

# Sound in the Faith

by Bob Pulliam

## Lesson 2

### The Child of God



Memory Verses: John 8:31; II Timothy 2:15 (KJV)

**I**t is important that we all understand our relationship to God. We know this is important for the lost, that they turn from sin and seek God. But it is true of the child of God, too. Three reasons for understanding our relationship to God stand out. They are: 1) That we may truly appreciate what God has done to bring us into this relationship. 2) That we understand the importance of living according to the standard God has set for us. 3) That we may live in hope of eternal joy with God.

#### *What Has God Done For Us, Before the Cross?*

The number of people who never think about what God has done for them is truly surprising. It is very easy for us to overlook this aspect. And when we do, ingratitude is certain to follow.

When we set our minds to the task of listing what God has done for us, the list begins and ends at the cross, for many. But we've not grasped the enormity of God's love, mercy, and grace; if that is the extent of our understanding.

Let us begin with the human condition before Jesus went to the cross. Sin had been in the world from the beginning. It began with Adam and Eve in the garden (Gen 3), and has always produced the same result: Death. Paul told the Romans that "*the wages of sin is death*" (Rom 6:23). The "death" being spoken of here is the separation sin creates between God and mankind. Isaiah told the Israelites, "*your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.*" (Isa 59:2) God is the giver of life, so, to be separated from God is death. And to reach eternity in that condition results in an existence that is devoid of all that is good and pleasant. We were created in the image of God (Gen 1:26f), and that portion of us that is eternal will exist eternally. The consequence of entering eternity

without God, is enduring the entirety of eternity in torment (Mk 9:43-48; Rev 20:15; 21:8; 14:11). And this was the certain outcome for all of us, if God had not determined to save us.

This was not a last minute decision on the part of God. Paul told the Ephesians that God had determined *before the foundation of the world* to save us in Christ (Eph 1:4f). And He did not do so because He saw something wonderful in us that seemed worth saving. As Paul told the Romans, God saved us when we were still enemies, or sinners (Rom 5:6-8). And this was the result of God's grace and mercy. His favor and pity are not the result of us earning His respect or concern. They are solely due to His love for us (Eph 2:4). God has endured over six thousand years of mankind's insults. But He still loves us. This love does not save us in spite of our rebellion. Instead, God's love has provided the remedy, and we must turn to God for that remedy (Lk 13:3f; Acts 3:19; 17:30; 26:20; II Pt 3:9). God worked this remedy into the fabric of human history for over four thousand years.

After Adam and Eve had sinned in the Garden, God cursed the serpent with a promise of being crushed (Gen 3:15). This was a promise of the coming Messiah, who would crush the head (power) of the devil. This great promise was fulfilled when Jesus was raised from the dead, thus conquering him who held the power of death and the grave (Heb 2:14).

This promise was renewed in Abraham. He was promised that in his seed, all nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen 12:3; see also Acts 3:25). This promise was also given to Abraham's grandson, Jacob (Gen 28:14). It gave hope to all mankind, rather than a single lineage of the human family tree.

When Jacob blessed his sons, he passed on, to Judah, the hope of Shiloh's reign (Gen 49:10). The promise of a victorious descendant was not dead. God had not forgotten.

Hundreds of years passed, but God was still preparing the way for this Messiah. As generations passed, divine providence cared for the seed which would fulfill these promises. The book of Ruth is a beautiful example of God's work to make of the promised seed what He would have it be. In the most unlikely of unions, Obed, the grandfather of David, was born (Ruth 4:17).

As the time drew nearer, the details became clearer, and many specifics were given about the coming Savior. The place of His birth (Micah 5:2); His name, and that He will be born of a virgin (Isa 7:14); and even the human kingdom that would be ruling when the fulfillment came to pass (Dan 2:44).

The more you study your Bible, the more you become convinced that God had all of the Messiah's details worked out from the beginning.

God's love for us was not simply a sacrifice on a cross. That sacrifice was the climax of over four thousand years of providence and miraculous power exerted by God to make it all possible. What did God do for us before He even gave Jesus to die on the cross?... More than we could ever know or imagine!

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*Question Set Number One*

- 1) What three reasons for understanding our relationship to God stand out?...
    - a)
    - b)
    - c)
  - 2) What follows, when we fail to contemplate what God has done for us?
  - 3) What has been in the world from the beginning?
  - 4) What is it's wage?
  - 5) We were created in the image of \_\_\_\_\_.
  - 6) That portion of us will exist \_\_\_\_\_.
  - 7) Where will we exist for all eternity, if we die without God?
  - 8) When did God determine to save us?
  - 9) What has provided the remedy for our condition?
  - 10) What must we do for that remedy?
  - 11) When was God's promise to crush Satan's power fulfilled?
  - 12) God's promise to Abraham gave hope to whom?
  - 13) The sacrifice of Jesus was the climax of what?
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*What Has God Done For Us, In Christ Jesus?*

We should always be careful not to allow the Bible to become "just another good book". And while it has been called, "The greatest story ever told", that also is not enough. The Bible isn't just a book, and it isn't just a story. It is the true history of human origin, and human destiny. It is the truth about the meaning of life, and the only reasonable source of hope and peace.

We've already discussed a little of what God did, leading up to the coming of Jesus. Now, let's give some consideration to the sacrifice of Jesus Himself. And this does not begin at the cross, nor does it begin at His trial. It actually begins when He leaves heaven's glory to live in this wretched, sinful world. As one song so beautifully puts it:

Out of the ivory palaces,  
into a world of woe.  
Only His great, eternal love,  
made my Savior go.

*(Ivory Palaces, Henry Barraclough)*

To appreciate what Jesus did, we must begin by realizing that He left the perfect bliss and glory of heaven to dwell upon this earth. And He did not leave ivory palaces to live in a palace here. He was born with the livestock, because there was no room for Him among humanity (Lk 2:7). He was whisked away to a foreign land, because a ruler wanted to kill Him (Mt 2:13ff). He spent much time in danger from His own people (Jn 5:16-18; 7:1; 8:37; 10:31). And all this time He knew the fate that awaited Him. Knowing this, He prepared His disciples often by telling them *"They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again."* (Lk 18:33) Even though He knew all of this from the beginning, He endured it for our salvation. He could have stayed in heaven, and remained far from the agonies of this world. But He came and endured unspeakable torture that we might live through Him.

The trial of Jesus was the greatest injustice ever perpetrated on the face of the earth. Standing trial was an innocent man, who was there because of the envy of the Jews (Mt 27:18). The illegality of His trial began with the night time proceedings, that should have waited until morning (Mk 14:64; 15:1). The next morning the Jews went through the formality of a trial by day (Mk 15:1); but they had already determined the charge the night before. He was immediately led to the governor, the Jews needing to quickly dispose of Jesus before public sentiment could rally against them. Pilate pronounced Jesus innocent (Mt 27:24), and even the thief who was eventually crucified next to Him knew that he had done nothing worthy of death (Lk 23:41). But His innocence would not keep politics and Pilate's lust for power from sending Jesus to the cross.

Possibly in an effort to pacify the Jews without killing Jesus, Pilate had Him scourged (Jn 19:1). The Roman scourging was brutal and without mercy. The whip had pieces of bone and metal in the ends of the straps, and every stroke ripped the flesh to ribbons. He had already been beaten about the face (Lk 22:64; Mt 26:67), and after the scourging, the

soldiers twisted a wreath of thorns, and pressed it down on His head as if it were a crown (Jn 19:5). By the time Jesus came back out before the crowd, He would have been unrecognizable. Most pictures and movie depictions of the trial are very inaccurate. But then, most people wouldn't be able to stand such a sight.

By the time He has the cross placed upon His back, He is too weak to carry it very far. After collapsing under the strain, a man named Simon is pressed into service, and carries the cross for Jesus (Jn 19:17; Mt 27:32). At the site of execution, the cross member is laid on the ground, and Jesus is laid upon it, His arms stretched toward each end. Large nails are driven through His hands into the wood (Jn 20:25; Ps 22:16), and then the cross member is hoisted up onto the vertical member (which is probably a permanent fixture on the hill). His legs are bent, and His feet nailed in place. Covered with blood, battered and bruised, our Savior was suspended between heaven and earth. At the beginning of His ministry, He had said, *“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”* (Jn 3:14f) He was not hanging there for Himself. He was hanging there for you and me.

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### *Question Set Number Two*

- 1) The Bible isn't just a book, and it isn't just a story... What is it?
- 2) Where does the sacrifice of Jesus begin?
- 3) What was Jesus born with, and why?
- 4) What was the name of the ruler who wanted to kill Jesus after His birth?
- 5) Where did Jesus' family have to take Him to escape?
- 6) Even though He knew His sufferings from the beginning, He endured them for what reason?
- 7) Why did the Jews place Jesus on trial?
- 8) Pilate pronounced Jesus \_\_\_\_\_
- 8) Describe the scourging whip...
- 9) How would Jesus have looked when He came back out to the crowd?
- 10) How was Jesus attached to the cross?
- 11) Jesus was not on the cross for Himself, He was there for who?

## *What Has God Done For Us, Our Present Condition?*

To simply say that God saved us is true and accurate. But we must realize where that leaves us now. We obviously have a debt of gratitude toward God and Jesus. It is a debt that we could never actually pay off; but it does demand a loyal devotion. The more we realize the sacrifices given, the more we feel indebted and grateful. The disciple who loves God will contemplate his/her debt to God continually. And with that is a realization of the great estate we have been lifted into through Christ.

The apostle Peter used some very graphic descriptions of where we now stand before God. He wrote, “*you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.*” (I Pt 2:9f) The four descriptions of verse nine depict the position to which God has elevated us. In Christ we are a *chosen nation, royal priesthood, holy nation, and His own special people*. These are designations of prominence; but more importantly, they express the special relationship we have with Him. It is of vital importance that we ever live with this relationship in mind.

My favorite expression of our relationship to God is that of being children. John wrote, “*Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!*” (I Jn 3:1) Paul wrote, “*For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*” (Gal 3:26) Later, in the same epistle, he told the Galatians that they had received the adoption as sons (Gal 4:5). He was writing to Gentiles (non-Jews) when he penned this. The Jews had come to sonship in Christ, the law bringing them unto Him (Gal 3:23ff); and the Gentiles had been adopted (see also Eph 1:5).

In making us sons, God has made us heirs. Remember that, in the Middle East, daughters never inherited. This is why all of God’s people, whether male or female, are called sons. We all are heirs of the great blessings that God provides in Christ Jesus. And the greatest inheritance of all -- Eternal Life with Him in heaven!...

Children are well noted as imitators of parents. “*Like father, like son*” is an expression based in the truth that at a certain stage of development, sons will imitate their fathers. And this is true of daughters, as well. With that in mind, consider Paul’s statement that the Ephesians were to “*be imitators of God as dear children.*” (Eph 5:1) Most parents have happy memories of their children imitating them. It is said that such is the sincerest form of flattery. And we realize the cause to be adoration, and a certain amount of awe. It causes the child to want to be like the parent.

And we are to want to be like God. Not that we crave infinite power. We want to imitate His love, mercy, and holiness. He has saved us with these, and now we want to imitate them.

Being children of God will cause us to treat one another a certain way. John wrote, “*By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.*” (I Jn 5:2) If we love God, we will love brothers and sisters who also are His children. And that love is manifest in our obedience to the Father.

God could have put a remedy for our sins in front of us, and then remained aloof from our circumstance. But He has drawn us near to become His children. “*Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!*” (I Jn 3:1)

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### *Question Set Number Three*

- 1) The debt we owe God demands what?
- 2) Peter listed what four positions to which God lifted us:
  - a)
  - b)
  - c)
  - d)
- 3) These express prominence, but more importantly, what else?
- 4) The love of the Father was bestowed that we might be called \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) Paul said that, through faith, we are all \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) By what process had the Galatians become children?
- 7) By making us sons, what else had God made us?
- 8) What is the greatest inheritance?
- 9) As “dear children”, what were the Ephesians to do?
- 10) What, about God, should we want to imitate?... and why?
  
- 11) How is our love for God and brethren manifest?

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### *Living in Hope of Eternal Life*

People talk about going to heaven, but how many truly have a hope based on the promises given in God’s word. That is the great joy of a child

of God. As children of God, we should have a confidence based on our devotion and obedience to God. Most people just allow their emotions to act as a compass to eternity. There is no true hope in the wild swinging of a moral compass that reacts to everything around it. But when we do our best to keep the word of God, we are acting like children.

It is important that we have a strong sense of hope. We know that our Father in heaven truly wants us to be with Him in eternity. Jesus has gone to prepare a place (Jn 14:1ff); and God has prepared an eternal dwelling for us (II Cor 5:1-4). It is His desire that we be with Him throughout eternity (Rev 21:3f, 22-27). Why else would He give His only begotten son as a sacrifice for mankind? He *wants us to be saved*. And this is what Paul wrote to Timothy, *“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”* (I Tim 2:3f) You will stumble and make mistakes all your life. He knows that we are not perfect. That is exactly why our salvation is not dependant on being perfect. We do the best we possibly can, looking to God for forgiveness when we falter, and the mercy of God will pardon.

So many people go to extremes on this subject. On the one hand, some will try to get away with doing very little. They think God cannot possibly see their deception. They are not lying to men; but to God. On the other hand, some will try to be perfect, and expect that perfection in others. They are harsh, and miserly with God’s grace and mercy. Our great hope lies in God’s abundant mercy, knowing that we have the responsibility to loyally serve Him with all our might.

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### *Question Set Number Four*

- 1) Most people have what as their compass to eternity?
- 2) What does the Father truly want?
- 3) God giving Jesus as a sacrifice proves that He wants what?
- 4) Now that you are a Christian, you will never make a mistake. T F
- 5) What are the two extremes on God’s mercy:
  - a)
  - b)
- 6) Our great hope lies in what?
- 7) But what responsibility do we have along with that?