

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE FRUITS OF JUSTIFICATION (II)

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In the last chapter we touched briefly on the special relationship we now enjoy. I'm speaking of the fact that God has become our Father. Remember our friend looking sadly out of his unlocked jail cell? If he would only turn around he would see more than just an open door. He'd see a Father waiting to receive him.

I can vividly recall one Saturday morning with my father. The two of us were sitting at the kitchen table when the phone rang. I was a young man at the time and far from God. As I answered the phone, my heart sank. The caller identified himself as a detective with the Montgomery County Police Department, Glenmont Station. Using police-speak terms, he informed me that I had been observed using a controlled substance (marijuana) at a particular residence the evening before (which was true). I was placed under arrest and instructed to turn myself in.

My father could tell from my expression that something was very wrong. "What's the matter?!" he asked.

I could only respond vacantly, "I'm busted."

What followed was uproarious laughter from the other end of the line. I had been set up by some "friends" of mine. The law-breaking fool was also a gullible fool. It hadn't occurred to me that the police don't arrest people over the telephone. As a courtesy, they do it in person.

While I'll never forget that practical joke, what made much more of an impression on me was Dad's response. He could have yelled at me for being the disgrace I certainly was. Instead, his first move was to affirm his love and support for me. That affected me deeply. I have no doubt Dad would have taken my place and my punishment, if possible. His loyalty was the opposite of what I deserved.

Jesus told a story of another foolish son who, after self-

ishly and prematurely demanding his share of the family inheritance, proceeded to squander it. When finally he ran

““ Thou hast created us for Thyself,
O God, and our hearts are restless until
they find their rest in Thee.

— Augustine ””

out of resources, the prodigal son decided to return home to his father and ask for the opportunity, not to be restored as a son, but to hire on as a servant. “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be

called your son; make me like one of your hired men” (Lk 15:18-19). The father had every right to ridicule and reject the son; even accepting him as a laborer would have been a sign of real generosity. Instead, he watched eagerly for his return, and welcomed his son with gifts and a feast. God’s mercy is displayed in this story as the father showers his boy with love, forgiveness, and acceptance—not at all what the son expected or deserved.

Meditate on John

8:1-11. What penalty did this woman deserve for her sin? What did she receive?

Thus far our study of justification has yielded undeniable evidence that this is indeed a great salvation. We have learned how to combat the persistent influence of accusation and adversity. We’ve navigated the sobering subjects of our own sin, of God’s holiness and wrath. We’ve taken a close-up look at the Cross, where our Savior suffered the condemnation we deserved so that we might be justified before God. There he obtained for us peace with the One who had been the object of our hostility; forgiveness from the One against whom we had sinned; and a union with himself that empowers us in our striving against evil.

Now we conclude with a look at two final aspects of our inheritance in Christ: adoption and the hope of future glory.

Revealing the Father

Biblical theology teaches us to expect an unfolding, progressive revelation in Scripture.¹ For example, the mysterious message in Genesis 3 about a woman’s seed bruising a serpent’s head becomes open and apparent in the New Testament declaration of Jesus’ crucifixion and subsequent resurrection. Similarly, the Old Testament gives us only the broadest outlines of what is a central revelation in the New Testament: the fatherhood of God. To be sure, there are passages that speak of Israel as the firstborn son of God as well as other snippets of this truth. But even then the idea is usually meant in a nationalistic sense. He’s the Father of Israel, not of individuals. For the

“ How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. ”

— John the Apostle

most part, the Old Testament portrays God not as our Father, but as an awesome and holy King.

Of course, God has always been Father, and Jesus Christ has always been God the Son. But it was necessary for Jesus to come and reveal God as Father to us because, as John explains in his Gospel, he was the only one qualified to do so: “No

one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known” (Jn 1:18).

In this verse, the Greek for “made him known” is the word from which we get “exegetis.” “Exegetis” means to explain or to rehearse the facts about something. For instance, to exegete a passage of Scripture is to teach it in such a way as to unfold its meaning. Jesus, who is at the Father’s side, a place of intimacy and tenderness, is perfectly positioned to know the Father completely. And an important part of Jesus’ ministry is to make him known to us. He imparted that truth effectively to his disciples, and the gospels continue to impart it to us today.

Each time Jesus referred to God as his Father, he was making what at that time was a revolutionary claim. Not everybody appreciated it. The Pharisees in particular

resented Jesus because by speaking of God as his Father he implied he was equal to God. But the verse above makes it clear that Jesus had the right to “exegete” the Father. Indeed, it would have been impossible for him not to have done so. Because he was of the same essence as the Father and the Spirit, Jesus shed light on God’s identity as he revealed himself.

This last point warrants a brief tangent. What is the relationship between God the Father and God the Son? Augustine, the most influential theologian of the early Church, classifies Scripture’s teaching on the nature of this relationship into three groups:

■ Those verses which reveal that Jesus is inferior to his Father because

Meditate on John 17:25-26. What was Jesus’ purpose in making the Father known?

1 Your church feels directed to reach out to a remote island tribe in the South Pacific. Because you’re the only one who speaks the Polynesian dialect, you find yourself parachuting into a clearing surrounded by expectant villagers. What are the first five attributes of God (for example, his power or kindness) that you would “exegete” for this tribe?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

of his incarnation. He willingly set aside his glory (Php 2:5-8) and was born as a baby. Consequently he experienced hunger, thirst, fatigue, and other weaknesses his Father has never known. In this human condition Jesus knew his Father was greater, and he willingly sought and submitted to his Father's guidance. We find one clear example of this in the Garden of Gethsemane: "Going a little farther, [Jesus] fell with his face to the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will'" (Mt 26:39).

■ Those verses which teach that Jesus, from before the foundation of the world, was with the Father yet distinct from him. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (Jn 1:1). "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times" (Mic 5:2).

■ Those verses which show that the Father and Son are not separate Gods, but are of one essence. "I and the Father are one" (Jn 10:30).²

Do you want to know the Father? Look at Jesus. On the evening of the last supper, Philip asked, "Lord, show us the Father and we shall be satisfied." Jesus replied, "Anyone who has seen me *has* seen the Father" (Jn 14:8-9 RSV, emphasis added). Do you want to know the Father's ways? Look at Jesus. "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does" (Jn 5:19). Do you want to increase in the knowledge of the Father? Look at Jesus. "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being" (Heb 1:3).

Jesus redefined our relationship with God. In a private moment with his disciples shortly before his death, Jesus said, "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you" (Jn 15:15). Through the teaching of the Law the Jewish people learned to revere a stern and distant Master. Through the life and death of Jesus we have been reconciled to a loving and intimate Father.

For Further Study:

Read Deuteronomy 6:4 and you'll understand why the Pharisees accused Jesus of blasphemy when he claimed God was his father. What verses can you find in the New Testament that shed light on the Trinity?

Adoption: Our Antidote to Angst

This unique relationship between God and all who have been justified is explained in the doctrine of adoption, also referred to as “sonship.” It points out our status as chil-

“ What is a Christian? The question can be answered in many ways, but the richest answer I know is that a Christian is one who has God for his Father.³ ”

— J.I. Packer

dren of God and refers to the means by which we become his children. Adoption into God’s family takes place not by birth, but by rebirth. It occurs not by maturation, but by regeneration. It’s not natural, but supernatural.⁴

Adoption is a gift of grace which becomes ours through receiving Jesus Christ. “To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (Jn 1:12). Note the condition here. God is not the universal father of all humanity. That’s a presumptuous and humanistic notion. God is *creator* of all, but he is the Father only of those who have received Christ.

The term “adoption” is used in the Bible exclusively by Paul. Growing up as he did in Tarsus, he would have been familiar with the custom as it existed in the Roman Empire. Adoption then was different from our present conception of it in at least two significant ways. First, the Greeks and Romans adopted adults, not infants. Rather than being given up for adoption, an unwanted baby (more often than not a female) was typically cast out and left to die from exposure. Correspondence of the day reflects this heartless practice in a chillingly matter-of-fact tone.

Second, because this was primarily a legal arrangement, adoption in the Gentile world did not carry the warmth and selfless love which we associate it with today. It was pragmatic—a business transaction. If someone lacked an heir, he would adopt a male of legal age to carry on the family heritage and estate. Adoption served as a form of social security. According to one commentator, “The adoptive son entered at once into the rights of the parent and undertook out of the assigned income to keep the testator and his family to the end of their lives...Hence adoption was a way of providing for old age.”⁵

Though Paul was undoubtedly aware of Roman-style adoption, it is more than likely that his knowledge of the Old Testament and Jewish history shaped his perspective on adoption. Although the word “adoption” never occurs

Meditate on John

14:1-4. Far from abandoning you to a meaningless existence, God is arranging eternal accommodations just for you—and luxury accommodations at that!

in the Old Testament, the concept certainly does. And it is here that the kindness, joy, and sacrificial love which we (together with Paul) attach to adoption is found. William Hendriksen writes, “How completely different (from the Roman model) is the nature of adoption as practiced in the Old Testament...Did not Pharaoh’s daughter ‘adopt’ Moses (Ex 2:10), even though he was only, humanly speaking, a helpless child? Did not Mordecai bring up his cousin, a *girl* named Esther (Est 2:7)?”⁶

Paul’s writings frequently employ terms from everyday language and invest them with deeper spiritual meaning. Hendriksen suggests that his reference to adoption follows that pattern: “When in Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:5 Paul uses the term ‘adoption,’ the *word* and the *legal standing* were borrowed from Roman practice, but the *essence* from the divine revelation in the Old Testament.”⁷

Adoption touches a profound human need, a universal insecurity. The New Testament speaks of “those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death” (Heb 2:15). Of course, many claim to be unafraid. But the entire human race struggles under what a German philosopher of the twentieth century has called “angst,” a nagging anxiety lurking just below the surface of the soul. This is not an anxiety that can be traced to any specific cause. It is vague and shadowy—but very real. Some have described this anxiety as the feeling of being hurled into a brutal and incomprehensible existence, or of being abandoned by one’s parents.

Salvation through Jesus Christ is the only answer to this fear. “For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear,” wrote Paul, “but you received the Spirit of sonship [adoption]. And by him we cry, ‘*Abba*,

Father’” (Ro 8:15). Perhaps the only way to capture the vivid imagery of this verse is with a true story.

I have a friend who adopted a child in Seoul, Korea. He describes how difficult it was to stand amidst that crowd of needy, unwanted children at the orphanage. They all hungered for attention, and pressed against him in hopes of receiving a touch or a smile. Seeing their desperate little faces

“ [Adoption] bestows upon its recipients not only a new name, a new legal standing, and a new family-relationship, but also a new image, the image of Christ (Ro 8:29). Earthly parents may love an adopted child ever so much. Nevertheless, they are, to a certain extent, unable to impart their spirit to that child; but when God adopts, he imparts to us the Spirit of his Son.⁸

”

— William Hendriksen

made him want to take them all. Yet as painful as it was to turn the others away, he recalls that joyful moment when he singled out his soon-to-be daughter Renee and took her in his arms.

Now, whenever Renee struggles with typical childish insecurities, all she has to do is ask, “Dad, do you really

love me?” Because she was adopted, her father can answer her in a unique way. “Renee,” he can say, “you weren’t forced on me. I didn’t have to bring you into my family. I wasn’t under any compulsion. But I *wanted* to, Renee. I wanted you so much that I traveled half way around the world to find you just so that I could make you my daughter. I deliberately chose you, Renee, and I will always, always love you.”

Jesus didn’t have to leave heaven and come to earth. He wasn’t under compulsion. Why did he come? So that he could look you in the eye and say, “You! I’ll take *you!* No longer will you be alienated, no longer will you be my enemy. I’m going to change you. I’m going to be reconciled to you. *You will be my child!*”

2 Under the proper headings below, briefly describe three things about a child’s life that change with human adoption, then note the corresponding changes that occur with divine adoption.

Human Adoption	Divine Adoption
•	•
•	•
•	•

To insure that we grasp the full implications of adoption, Paul uses the Aramaic word “Abba.” It’s an informal term resident in the vocabulary of any toddler—we would translate it “Daddy.” This is how Jesus addressed God as he sweated drops of blood in Gethsemane’s garden. He didn’t approach his Father with the stiff, courteous tone of voice you might expect from an English schoolboy. In his passion he prayed, “*Abba! Daddy!*” Paul says adoption evokes a *cry* from our hearts, a very strong word. And listen to Martin Luther’s sixteenth-century remarks about this phrase:

This is but a little word, and yet notwithstanding it comprehendeth all things. The mouth speaketh not, but the affection of the heart speaketh after this manner. Although I be oppressed with anguish and terror on every side, and seem to be forsaken and utterly cast away from thy presence, yet am I thy child, and thou art my Father for Christ’s sake: I am beloved because of the Beloved. Wherefore this little

word, Father, conceived effectually in the heart, passeth all the eloquence of Demosthenes, Cicero, and of the most eloquent rhetoricians that ever were in the world. This matter is not expressed with words, but with groanings, which groanings cannot be uttered with any words of eloquence, for no tongue can express them.⁹

For Further Study:

According to Galatians 4:1-7, even though we were heirs to a rich estate, something had to take place before we could gain our inheritance. What was it?

The word “Abba” indicates freedom, confidence, joyful recognition, sweet response, overwhelming gratitude, and filial trust.¹⁰ In this word we find our antidote to angst. The Spirit we have received, far from producing fear and bondage, has set us free to call upon God in the most intimate way possible.

My favorite part of the day occurs when I arrive at home after work to the delight of my four children, who repeatedly shout “Daddy! Daddy!” as they shower me with hugs and kisses. As uncomplicated and informal as this greeting is to them, it is wonderful and fulfilling to me. I don’t doubt that our cries affect our heavenly Father in a similar way.

Feeling the Father’s Care

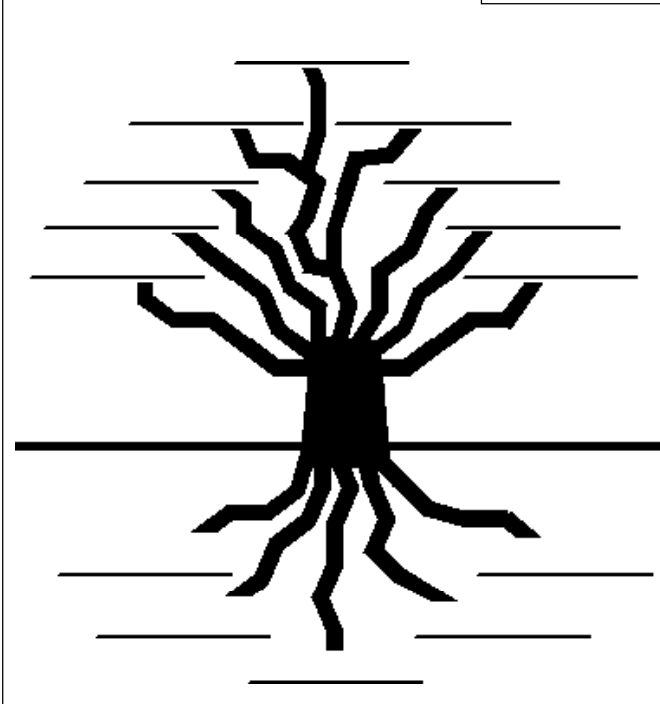
At more than one point in this book we have seen that justification is an objective reality unaffected by the shifting state of our emotions. Feelings make a poor foundation for our fellowship with God, and emotionalism is often counter-productive. But to argue against feelings and define the faith solely in terms of act and fact is to cut the heart out of God’s love. If emotions are so easily recognized and appreciated in human relationships, why would we eliminate them from our relationship with God?

There is a subjective element to knowing God, and it’s this to which Paul refers in Romans 8:16: “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.” The inward sense of God’s presence, the emotional awareness of his loving Spirit is an important fruit (though not a root) of justification. To believe otherwise is sub-Christian.

One of the Holy Spirit’s most important functions is to bless us with the assurance that we are indeed God’s children. As philosopher Blaise Pascal once said, “The heart has its reasons, that reason knows nothing of.”¹¹

I don’t mean to imply that one must become a mystic to enjoy the feeling of God’s love. As a matter of fact, the more knowledge we acquire regarding Scripture’s claims

3 Any tree that mistakes its fruits for its roots will have a hard time growing. That's true for Christians as well. With the help of the following diagram, identify five roots (from Romans 8: 29-30, see pages 3-4 for a reminder) and nine fruits (from Galatians 5:22) of the Christian life.



about God's fatherhood, the more we will be aware of his continual presence.

The fact that we are included in God's family at all is a marvelous thing, though at first glance that may not be apparent. After all, most of us

grew up in families and took them for granted. We probably failed to adequately appreciate the extent of Mom's sacrificial love and Dad's provision. Gratitude does not come automatically. The sad part is that if we don't learn to be thankful for these blessings, we grow to expect them as our due. In the same way we can take our Father's goodness for granted. Here we are, orphans transplanted from the filthiest alleys into the King's own palace, and still our

tendency is to gripe and complain. How fortunate we are to have a Father whose love is surpassed only by his patience.

A brief excursion into a few of our Father's many ways of caring for us can help us appreciate his love more fully. To begin with, let's not overlook his providential care. We all know he causes rain to fall on the unjust as well as the just, but that doesn't make it any less wonderful. Stop and think of all the "mundane" things we take for granted like food, shelter, family, and friends. These are no less gracious gifts from a loving Father than are prophecy and words of knowledge.

The language is a bit archaic, but Sir Robert Grant captures the wonder of our Father's providence in his hymn, *O Worship the King*:

Thy bountiful care, what tongue can recite?

Meditate on Psalm 145:15-16. Take a moment to thank God for the way he has opened his hand for you.

It breathes in the air, it shines in the light.
It streams from the hills, it descends to the plain,
And sweetly distills in the dew and the rain.

“ To be right with God the judge is a great thing, but to be loved and cared for by God the father is a greater.¹² ”

— J.I. Packer

These manifestations of our Father's tender consideration are well-deserving of poetry. And thinking of such benefits has the added advantage of putting us squarely in our place! There is no room for pride when

we see how dependent we are on our Father's providential provision.

The English are a people of many titles. Lords and ladies, dukes and earls abound. One very interesting title is "Lord Protector." King Edward was only a boy when he inherited the throne from his father, Henry VIII, so it fell to the Lord Protector to oversee the young king as well as the kingdom's affairs. God is our Lord Protector. He takes charge of our affairs for our good and effectively shields us from danger.

I'm a rather mild-mannered person by nature, not at all given to temper (except on the golf course). But I've noticed a certain courage or righteous anger that rises up in me when anything threatens my wife and children. It seems almost instinctive. I believe God put it there, and while I'm sure it could be expressed sinfully, it need not—it's for the protection of my family. Having a protective heavenly Father enables us to relax in childlike trust, just as my human father served as a refuge for me during a difficult experience several years ago.

My wife's first pregnancy ended in miscarriage. It was a very sorrowful time. But neither of us were prepared for the danger that followed. Because we lost the baby in the middle of the night, the doctor instructed us to come to the hospital first thing in the morning. Clara bled profusely, but we assumed that to be normal...until 6:00 a.m., that is, when she passed out and went into shock. I struggled to call the ambulance and care for her at the same time. Though it was touch and go for a while, we finally got her to the hospital where her condition stabilized. What a relief!

Part of a pastor's job is to manage responsibly in times of crisis, so as I handled admittance forms and other details throughout the morning I kept my emotions in check. Then it was time to make phone calls to let others

For Further Study:

For an intimate look at God's fatherly care toward his undeserving people, see Hosea 11:1-4 (also Deuteronomy 33:27).

4 Read Psalm 18:1-19 and then answer the following questions:

- What titles does David use in referring to God? (vv.1-2)

- Who did David call when in trouble? (v.3, 6)

- Why does God rescue us? (v.19)

know what had happened. All went smoothly until I called my parents and my father answered the phone.

“Dad, we lost the baby. Clara had a miscarriage last night.”

“Gee, Rob, I’m real sorry to hear that.”

When he said those few words, simple and sincere, something broke and I burst into tears. I was surprised by the intensity of my weeping and how quickly it came over me. Then I realized that in the presence of my father, I didn’t have to be in charge. I was free to release the emotion stored up inside me. I was able to be his son. Under the umbrella of our heavenly Father’s protection we are free to be vulnerable and to express our deepest emotions. (Of course, it’s also true that if the crying goes on too long, Dad will encourage you to “suck it up” and get on with business!)

There is a limitless amount of spiritual ore to be mined in the revelation of God as Father. And however much our earthly fathers may suggest divine qualities, they fall far, far short of our Father in heaven.

Looking Ahead to the Future

What prompted God to give us the incomparable privilege of membership in his family? Paul reaches back into eternity past to supply us with an answer: “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and

““ Those born once only, die twice. They die a temporal, and they die an eternal death. But those who are born twice, die only once; for over them the second death has no power.¹³

— William S. Plumer

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” (Eph 1:4-5). It was God’s love that brought about this great salvation. Rest assured that your own individual merit (or lack thereof) was

never a factor. God, in the wonder of his love, decided to adopt you before the creation of the world.

How comforting to know that God's choice of us had nothing to do with how attractive, clever, or good we are. If such were the case, he might be tempted to trade us in on a better model! We didn't earn adoption by our works and we don't keep it by works. Adoption is a gift of grace which originated in God's heart at the very beginning of time.

Looking back into eternity past provokes an outpouring of gratitude, but it's equally exciting to gaze into eternity future. We have yet to see the completion of all that adoption brings. Paul speaks for every Christian in expressing his great anticipation of the future: "We ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inward-

ly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies" (Ro 8:23).

Despite our current status as God's sons and daughters, our adoption won't be fully consummated until the day God redeems, or resurrects, our bodies. Few subjects have triggered as much speculation and excitement in the Church as this one. We all have a desire to understand what awaits us at the end of the age. Though to the natural mind these things are shrouded in mystery, Scripture provides us with the broad outlines of what we can expect to see take place.

The Bible reveals that there are three stages of man's existence. First is the *natural state*, which spans the time from our conception to physical death. Body and soul are joined together. This is life as we know it in the present world. In spite of the fact that this state involves a great deal of cares and suffering, few of us are in a hurry to enter stage two—the *intermediate state*. This period stretches from the time of our death until the return of Jesus Christ and is characterized by a separation of the body from the soul or spirit (I'm using the terms interchangeably). The physical part of us reverts to dust while the immaterial part "returns to God who gave it" (Ecc 12:7). The spirits of all those who have died in Christ are currently with Christ. You won't find better accommodations than this. Paul, knowing he faced the very real prospect of death, made it clear that he found the intermediate state superior to the natural: "I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far" (Php 1:23).

- 5** Which of the following will signal the Lord's return? (Check all that apply)
- A trumpet blast and a shout
 - A "Rapture Special" on used burial plots
 - Resurrection of the righteous dead
 - Abandoned homes, cars, and tennis shoes
 - A reunion in the clouds
 - The 77th Edition (Revised and Updated) of *Why The Rapture Will Take Place In...*

**Meditate on
Ecclesiastes 3:11.**

Where did our interest
in the future originate?

While hanging on the Cross, Jesus promised the penitent thief they would be together in paradise that very day (Lk 23:43). A comparison of this with 2 Corinthians 12:1-4 shows that “heaven,” “paradise,” and “being with Jesus” all refer to the same place. While in this intermediate state we will neither be unconscious (“soul sleep”) nor will we be serving any stint in purgatory, both of which are unscriptural doctrines. We’ll be instantly conformed to Jesus’ image, our sanctification complete. No longer will we be troubled by the presence of sin. Best of all, we’ll enjoy unbroken fellowship with the Lord. That’s my only concern. As long as I’m with him, I’ll have no anxiety about any unresolved details.

““ That we shall live again is surely no more wonderful or mysterious than that we are alive now. The real wonder rather would seem to be that after having not been in existence through an eternity that is past, we are now in existence...Surely it is far more incredible that from *not* having been, we are, than that from *actual being* we shall continue to be.¹⁴

— Loraine Boettner

As grand as this intermediate state will be, it is not the *final state* of our existence. The time is coming when “the trumpet shall sound, the dead will be raised and we shall be changed” (1Co 15:52). This is also known as the *glorified state* and will commence at the return of our Lord. On that day the dead will be raised and reunited with their glorified bodies.

Once again it is Paul who depicts what this day will bring: “Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body” (Php 3:20, 21).

The longest chapter in any of Paul’s letters, 1 Corinthians 15, focuses almost exclusively on our pending resurrection. He wrote the chapter in response to certain members of the Corinthian church who considered the resurrection unbelievable and unnecessary. Just in case we have any Corinthian tendencies, let’s note the highlights of Paul’s instruction in this chapter:

■ The resurrection is essential to Christianity. If you take away Jesus’ resurrection, you remove the basis for forgiveness (vv.12-19).

■ Jesus Christ is the firstfruits of those who rise; his resurrection guarantees the resurrection of all those who are in Christ (vv.20-22).

■ Death, our last and greatest enemy, will be over-

come through the resurrection. Because Jesus died and rose again, he is no longer subject to death. The same reality awaits those who are his. Though we all have a strong natural aversion to death, God's Word, Jesus' example, and the presence of the Holy Spirit are sufficient to shepherd us through even this dark, shadowy valley. Far from devouring the Christian, death itself is swal-

lowed up by victory—the victory of Jesus Christ (vv.26, 54-56).

■ What will these glorified, resurrection bodies be like? Paul says they will bear some similarity to our present bodies but will also differ in significant ways. The relationship between an acorn and an oak tree may serve as a fitting metaphor to describe the difference. We can also gain insight from studying the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. Our new bodies will be imperishable, powerful, glorious, and primarily spiritual in nature (vv.35-44).

6 Here's an abbreviated inventory of the things we must leave behind when we assume our glorified state. Check any items you would prefer to carry with you into eternity.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stress | <input type="checkbox"/> Taxes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Excess weight | <input type="checkbox"/> Acne |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Depression | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sorrow and sighing | <input type="checkbox"/> Sickness and disease |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Malfunctioning computers | <input type="checkbox"/> Confusion about God's will |

Be Done with Dross and Dung

Attempting to bring this final chapter to a close gives me a new sympathy for Paul, whose lengthy tributes to the grace and mercy of God made an art form of the run-on sentence. Where does one end? The doctrine of justification is unparalleled in scope and beauty. It's no coincidence that the four living creatures continually proclaim the Lord's holiness, and that with each declaration the twenty-four elders prostrate themselves in continuous worship before the glorified Lamb of God (Rev 4:8-11).

Jesus' parable about the wedding feast leaves us with just the right mix of celebration and sobriety (Mt 22:2-14). You are probably familiar with the story. A king was hosting a wedding banquet for his son, and sent invitations throughout his kingdom. When his honored guests rejected the invitation, however, the king refused to change his plans. "Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find," he said. Soon the hall was filled. These lower-class guests weren't accustomed to royal etiquette, so it's likely that the king outfitted them with clothes befitting the occasion.

In the midst of the feasting the king entered the ban-

For Further Study:

Consider these words from an old folk hymn: "This world is not my home, I'm just a-passin' through." With that pilgrim mindset, read 2 Corinthians 5:1-5. Where was Paul's citizenship? Where is yours?

quet hall to see his guests, and it's here we find the crux of the parable: "But when the king came in he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?'"

In seeking to understand the king's indignation, some have conjectured that it was customary in Jesus' day for

“ The choicest portion of every Christian's existence is [yet] before him.¹⁵ ”

— William S. Plumer

the host to provide his guests with wedding garments, especially guests of lesser means. This under-dressed guest wasn't an innocent victim of poverty; he had blatantly scorned the generous provision of his host.

Without hesitation the king

ordered that he be bound hand and foot and cast out into the darkness.

God Almighty has rounded us up off the street corners and offered us a place at his Son's wedding feast. He has given us robes of righteousness to replace our filthy rags. A tremendous, eternal celebration is in store. But let's pay close attention to the dress code. Hand-sewn garments, no matter how painstakingly or diligently fashioned, will insult the Lord of the banquet. Only the free gift of justification, the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ, can usher us into the favor and presence of God.

"Had I all the faith of the patriarchs," said one nineteenth-century saint, "all the zeal of the prophets, all the good works of the apostles, all the holy sufferings of the martyrs, and all the glowing devotion of the seraphs; I would disclaim the whole, in point of dependence, and count all but dross and dung, when set in competition with the infinitely precious death, and infinitely meritorious righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ."¹⁶ Delivered from God's wrath and justified by his grace, we've only just begun to comprehend the magnitude of this great salvation. But we still have a little time. An eternity, in fact—though even that may not be enough. ■

- GROUP DISCUSSION**
1. What is the best memory you have of your father?
 2. Discuss the “angst” the author describes on page 78. How is this expressed in those who haven’t been justified in Christ?
 3. Discuss your reaction to the story about Renee’s adoption on pages 78-79.
 4. List three adjectives you think of when you hear the word “judge.” How about the word “Father”?
 5. Have you had bad experiences with your human father that make it difficult to draw near to your heavenly father?
 6. “How comforting to know that God’s choice of us had nothing to do with how attractive, clever, or good we are,” writes the author (page 83). What then motivated him to adopt us?
 7. Is there anything that would make you feel awkward referring to God in your prayers as “Daddy”?
 8. How has your heavenly Father provided for you in the past week?
 9. Which of the following best expresses your hope of future glory? A.) Can’t wait! B.) Sounds nice C.) I’m not ready D.) A one-way flight to *where*?
 10. Read Hebrews 11:13-16 aloud. What characterized the individuals mentioned here? How can we develop a similar desire?

- RECOMMENDED READING**
- Immortality* by Loraine Boettner (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1984)
- The Bible on the Life Hereafter* by William Hendriksen (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1987)
- The Atonement* by Leon Morris (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984)
- The Glory of Christ* by Peter Lewis (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1997)

NOTES

1. Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1961), p. 15.
2. Gordon R. Lewis, *Confronting the Cults* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1966), p. 25.
3. J.I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), p. 181.
4. Ibid.
5. W. v. Martitz, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. VIII*, G. Kittle and G. Friedrich, Eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), p. 398.
6. William Hendrikson, *New Testament Commentary, Romans—Chapters 1–8* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980), p. 259.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. F.F. Bruce, *Tyndale New Testament Commentary, Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963), pp. 166–67.
10. William Hendrikson, *Romans Commentary*, p. 258.
11. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter 8:5-17* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), p. 243.
12. J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, p. 188.
13. William S. Plumer, *The Grace of Christ* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1853), p. 266.
14. Loraine Boettner, *Immortality* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing House, 1956, 1984), p. 59.
15. William Plumer, *The Grace of Christ*, p. 404.
16. Ibid., p. 236–37.