

4 - THE GOSPEL FOUNDATION: FINDING SECURITY IN CHRIST

A few years after Jesus ascended into heaven, Saul began “breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord” Acts 9:1. When he was brought before King Agrippa later in his life, He shared this story:

“Many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against *them*. And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled *them* to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted *them* even to foreign cities. While thus occupied, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests . . . I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me. . . . I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? *It is hard for you to kick against the goads.*’”

“So I said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’”

“And He said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ‘But rise and stand on your feet; I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me’” Acts 26:10-18.

The phrase, “It is hard for you to kick against the goads,” reveals the inner turmoil and struggle Paul was experiencing. A goad was a pointed stick used to prod an ox along. Kicking against the goad was a common Greek and Latin proverb referring to the pain that resulted from stubborn resistance (See Robertson’s Word Pictures of the NT; New English Translation Notes).

Saul was fighting against the conviction of the Holy Spirit. His teachers had told him Jesus was an imposter. He believed them when they said the story of the resurrection was a lie made up by the disciples of Jesus (Matt. 28:13).

Respect for his teachers, along with the desire to be accepted, led Saul to stifle his conscience and persecute the church. However, the Holy Spirit did not give up on him. It was hard to fight against the convictions He brought.

Now that Jesus stood before him, he realized he had placed his confidence in the wrong authority. When the truth became clear, Saul repented and was baptized (Acts 9:18). With his whole heart he chose to serve Jesus as His Savior and Lord. (He later changed his name to Paul to communicate that he was a different person. Acts 13:9 is the first time he is called Paul.)

Paul was handpicked by Jesus to explain the gospel in order to turn people “from darkness to light.” Under the inspiration of God he wrote over half of the New Testament. In 2 Corinthians 5:14 he revealed the truth that was the foundation of his life, ministry and teaching. “The love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died.”

This truth motivated him to share the gospel everywhere, even when faced with threats and persecution (2 Corinthians 11:22-28). If we want to be motivated by the love of Christ as Paul was, we also need to understand what he meant when he wrote, “If one died for all, then all died.”

HOW CAN GOD BE JUST WHEN SAVING SINNERS?

1. Every government has a law to keep order in society. How did Jesus sum up the law of God’s government? Matthew 22:36-40

A. “_____ the Lord... with all your heart,... soul, and.... mind.”

B. “_____ your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the _____ and the Prophets.”

2. If we are going to have eternal life based upon our own keeping of the law, what is required? Galatians 3:10-12

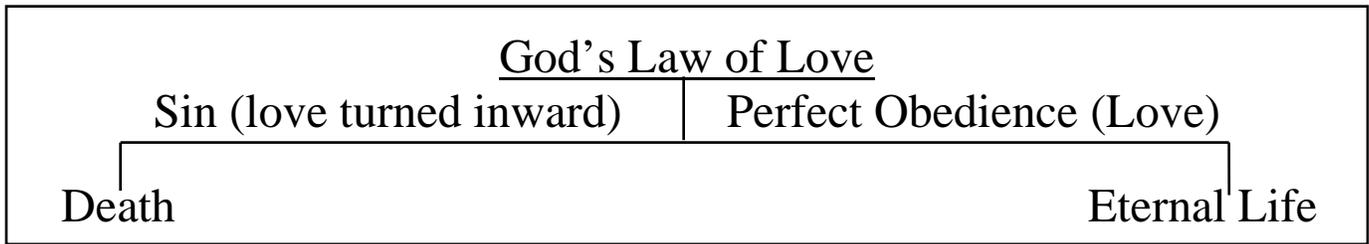
“The _____ is not of _____, but ‘the man who _____ them shall _____ by them’” Galatians 3:12

The law is not based on faith. It states the standard of right and wrong and the result of each. If we keep the law perfectly we earn eternal life.

On the other hand, all who do not “continue in all things which are written in the book of the law” are under a curse (Galatians 3:10).

3. What do we earn by our sin? Romans 6:23

Wages are what we are paid for the work we do. The wages of sin is death. Since all have sinned, all have earned death. This creates a dilemma. How can God uphold his law and give anyone eternal life?



4. Is upholding the law an important issue to God? Or to put it another way, is God concerned about justice?

- A. 1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and _____ to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
- B. Revelation 15:3 The redeemed will sing, “Great and marvelous are your works, Lord God Almighty! _____ and true are Your ways.”
- C. Romans 3:31 “Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we _____ the _____.”

It is clear that justice is very important to God. While He loves us with an everlasting love, He is committed to upholding His law. Before we look at the gospel answer, we need to realize how big the dilemma is.

5. What is to happen to the one who sins? Ezekiel 18:20

Imagine a young man gets addicted to drugs and alcohol. He needs a lot of money to satisfy his addictive cravings, so he decides to rob a bank. The police are called and begin to chase him as he runs away. When they get close, he takes out a gun and shoots and kills one of them.

Eventually he is arrested, taken to trial, and found guilty. When the judge sentences the man to death, the father asks the judge, “My son is not ready to die; would you allow me to die in his place?”

What would the judge say in the United States? “No!”

God’s law is no different. The one who sins is the one who must die. No one else can die instead of me. I must die the death that the law demands. How can God uphold His law and give anyone eternal life? It seems like an impossible dilemma. The good news is God found a way.

SEEING THE WORLD FROM GOD’S PERSPECTIVE

The key to understanding the plan of salvation is learning how God sees the human race. When God created Adam, He was creating the human race. He “formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” Genesis 2:7. He then took a rib from Adam’s side and created Eve (Genesis 2:21,22). Together they produced the human race (Acts 17:26). Since the seed was in Adam, God saw the whole human race as in Adam.

6. Since all of us were in Adam when he sinned, what impact did his sin have on everyone?

A. Romans 5:18 “Through one man’s offense, *judgment* came to all men, resulting in _____.”

B. 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22 “...in Adam all _____.”

This is the bad news. As a result of Adam’s sin, we all are born condemned. If the story ended here, there would be no good news. But fortunately, God created a plan to free us from the condemnation.

7. What impact did Jesus’ righteousness have on the human race?

A. Romans 5:18 “Through one man’s righteous act, the free gift came to all men resulting in _____ of _____.”

B. 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22 “In Christ all shall be made _____.”

In the New Testament we learn that Jesus was One who created the world and the human race (John 1:1-3,14; Colossians 1:16). Since Jesus created Adam, He was the head of Adam. This means He could legally become another head of the human race. This is what He chose to do.

8. What name does Paul use for Jesus in 1 Corinthians 15:45, 47?

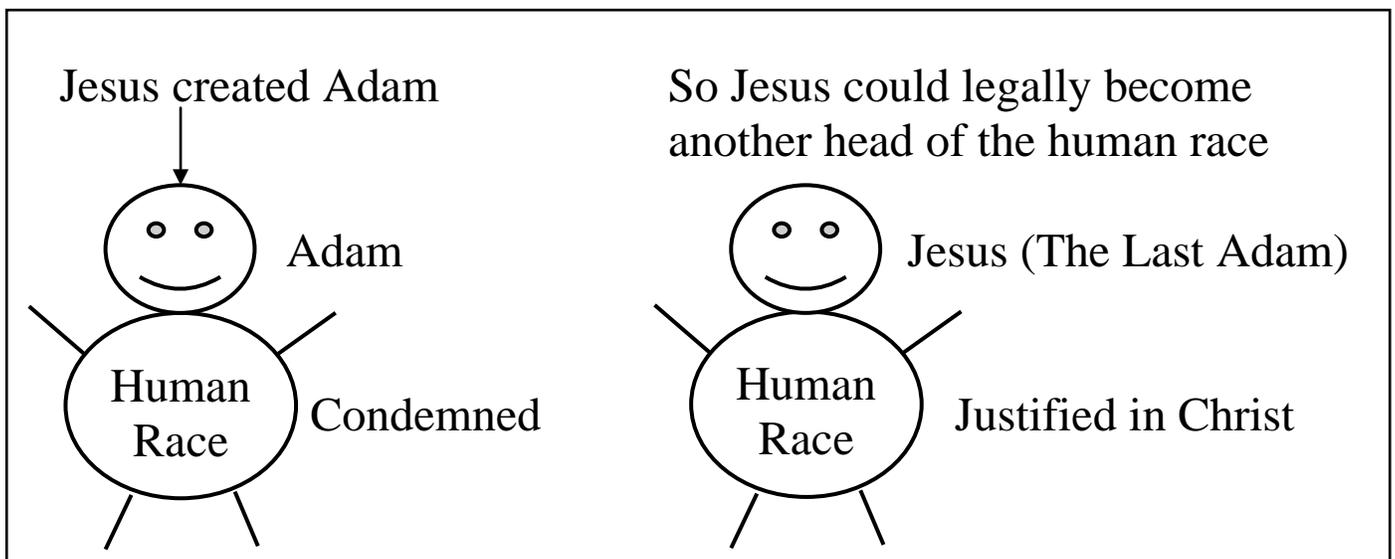
When a person's name is changed in the Bible, there is a significant reason (for example, see Genesis 32:28). By understanding the meaning of the name Adam, we can discover what Paul is trying to say.

9. What is the meaning of the name Adam? Genesis 5:1,2

Compare verse 2 in the King James and New King James Versions:

- “Male and female created He them; and blessed them, and *called their name Adam*, in the day when they were created.” KJV
- “He created them male and female, and blessed them and *called them Mankind* in the day they were created.” NKJV

The underlined word is from the Hebrew word, Adam. The name means man or mankind. So when Paul calls Jesus the last Adam, he is referring to Him as the last head or representative of the whole human race.



Two illustrations from the Bible can help us understand that this is indeed the way God thinks: one person can represent a whole group.

A. “Isaac pleaded with the LORD for his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived. But the children struggled together within her; and she said, ‘If all is well, why am I like this?’ So she went to inquire of the LORD.”

“And the LORD said to her: ‘Two nations are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; one people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger.’ So when her days were fulfilled for her to give birth, indeed there were twins in her womb” Genesis 25:21-24.

Rebekah gave birth to Jacob and Esau. However, God said she had two nations in her womb. He saw the whole nation of Israel in Jacob and the whole nation of Edom in Esau. From God’s perspective, each of them represented a whole group of people.

B. The second illustration comes from Hebrews 6 and 7 where the author describes Jesus as our High Priest. The Jews had a problem with this, for Jesus was from the tribe of Judah and the priests came from the tribe of Levi. The problem is resolved when we learn that Jesus was a priest like Melchizedek. He also didn’t come from the tribe of Levi. He blessed Abraham and received tithes from him.

Then Hebrews 7:9,10 takes it a step further: “Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.”

In other words, Levi was seen to have paid tithes to Melchizedek in Abraham. What Abraham did, the Levites were seen to have done. This is different than we normally think. However, the gospel is based upon this concept from God’s perspective:

- What Abraham did, the Levites were seen to have done.
- What Adam did, the human race was seen to have done.
- What Jesus did, the human race was seen to have done.

WHAT JESUS ACCOMPLISHED FOR EVERYONE

10. What was the truth that motivated Paul? 2 Corinthians 5:14

“The love of Christ compels us, because we _____ thus: that if _____ died for _____, then _____.”

This truth helped Paul understand God’s unconditional love. It motivated him to share the gospel, even when he was faced with threats and persecution. It provided the security that enabled him to grow into maturity. This truth was the foundation for all he taught.

The concept we learned from Hebrews 7:9,10 helps us understand what Paul is saying. What Abraham did, the Levites were seen to have done, for they were “in Abraham.”

In the same way, what Jesus did, we were seen to have done, for we were all in Him. It was God who took the initiative to place us all into Christ, the “last Adam” (1 Corinthians 1:30; 15:45). From God’s perspective, in Christ, everyone has legally died the death that the law demanded. The implication of this truth is tremendous.

11. How does God now view the human race? 2 Corinthians 5:19

God took the initiative to reconcile the world to Himself by removing the sin barrier that separated us from Him. As a result, He is not counting any of our sins against us, no matter who we are or what we have done. This truth is amazing! This is the good news of the gospel. Unfortunately, very few people understand this truth. Therefore God invites all who do believe it to share this truth with everyone.

12. What choice are people urged to make? 2 Corinthians 5:20

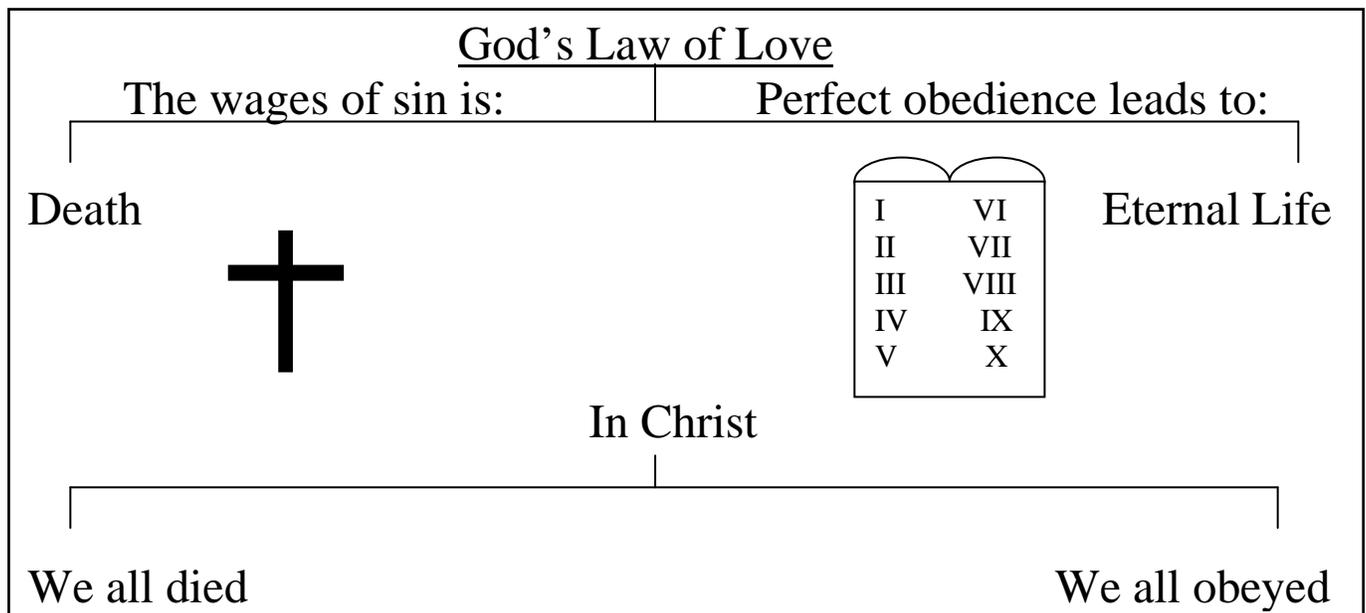
When two people are at odds with each other, it takes both parties to be willing to reconcile in order for the relationship to be fully restored. While God has taken the initiative to reconcile us to Himself, He will never force Himself upon us. He always maintains our freedom of choice. Through His ambassadors, God stands with open arms and says:

“Please come! I love you and want to live with you throughout eternity. You are free to come just as you are.”

13. What else has God given to us in Christ? 2 Corinthians 5:21

The word “for” shows there is a connection to verse 20. Paul explains why we have the right to be reconciled to God. Jesus was made to be sin so He could take us and our sins to the cross. He also lived a perfect life so “that we might become the righteousness of God *in Him*.”

In Christ, the legal demands of the law have been met for everyone. This means that legally God has qualified everyone for eternal life.



QUALIFIED FOR ETERNAL LIFE

14. Read Colossians 1:12-14

A. What has the Father qualified us to be partakers of? (12)

B. What has He delivered us from and conveyed us into? (13)

C. Who has been redeemed by Jesus' blood (v. 14; 1 Timothy 2:5, 6)

Jesus redeemed the human race when He gave Himself as a ransom for all (1 Timothy 2:6). Since Jesus redeemed everyone, the words "us" and "we" in verses 12-14 would also apply to everyone.

In other words, legally, we all have been qualified for heaven, delivered from the power of Satan and transferred into the Kingdom of Jesus.

15. Read 1 John 5:10,11

A. What happens when I believe the testimony God has given? (10)
(See also Romans 5:1; John 1:12,13; 1 John 5:13)

B. What do I call God if I don't believe the testimony? (10)

C. What is the testimony that God has given? (11)

When I believe the truth, I have the witness in myself. In other words, I *experience* peace and security with God and am born again. If I don't believe that God has given me eternal life, I am calling Him a liar. This makes it clear that through Jesus, God has given eternal life to everyone.

When Jesus redeemed the human race, He:

- Freed everyone from the condemnation brought by Adam.
- Qualified us all for eternal life.
- Restored our individual freedom of choice.

WHY WILL ANYONE BE LOST IN THE END?

16. What was Jesus' mission when He came to earth? John 3:16,17

Jesus came that He might “save the world.” He didn’t need to condemn us, for we were already condemned (Romans 5:18).

When He cried out, “It is finished!” (John 19:30), Jesus accomplished the mission that He came to fulfill on earth. He died for all so that “all” could be “justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” Romans 3:23,24. This enabled everyone to have freedom to choose to live with God forever or cling onto sin and perish in the end.

17. If God gave eternal life to the human race, why are some condemned and others are not in the end? John 3:18,19

The phrase, “he who does not believe is condemned already” is clarified in verse 19. The unbelief is based on rebellion, rather than ignorance. The condemnation is a result of rejecting the light.

In other words, no one will be lost because they have sinned. They are lost because they love sin. They “love darkness rather than light, for their deeds are evil.” They don’t want a Savior from sin. These people would rather die than come into the presence of God (Rev. 6:14-16).

In order for anyone to be lost, they must persistently resist the Holy Spirit. Jesus told Saul, "It is hard for you to kick against the goads." Acts 26:14. It is hard to fight against the conviction the Holy Spirit brings. It is hard to hold onto guilt, shame and bitterness. It is hard to be continually disappointed by the emptiness of sin.

Jesus invites everyone, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" Matthew 11:28-30.

18. What assurance does God want people to have who continue to believe in Jesus as their Savior? 1 John 5:12,13

God gave Jesus to the world. The question everyone has to decide is simple. What do I do with Jesus? Do I want to live with Jesus as my Savior and Lord or do I want to cling onto sin. Everyone will decide one way or another.

John is anxious for believers to have the security of knowing that they are going to live forever with God. Since Jesus earned eternal life for the human race through His perfect life and death, our assurance is not based on our performance.

John also encourages us to continue to believe in Jesus. He knows that the lies from Satan, the pressure from others, our desire to be in control, and our own attraction for sin will continually tempt us to satisfy "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" 1 John 2:16. If we persistently pursue these things, we will harden our hearts against the Holy Spirit and eventually reject Jesus as our Savior and Lord.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

19. Who are we free to live for when we understand “that one died for all, therefore all died?” 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15

We are naturally selfish. A person who is trying to be good in order to get to heaven is still motivated by selfishness. When we understand we have already been given eternal life through the perfect life and death of Jesus, we no longer have to be focused on trying to get to heaven. We are free to live for God out of loving appreciation for all He has done.

20. How does this truth help us to see people and Jesus differently? 2 Corinthians 5:16

People

We tend to put people in different classes: rich and poor; good and bad; male and female; Jew and Gentile; black, white, Asian, Hispanic, etc. When we realize Jesus is the “Savior of the world” (1 John 4:14), we are able to see everyone in the same way. We are all equally lost and sinful through Adam’s choice. In Christ, we are all equally loved, valuable, redeemed, forgiven and qualified for eternal life. We can see every person as a brother or sister “in Christ.” This is how Jesus wants us to see others. He identified Himself with every human being when He said,

“I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I *was* naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.... Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My bretheren, you did it to Me” Matthew 25:35-40.

Jesus

Some saw Jesus as just another human being, an illegitimate child, a good person, a good teacher, and even associated with Beelzebub. Now we see Him as the Son of God, the last Adam, and the Savior of the world.

BEING IN CHRIST INVOLVES TWO CHOICES

21. What change takes place when we're in Christ? 2 Cor. 5:17

“If anyone is _____, he is a new _____; _____ things have passed away; behold, all things have become _____.”

There are two levels of being in Christ: the first is based on God's choice; the second is based on our choice.

God's Choice

In 1 Corinthians 1:30,31, Paul writes, “But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God--and righteousness and sanctification and redemption-- that, as it is written, ‘He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.’”

There is absolutely no reason we can boast. We are not even responsible for placing ourselves into Christ. God did this so He could redeem the human race and make us holy and righteous in Christ. This is what enables us to have the freedom to choose.

In Christ, both demands of the law were met for everyone. The old that passed away is the condemnation that came to us through Adam's choice. The new that has come is the justification that Jesus brought to everyone (Romans 5:18).

Our Choice

By becoming the last Adam and redeeming the human race, God was able to be just when forgiving sinners and legally qualify everyone for eternal life so that everyone could choose for themselves, *life* or *death*.

When we believe the gospel and receive Jesus as our personal Savior, we express our choice to surrender our lives to Him. Jesus will then send the Holy Spirit to dwell within us. When He comes, He will transform our lives from the inside out.

The old things of sin that we once loved will become less and less attractive. The new that will come is a “love for the truth” and a “hunger and thirst for righteousness” (2 Thessalonians 2:10; Matthew 5:6). Living for Jesus will become our primary focus. Through serving Him we will discover true joy and meaning in life.

AMAZING LOVE, AMAZING GIFT

Imagine a couple who would like to get married. They have come to love each other and they want to spend the rest of their lives together. However, the young lady has a secret she has kept from her fiancé. She is afraid that he would not want to marry her if he really knew the truth. However, she knows she must tell him, for he would find out eventually. So she arranges a time to meet with him to share her secret.

By the time their date begins, the young man is very worried. He wonders why his best friend is so concerned. After struggling over her words, she finally says, “I love you very much and want to spend my life with you, but there is something you must know. And if you don’t want to marry me after I tell you this, I will understand. I have a \$100,000 debt with nothing to show for it.” Her fiancé takes a deep breath and pauses while he thinks.

Finally he says, “Honey, I have come to love you. I want to spend the rest of my life with you. We will face that debt together. I still want to marry you!” Tears come to both of their eyes as they realize the honesty and commitment that was just shared. They continue with their wedding plans, get married and go on their honeymoon.

While they are on their honeymoon, the husband says, “Honey, there is something I really need to tell you that I haven’t shared before.”

“What! How can this be?” the Bride wonders. “After all, I was willing to share my worst secret. What is he hiding from me?” Then she remembers how gracious he was toward her, so she calms down.

The husband continues, “I have ten million dollars in the bank. I didn’t want to tell you, for I didn’t want you to marry me for my money.” He then writes a check for \$100,000 and gives it to his wife. And since they are married, she moves from being way in debt, to being a millionaire.

22. As human beings, how are we able to view ourselves in the light of what Jesus has done for all of us? 2 Corinthians 8:9

While the husband was very loving and kind toward his fiancé and wife, the story comes short of fully illustrating what Jesus did. For Jesus didn’t just take a little bit of wealth and share it with us, He became poor that we might become rich. We deserve nothing that Jesus gives us. For we have all “sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” Romans 3:23. We have all failed Him. But God still loves us.

AN INVITATION FROM JESUS

Through the message of the cross, Jesus stands with open arms, saying:

I love you. I forgive you.

I know you are helpless to measure up to any standard.

You can stop trying. I know you can pretend for a while on the outside, but the inside is still hurting.

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to Me.

Get away with Me and you'll recover your life.

I'll show you how to take a real rest.

Walk with Me and work with Me--watch how I do it.
Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.
I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you.
Keep company with Me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly”
(Matthew 11:28-30, The Message Bible).

If you want Me to,
I can heal you on the inside;
I can bring peace to the inner turmoil;
I can bring healing to the broken relationships.

I love it when people:
Are honest with Me;
and allow Me to be honest with them.

When we share openly, misunderstandings can be cleared up;
You won't have to pretend anymore;
You won't have to be afraid of Me anymore;
You won't have to hide from anyone anymore.

If you give Me permission to come into your life, you will not be sorry.
You will experience:
Security from My unconditional love;
Joy from serving others;
Meaning in life from accepting My plans for you.

“I stand at the door and knock. If you hear My voice and open the door,
I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends.”
(Revelation 3:20 New Living Translation).

23. Share your thoughts in response to Jesus' love and forgiveness for you.