

Introduction | Sin

This is week three of five wherein we are examining the **riches of God's grace** from BEFORE the beginning of time until AFTER the world ends. Last week we considered **what sin has done to us** which makes the grace of God necessary to save us. God created man to know and enjoy His goodness, but with the opportunity to know evil. In other words, God said you can know me or everything else. Men chose everything else. The Bible says that through the sin of one man, Adam, death came to us because all men fell into sin. To describe the state of fallen man, the Bible describes us as dead in our sin, enslaved to sin, blind to truth, and hostile enemies of God. **Men became lost, uncertain of who they were, unwilling to ask for help, and unable to help themselves.**

While all of this grieved God, it never surprised Him, for before a single atom of matter was created, God had formulated a perfect and invincible plan to **RECLAIM those He loves. There are no accidents.** God executes His plan by the WORD of Christ through the Spirit of Christ working together to, **by grace, CALL** His children out of death and into life. By grace, through faith, God gives his chosen a new heart, with new desires, a new disposition toward sin, and a new devotion to Jesus. **John 1.11-13** ¹¹ *He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.* A divinely planned, initiated, and executed **cosmic change occurred between God and man through the cross of Jesus Christ—those who received Him are reborn, transformed into an entirely new creation.** ¹⁷ *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.* ¹⁸ *All this is from God (2Corinthians 5.17-18).* **By grace, God has done everything necessary to bring us back into relationship with Him.**

Guilty | We are orphans

In Ephesians 1.5, Paul writes that God, IN LOVE, planned our **ADOPTION.** *In love ⁵ he predestined us **for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ,** according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.* God's plan for adoption implies something about who we became in our sin—**WE ARE ORPHANS.** Having inherited a sinful nature from our first parents, we willfully and joyfully pursued our own fleshly desires, and became **CHILDREN OF WRATH** following the course of this world. **In rebellion, we ran away from our true Father and chose to live as orphans in the DEVIL'S ADOPTION AGENCY...like the rest of mankind.**

An orphan is, by definition, a child who has been deprived of parental love, protection, and care. Usually, this is the result of death. Spiritually speaking, death came into the world because of sin. ¹² *Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned (Romans 5.12).* **SIN MADE US ORPHANS.** And every orphan desires in their heart to be adopted; every orphan has a deep rooted **longing to be accepted and loved.** In other words, everyone is struggling for **validation**—because no one really feels worthy. As we live in the world, which is really an adoption agency for the devil, **men seek different “fathers”, saviors who they believe will rescue us from those feelings of worthlessness.** None are found because there are none to find.

1. **Orphans are FATHERLESS** | Orphans are uncertain of who they are—they have no identity—no one to tell them who they are. Without an identity, they seek to find it in what I do, what I have achieved, what I've done right, what I've done wrong, or what others think of me.

2. **Orphans are UNDISCIPLINED** | Orphans are weak and defenseless. They are vulnerable to negative influence and unrestrained passions because there is no one devoted to their loving protection.
3. **Orphans are FEARFUL** | Orphans live in fear of rejection, enslaved to performance. They are never sure if they are good enough. Every time we make a mistake or fall short of an expectation, we feel great despair.
4. **Orphans are ALONE** | Orphans do not have family. This often leads them to build communities with other orphans just as messed up as they are. There they are affirmed but never healed.
5. **Orphans are BITTER** | Orphans can live believing they deserve and are entitled to more. They are not responsible for our mistakes, our failures, or our current situation. They are victims of people, institutions, and circumstances.
6. **ORPHANS are INSECURE** | Orphans live and measure their lives according to how we compare with others. They compete with others for approval. They are, therefore, unable to love others or rejoice with others easily. Instead, we exist in a constant state of feeling inferior or superior to others.
7. **ORPHANS are HOPELESS** | Orphans live without a certain future. They ultimately don't know what is going to happen tomorrow, let alone in eternity.

Sin made us orphans – WE HAVE NOT FATHER. Spiritual orphans live with a spiritual sadness—an undeniable and unavoidable state of feeling unworthy, unwanted, and unaccepted. In truth, men in their flesh are unlovable and unworthy. **Our adoption files are 12 inches thick.** They are full of our crimes, our personality weaknesses, our character flaws, and more. **Each of our files is an encyclopedia of sin we committed and love we omitted.** It lists what is broken in us, what is deficient in us, and what is rebellious in us. No one in their right mind would want to bring you into their home, into their family.

In the hours before He would be arrested and sentenced to die, Jesus said to His disciples: ¹⁸ “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. **John 14.18**

Justification | God reclaims us

God didn't need us, but He wanted us. That is the GRACE of adoption. **But our adoption price is infinitely high.** God cannot bring us into our family in our present condition. His holiness and perfection requires we have a perfect record. **In order to live with God, our adoption file must be expunged, we must have more than a CLEAN record; we need a PERFECT record.** Jesus chose to love us in our ungodliness. **Romans 5.6—8** ⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— ⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Before the foundation of the world, God plans our adoption. Through adoption, God reclaims (CALLS) His children back to Himself and admits them into his family. Ephesians 1.6 says, this adoption takes place THROUGH JESUS CHRIST. **Romans 8.30** | ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. **Justification makes adoption possible.** What was necessary was our **JUSTIFICATION**.

John Stott explains that: “Justification’ is a legal term borrowed from the law courts. It is the exact opposite of ‘condemnation’ (cf. Deut.25:1; Prov.17:15; Rom.8:33, 34). **‘To condemn’ is to declare**

somebody guilty; 'to justify' is to declare him... righteous. In the Bible it refers to God's act of unmerited favor by which He puts a sinner right with himself, not only pardoning or acquitting him, but accepting and treating him as righteous." (Galatians p.60)" ³For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Romans 8.3-4 **OUR JUSTIFICATION MEANS THREE THINGS:**

Legal Exoneration: WE ARE DECLARED INNOCENT Justification just-as-if-I-didn't sin | **JUSTIFIED SATISFIED.** 'we were bought with a price'

- **God forgives past sin.** Psalm 103.11-12 ¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; ¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.
- **God forgives present sin.** Romans 8.1 There is therefore NOW no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
- **God forgives future sin.** 1 John 2.1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Legal Union: WE ARE DECLARED RIGHTEOUS

- We are given Christ's life and Christ takes my death. Keller says it is more than just getting out of prison, it is receiving the "congressional medal of honor."
- We are given Christ's perfect record. We are treated as if we lived a perfect life that Jesus lived.
- We are given the love that Jesus deserved—a legal and personal UNION is created.
- We are given all of this by faith. Christ is the grounds for our righteousness. We are not declared righteous because of our faith. Our faith is always impure. We are not saved by the quantity or quality of our faith, but by the object of our faith. **Faith declares that only Christ saves and only Christ justifies. FAITH IS TRUSTING CHRIST DOES IT ALL. —Basing your life on your justification.**

Titus 3.4-7 ⁴ But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Legal Empowerment: WE ARE DECLARED BLESSED

1. **We are blessed.** We no longer have to fear we're too bad to deserve God's love.
2. **We are blessed.** We no longer have to perform to get God's love.
3. **We are blessed.** We can approach God like a Father for love.
4. **We are blessed.** We are freed from comparing and compete with others.

5. **We are blessed. We are part of a family.**
6. **We are blessed. We enjoy the security of a guaranteed future.**
7. **We are blessed. We delight in God as our loving Father who delights in us [refer drawings].**

Christians who like ORPHANS

Sadly, MANY Christians do not live in the joy of their justification—this is the reason for much of their pride and spiritual deadness. They continue to live like **FEARFILLED-ORPHANS, uncertain of God's love** who believe that their position with God is dependent upon the quality of their behavior and the purity of their hearts. **We don't have to live in that kind of fear.** The cross is God's declaration that I love you. **1 John 4.18¹⁸ There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.** We have gone from ORPHANS to SONS. If God loves you like that as an EVIL CHILD of WRATH, how much more then as HIS SON.

We base WHAT WE DO on WHO WE ARE in CHRIST, our PRACTICE on our POSITION, NOT our POSITION on our PRACTICE. If you believe that you are accepted only because of your obedience, you will live like an ORPHAN forever uncertain of God's love. You will remain prideful, fearful, performance-driven, comparison-focused, and radically insecure. But when you believe **I AM ACCEPTED...you will live a life of peace, love, and gratitude.** WE DO NOT OBEY TO BE ACCEPTED. WE ARE ACCEPTED, THEREFORE WE OBEY.

CONCLUSION | Reclamation

Our obedience is OUR RESPONSE to God's gracious love. The symbol of Christianity is a Roman torture device. We can try to explain away many of the difficulties and sharp edges of God, but we will always come back to the violent death of Jesus Christ on the cross as the centerpiece of our faith. Even more disturbing: God designed it this way. **Revelation 13.8 (KJV) ⁸ And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.** If God was chose to go through all of this, then it must have been because there was something accomplished there that could not be done in any other way.

DO WE SEE THAT, IN PURSUIT OF HIS OWN GLORY GOD BECAME WHOLLY ABOUT OTHERS. He is not selfish—he is utterly selfless. In love, Jesus was willing to put Himself to shame and extreme pain in order to secure **OUR RECLAMATION. Our adoption is not only our EXONERATION of our spiritual poverty; it is our INVITATION TO enjoy the riches of God's grace. DO YOU BELIEVE GOD LOVES YOU? (IN YOUR PAIN, LOSS, FAILURE, WEAKNESS, MISTAKES...GOD LOVES YOU.)** **He loves us before we are good. He loves us even though we are bad. He never stops loving us—the HOLY SPIRIT is the SEAL of our ADOPTION.**

ROMANS 8.1-18 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³ For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and

peace. ⁷ For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

¹² So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. ¹

¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. 2001 (Ro 8:1–17). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.