back. Christ, through his work on the cross, earned our salvation for us ...

*Today, we look at the way God applies that salvation to individual lives.*

Throughout the next four classes we will see that "salvation is of the Lord." God not only *accomplished something* on the cross; he also *applies* the benefits of the cross to individual people.

So: When the Bible speaks of salvation it doesn't speak of one "simple and indivisible act." Rather it speaks of salvation comprising a "series of acts and processes." Scripture speaks of salvation in the past, present, and future. Christians have been saved (Eph. 2:8), are being saved (1 Cor. 1:18), and will be completely saved someday from the consequences of sin (Rom. 5:9).

Given that the application of redemption is not a one-time action — but rather a series of acts and processes, we should not be surprised to find it following a certain, distinct order with an arrangement of various steps. However, no single verse of Scripture mentions every act or process in this "order of salvation."

Instead, a careful comparison of several New Testament passages gives us a framework for the order of salvation. [That's what Systematic Theology is – looking at the whole Bible to see what it says about one topic or question]

Take Romans 8:29-30, for example. **"For those [God] foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified."**

So we see that predestination precedes calling, which precedes justification, which in turn precedes glorification. This makes sense doesn't it? God could not, for example, glorify a sinner that had not been justified, could he? There is a logical order of how salvation is applied to people.

Well, the Order of Salvation that we will be considering in the coming weeks is as follows [this is on the front of your handout]:

- 1) Election (*God's choice of people to be saved*)

- 2) The Gospel Call (*proclaiming/hearing the message of the Gospel*)
- 3) Regeneration (*being born again*)
- 4) Conversion (*faith and repentance*)
- 5) Justification (*right legal standing; righteousness of Christ imputed*)
- 6) Adoption (*membership in God's family*)
- 7) Sanctification (*growth in obedience and knowledge; increased conformity to Christ*)
- 8) Perseverance (*continuing in the faith; abiding in Christ*)
- 9) Death (*going to be with the Lord*)
- 10) Glorification (*receiving a resurrection body*)

We should note that some of the aspects of salvation are entirely up to God (like election). Others, like conversion, require human activity along with God's activity. Repentance and faith are gifts that we have to respond to (2 Tim. 2:25).

Also, realize that this order of salvation isn't strictly chronological – you know *this* happens, then *that* happens. For example, the moment we truly repent and place our confidence in Christ, God justifies and adopts us and starts the sanctification process. Not everything happens at once – right, we're obviously regenerated before we're glorified. But primarily, the salvation order is one of **logical** ordering more than a *chronological* ordering.

Today, we'll attempt to cover the initial process of salvation by looking at the doctrines of election, calling, and regeneration. And we'll cover the rest over the next three weeks. So here we go, point 3 on the left hand pg. on the inside of your handout: Election/Predestination.

### III. ELECTION/PREDESTINATION

The first section that we must begin with is God's election. As we said before, *salvation* begins with God. If you look on your handout, we define election as **“an act of God before creation in which he chooses some people to be saved, not on account of any foreseen merit in them, but only because of His sovereign good pleasure.”**

In other words, God chose a specific and definite number of people to save. He guaranteed their salvation, won at the cross by Jesus, and granted the benefits of Jesus' death and resurrection to their lives.

If left to himself, man would remain forever in his sin, because as it's written, **“There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God”** (Rom. 3:10).

Nothing but a mighty supernatural act on the part of God can rescue sinners in this condition. If they're to be rescued, God must take the initiative, and this is precisely what God does. He sovereignly picks a man up out of the kingdom of Satan and places him in the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13)

This doctrine of election—or predestination, as it is sometimes called by the Apostles—is clearly laid out in Scripture; the elect are referred to at least 25 times in the New Testament. So let's look at the Bible, because we want to see things for ourselves in the Scripture.

So, Luke writes in Acts 13:48 about Paul and Barnabas preaching to the Gentiles in Antioch. He says that when the Gentiles heard the message, **“they were glad, and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed”**. Here we see that the elect of God are the ones who believe the gospel.

Ephesians 1:4-5 says, **“For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will.”**

Paul writing in I Thessalonians 1:4-5 says, **“For we know, brothers loved by God, that He has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit, and with deep conviction.”** Paul knows that these Thessalonian Christians are God’s elect because they have faith in the gospel.

The implication, of course, is that God’s electing love must be directed toward an individual before a response of saving faith is possible. Writing to that same church, Paul later writes, **“But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved”** (2 Thess. 2:13).

God’s choice of giving certain individuals salvation rests solely on His sovereign will. It’s an *unconditional* election. We don’t do anything to deserve it. His choice to save particular sinners was not based on any foreseen response or obedience on their part, such as faith and repentance.

On the contrary, God gives faith and repentance to each individual whom He chooses. Any act of obedience like faith and repentance are the *result*, and not the *cause* of God’s choice.

You will never find Scripture saying our faith was the reason God chose us. Salvation is all of grace. Thus, God’s choice of the sinner – not the sinner’s choice of Christ – is the ultimate cause of salvation. We love because God first loved us ... we chose God because he first chose us.

We see unconditional election in the OT, too. Remember, we’re looking at the whole bible for this topic. In Deuteronomy 7, God clearly lays out the reason why he sovereignly elected Israel to be his chosen people: It says that, **“The LORD did not set his affection on you [Israel] because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you....”**

God’s purpose in election was not based on Israel. It was based on God. And notice here, it’s based on God’s *love*.

God is saying, “I chose you because I *loved* you.” We could just stop there for today couldn’t we? I remember once a mentor of mine was talking about a time his wife asked him why he loved her. And though he had a million reasons, he simply said, “babe I love you...because I love you.” That’s what it is with God, we cannot know his mind *beyond* what he reveals in his word. So, know that if you are in Christ, God chose you because he *loved* you. Why does he love you? Because he loves you.

In the New Testament we see election explained nowhere more clearly than in Romans chapter 9:10-16. It says,

**Rebekah's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. Yet, before the twins were born *or had done anything good or bad* – in order that God's purpose in election might stand: *not by works but by him who calls* – she was told, "The older will serve the younger." Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.**

“*Esau I hated?*” That’s harsh! It sounds unfair. But when we ask the question that Paul asks, “Is that unjust of God?” we must say, “Not at all!” God could have rightly said, “I hate both Esau *and* Jacob.” If you look at Jacob’s life in Genesis, especially the early years, you’ll see that his behavior is detestable – he’s a treacherous, lying schemer. The difficult question is not how can God hate Esau, but how can he justly love Jacob, a sinner?

The real mystery isn’t, “why would God only save *some?*,” but “why would He save *any of us* at all?” We all deserve eternal damnation, yet in God’s love and mercy he planned to save some of us.

Notice in this passage that God’s purpose in election is being worked out even before Jacob or Esau are born – before they have done anything good or bad. God’s election was not conditioned on their actions, but on God’s sovereign will. This is hard for *us* to deal with, but I like the way Thabiti Anyabwile puts this. He says, “God is not ashamed of his wrath, neither should we be.” ...

Furthermore, a common objection to the doctrine of election that is often voiced is that election means that unbelievers never really have a chance to believe. But the Bible does not support this objection.

When people reject Jesus, he always put the blame on their willful choice to reject him, not on anything decreed by God. In John 5:40, Jesus says, “**You refuse to come to me that you may have life.**”

This is the consistent pattern in Scripture: people who remain in unbelief do so because they are unwilling to come to God, and the blame for such unbelief always lies with the unbelievers themselves, never with God.

### **Does anyone have any Questions or Comments?**

[OR ASK THESE QUESTIONS INSTEAD ...] What does it mean for us practically that God elects some to salvation? (***It is a comfort*** – *Romans 8 shows that God always acts for the good of those whom he called to himself; It gives us humility and a thankful heart* – *Salvation is not found in us; It makes evangelism hopeful* - *In Acts 18, Paul is told by the Lord in a vision to stay in Corinth and continue preaching because: “I have many people in this city.”*)

Alright, because election is so crucial we spent a lot of time on it; we're going to move more quickly through our next two events in the order of salvation. Look at point 4 on the top right hand side of your hand out.

#### IV. THE GOSPEL INVITATION

We've established the fact that our salvation begins with God's choosing us. Now we must seek to understand how this salvation is worked out, and so we come to what is known as the gospel invitation; this is number two in the order of salvation.

Without the gospel invitation, or gospel call, no one would be saved. "**How can [men] believe in the one of whom they have not heard**" (Rom. 10:14)? Paul tells the Thessalonians that God called them to salvation *through the gospel* (II Thes. 2:14). However, it's important to note that the gospel call is *one* calling with *two* different aspects.

While a general, external gospel call goes out to all men of which some reject ... a stronger, more effective internal call is given by our sovereign God, who summons people to himself in such a way that they *always* respond in saving faith through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:29 says that those whom God predestined, he also called. As we can see, this calling is an effective calling and is an act of God that guarantees a response because, as Paul goes on to say, those who were called were also justified and glorified. God calls men "**out of darkness into his wonderful light**" (I Peter 2:9).

We are to call everyone to repent of their sins and to trust in Christ. But we're also to be aware that not everyone will respond to the gospel. As Jesus said, "**many are called, but few are chosen.**"

Only God can effectually call us to himself. In John 6:44, Jesus says, "**No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.**" In verse 65 of that same chapter, he repeats this teaching: "**No one can come to me unless the Father has enabled Him.**" Those of us who are Christians have been called to be such. We have been given ears to hear and eyes to see the light of the gospel.

We know that we've been chosen and called by God if we have believed God, repented of our sins, and trusted the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what Peter means when he tells God's elect to "**be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure**" (II Pet. 1:10). We do this by examining our lives and seeing if they reflect the biblical teaching of a faithful response to the gospel.

Let's move on to point 5, Regeneration.

#### V. REGENERATION

We've talked about this in our classes on the Holy Spirit, but when is man considered to be regenerated? Before he hears the gospel or after it?

Well, we know from Scripture that regeneration comes before we can respond to the gospel with saving faith. Yet, it's difficult to determine the exact moment in time that a person hears the proclamation of the gospel and is regenerated. So don't worry if you don't know the time!

We must say, however, that the preaching of the gospel *generally* coincides with man becoming regenerated. At least this is what happened to the household of Cornelius in Acts 10. While Peter was still speaking the gospel, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message.

Regeneration is an instantaneous event in which the Holy Spirit works in us and enables us to have faith and to follow Christ. It is then followed by conversion and justification, which we will come to next week, Lord willing.

Remember earlier how we talked about how some events in Salvation are all up to God? Well, regeneration is one of them. Man is completely passive in his own regeneration. He cannot give himself physical life, nor can he give himself spiritual life. It'd be like a body in the morgue trying to give itself CPR – it just doesn't work.

Regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit. And when people talk about "being born again," what they're actually saying is that they've been regenerated because that's what it means. Regeneration is another way to say, "being born again."

We see regeneration in the OT. In Ezekiel 36:26-27, when God is making promises about what He will do for His people, He says, "**I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.**" Notice that it's God who is acting. "*I will*" do these things He says.

We see regeneration in the NT. John 1:13 says that Christians are "**born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or of a husband's will, but born of God.**" It's God who must take that first step in order to give us the ability to then repent and believe.

This is very important for us to understand. We need to be regenerated first before we can produce saving faith. Many well-meaning Christians say that if you believe in Christ as your Savior, then you will be born again – *after* you believe. But Scripture does NOT say this.

For example, in Acts 16:14, Luke says of Lydia, "**The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.**" First, God opened her heart, then she was able to respond in faith. It may be for only the smallest fraction of a second, but regeneration *does* precede faith.

We cannot have a soft heart and ears to hear until God give us them. Think of it like this: before your heart can make a decision, it first has to have a pulse. Regeneration is the spiritual defibrillator that happens to make the heart beat before it can do anything — like believing in God.

Regeneration always produces fruit in the Christian life, and true regeneration *will be followed* by a changed life.

All that we're talking about today – election, gospel calling, regeneration ... all the way to our glorification – is a package deal. God cannot fail in salvation. Our redemption is authored and perfectly completed by Him.

Regeneration creates in us a state of heart and spirit that causes us to turn from our sin and commit ourselves to Christ in faith. **“No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God”** (I John 3:9). There are more texts like John 3 and the story of Nicodemus that we could discuss, but let me stop for **Questions or comments?**

**CONCLUDE:** *Encourage the people for showing up to study the Scriptures and exhort them to keep on it (Statement of faith, three tenses).*

**PRAYER.**



## APPENDIX A

### IV. REPROBATION

If God sovereignly elects some unto salvation, then that necessarily means that not all are elected to salvation. Some necessarily will perish. This is the doctrine of reprobation.

Reprobation may be defined as **“the sovereign decision of God before creation to pass over some persons, deciding not to save them, and to punish them for their sins, and thereby to manifest His justice.”**

So does hearing this make you angry? Do you want to object? Do you think that this doctrine simply cannot be true of a loving God? If you answer yes, then you’re not alone. This is something that many people struggle with.

“The love that God gives us for our fellow human beings and the love that he commands us to have toward our neighbor cause us to recoil against this doctrine, and it is right that we feel dread in contemplating it. It is something that we would not want to believe, and would not believe, unless Scripture clearly taught it.”<sup>1</sup> Scripture does teach it, though, so we have a responsibility to believe it, to know it and recognize that somehow, in God’s wisdom, the fact that some will be eternally condemned shows God’s justice and results in his glory being displayed to the objects of His grace.

Unless you think that there are no grounds for this doctrine, listen to these verses in Scripture:

- Jude 4 says, **“For certain men who were marked out for condemnation long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men who...deny Jesus Christ.”**
- In I Peter 2:8, Peter says that those who reject the gospel, **“stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.”**
- Proverbs 16:4 says, **“The LORD works out everything for his own ends – even the wicked for a day of disaster.”**

Paul also alludes to this idea of reprobation in Romans 9:18-23 where he appeals to his audience that it’s entirely just for God to **“make out of the same lump of clay some [people] for noble purposes and some for common use”** and that it’s entirely just for God to “show his wrath and make his power known” in dealing with those who are “objects of his wrath” that were prepared for destruction.

A great study to do is to look not just at the existence of the doctrine of election in scripture, but of how it’s perceived by the biblical authors. The authors of Scripture rejoiced in this doctrine as a sign of God’s love and mercy and grace and sovereignty. This is why we must talk about God’s electing love. If he elected us, then he will be faithful to be not only the author of our

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<sup>1</sup> W. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 685.

faith but also the finisher. We know that He will be working for the good of those of us who love Him, who are called according to His saving purpose!

So if God has elected some to salvation, then why do we need to evangelize and tell others the gospel? (*Telling the gospel is the means that God uses to bring the elect to himself. Again, election does not make evangelism pointless, but hopeful. God commands us to tell others the gospel, which brings us to our next topic....*)

### ***Possible Quotes to Add***

***Does election make us robots that do not have real choices?*** Our choices are voluntary because they are what we want and decide to do. We also have real responsibility for our choices. A supervisor often directs the actions of his employees without violating their freedom or responsibility. So, too, does God but in a greater and more perfect sense. I Peter 2:8 says of the wicked, **“They stumble because they disobey the message – which is also what they were destined for.”** For the righteous, we can say “that God causes us to choose Christ voluntarily.”<sup>2</sup> (*Other examples are Pharaoh, Joseph and his brothers, etc.*)

How does someone grow in faith? Well, one way is from Romans 10:17, **“faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”** Faith not only comes initially from God’s word, but it also grows as it is fed by God’s word.

***Question: I agree that we need to trust in Jesus for salvation because it’s through faith that we are saved, but isn’t saying that a person must also repent be like saying we must also work to be saved because we are adding something to believing? After all, I’ve heard that the Gospel of John, which is one of the most evangelistic books in the New Testament, only speaks to people believing and doesn’t mention repentance but only believing.***

- When Jesus sent out the Twelve, Mark 6:12 says that they preached that people should *repent*. In the same account in Luke 9:6 it says that they went out preaching *the gospel* (See also Acts 20:20-21). In fact, in Luke 3:13 Jesus says that if we do not repent, we will perish.
- While the Gospel of John may not have the actual word ‘repent’ in it, it does speak to repentance. For example, in John 8:31-41 Jesus is speaking to the “Jews who had believed him” and he draws a contrast between true followers who “hold to [his] teaching” and those who don’t – who only believe without repentance. In addition, in John 12:24-26 Jesus speaks to dying to self (i.e. repentance) so that we might live for God and renounces the attitude of living for ourselves.
- Repentance and faith, while distinct from each other, are necessarily joined together. We cannot have true faith in Christ without repenting from our sin. It’s the same with faith and hope – they are distinguished, but faith is never without hope. We cannot turn to God without turning from our sins (i.e. repent).

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<sup>2</sup> W. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 680.

- Does Christ call us just to consent or is there something more he calls us to? Saving faith isn't merely intellectual. Justification is by faith alone, it is not by a faith that is alone.
- The effect of not calling others to repent in the gospel call is to produce "Gospel hypocrites", or those who have been told they are Christians because they simply believe without any commitment made to follow Christ.

***Question: What is the New Perspective on Paul (NPP) and its understanding of justification?***

- The NPP holds that Paul was not speaking to Jewish legalism versus faith when he speaks about justification. Instead, the NPP says that Paul was speaking out against ethnocentric tendencies of the Jews who argued against the Gentile Christians being included as those in the Covenant. The problem with Judaism was not because it was legalistic but because it wasn't Gentile-accepting Christianity. The Jewish law was not being misused as a means of self-justification but as a means of excluding Gentiles. Paul wasn't speaking about salvation issues of how one is saved but issues of membership in the covenant community and how one is to know they are in that community. Because Jews thought they were the only covenant people, they denied that Jesus was the promised Messiah who fulfilled OT promises of salvation for both Jew and Gentile.
- The term NPP came from James Dunn, who elaborated on ideas introduced by E.P. Sanders. N.T. Wright has further taken up and written on this approach to studying Paul.
- The NPP says that the Jews in Paul's day weren't unmindful of grace and kept the law out of gratitude, as the proper response to grace. After all, Jews understood themselves to be a known benefactor of God's covenantal grace (this is nothing new). Yet, Jesus consistently showed that the Jewish leaders did not know God (e.g. John 8:47, Matthew 23:15) and exalted themselves and their own morality and didn't follow God and that this was the problem just like it is today, even among Christians – it is a universal problem. Their hearts were full of self-sufficiency, such as the parable of the Pharisee and tax collector proved.
- The NPP says that God's righteousness doesn't mean the saving obedience of Christ that was imputed to the sinner to be declared righteous. Instead, the NPP says, as in Galatians, not being justified by the works of the law means not being defined as Christians by circumcision, Sabbath-keeping, or other ceremonial laws. If this was all Paul was talking about, then it one's own faithfulness may contribute to justification. Justification becomes smaller than what it really entails. The NPP says that no one can receive Christ's righteousness – it is non-transferable. Another example of this is in Romans 3:20 where it says, "no one will be declared righteous in his sight by works of the law." The NPP would say that we cannot just refer to "works" by itself as the problem, but that it was "works of the law", or Torah-faithfulness that set the Jews apart from all peoples. While the works were placed in the context of keeping the Torah (as was everything at the time), but it wasn't the Torah that was the emphasis but the relying on one's own works to obtain righteousness before God. So to the NPP, justification is about our relationships with other believers more than about our relationship with God. It would stress the insistence that all who share faith in Christ belong at the same table without regard to ethnic differences. The NPP would say that justification has both an initial and final reference. We're saved by grace alone initially but we need to maintain our covenantal relationship through obedience. Final justification will

be based in part on our continuing obedience. One gets in heaven by grace but one stays in heaven by obedience.

- The NPP holds that we cannot accurately understand NT Scripture without understanding the context it was historically in. The text takes a backseat to historical context. Yet, the clearest way to understand ‘justification’ is by reading the author and the context he uses it in.
- According to the NPP, the gospel is not about calling sinners to find salvation through faith in Christ but to bring God’s promises to all people through faith in Christ.
- While the NPP seeks to change the emphasis of Paul’s (and Scripture’s) arguments, we can see clearly in various texts why self-justification is being argued against (whether it’s in a Jewish context or some other). In Galatians 3:3 Paul shows that he is writing against those trying to obtain the Spirit by their own works-righteousness. Also, in Romans 5:12-21 Paul clearly shows that justification is speaking to sin (v. 16, 18) and imputation of Christ’s righteousness is necessary to obtain justification before God.

***Question: What does the doctrine of justification mean for us by way of application?*** It means that 1) we are free from fruitless efforts to try to save ourselves by our own goodness; 2) we are free to regard others the way God regards his children and to love and forgive them in their own shortcomings; 3) the gospel is applicable for missions to everyone all over the world because all men from every race are in Adam and his sin; 4) by relying on Christ’s righteousness keeps us from despair in our standing with God; and 5) Christ must be exalted and honored in our lives as the one who provided perfect righteousness for us.

***Question: Scripture says that Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. Does this mean that our faith is what God reckons as righteous?*** No. The righteousness that is received is the righteousness of Christ (an external righteousness) secured in his obedience to death on the cross. We obtain this righteousness through trusting in Him and not depending on ourselves and own works. II Corinthians 5:21 says, “**God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**” In Romans 5:12-19, Paul clearly shows that through Jesus men receive righteousness just as in Adam men received judgment.