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Christian Basics

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CONTENTS

	Page
STUDY ONE: Introduction to the Subject	1
STUDY TWO: Calling and Creation	7
STUDY THREE: The Man Who is Called	12
STUDY FOUR: The Calling of God and the Fall of Man.	20
STUDY FIVE: Man and the Nature of Sin	29
STUDY SIX: Conscience and the Call	37
STUDY SEVEN: Man and the Counterfeit Calling	45
STUDY EIGHT: The Call and the Cross	53

STUDY ONE

Introduction to the Subject

WHY CHRISTIAN BASICS?

By Christian basics we mean a study of those truths that are essential for our relationship with the living God, ourselves and others.

Many of the subjects to be considered are not only basic for an initial experience of the Father's love, but continue to be primary in the day by day experience and growth in that love. In this sense it is not a course consisting of elementary facts which once understood cease to have relevance. However, the object will be to remain simple and functional.

THE AIM OF CHRISTIAN BASICS

As we have indicated, the aim of the course is not to gather together a list of facts, but to *know* the life that flows from a submission to the truth about our Father God and the creation He has called into being. So our aim is to be confirmed in the hope of our calling - a calling that is rooted in the nature of God, and is expressed to us through His plan of salvation. In this we' are called to be actively involved. (Consider at length Ephesians 1:15-23).

We should expect then that the crisis will not be how much we can store away in our brain, but rather, whether we are prepared to *receive* God's word and live in the love that is ours through Grace.

THE GOD WHO CALLS

“... I am God, and there is no other:

I am God and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, ‘My purpose will be established and I will accomplish my pleasure’” Isaiah 46:9, 10.

Many times God is referred to as the God Who calls. He calls the creation into being; He calls the nations into history, Isaiah 41:4; He calls Israel to be His Son, Ex. 4:22; He calls fallen man into covenant relationship with Him, Gen. 8:21, Ex. 17:1f, Heb. 10:16; He calls forth His Son to be the man Christ Jesus, Luke 1:31f; He calls His people to be sons, I John 3:1, Rom. 8:15, Gal. 4:6, 7, through His call to faith II Thess. 2:13f; He is calling us to glory, I Thess. 2:12 etc. To follow through this great theme consider the following Scriptures:

Acts 17:30, Rom. 8:30, Gal. 5:13, Eph. 4:1, Phil. 3:15, Col. 3:15, I Thess. 2:12, 4:7, II Thess. 1:11, 2:13, 14, I Tim. 1:12, II Tim. 1:9, I Pet. 2:9, 3:9, 5:10.

So then to *know* God is to experience what He *calls* us *into* and *to be* that in His creation.

(a) The God Who Calls Is The Living God

It becomes clear from the passages above that the God Who calls all those things into reality must be living and vital. So we see that God is revealed as the Living God, Gen. 2:7, Deut. 5:26, Jer. 17:13, Dan. 6:20, Matt. 16:16, John 6:57, Titus 3:15.

Now by living we mean: (i) *He is the Source*, the fountain of life, Ps. 36:9, Jer. 2:13, 17:12f, John

7:37f. Out of the pure love relationship between the Father, Son and Spirit flows the life expressed in God’s creation, Prov. 4:23. (ii) *God is Action*. The God Who calls His plan into existence is always dynamically involved in it, John 5:17, Eph. 1:3-14, Ps. 33:6-9. So it is that the Word of God is living, James 1:18, Jer. 23:29, Heb. 4:12.

When the Son takes up humanity in Jesus Christ, men of faith recognised that he was the Son of the *Living God*, Matt. 16:16, that is, wherever he went and whatever he did was the activity of the Living God. See also Acts 14:15f, II Cor, 6:16, I Tim. 4:10, where it is clear that the people of God are involved in the same dynamic action.

(b) The God Who Calls Is The God Who Has The Plan

After considering what God has called into existence it is impossible to avoid the truth that God has His plan, Eph. 1:3f.

There is a *purpose* in His calling, He has a *goal* towards which He is working. See I Pet. 5:10, Rev. 21:1-7. His plan is the framework of His calls. He can declare the end from the beginning and the beginning from the end because all that He calls into existence is with the view to His goal, and He has the power and authority to make it happen:- Isaiah 46:10, Eph. 1:3f, Rom. 8:28-39.

(c) Father, Son and Spirit are United In The Plan

As we have seen, the living God is not an isolate but Father, Son and Spirit relating in the unity of true love. The Scripture reveals that this internal unity is always present. At *creation* they are one, “let us make man in our own image” Gen. 1:26. In *redemption* they all unite to bring life to man, “the Father was in Christ reconciling the world to Him-

self.” II Cor. 5:19. The Spirit brings to us experience of regeneration, Titus 3:5, and is known as the Spirit of adoption, Gal. 4:6. Likewise in the action of bringing us to glory, Father, Son and Spirit act in love to make that a sure hope. Eph. 1:13-19.

This brings us to recognise that we know the Living God because He planned it, and through His calling made it so. We know Him by His actions, we know He is the loving God because His actions and His plan are all grace. Jer. 31:3. Not to respond to His action of love in creation and redemption is to give oneself into terrible idolatry and darkness. Rom. 1:18f.

THE GOD WHO CALLS IS LOVE

All of God’s actions arise out of His nature.

He calls forth His plan because He wants to - nobody or no circumstance pressures Him to act or make improvisations in His plan. Ephes. 1:11, Heb. 6:17, Rom. 11:36.

The Scriptures reveal that God is Father, Creator and King. By His actions He is known as the Father-Creator-King. Now because He is love, I John 4:8, 16, we know Him as loving Father, loving Creator and loving King. We have now reached the most important point in our study.

(a) God My Father

The great purpose of Jesus’ ministry was to show us the Father, John 1:18, 8:28f, 14:9. By show we mean with the view of knowing - John 17:3 - Him as Father. Why was this so? The answer is simple God is *the Father*. He is the Living Father, John 6:57, and He always has been, Isaiah 63:16. It is as Father that He calls forth His creation. When

He creates man it is as Father. Luke 3:38. All of creation then bears the mark of the Father - so it only finds true meaning as it relates to Him. Eph. 3:14, Eph. 6:4.

The plan of God is seen to flow out of His Fatherhood, Eph. 1:3f, for He has always planned to make us sons and therefore His Family.

From Jesus’ story of the lost son (Luke 15:14-32) we see that the desire of the Father is to love His sons and set them up by grace to love Him (and so obey Him). When we cry Father truly from the heart, we have the key to understanding all things, that is ourselves, creation and its goal.

(b) God My Father-Creator

If God’s true nature is Father, He was Father at creation. Isaiah 64:8. It is understood by this that He created all things to show the true glory of loving Fatherhood. Therefore to know the Father-Creator is to be able to trust that He will provide all our needs. See Jesus’ teaching in Matt. 6:19-34, 7:7-11. It means that He may be trusted to accomplish what He planned for His Family because He called them forth for that purpose. Isaiah 43: 6-7, I Pet. 4:19.

(c) God My Father-Creator-King

Jesus referred to His Father as, “Lord of heaven and earth”, (Matt. 11:25, Luke 10:21) which must mean that He has absolute sovereignty to be Father. It also means that His sovereignty is Fatherly. Ps.103:13.

The practical outworking of this fact for us is that the Father-King can and must take the initiative in all of His plan. So every action of the

Father-Creator-King Who calls His plan into being pure grace. By faith we see with Paul that is magnificent. All His actions reveal the glory of His grace, (Eph. 1:6, 14) which He has lavished upon

STUDY TWO

Calling and Creation

INTRODUCTION: THE END FROM THE BEGINNING

“I am God, and there is no other Declaring the end from the beginning.” Isaiah 46:10. See also Ps. 102:24, Isaiah 44:6, Jer. 10:10 and Mic. 5:2. From this, three things are clear - (i) The Father had an end, a goal in sight when He created the universe. (ii) We cannot understand creation apart from its planned end or goal. (iii) Because we are part of the ‘in-between’ i.e. between the beginning and the end, the hope of *our* calling relates to what God created us to be. In other words, we can have a good hope for the end because of the nature of the beginning. Isaiah 43:7, 60:21, Rom. 11:36, I Cor. 15:28, *Eph. 1:9-14*, Col. 1:16f.

THE CREATION AND ITS CREATOR

When God created the universe and placed man to be its prince and manager, the Scripture reveals that it was the work of the Father, Son and Spirit. The Father was the Source, the Son was the agent or mediator, and the Spirit the energiser, I Cor. 8:6, John 1:3, 4, 10, Col. 1:16, Heb. 1:2, and for the Spirit’s ministry see Gen. 1:2 and Ps. 104:30.

From the above Scriptures we see that the Apostles emphasised the ministry of the Son in creation. John in particular ascribes to the Son a most significant part in the act of creation. In Study One we saw that all things were created to relate to the Father and His plan. This was accomplished by the Son. He had always related to, and known the

Father from the vantage point of the true Son. John 1:1f, 5:20.

So when the Son created He imprinted the whole creation, especially man, with sonship. What better way for the Father to ensure that all creation relate to Him, than to create it through the Son. Likewise the Spirit, Who has always known the way of the Father (I Cor. 2:10f) energises all things to find their goal in the Father's plan.

It is significant for us then that the creation reflects the nature of its Creator. Ps. 8, 19:1, 50:6 and Rom. 1:19.

(a) The Goodness Of Creation

If the creation reflects the nature of its Creator Who is holy, then it must be essentially good. Paul says it this way. "Everything created by God is good for it is sanctified by means of the word of God..." I Tim. 4:4, 5. Consider also Isa. 6:3 which can be understood as, "His glory is 'the fulness of all the earth'". - Also Isaiah 24:16, Ps. 24:1, and Eph. 4:6.

The goodness of creation is not simply its aesthetic beauty but primarily its operating beauty. After the act of creating, God declared it all to be very good. Gen. 1:31. This means it was set in line with His plan. It was fitted to reach the goal that He would call it to.

So creation is trustworthy - it reflects the absolute trustworthiness of the Creator's holiness. This is important, for if creation was deficient in any way it would suggest an imperfect Creator. This would place in jeopardy the plan of calling creation to its perfect goal.

We must note that although creation has been soiled and frustrated by the sin of its keeper (man) it still remains essentially good. Sin imposes itself on it but does not change its nature. This is made clear in Rom. 8:18-25 where Paul reveals that God will call creation into eternity. The end of creation is utterly dependent on its beginning. (Note from Rom. 8:21 that it is the original creation which is to be purged and liberated from sin's imposition - because it was created good.)

(b) The Liberty Of Creation

Following from the last point (a) it is clear that all of creation was made good so all creation was in a state of freedom. By this we mean there was no impediment in God's natural order. Everything was free to be what it was.

This included man, the outstanding identity of the creative act. Psa. 8, 82:6. As a son he was structured to relate to the Father freely in dependence. He found liberty in obedience because his obedience was related to his environment. He was given the responsibility to rule and manage the creation. Gen. 1:28, Psa. 8:6f. In his obedience, he discovered the freedom of being in harmony with his Father, self and creation. What's more, creation responded to his obedience and was good.

What obtained then was that the whole of creation, with man as its prince, reflected the freedom of love and harmony of the Father, Son and Spirit Who created it.

Although man lost this liberty in the Fall and dragged creation into bondage with him, Isaiah 32: 9-20, Rom. 8:18-20, by God's plan through His Son the liberty of creation's harmony will be restored and more. Eph. 1:9-11, Col. 1:19-21, Eph. 1:22-23,

4:7-10, Rev. 21:1-7.

(c) The Diversity of Creation

God is triune. That is to say a social, relational unity of the Father, Son and Spirit. The three are members of what we call the Godhead. There is diversity of persons, Father, Son and Spirit but total unity in purpose and action. (See further *Christian Teaching Series* No. 3, NCPI)

As with the Creator so with His creation. There is diversity but also a planned harmony. All things were created with a role and purpose - to operate in harmony. Eccl. 3:11, Mark 10:6. The glory of God's plan can be seen in that He makes flow together in true harmony a creation of such diversity. Psa. 104.

CREATION IS HOME

We know that God called the whole of creation into existence to make a family for Himself and provide them with a home. Gen. 1 and 2, Psa. 148, Jer. 31:33-37, 33:37-42. From Rom. 8:18-30 we understand that He always planned to call His family and their home into eternity. (See further *Father! My Father!* Rev. G. C. Bingham, NCPI)

This gives a permanence to creation. God has not created a partially deficient back-drop for His actions, something that will one day be discarded as obsolete. Jer. 33:25f. It means that every moment from the act of creation through to its end goal is significant. Thus it is the basis for a good hope now, for the Father-Creator is upholding it all and calling it to its goal. Col. 1:17, Heb. 1:1-3.

CREATION AND MAN'S FUNCTION

We have seen that man was created as *part of*

creation yet *over* it, to be the responsible ruler of it. Gen. 1:27-31, Psa. 8:3-9. So also it is in the context of creation that man is to be a son and discover how he is to obey the Father's mandate. Therefore man must see the truth about his own created purpose, and also that of the creation he is over. Because of the Fall he *will* not, (Rom. 1:21) so he is lost to creation and creation to him. When he obeys the Gospel he is renewed towards His Creator, he discovers his true nature and therefore his true purpose. Consequently he becomes alive to creation and rediscovers his role and purpose.

CONCLUSION

Through creation then we understand that God brought the universe into existence, set man up in it with the view of calling the whole unified order to its goal in His Son. A goal it is able to reach because of its nature. From beginning to end it reflects the Father because it bears the mark of His Son and His Spirit, therefore we have a good hope in our calling as sons. Having rightly understood the nature of creation, the rest of the studies on the Calling of God assume their proper significance.

STUDY THREE

The Man who is Called

THE MAN WHO IS CALLED

It is important to remember that the call we are talking of is the call of the Living God by which He brings to be what He has planned for His creation. By His call, creation occurred. By His call, all of the generations of man have appeared. Isaiah 41:4. But it is to the goal of His plan that He is calling humanity (Col. 1:16f), through His Son - the true man. Now it is through the revelation of the knowledge of the Father's planned goal for man that we have hope now. (Eph. 1:17, 18).

Obviously from Scripture, man is central in God's plan. (Eph. 1:5). So we can say it is great to be a human being because God has a great plan.

(a) Man's Conflict In God's Calling

When we consider what man is by nature of his creation and through his redemption, the problem we face is not one of information, but of man's attitude. To know the truth about what we are as God's children, and how wonderfully and graciously we have been made and redeemed, is to have no alternative but to be like it. (I John 3:1-12, 4:20, 5:1-3).

It is at this point that we may have the greatest conflict, which is to live up to the true filial status given us by creation and the Gospel. When Satan lures us to a weak and rebellious view of our nature as sons (by making the Father's word burdensome - I John 5:3) we lose the true understanding of our nature and because of guilt rationalise our

failures as being "only human".

By faith we understand our created nature (Heb. 11:3), by faith we know our redeemed nature (Gal. 3: 2-7). So let us see what our Father called us to be - simply believe and be it.

(b) Manhood Is Not A Goal But A Reality

To say this, is not to deny that there is still much for man to enter into through the calling of God. (I John 3:2). What we mean is that man is prone to make what God says about him a goal to be aimed at rather than true *now*. Our Lord revealed the full expression of humanity by his open and complete filial relationship with his Father. By doing this, he reflected what man was created to be in the image of God. (Col. 1:9). Paul continues in Col. 1:10 to make the incredible claim that *in him we have been made complete*. We could translate that 'full', that is in Christ we are made fully human. God never allows man off the hook - He made us and redeemed us, thus filling up our humanity so that we have no reasonable option except to live in the fullness of it.

MAN AND HIS CREATOR

(a) Man's True Nature And His Relationship with God.

The biblical portrayal of man never seeks to highlight his nature and purpose as an isolate in creation. Man is without exception seen in the context of his relationship with God. Berkouwer says that man's relation to God is not something added to his humanness, his humanness is clearly dependent on the relationship. (See G. C. Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics, Man: the Image of God*. p. 195f).

So we see that apart from God, man is not up, his humanness is 'dead' (Eph. 2:1-3). forgiven man restored to sonship is alive, that truly human. (Col. 1:13).

(b) Man's Total Dependence On The Father-Creator

It is clear in the Scriptures that man is dependent on God at every point of his experience.

At creation, man was formed as clay in the potter's hands, (Isaiah 64:8), totally dependent on God for what he became. Thus he is linked with Father, Son and Spirit being created in their image. (Gen. 1:26, 27, 5:1, I Cor. 11:7, Col. 3:10, James 3:9).

When a man is born, he is totally dependent on the Father-Creator. (Psa. 119:73, 139:73f., Isa. 44:24).

All the days of his life, he is dependent upon this relationship with his God. (Jer. 10:23, Psa. 37:23, 139:1-6, Heb. 4:13).

Our understanding of what man is, must begin submission to this truth. It is a great thing that we are *God's* creation. Study carefully Psa. 139: 1-12.

(c) Man's Unique Relationship

Our humanness or humanity is dependent on and derived from our Creator. But all of creation shares in this necessary dependence upon God. (Psa. 104:27-30). Man is different because he was created in the image of God. What does that mean? We must start by considering God.

MAN'S CREATOR - HIS IMAGE

If man was created in God's image, then it is important that we see Who God is. We must begin at that point, for we are in His image, not He in ours.

Historically, God has revealed Himself to be Father, Creator and King. These are shown at creation and there has never been a moment in history when He has not actively expressed all three.

It is clear then that all God's attributes, His wisdom, power, holiness, justice, mercy and truth are the expression (the life action) of His Fatherhood, Creatorhood, and Kingship.

God is the Living God, the fountain of life. (Psa. 36:9, Rev. 21:6-7). We can say that all His life is Fatherly: His creating and His ruling are Fatherly. This is what makes God the Living God. How incredible that when God made man in His image He made him to reflect His life. As God is Father-Creator and King, man is made to be like that in his realm.

From God's mandate to Adam (Gen. 1:29f) we see that man must rule creation in a fatherly way, reflecting the care of the Creator. What a call! What a man!

(a) Man Is A Son, Creature And Servant

Being created in God's image, man must by nature be made to correspond to God. All that God is man must reflect as a man, or in a man's place.

So as God is Father, the Scripture reveals mankind as His sons, (Luke 3:38, Acts 17:28-29); as God is Creator, man is made to be His creature (I Peter 4:19, Gel. 6:15, II Cor. 5:17); as God is King, so man is created a servant. (Gen. 1:28f, 2:15).

(b) Man Is A Unity

God is not one moment Father and then another Creator and yet another King. He does not divide His activities because He is not segmented but a unity. God is One, Father, Son and Spirit in the total unity of love. He is always the Father Who has created and Who upholds all things by His sovereign power. His love is always Fatherly powerful, and related to creation and His plan.

Likewise man is not a conglomerate of attributes or parts. He is not tri or bi anything but a whole person. His humanness is found as he relates to the God Who is One. That is he is a man as he submits to the Father as a loving son depends upon Him as *a creature* and obediently *serves* Him.

MAN'S LIFE IN GOD'S PLAN**(a) As A Son - Made To Love**

Because God is Father and man is made a son, God's planned response of His creatures is love. We could say that man's call is to love, he is structured to love and *for* love. He is a son and therefore a brother. (Eph. 5:2, I John 4:7).

Love, filial love, shows itself in confidence towards the Father. Adam clearly related with a simple confidence in God. (Gen. 2:18f).

Humanness thrives on a clean, confident, filial relationship with God.

From the Scriptures, it is clear that all man's relationships depend on this filial love of his Father. Where that is true, there is no impediment in his human relations.

So the call of God to be sons and daughters is the call to love, is the call to true humanness, is the call to live. (We will see in a later study that because man refused to be a son he needs to be justified - an action of grace that sets us up to love the Father as sons).

(b) As A Creature - Made To Depend

Jesus impressed upon man through his life and word that to be truly human is not to be independent but completely dependent on the Father. (See for instance Matt. 6:19-34).

In other words, man is structured to depend, it is good for him, he finds himself as a creature when he does. In each and every area of his life, man has been structured to be dependent.

- (i) For his daily sustenance. (Phil. 4:19-20, Matt. 6:19f).
- (ii) For his justification (Eph. 2:8-9).
- (iii) For his glorification (Rom. 8:28-30). The gravity of man's sin (his refusal to be son, creature and servant) can be clearly seen at this point. He feels that it is weak, unmanly to depend upon anyone. He must 'prove' his manhood by either seeking to be independent of God or proving that he can merit God's care and grace, eg. Gal. 3:1-2.

(c) As A Servant - Made To Serve

Again we seem to be saying something contrary to our nature - we are made to serve. Service is often seen to be a dreary unrewarding burden. The classic revelation of how service to our Father is seen by sinful man is the story of the 'prodigal brother' (Luke 15:25f). For him it had been a thankless deadening task.

But God has structured us to find liberty in

service. Consider Jesus, the man who bore the true image of God. (II Cor. 4:4, Col. 1:15). He said, "I am among you as one who serves". (Luke 22:27).

Adam was structured to serve. (Gen. 1:28), When Paul speaks of restored man it is in terms of him doing the service of good works. (Eph. 2:10). Man is to use his liberty to serve his brother. (Gal. 5:13). When man is 'clean' he wants to serve the Living God. (Heb. 9:14).

ALL THESE THINGS AND MORE

What more can there be? Man has been created so magnificently (Psa. 8), set up by God, called to be in His image, to show His glory through sonship, dependence and service. Man's life is to be relational as God's is, consider Eph. 4:31-32, Matt. 5:43-48.

As great as these things are, they do not form the total picture of what man is called to be.

God made it clear that He did not intend to call man to fulness in Adam but in Christ. (Eph. 1:10). Through creation, man reflects Father, Creator and King. In Christ, man reflects the image of God as Father, Creator, King and *Redeemer*. In other words, man's fulness can only be seen when he responds to the Father's forgiving grace, (Eph. 1:5-7), he then becomes the image of the glory of His grace.

ALL THIS AND YET MAN CHOOSES LESS

By refusing to be a son, a creature and a servant, man chose *against* himself. This resulted in the terrible anguish we call guilt - the sense of not being truly man. But however seriously that affected man, God has never viewed or related to man other than how He created him and redeemed him to be.

To say it another way, God has never lowered His

view of man, for His call is sure - man in Christ will become truly man. (Rev. 7:12-17, 21:1-5).

CONCLUSION

To be truly human is to be a son of God and thereby share in the work of the Father. For this He called us into the image of the true Son through the Cross.

What a Father, what a plan, what a man?

STUDY FOUR

The Calling of God and the Fall of Man

INTRODUCTION

So far we have seen:

- (a) God is the One Who calls everything into existence, gives them meaning (Isaiah 46: 9-10, Eccl. 3:11), and Who calls them to His goal. (Eph. 1:1-12).
- (b) As Father-Creator-King God's action reveals His love as Father-Creator, and His Fatherly authority and power as Lord of heaven and earth.
- (c) He calls us to know Him in His creation and to know how we relate to the end goal.
- (d) Creation is the "beginning" action of the Father and is with a view to the 'end' or goal of God. Therefore each moment of His plan in history is significant - so we can have purpose and significance

THE FALL AND THE PLAN

The revelation of all God's actions as the Living God that lie between creation and the new creation we call salvation history. By this we mean that the Bible does not record history simply as a series of events. It only records specific events which are significant in revealing to man the plan of God.

Keeping this in mind, we can now appreciate the structure of the book of Genesis. There is a simple introduction to God, creation, man, the Fall, the emergence of covenant, and the development of the plan in Israel. What Moses was recording then in the opening part of Genesis was a clear picture of man's desperate position and condition because of the Fall. Not to shut man up in despair, but to shut him up to the only way of life possible - God's covenant love.

So we can say that Moses sets the picture straight for a lost humanity to see how things really are. The events take on true significance for without an understanding of the Fall, God's covenant is meaningless and without the revelation of man's nature and purpose, the Fall is meaningless and without the revelation of creation and the God Who creates man makes no sense.

THE FALL IN HISTORY

Although some of the aspects of the account of the temptation and fall of man are difficult for us to visualise, the emphasis and tone of Moses' words indicate that he considered it to be an actual event in history.

Now the historicity of the Fall has been challenged since early times. From Pelagius in the 4th Century to our day there have been those who say that Adam's sin did not represent the fall of all humanity but only affected him. It has become popular in recent days to view Adam's fall as the story of every man. That is humanity has no guilty link with Adam, only the same possibility of falling like he did.

However, from the revelation of God's plan in the New Testament, it is clear that the Fall is

viewed as an event in man's history through which all humanity was plunged into the 'darkness' and 'deathness' of Adam's experience. This assumption is supported in the following Scriptures.

- (a) Rom. 5:12 - Sin and death entered into the world and experience' of man through the *man* Adam.
- (b) Rom. 5:18 - The universal condemnation of man came through the one transgression of Adam.
- (c) I Cor. 15:21 - By *one man* (Adam) death came into man's experience.
- (d) I Cor. 15:20f - Just as the actions of Jesus in dying and rising were actual events in our history so was the fall of humanity in Adam. One stands in dependence upon the other.
- (e) I Tim. 2:14 - There was a *point* in Adam's experience when he deliberately rebelled against God. Eve was deceived into disobedience.
- (f) Eph. 2:3 - Man is by nature sinful. This is a universal fact. From these Scriptures alone it is clear that the Apostles knew that if the Fall was not an actual event in man's history then the event of Messiah was unrelated to man's experience and need.

THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE FALL

(a) Satan The Precursor

- (i) His realm.

When God created the universe as we see it, there

also came into existence a mighty realm of angelic beings, (Col. 1:15f, II Pet. 2:4, Gen. 28:12, Acts 7:53, Gal. 3:19, Psa. 91:11 etc.) These angelic beings were created to submit to His authority in the tasks given them. (Col. 1:16).

Scripture is not clear as to when they were created but it would appear that they were already created when God called forth the material universe (Job 38:7).

It is from within these angelic beings that Satan appears - as one of high standing. (Jude 9).

- (ii) His rebellion

From Rev. 12:14, Isaiah 14 and Ezek. 28, I Tim. 3:6-7, it would seem that through the sin of his pride he refused to exist as God's creature and sought to deceive humanity into behaving in the same way. By his rebellion he ceased to relate truly to God and became what the Scriptures call a murderer (John 8:44), a thief (John 10:12), the destroyer (Rev. 9:11), a wolf (John 10:12). From just these few passages his nature is clearly seen to be quite the reverse of the Father Whose glory he seeks to have.

Satan's rebellion was no small event because from Rev. 12:4 we see that he took many of the angels into his deception. Together their goal was to sweep the whole of humanity into their darkness.

(b) Humanity Ensnared

- (i) Based upon deceit

When Satan appeared to Eve (Gen. 3:1-5), it was to introduce his brilliantly deceptive plan for the world. At the Fall, he appears in history to deceive

the whole world, (Rev. 12:9, 2:3, 8, 10, II Cor. 4:4, I John 5:19). He would stop at nothing until humanity was persuaded that his system was real and God's illusory. He must appear as father, and his fatherhood must be deceptively tangible. This is dramatically seen when Jesus recognised that the Pharisees of His day had been so blinded by legalism as to be the children of the devil while professing to be leaders of God's people. Satan must have a kingdom that appears reasonable and logical to fallen man's thinking. Paul spoke strongly to the Galatians warning them not to be bewitched within the Church by systems which have no origin in God's grace—Gal. 3:1f.

(ii) As God Or As Man?

Satan's word of temptation to Eve was an expression of his own intent. To be as God (Gen. 3:5), was the temptation to deny sonship, creatureliness and servanthood and attempt to become as God, i.e. Father-Creator-King.

When Satan insinuated that the Father was holding out on His creatures by His command, (Gen. 3:1b and 5) he was deceiving man into an untrue understanding of the Father. Man by accepting Satan's view found what seemed to be 'reasonable' grounds for disobedience.

By deception man was ensnared to feel that his fullness was to be found in breaking with filial love, dependence and service.

Moses records that the deception became immediately obvious - fear replaced filial love. - Shame, loss of dignity and uprightness replaced simplicity and regality - Guilt came where peace had been.

Hence the Fall of man became a grim and certain

reality, the effects of which immediately imposed themselves on Adam's familial relationships.

(c) The Futility Of Creation

Because man was created to reflect his Father's love, care and Lordship in creation, when he opted for independence nothing remained the same. This was due to two things:

(i) Creation's curse.

As the result of man's sin God called the creation into a 'cursed' condition to operate against man. (Gen. 3:17-19). (We must be careful to note that creation was subject to this futility in hope - Rom. 8:18f, and not in despair). The position of man was Clear. The creation in which he was to find liberty became a constant reminder of God's judgement.

(ii) Through his sin - blinded to true purpose.

Where he was intended to care for and enjoy the home of creation he became its abuser. No longer could creation respond according to its nature. With a fallen prince as its lord it became frustrated in the expression of its real nature.

So the creation 'groans' longing for its release from the curse, and for humanity in Christ to be restored to unimpeded sonship. (Rom. 8:19-21).

THE RESULT OF THE FALL

(a) The Enemies Of The Father's Plan

We saw how Satan has his system to stand in place, of God's plan. (Col. 1:13, II Thess. 2:3-4.) Satan's system involves many elements. All these are hostile to man and hold him in his fallen state of deprivation and depravity. They are:

(i) The world system.

Paul speaks of the 'present corrupt system' (Gal 1:4). Satan rules over this system, (I John 5:19). It works to establish anti-God activity through fear, accusation and guilt, (Gal. 1:4), and has its own form of deceptive wisdom (Rom. 1:21-22f, James 3:15-16, I Cor. 1:20f). It operates on the original deception of the Fall that it is the only way for man to be truly fulfilled but by feeding on lust and corruption it destroys the true life of humanity. (Eph. 4:22 cf., Gen. 3:6).

(ii) Satan the Accuser.

He holds man in a slavish fear of death through his guilt (Heb. 2:14-15). In man's fallen conscience he finds a ready weapon to hold man in a deadening fear of God, through his accusation. Of course where fear is present love and trust are absent and man's filial liberty denied.

(iii) The action of sin.

Jesus said that whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. (John 8:34 cf, also Rom. 6:17). So sin is the tangling and fouling of man, who is trapped in, unable to see the way free, let alone desire it. However, all the time he (man) feels the anguish of not being truly human because of it. As in the case of the world system and Satan the accuser, sin's slavery is guilt - that is man's liability to be punished. So death becomes an incredible horror, for it represents the impending judgement of God.

(iv) The flesh.

Again this arises in the Fall and continues to plague man. It is the incorrigible desire and tendency for man to break filial relationship and stand against God. Being dominated by the fallen mind and will, it seeks to do anything which is opposed

to God's plan. (Rom. 8:5-8, Eph. 4:22).

(b) The Fruit Of The Fall In Man

Because these elements in Satan's plan are powerful and man of himself is defenceless against them (read Romans chapter 7 in this light) their effects are horrific. Fallen man no longer:

- (i) Knows the Father but sees Him through the eyes of guilt. Hence the Father is seen to be over-demanding, harsh and remote.
- (ii) Relates in filial dependence and love and obedience, and so he is 'dead' relationally to his Father.
- (iii) Relates to creation, reflecting the dynamic love and care of the Father-Creator-King. He becomes lost to his brother man and all relationships tangle and pollute through his guilt.
- (iv) Knows himself - he is in terrible anguish because he no longer feels the innocence of his simple and pure relationship with his Father.
- (v) Seeks God, to know Him and serve Him. Paul says in Rom. 1 that when he thinks he is seeking God he is actually being idolatrous. (Rom. 1:21ff).

GOD'S PLAN AND THE FALL

Having seen the terrible reality of the Fall, we can see why Moses recorded the event. Because of man's incredible audacity as a sinner he must be shown to be utterly dependent on God's grace. Paul in Rom. 3:19 says that every mouth must be closed from any self justifying statement. Through the Fall we see that man is left in the dock of judgement with no witnesses for his defence and under the condemnation of "guilty". Only from this position can we truly understand and receive the covenant love

of God. (Gen. 3:15, 9:9-17, 17:1f.)

The Fall does not make God's calling of creation and man to their goal doubtful. We must say that man's dilemma as Fallen humanity is not beyond the dynamic action of the Living God to renew. But in the climax of the Cross all the elements of Satan's kingdom are defeated. All the soiling and guilt of man's sin is judged completely so that through grace man knows his Father again and has *good* hope in His calling.

STUDY FIVE

Man and the Nature of Sin

INTRODUCTION

It is only as we observe where man once stood by nature, having been made in the image of God, that we can begin to comprehend the depths to which he fell. Something is tragically lost in his humanity, and what he 'supposedly' gained is destructive and works against his fulness as God's creature. "The joy of our hearts has ceased...the crown has fallen from our head, woe to us, for we have sinned." (Lam. 5:15f).

(a) Man - Where Are You?

This is the call God directed to Adam immediately after the Fall (Gen. 3:9). In the context of this call we find that Adam and Eve had known the dread of coming face to face with God and fled. V.8. We understand that God was not simply asking Adam to reveal his hiding place, but rather His call was to bring Adam into the crisis of facing the terrible fear and guilt into which he had fallen. So we see that this question was directed to Adam concerning his relationship not location.

We are immediately struck by the *privation* of man - gone is his relational liberty with his Father, and gone is his confidence and uprightness as a man. His immediate attempt to justify his actions is a clear indication of the deceit of sin. V.12. Man has lost the ability to confess (acknowledge) the truth to his Father, a privation that has been a

constant anguish to him since then.

God's call, "Where are you?" is also the call of the faithful Father, moving to His lost son with the view of restoring him in His true calling as a man.

THE CALL TO MAN

(a) Man—His Nature

In Study III we saw that God created man in His image and thereby structured him to be a son, a servant and a creature. That is as God is Father, man is structured as a son to reveal the glory of the Father. As God is Creator so man is structured to operate as a creature and hence reveal the glory of the Creator. Likewise as God is King, so man is structured to show the glory of that through his obedient service. So we can see that God's calling to and for man cannot be separated from who he is as a man creationally.

(b) Man's Calling Not Optional But Functionally Indispensable

In the New Testament, man's calling through regeneration is to be truly filial (Eph. 1:2, Gal. 3: 26, Rom. 8:14), truly dependent as a new creation, (II Cor. 5:17), and truly obedient in service (Heb. 9:14, I John 3:18).

From Rev. 21:7, we see that the *goal* of man's calling is to be fully filial. Similarly man in Christ will be fully dependent and fully involved in true service (Rev. 22:1-5).

Therefore we can say that when God created man He structured him for His calling. Now this must mean that man has no option but to obey God's calling if he is to be fully human. Or in other words,

God's calling to man is not optional for he is structured to function truly only in obedience to the call. This means that when man rejected God's call he chose against himself. So we speak in terms of him being lost, that is lost to his Father, himself and others.

He feels this lostness like the lost son (Luke 15:11-24). Jesus remarked, "No one was giving anything to him" v. 16, so that even the husks and slops of the pig-pen were attractive to him. He was not structured to be apart from his father life for him was back home.

Man's experience of lostness, dislocation, anxiety and his privation are the manifestations of his guilt as a non-son, non-creature and non-servant. Hence fallen man's guilt is the real result of his refusal to function according to God's call.

MAN REJECTED THE CALL BY REJECTING THE CALLER

From our last section it is clear that to reject his calling is to actually reject his Caller for man was called to reflect his Caller's glory. David exclaimed, "Against Thee and Thee only I have sinned" (Psa. 51:4) and Paul shows in Rom. 3:23 that man comes short of the glory of *God* through his sin. Paul means when he says 'come short' to be inferior to, or come behind the glory of God. Amongst other things the glory of God is His nature as Father, Creator and King.

We can now see why the Scripture shows that when a man sins against his brother it is a sin against God (Psa. 51). In other words a true son of the Father does not abuse a woman - he moves to her to cover and protect. So when a man sins against another person it simply reflects his bad relationship with his Father.

When Joseph was tempted by Potiphar's wife, he recognised that he was who he was, only in dependence upon God, and to abuse that would be sin against Him (Gen. 39:9f).

MAN'S WILFUL REJECTION OF THE CALLER

In Rev. 12:9 Satan is called the deceiver of the world. Sin is spoken of as having an inbuilt deceit - Heb. 3:13-14, see also Rom. 7:7ff. The fruit of sin is deceit. (Eph. 4:22). However, the deceit of Satan and his works, no matter how brilliant, does not let man excuse his rejection of God and His call.

The deceit of Satan in Eden did not so overpower the will of Adam and Eve that they became unwilling participants in sin. The deceit lay in the fact that Satan's insinuations about their Father were untrue and that his (Satan's) plan to establish their fulness through independence was utterly fraudulent.

Satan took the prohibitions of God and applied a negative and restrictive interpretation on them. Man chose, against a full revelation of his Creator's goodness, to accept that deceit. He refuses to acknowledge that, as a creature, he must stay within the good boundaries set by God. He chose to believe that the boundaries were threatening not protective.

Man's Kin is complete rebellion, an action of his will. James 1:13f says that man is enticed away by his own lust. Satan's lust for independence and glory was mirrored in man.

(a) Man's Refusal To Obey Came From A Corrupt Heart

Man changed his mind about his Father and from that corruption flowed the initial act, (and all others) of disobedience. So the Scripture reveals that man's rebellion is not external but reflects his fallen heart and will (Jer. 17:9, Mark 7:21). This means that man has no power within himself (no will) to escape from his sin. Rom. 3:10f, John 8:34, Eph. 4:18, Col. 2:13.

It is interesting to see that the word used in the New Testament for obedience comes from a common root word 'to hear'. So when a man will not hear the true call of God it is disobedience. Now the word for disobedience is literally, 'to hear alongside of', or in other words 'to ignore', (see Mark 5:35, T.E.V.). So Adam's transgression consisted of his wilful ignoring of God's functional call. This indicates that Adam set aside the authority of God, and the goodness, wisdom and love of God's word to him and in its place sought to establish his own sovereignty. The listening of obedience was replaced by his 'doing what seemed right in his own eyes' cf. Rom. 1:21f.

(b) Man's Refusal To Obey Corrupted His Will

Not being willing to honour God and rejoice in His way man chose the only other alternative, idolatry. (Rom. 1:23). That is, the wilful substitution of creaturely things in the place of the Creator, as the object of worship and service. (Rom. 1:23, 25).

By rejecting the call of God from his heart man deprived himself of a healthy will - he still had a will but it was bent on being unfilial, independent and rebellious. As long as a man gives himself over to Satan's deceitful revelation of God, he will not will to do God's will. All his energies go into

sinning and attempting to justify his sin. (Rom. 1: 32).

MAN'S EXPERIENCE IN SIN

We have seen how that at the Fall, man's sin was rejection of a relationship. So man's experience in the on-going action of that rupture is:

(a) Impurity

By rejecting the call of God, man opted for a life of impurity. All his acts are unclean because they are against his created nature. He was not structured to rebel so it is anti-natural. All of his perverted relationships are impure and work against him leaving him dry and dead as a human being, (consider the story of the woman from Sychar - John 4:1-29).

(b) Bondage

The grip of sin is a vicious bondage. Sin's grip is guilt because guilt produces a fear of God that alienates us from Him. (Heb. 2:14-15, I John 4:18). So the more alienation, the greater the guilt, the greater the fear, etc.

(c) Hostility

This hostility is related to man's bondage through guilt. In Col. 1:21 Paul talks about the sinner being alienated and *hostile* in mind towards God. By hostility Paul means that the sinner's mind is set against the truth of God's Fatherhood, Creatorhood and Lordship. But there is also another perverse kind of hostility that springs from the guilt of a non-relationship. The prodigal's brother became bitter and hostile when confronted by his father's love and grace. (Luke 15:28f).

Allied to man's hostility is his living in hate. Not to be in loving relationships is to be involved in the dead works of hate. In the Scriptures love and life are one, and so are death and hate. (Eph. 2:1f). Sinful man camouflages his hate and calls it neglect and incompatibility etc. but any operation of man which does not flow from a filial love flows from a corrupt heart controlled by Satan, the destroyer of life. (John 8:44, Rev. 9:11).

"So man in sin is objectively alienated from God because of his sin and subjectively because of his reaction to God." (G.C.Bingham, NCTM. Study 27).

THE EXTENT OF MAN'S SIN

When the call of God to man comes clearly through the command to repent and believe the Gospel man is called out of the totality of his sin. That is we can see the extent of man's sin when we see what the Gospel calls him out of:

- (a) The kingdom of darkness, Col. 1:13 into the Kingdom of His light and love (reality).
- (b) Disbelief and hardness of heart into faith, II Thess. 2:13, 1:11.
- (c) A distorted and profane view of the Father into true repentance, Acts 17:30.
- (d) Internal and relational anguish into peace, Ephesians 2:14f.
- (e) The despair of guilt and condemnation into forgiveness, Eph. 1:7, Acts 13:38.
- (f) The bondage of guilt into liberty, Gal. 5:13.
- (g) Impurity into true holiness, I Thess. 4:7.
- (h) The deadening action of hate into love, Eph. 4:1, 2, 17, 5:2.

(i) The isolation of bad relationships into the love of the Family, Col. 3:15.

JESUS THE TRUE MAN

We can recognise now that for Jesus to be truly man he must become truly filial, dependent and obedient as a man. Faced with the same Satanic deception about the Father he chose to sanctify God through his obedience. Hence his relationship with God was pure - he was free from guilt and fear and retained the regality of manhood. So the glory of God's image was clearly visible. Jesus himself said that he has given his glory to his people, (John 17:22). So in Christ we come alive to the calling of God - sin's power and pollution is broken and we live as true men and women.

CONCLUSION

"This description of man's sinful life-direction refers to a passing from heights to depths or a falling away. The Fall is an apostasy, or standing apart, or a defection from the fellowship of God." (Berkouwer).

Man in sin is terribly lost and perverted - only the bearing away of the wrath he knows through guilt and fears at death can relieve him. Thanks be to the Father Who reconciles us to Himself. (II Cor. 5:18f).

STUDY SIX

Conscience and the Call

INTRODUCTION

In this study we will consider how man in sin refuses to relate to God's law - how law becomes a dead and destructive thing for him as he is under guilt. We will need to consider man's conscience, and see what it means to have a good conscience, or a bad conscience.

GOD'S CALLING AND HIS LAW

(a) God's Law Is The Expression Of His Will

In Psalm 40:8 David shows quite clearly that God's will is expressed in His law. It is also obvious that God's law is personal - that is it expresses God's *nature* and relates to man's as he is in his Father's image. David said "Thy law is within my heart" - it is a personal thing. Paul said that the law is the, "...embodiment of knowledge and of truth". (Rom. 2:20b) Now we know that word truth means reality. So God's law revelation to His creatures of how He really is, how man really is, and how His plan really is. Rightly understood the law is perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, true, enduring and desirable for man. (Psa. 19:7-10). When we consider that the true impact and significance of God's law is *love* (Matt. 22:34f) then we can understand its *delightful* nature.

(b) Calling And Law

To understand the law of God is to see that it

is the personal call of the Father-Creator-King to His children to relate to Him. So God's command to Adam and Eve not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was a *personal protective* command to safeguard true relationships. Similarly the command given to Israel not to have any other gods was the call of God's functional will for them to be protected from the deadliness of idolatry.

It is impossible then to separate the will of God, His law and His calling - all flow from the one true living God. "The law is spiritual" (Rom: 7:14). Concerning the meaning of this, Deane Meatheringham has written, "By spiritual Paul certainly does not mean that the law is simply 'religious' or that it has to do with the way we feel emotionally. The personal law of God is spiritual in authorship, it is designed for persons and speaks to persons at the depths of their personal relationship with the living God". (*The Delight of Law* p.5 NCPI)

(c) True Man And The Law

As we saw in the beginning, God's law was expressed to Adam and Eve to protect them not deprive them. Adam could have loved the law of God for it was good for him. Solomon saw that, "Where there is no revelation the people are unrestrained, but *happy* is he who keeps the law". (Prov. 29:18). See also *Prov. 8:32-36*, 1:31f, *Psa. 19:7, 8, 9, 10, 119:143f, 160, Psa. 78:1-7, Rom. 7:22*.

In Jesus we see the embodiment of the law. He was the true man so the law was not a burden to him, (Matt. 11:30 cf, Luke 11:46), but he understood it was Fatherly. (John 8:26-28). So the truth is clear, because the, man Christ Jesus knew his Father (whom to know is to love);he desired to *do* God's will; it was a delight for him to obey the law. We can add that his true manhood and the law worked harmoniously

to fulfil his calling as Messiah.

"The tragic mistake has always been that of changing God's will into religion or law, i.e., into something which binds man and effectively alienates him afresh. The tragic mistake has been that of regarding obedience to God as servitude. This has been Satan's supreme achievement in the spirit of men. If God himself is free, however, he surely cannot bear to be obeyed by slaves. He surely wants obedience to be free and voluntary. If God is love, surely he cannot tolerate being loved in return, not freely, but out of fear and debasement. Love presupposes freedom. God can hardly subjugate without being confused with Satan. This is why obedience to God's will is itself freedom." (quote from "*The Ethics of Freedom*" p.62, Jacques Ellul).

It seems surprising then that something so good for man should become a curse for man. (Gal. 3:13).

Has the law changed into something essentially evil? Pan] says emphatically, "May it never be... the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good". (Rom. 7:12).

So we must consider the action of sin on the law. By this we mean, how sin has affected man's understanding of God's law.

SIN AND THE LAW

(a) Man's Lawlessness And His Guilt

We saw in Study Five that sin is lawlessness, (I John 3:4). Man in Adam chose to ignore the true revelation of the Father through His commands and opt for a perverted view of God. This supposedly made it 'reasonable' to disobey the calling of God. He immediately suffered terrible guilt - the guilt of not being truly filial, dependent and obedient.

So the calling of God (His law) became the “law of sin and death”, (Rom. 8:2), instead of being the pattern of life, that is man came under the judgement of the law (Rom. 6:23, 7:10, 11, Gal. 2:10). Thus man’s guilt, for falling short of the glory of Father-Creator-King, and his guilt for actual acts of sin (Rom. 5:12-21, 1:18 - 3:23), brings him into fear of judgement. Satan can use his guilt to threaten him and take him further into the darkness of fearing and hating God.

(b) Sin’s Perverted Use Of The Law

“The commandment which was to be life resulted in death for me: for sin taking opportunity through the commandment deceived me, and through it killed me.” (Rom. 7:10, 11). Sin takes the command of God which is the functional way for man to live and makes it a condition, the means by which man attempts to merit God’s favour. So man in sin, bent on independence, makes the law a system of salvation. He then sets about to justify himself by performing that part of the law that suits him. However, the more he strives the more the law kills him - no man is justified by works of law, (Rom. 3:20, 9:31f. In fact sin is not overcome through ‘obedience’ to works of law - it is inflamed. (Rom. 7:8).

(c) Law Inflames The Sin

This means that the law energises sinful man’s rebellion against God. Paul says that sin produces a terrible Just in man to actually rebel (Rom. 7:8). That is man *will* not be told what to do by God but rather defiantly goes his own way.

But the law doesn’t only produce a sinful reaction it reveals clearly the true nature of sin (Rom. 5:20, I Cor. 15:56). The more our sin is revealed the more we suffer guilts, shame and pain.

The law system then says, “Do more, try harder”. However, this brings man further into the dilemma of his failure and guilt. As Paul says, “...when the commandment came sin became alive and I died.” (Rom. 7:9b.)

So it is that the law is deceitfully used by sin to hold man in the deadness of a guilty conscience. The law is the *power* of sin. (I Cor. 15: 56). Man fears the wrath of God the law-maker. This is what it means for man to be under the law to be under the condemnation of the law-giver.

MAN AND THE WRATH OF GOD

Sinful man will always consider the wrath of God in a twisted way. It will be seen to be vindictive, too harsh and incompatible with the love of God.

We note that it is through this slavish fear of a false understanding of God’s wrath that Satan brings so many into bondage about the Father. At Sunday School level it is expressed “I love Jesus but God is not nice - He’s too strict”. Later it is heard in this form, “I can accept the God of Jesus, but God in the Old Testament is too angry and judgemental.” The truth is, man wants to be free of his guilt - so to reduce God to a passive non-judge is one of his delusive ways of trying to feel free.

Man knows the wrath of God now, and fears that which is to come.

(a) Wrath - A Present Experience

In Rom. 1:18f Paul indicates that God’s wrath is presently being revealed against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. (v.18). In vs. 24, 26, 28, we are shown what this wrath consists of. In fact God’s wrath, presently experienced by man is the terrible kick-back of his sin. To be given up

to sin is to be given up to the ravages of its dysfunctional effects. To be given up to sin is to be given up to its curse. Hence we see that the condemnation of God is always present to man and in man. As we will see, man's consciousness of sin is a terrible burden continually.

(b) Wrath - To Come

Man lives constantly in the fear of the wrath to come, in fact it is a bondage all his life. (Heb. 2:14, 15). The sting of death is sin, that is the judgement man is liable for because of sin. Paul talks of a day of wrath when the righteous judgement of God will occur. (Rom. 2:4, 5, cf. I Thess. 1:10). We see that the wrath of God's final judgement will actually be the personal righteous wrath of the Lamb. (Rev. 6:16). From this we see that the judgement will be on those who have refused to accept and live in the propitiation of the Cross of the Lamb.

Therefore man of himself cannot find a way of escape from God's wrath.

MAN'S CONSCIENCE AND HIS CONSCIOUSNESS OF SIN

We don't have to be convinced about the or *constancy* of our conscience. It is both our accuser and judge and as well our executioner. The conscience in the New Testament refers to the ability of man to know and appraise himself morally. (Rom. 2:15). But as we saw in the last section, as long as a man is under the law he will never find any possible way of soothing the accusation of conscience. The New Testament speaks of a good conscience, (I Tim. 1:5), or a defiled or bad conscience. (Titus 1:15, Heb. 9:14).

(a) A Bad Conscience

As long as conscience is faced by the judgement and wrath of God it can never rest from its painful execution. Under the prompting of Satan it becomes involved in "dead works" (Heb. 9:14). These dead works cannot bring peace, only the terrible drive to do more and more to be justified. Guilt remains the motivating force - a clear evidence of the defilement of the conscience.

If a conscience is bad it will be 'weak' By weak the New Testament means that it is quick to come under the bondage of guilt, see I Cor. 8:7. So a weak conscience will continually stumble into the darkness of the consciousness of sin.

(b) A Good Conscience

Many feel that the more their conscience probes and condemns the 'better' it is. In fact many believers equate conscience with the voice of God. For them the worse God makes them feel by the accusation of conscience the more likely they will be to obey Him.

However, a good conscience is quite the reverse of this. A good conscience and a good faith go together (Rom. 14:23, I Tim. 1:5). From I Tim. 1:5 we also note that Paul links in the fact of a pure heart. So we say that a good conscience is one that has been brought to peace by faith in the propitiatory (wrath bearing) action of the Cross, it lives in the peace and freedom that there is no condemnation, (Rom. 8:1), therefore it refuses to seek 'dead works' of self justification. Hence we see that, "Liberty in Christ is the liberation of the conscience, in that it takes away the consciousness of guilt and gives the believer the awareness of being led in his speech and actions by the Holy

Spirit". (Paul, *An Outline of His Theology*, Herman Ridderbos. p. 289).

THE LAW AND CONSCIENCE

Paul shows in Rom. 7:1-13 that when sin chose to bring man into bondage using the law it was doomed. The law is holy and good, and sin is ultimately shown up to be utterly sinful in its action of killing man relationally by using God's good law.

In fact the law leads us to Christ, (Gal. 3:24), it shuts us up to the way of faith, v.23. So when a man is justified by the Cross, the law ceases to be a system of salvation, it ceases to incite and oppress his conscience - it becomes a delight - he knows liberty.

STUDY SEVEN

Man and the Counterfeit Calling

INTRODUCTION

In study four we considered the results of the Fall in man's experience (Study 4, 5 (a))- Man under the 'energising' (Ephes. 2:2) of Satan devised a whole new system to be a counterpart to that plan of God begun at creation (Eccl. 7:29, Psa. 106:39, Jer. 2:13, 4:22, Mark 7:8, 9, Rom. 1:21, 32, 3:9, 19, Titus 3:3). Both Satan and fallen man are seen to be utterly devoted to their new system. For them the delusion of sin has been such that their plan seems to appear as the reasonable and pleasurable one.

We must accept man's complete responsibility in being part of Satan's world system. Man was not innocently entangled but rather willingly seduced. This is clear from God's question to Adam, "What have you done?" Gen. 3:13.

So we say that when man gave heed to the temptation to be 'as God' it was out of the lust of his own heart - little did he know or want to know that the 'calling' into Satan's system was truly counterfeit - that is it seemed to offer man a way to fulfilment but proved to be fraudulent.

THE TWO KINGDOMS

(a) The Worldly Kingdom

It is clear from Gen. 11:6 that when man fell

he still retained great abilities. Certainly he lost any ability to relate to God freely but he still had many of the powers given him at creation. The problem was his perverted use of these abilities, see again Rom. 1:9f, Gen. 4:1f, 6:1f.

Called on by his lust for independence, man sets out to build his worldly kingdom. Figuring that he was free, man was actually in slavery to the evil one. (Eph. 2:2f). In thinking that he (man) was gaining independence, he was going further into the delusion of the counterfeit calling of Satan.

(b) The Kingdom of God

The Kingdom of God is the rule of the Living God over all His creation (Dan. 4:34f). It consists of the actions of the Living God to call to Himself His sinful children, heal them of their crippling sin and bring the whole creation into harmony in Christ (Luke 4:18).

Because of his sin, man cannot and will not accept God's Kingdom plan - so he must repent, receive forgiveness and thus come to see the Kingdom by the Spirit's ministry (John 3:3, 5). The Kingdom of God is quite foreign to man so long as man lives in the worldly system (John 3:6f).

God's Kingdom is eternal (Heb. 12:28), and must triumph over Satan's (John 12:31f, I Cor. 15:2Off, Rev. 19:5f).

From Jesus' temptation, (Matt. 4:1-11), we see that Jesus rejects the way of Satan's kingdom for the true Kingdom of His Father.

Man finds himself in either one kingdom or the other. Either he is subject to the slavery and corruption (however sophisticated) of Satan's system

or he belongs as a son in God's Kingdom. Col. 1:13f, Acts 26: 18.

(c) Two Kingdoms—One King

When we speak of two kingdoms, The Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan we mean primarily the authority and expressed rule of God and the power of Satan to rule. But it is important to see that there is only one King so there is really only one true and lasting Kingdom. Satan, being a creature *cannot* ever be 'as God' - he only believes he can. Therefore any rule or authority he has must always be less than, and within the authority and rule of God, see Job 1:12, 2:6, Rev. 19-21. So dualism is never part of the operation of history. There has never been a time when God has not been King. Whatever opposition there has been to the rule of God it has never reduced or threatened it in any way. Satan's rule is a rule that is creaturely and therefore must pass away.

*"There is no unbounded power and work of the evil one; no seduction that is unrelated to the guilt of man Only in our guilt and capitulation to the evil one is the power of evil irrepressible. Only in that way does an evil man become the slave to sin". (G.C. Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics - Sin*, p.112).*

Hence when the Scripture reveals the power of Satan and his kingdom's operation, it does so, linking them with the 'lusts of the flesh' and the indulgence in the works of flesh (Eph. 2:3). So man is under the rule of the evil one not by reason of Satan's equality with God or his right to rule the universe, but because he has willingly given himself over to the 'world system' over which Satan rules.

THE NATURE OF THE WORLDLY KINGDOM

The word '*world*' (kosmos) in the New Testament has many meanings. It is used in a general sense of the created world, Rom. 1:20, more particularly as the place of human habitation, (I Cor. 5:10), or also the sphere of man and his awareness. (I Cor. 4:9). It was also used by Jesus to refer to those who stood against Him as Messiah (John 7:7). However, along with the word 'age' (aeon), kosmos commonly means the whole experience and system of man as he lives alienated from God and subject to Satan. (John 12:31, II Cor. 5:19, Gal. 1:4, 4:13, Eph. 2:2, 12, Col. 2:8, 20, II Pet. 1:4, I John 2:16, 17, 3:1, 13, 5:19). So we see that:

(a) Satan Is The God of The Worldly System

In II Cor. 4:4, Paul says, "...The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving..." We see clearly then that Satan is not concerned to set up an alternative system to God but rather to destroy God's and set up his, as the only one. He blinds men in sin to the glory of Christ, who was the image of God. So he must be god - nothing less. His system means that all must serve and worship him, (Matt. 4:9). He must infiltrate and penetrate the world of man so as to exalt himself above everyone else. (II Thess. 2:4).

Now as God is Father, Satan must emulate Him if it is to be 'as the Father'.

(b) Satan Is The Father Of The Worldly System

The glory of God our Father is seen in the way He gives to His children. He gives with an open hand, (Psa. 104:28, 103:1-5), and He gives according to His riches. Blinding sinful man to this, Satan must appear in place of the Father as the great giver, (Matt. 4:8f, Prov. 9:17f, 14:12,

II Peter 2:18f).

We note that there are not two 'fatherhoods' only one, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (I Peter 1:3). Satan as a creature can only pervert fatherhood and produce a perverted family. To be "of the devil" is to produce and reflect the same lusts as him. In John 8:33f, Jesus shows that the devil "fathers" children who stand against the true Son to destroy him - that is they cannot receive him for that would be to submit to the true Father.

As the 'father' of the world system, Satan has ready and willing 'sons'. Sinful man 'loves' the world and therefore the love of the Father is not in him. (I John 2:15f, cf. also 3:10f, 4:8, 5:1, 4, 18).

(c) Idolatry - The Religion Of The World-System

As Paul says in Rom. 1, not to worship the true God is to give one's worship to idols (vs. 23f).

The more sophisticated man becomes, the more sophisticated are his idols, but whatever he substitutes for dependence, love and service of his Father, he makes his idol.

Satan's seduction in this area is quite brilliant - he is seen to make inroads into the church and lure people from a pure devotion to Christ, (II Cor. 11:1f), even by appearing as an angel of light, v.14.

We see then that the counterfeit calling of man into idolatry finds ready acceptance in his heart, for he lusts to be independent of God (I John 2:16).

Man's lusting for religious systems, seen to have been the plague of the church from Galatia on-

wards, is recognised by Jesus and Paul as belonging to the world. As we saw, Jesus identified many of the leaders in the Jewish Church of his day as the 'world', (John 7:1-7, 14:19 etc.). Paul links the legalism at Galatia with the works of the flesh, (Gal. 3:3). Now the works of the flesh are the outworking of the kingdom of Satan, see Gal. 5:16-21. 'Christian' legalism is nothing more than a christianised worldliness. Its adherents find themselves in the deadliness of making the word of God into an abstraction and the loss of a good relationship with the Father.

THE FRUITS OF THE WORLD-SYSTEM

The fact that we need to spell out that Satan calls man into a hopeless mess rather than a true Kingdom, simply highlights the brilliance of his operation and the guilt of man.

(a) Purposelessness

We must see that there is no valid reason or motive for the kingdom of Satan, the world system, to exist. In the light of God's nature and His great plan, the sin of concocting a counterplan is inexplicable. So Berkouwer says, "The more 'motives' we adduce for our sin, the more we betray how guilty we are" op. cit. p.140. The world-system cannot offer its subjects any real purpose. By its impure actions, relationships are broken and life ceases, along with significance and meaning for all involved. The whole world system is passing away. (I John 2:17).

(b) Foolishness

"The world through its wisdom did not come to know God" (I Cor. 1:21). How idiotic, how foolish can man be when he can't even know his Father. The

true wisdom Paul said, is not of this age - it isn't found in the world-system (I Cor. 2:6). Man creates his great systems of asceticism, ritualism and legalism, but all prove too feeble to even show him his Father.

The foolishness of the world system is the foolishness of reaction. James says that true wisdom is gentle not reactionary, (Jas. 3:13). Bitter jealousy, selfish ambition and arrogant attitudes find their motivation by means of an earthly, natural and demonic wisdom (Jas. 3:14, 15). Where the world's wisdom has sway, there follows disorder and all kinds of evil, (Jas. 3:16).

(c) Corruption

Peter said that those who have received the Faith have escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust (II Pet. 1:4). It is clear from Gal. 5:19f that the corruption of the world-system is relational. Immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, etc. all pollute and decay good relationships. All bring powerful guilt reactions which corrupt our relationship with the Father. So the world offers sin as the norm and man is corrupted and ensnared, (Prov. 5:22, John 8:31-36, Rom. 3:9f).

(d) Remorse

Solomon said, "A joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones." (Prov. 17:22). Likewise Paul in II Cor. 7:10 speaks of the sorrow of the world that produces death, cf. also Matt. 27: 4, 5, Heb. 12:17, I Kings 21:4, II Sam. 13:4-17:23, I Sam. 30:6. To be in the world-system is to be without God and therefore without the truth of His gift of repentance. The one in the world-system can

only grovel in the self pity and anguish of guilt, with no way of escape. True confession and release means coming to know the Kingdom of God - it means rejecting the temptation to justify our sinful action and recognising that there was no good reason to sin.

CONCLUSION

We are called to be in the world but not of the world, consider John 17:11ff, Gal. 5:16f, Eph. 4:1-3, 17ff, Col. 3:1f, I Thess. 2:12. We will see' in the following Study how this can be possible because of the Cross.

We conclude by saying that the counterfeit calling of the evil one, a calling to be in his kingdom is brilliant, seductive, constantly powerful through man's guilt, and demands watchfulness, but is doomed. "Christ must reign until he has put all things under his feet". I Cot. 15:25 - "then the kingdom of the world will have become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ and He will reign forever and ever". Rev. 11:15.

STUDY EIGHT

The Call and the Cross

INTRODUCTION

We began the series on the Calling of God with the aim of knowing the good hope of that calling. Yet progressively we have been faced with the dilemma that man has set himself against the God who calls him. Although his bondage and hopelessness is self made, man discovers that it cannot be cured by his own effort.

So it is that the call of God is the effective calling of man out of the power and pollution of his sin. Only then will man relate to the Father - only then will man submit to the King - only then will man serve the Lord.

We say then that the plan of God to bring man and creation into total harmony with Himself must involve an attack on and the removal of all that opposes that harmony. This great crisis occurred on the Cross. Jesus after his resurrection said, "Was it not necessary that Christ should suffer for these things and enter into his glory". (Luke 24:26). Hence the Apostles having had their minds opened to the plan and calling of God (Luke 24:45f), seek to teach the Church that the Cross was the indispensable act of the Living God in the reconciliation of all things to Himself. See Acts 2:22f, 3:18, 5:29f, 17:3, I Cor. 1:18, 15:3, II Cor. 5:11ff, Col. 2:13f, etc.

THE RIGHTEOUS CALLING OF GOD

Because God is love and His love is holy, He cannot blink at sin. He cannot accept the agencies working to put down His plan, that is, Satan, the World system, man, guilt, etc. We say that, because God's love is holy love, He moves strongly against anything that is not living in and reflecting His love.

Another way of saying this is to speak of the wrath of God. God expresses His personal wrath against sin and this wrath is always righteous or justifiable.

(a) The Affront Of Wrath

"A jealous and avenging God is the Lord
The Lord is avenging and wrathful
The Lord takes vengeance on His adversaries
And He reserves wrath for His enemies
The Lord is slow to anger and great in power,
And the Lord will by no means leave the guilty
unpunished"

Nahum 1:2,3.

For many, such expressions as that above become offensive. They must be relegated or archaic and unenlightened.

However, unless we rightly understand the wrath of God we will never know the full crisis of the Cross nor the liberty that flows from the Cross.

Much of the offence of God's wrath is due to our sinful understanding. Words such as jealous, avenge and anger are seen in the light of sinful jealousy and anger, that: is as irrational, vicious and capricious. But God's wrath is none of these reactions, it is "the stern reaction of the divine nature toward evil". (Leon Morris, *The Apostolic*:

Preaching of the Cross, p. 150).

We see that God's wrath is extended against man because of rebellion to the calling and plan of God, (Psa. 78:21f, Lam. 3:42f) and in particular, when man gives himself, to idols (Deut. 6:14f, Ex. 32:10f, Isa. 66:15-17, Ezra 9:14, Rom. 1:18f).

(b) Righteous Wrath

It becomes clear that God must reveal His wrath if He is to be seen to be righteous. Paul speaks of God's righteous wrath (Rom. 2:5).

(i) We say that God's wrath is righteous because it is absolutely fair and valid. He is completely just in His wrath.

(ii) We also see that God's wrath is righteous in that He desires man to come to grace and not into judgment.

P. T. Forsyth says "When a man piles up his sin and rejoices in iniquity, is God simply a bystander and spectator of the process? Does not God's pressure on the man blind him, urge him, stiffen him, shut him up into sin, if only that he might be shut up to mercy alone?" (Quoted by Morris, *Ibid.* p.183). See also Rom. 3:25, 2:1-5.

In line with our previous studies we can see that for man to wilfully reject God's calling is to be liable for the wrath of God. God could not simply 'forget' man's sin for He is righteous. Man's sin is personal and moral and has imposed itself upon the whole of man's experience. Man's sin must be judged, or to be more accurate, man the sinner must be judged. The only way man can be free of God's wrath is for that wrath to be fully expressed on a man.

THE CROSS AND THE WRATH OF GOD

Paul speaks of God setting Jesus forward publicly as a propitiatory sacrifice, (Rom. 3:25) as does John in I John 4:10.

Paul in Romans 1-3 outlines the truth that the whole world was exposed to the wrath and judgment of God. (see the climax of this in 3:19). So the Cross was the great crisis for man because it was there that God's wrath was poured out on the man Christ Jesus and thus he averted the righteous wrath of God from all humanity. Hence the word propitiation, or the averting of wrath, is used to describe the action of the Cross.

(a) Propitiation or Expiation

This note is inserted because some translators and commentators opt for the word expiation in the place of propitiation. The word expiation means to pay for one's sins. A person pays for a crime, that is he expiates a crime. Leon Morris in the New Bible Dictionary emphasises that the word expiate has a thing as its object. Propitiation however, is a personal word speaking of averting or appeasing another's wrath. Because sin is not a thing but moral and personal, it cannot be expiated. For a full argument on this subject see Leon Morris, "*Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*". p. 144,213.

(b) Propitiation is God's Action

This fact safeguards the use of the word propitiation from the notion that heathen worshippers have when by it *their* actions or gifts they appease their gods. There is no sense in which sinful man can offer anything to God to escape the righteous judgment due him. The Scriptures are clear that the gift of the Son as the propitiatory sacrifice is

God's initiative and God's action totally. So Morris says "The use of the concept of propitiation witnesses to two great realities, the one, the reality and seriousness of the divine reaction against sin, and the other, the reality and the greatness of divine love which provided the gift which should avert the wrath from men". Ibid. p.211.

THE CROSS IS JUST

(a) A Demonstration of Righteousness

How can God, who will "by no means leave the guilty unpunished" (Nahum 1:3), justify His rebellious creatures. How can He fully accept His reprobate family without compromising His holiness or sentimentalising His holy love into a weak indifference to sin?

We have been building up to an answer to this question in our section on propitiation. If there is no propitiation then there is no answer to these questions and we are faced with the ridiculous notion that God is thwarted by the dilemma of man's sin.

Paul says in Rom. 3:26, that the propitiatory sacrifice was the demonstration of the righteousness of God so that He could be seen to be the justifier of sinners.

(b) The Extremity of the Cross

God made him to be curse for us (Gal. 3:13). By this we see that for Jesus to identify with man and become his sin was to *come* under the curse of man's consciousness of sin, guilt and the terrible righteous wrath of God.

Jesus directs us to the awful action on the

Cross in his words to the disciples prior to the event, “I will strike down the shepherd and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered”, (Matt. 26:31). He spoke of the striking of judgment, of the full cup of wrath towards sinful man.

All we can say is that God did this so as to be just in justifying sinful man. As Isaiah said, “It was the will of the Lord to bruise him, He has put him to grief” (Isaiah 53:10), and “My Servant will justify the many, as he will bear their iniquities”

So Paul says that God sent His Son equipped as a man with flesh, open to all the ravages of sin, and condemned sin in his flesh (Rom. 8:3). By condemned, Paul means judged as guilty and executed total judgment for that guilt.

(c) The Conflict on the Cross

We are told that it was on the Cross that Jesus triumphed over the evil Satanic powers and rulers. (Col. 2:15). Some translations speak of him stripping these powers from himself on the Cross. What we see then is the terrible openness and subjection to the ravages of the demonic realm that Jesus experienced on the Cross. When he became our sin and guilt, he was subject to every dreadful accusation and scornful probing of Satan.

He had said “Satan is coming” (John 14:30f) the Cross was the great conflict of his coming to destroy the Son of God so as to strike out at the Father.

But we see clearly that when the wrath was extended, guilt was removed and the evil powers were stripped of their horrible authority.

So God overcomes truly and justly the whole world of evil - Satan, his world system operated under guilt, sin and death. (For the great triumph of the Cross, see: John 12:31, Col. 2:14, 15, Rom. 8:2-3, II Cor. 5:21, I John 4:10, Rom. 3:25, 5:12, 6:7, 14, 7:4, Gal- 2:16-21, 5:24, 1:4, 6:14, I Cor. 15:55-56).

THE FRUIT OF THE CROSS IS JUST

(a) The Relaxation of the Conscience

When guilty man sees the truth of propitiation, he knows that his guilt has actually been dealt with. He no longer has the consciousness of sins judgment and wrath, for there is none. In the place of the accusing conscience, comes the full assurance of faith, the direct fruit of a clean conscience, (Heb. 10:22).

The law can no longer condemn, for the judgment of the law was poured out on the Cross. So Luther could say, “Mr. Law, go ahead and accuse me as much as you like, I know I have committed many sins, and

I continue to sin daily. But that doesn't bother me. You have got to shout louder Mr. Law.. I am deaf you know. Talk as much as you like, I am dead to you... My conscience is a lady and a queen and has nothing to do with the likes of you, because my conscience lives to Christ under another law, a new and better law, the law of grace” (Commentary on Galatians).

Only when man agrees with God that He is the Just justifier of sinners can the conscience relax.

(b) Reconciliation

Because of the propitiatory action of the Cross, man can *know* the *full* acceptance of the Father (Heb. 9:14, 10:22, II Cor. 5:19, Rom. 5:10, Col. 1:19f,

Eph. 2:11ff.

It is at this point that the great calling to man to be truly filial is established — he wants to be a son of his Father for he sees the truth about his Father in the Cross, he is now reconciled to God.

Knowing this, he is reconciled to himself - he feels at home with himself and is not pressured into self hate and inferiority by his guilt. We say that this is what it is to love oneself (Matt. 19:19).

Consequently man is reconciled to his brother for he recognises the dynamic truth that his brother's sins have been and remain forgiven by God and that this was done justly and in full measure on the Cross. Out of the love generated by his own forgiveness, he relates to his brother as a forgiven person, that is, he graces him with full acceptance and open relating. We could say like Father like son.

CONCLUSION

It is clear then, that the Cross is the focal point of God's calling to man. Only in the Cross, and, as a result of the Cross, does God's plan come to its fulfilment.

All things are restored to full operational (creational) harmony and purpose in the Cross of Christ. The proclamation of the Cross is the full message of the Father and forms the true substance of history as the Living God calls His sons into the Family and restores creation to them (Rom. 8:19, Eph. 2:11ff).

Knowing this **is** to be full of the good hope of grace.