

Introduction.

This booklet is about the blessings that God gives to us when He saves us. Salvation is a great gift from God and, like all gifts, it brings with it many blessings for us to enjoy. One of the most important things that a Christian can do is to study the Bible to make sure that he understands the blessings that God has given to him. It is a sad fact that there are many saved people who have never thought about the blessings that God has given to them when He saved them. But this is something that is extremely important. We as the saved people of God need to spend many hours reading the Bible and examining carefully the blessings that God has given to us when He saved us. There are three reasons for this.

1. If we do not study the blessings that God has given to us in our salvation, then we are in danger of insulting God. Imagine that you work hard for two years and save up some money which you then use to buy a really nice mobile phone for your friend. You then go to his house and give him the phone as a present. Imagine that he looks at the phone for one or two seconds and then puts it away and starts talking about other things. You would be upset. The gift cost you a lot of money but your friend does not seem to appreciate it. He hardly looked at it and did not seem at all interested in it. We need to examine very carefully the great gift of salvation that God has given to us otherwise we are insulting God.

2. If we understand the blessings that God has given to us in our salvation then we will live our lives in such a way as to please Him. There are three things that God requires of all His children: He wants us to love Him, He wants us to obey Him and He wants us to serve Him. This is true worship and this is what He asks from each one of us. Now, if we have a clear understanding of the blessings that He has given to us then we are much more likely to do this. Jesus said that he who has been forgiven much loves much (Lk. 7:47). What He meant is that those who realise just how much they have been forgiven will love Him much more than those who do not fully realise just how much they have been forgiven.

3. There is a great deal of confusion in our country today with regard to the blessings of salvation. There are many preachers today who speak much about the things of this world and little about the things of heaven. People are told that if they come to Christ for salvation then the blessings they will receive will be health and wealth. It is because such confusion exists today that we need to examine carefully what the Bible teaches about the blessings of salvation.

In this booklet we are going to look at seven major blessings of our salvation. These are:

1. We are Justified.
2. We are delivered from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light
3. We are reconciled to God and to His people.
4. We are adopted into God's family.
5. We are given assurance of salvation by the Holy Spirit.
6. We are being transformed into the image of Christ.
7. We will one day be glorified.

Lesson One, Romans 3:20-31, We are justified by the grace of God.

In this lesson, we are going to look at justification, and we will do so by asking and giving answers to four questions.

1. What is justification?

Justification is an act of God's grace in which He freely forgives us all our sins and gives to us the righteousness of Christ, so that we are declared righteous in His sight. Justification is received by faith alone in the finished work of Christ alone, and is not by our works. Paul says in this passage, "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ" (Rom. 3:23-24). There are three things here that we need to learn carefully.

(i) Justification is a work that God Himself does, it is not something that any man anywhere can do: "Salvation is from God; Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Jonah 2:9; Mark 2:7). This is because when we sin we sin primarily against God, although others also feel the effect of our sins. When Joseph was being tempted by Potiphar's wife, he said, "How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9). Joseph knew that if he slept with Potiphar's wife he would be doing a great wrong against his master, but he also knew that his sin would be primarily against God. The Bible says, "Sin is transgression of the law" (1 Jn. 3:4). This means that when we sin we are breaking God's law: it is primarily against God that we are sinning. Therefore to justify a sinner is the work of God alone: He is the one we offend when we sin and only He can grant forgiveness. No man has ever been given the authority to grant forgiveness to a sinner, only God can give forgiveness.

(ii) Secondly, justification is a work of God's grace. This means that God justifies us when we do not deserve it. In fact the Bible says that God gives to us the blessing of justification when we actually deserve the wrath and judgement of God. The Bible says, "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God," and, "God justifies the wicked" (Rom. 3:23; 4:5). We are great sinners in the sight of God and therefore we deserve the wrath and judgement of God. If God had sent the entire human race into hell, not one of us could complain. Not one of us could say that God was unjust in what He did. We all know that we are sinners and that we all deserve the judgement of God. But God is a God of grace. He is full of mercy and kindness and He takes pity on us sinners. Instead of judging His chosen people and casting them into hell, He justifies them and saves them; justification is a work of God's grace.

(iii) Thirdly, justification is a work of God's grace through the work of Jesus Christ. Paul says in this passage, "God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice" (Rom. 3:25). Imagine that we read of a man in our country who is a really bad criminal. We read of how he has killed people and stolen their property. Then one day the police finally catch him and take him to court. In court the

judge listens to the evidence and says to the man, “It is very clear from the evidence that you are a very bad criminal and that you have done all these crimes. But I am not going to send you to jail or to fine you. You go back home and try to live a better life.” We would feel really angry because justice has not been done. The man has committed the crimes but he has not paid for his crimes. This is unjust and would make us angry.

The justification of God is not like this. When God justifies us He is not being unjust. The reason He justifies His people is because their sins have been paid for by the Lord Jesus Christ. This is why the Bible says, “He did this to demonstrate His justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus” (Rom. 3:26). The work of Jesus Christ enabled God to justify sinners and yet remain just. Think again of the example I gave above. Imagine that the judge says to the criminal, “I fine you ten million shillings because of your crime,” and someone comes and pays that ten million shillings. The judge can then say to the criminal, “Your fine has been paid, you are free to go.” In releasing the criminal the judge is not being unjust, he is acting within the law. In the same way when God justifies His people He is not being unjust; He is acting within His own law. He is setting free those whose sins have been paid for by the Lord Jesus.

2. What does God actually do when He justifies a sinner?

The Bible tells us that there are three things that God does in justifying a sinner:

(i) He forgives us all our sins, past, present and future.

Paul says in this passage, “In his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished” (Rom. 3:25). These words tell us that justification is to do with punishment for sins and forgiveness of sins. Our sins deserve to be punished because when we sin we break the law of God. The person who breaks the law of our country is taken to court and punished for his sins. In the same way the person who breaks God's law deserves to be punished. But God is a God of grace and He sent His Son to take the punishment of His people. When the Lord Jesus died on the cross, He took the sins of His people upon Himself and paid the penalty for them. And so God now forgives His people all their sins, the ones they have committed in the past, the ones they commit in the present and the ones they commit in the future.

Forgiveness of sins is a most wonderful gift from God. The Bible says that when God forgives our sins, He throws them into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:18-19). This means that God remembers our sins no more and will not deal with us as we deserve: “He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us” (Ps. 103:10-12).

Christians often fear that when they stand before Christ on the Day of Judgement all their sins will be brought up and exposed to everyone. This, of course, is not true. God has

forgiven us all our sins and He will never bring them up again; He does not deal with us as our sins deserve, He deals with us as a loving Father.

(ii) He gives to us the perfect obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When God justifies us, He does not only forgive us all our sins, He puts into our account the perfect obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ. In booklet number 6 in this series I used an illustration to teach this point. Perhaps it will help us to look at that illustration again.

Imagine that on the day you were born, God took an exercise book and wrote your name on the cover. Then, from that moment, every sin you have ever committed is recorded in that book. By the time you are in your twenties and thirties that book will have a record of perhaps millions of sins because we sin all the time, even when we are not aware of it. Now imagine that on the day the Lord Jesus was born in Bethlehem, God did the same thing: He took an exercise book and wrote the name of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cover. After some 30 years, Jesus was crucified and died. What is written in His book? The answer, of course, is that there are no sins recorded there, since He never sinned: “He was tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin” (Heb. 4:15). He lived a life of perfect obedience to God. And so the first page of His book says, “This person has obeyed the Law of God completely and perfectly, He is completely righteous.” This is what is written in His book.

Now when we get saved, a great exchange takes place. God takes our record of sin and rebellion and puts it into Christ's exercise book. He then takes Christ's record of perfect obedience and puts it into our exercise book. And so Christ takes our sin and rebellion and is punished for it whereas we are given His righteousness. Notice carefully Paul's words to the Romans: “Through the obedience of the one man, many will be made righteous” (Rom. 5:19). The “one man” is, of course, Christ. It is through His obedience that many will be made righteous. It is not through their own obedience that they are made righteous, it is through His obedience.

In writing to the Corinthians Paul says, “God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21). Look again carefully at this verse. Christ had no sin for He was perfect, but God put our record of sin onto Him so that He who knew no sin became sin for us. God then took His righteousness and gave it to us so that we became the righteousness of God in Him. And so when God the Father looks at us, He does not see our record of sin and disobedience. That has been taken from us and given to Christ. What He sees is Christ's perfect obedience to His Law which has been put into our record. This is how we are pronounced righteous by Him: Christ is our righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30). Without the perfect life of Christ here on earth we could never enter heaven; we enter heaven because He obeyed the Law of God perfectly and then gives to us His obedience.

(iii) He makes a once for all legal pronouncement of righteousness.

This is what happens in justification: we who are sinners with a record of sin are taken to God's court of law. There, the Lord Jesus takes our record of sins upon Himself and gives to us instead His perfect record of obedience. God the Father, who is the judge, then examines our record. He opens the book which has our name on it and He sees what is written inside: "This person has obeyed the Law of God completely and perfectly, He is completely righteous." So God the Father looks at us and says, "You have obeyed my law perfectly. I have no charge to bring against you. You are righteous in the sight of the law."

Notice that this is a legal pronouncement, meaning that it is to do with a person's standing in law. Imagine in a man in a village who is a really bad character: he is rude and arrogant and selfish and unpleasant. One day he is taken to court by the police on a charge of theft. The judge examines the evidence and decides that the man is not guilty of the crime, it is quite clear to him that someone else committed the theft and not this man. So he says to the man, "You are not guilty, you are free to go." Notice carefully what the judge is doing. The judge is not saying, "You are a really nice, clean-living, godly man." The court is not interested in the character of the person, it is only interested in the person's legal standing: is he guilty of the charge of theft or not? He may be the worst man in the village, but if he is not guilty of the crime then the judge must pronounce him not guilty. The pronouncement is to do with the person's legal standing, not his character. In the same way justification is to do with our legal standing, not our character. When God justifies us He is simply saying that as far as His law is concerned, we are righteous. He is not saying that we are nice, good, decent people.

3. How does God justify us?

The answer to this vitally important question is given very clearly in the Bible. Paul says, "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law" (Rom. 3:28), and again, "A man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ" (Gal. 2:16). Justification, as we have seen, is a wonderful gift from God. God removes our sin from us and forgives us. He then gives to us the perfect obedience of Jesus Christ and so pronounces us legally righteous. How do these wonderful blessings come to us? Do they come to us because we have tried our best to live a good life and a religious life? Does God give to us these wonderful blessings because He sees that we have made a real effort to keep the Ten Commandments? The answer from the Bible is very clear: we are not justified by our attempts at keeping the law but by faith.

Faith means trust. We are justified when we trust the Lord Jesus Christ alone to save us from our sins and take us to heaven. If we trust ourselves and our good works then we will never have the forgiveness of our sins. It is only when we put all our hopes of forgiveness and all our hopes of entering heaven on Christ alone that we are saved.

The testimony of Paul in Phil. 3:4-11 is the perfect example of this. Paul used to trust in his own good works, thinking that they will get him to heaven. He was convinced that the fact

that he was born a Jew, that he was circumcised and that he lived a decent moral life would earn him a place in heaven. Then the light of the gospel flooded into his heart and he realised that these things would never save him. And so he counted these things as rubbish and instead came to faith in Christ, trusting Him alone for his salvation. Once he had done this, he had a righteousness "that comes through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith" (Phil. 3:9).

4. What does all this actually mean in practical terms?

It may be that as you have read this lesson up to this point, you have been saying to yourself, "This is all theology and I am not sure what it all means to me in practical terms." In this part of the lesson, therefore, I want to explain to you what all this means. Perhaps the best way to understand it is to look at three different people: the unsaved person, the saved person here on earth and the saved person in heaven.

(i) The unsaved person. The Bible tells us that the unsaved person has two major problems as far as his relationship with God is concerned. In the first place, he is guilty before God because he has broken God's law; and secondly, he is a sinner by nature, meaning that his very nature is a sinful nature. Imagine a street boy who sniffs glue and threatens and robs people. We would all say that he is not a nice person: he is a bad person. Imagine that this street boy has stolen a lot of money from someone and is now hiding from the police. He has two problems: he is not a nice character: he is bad; and on top of that he is guilty before the law because he has stolen money and the police are looking for him. That is what the unsaved person is like, he has a bad heart and a bad record.

(ii) The saved person here on earth. The Bible tells us that the saved person here on earth is different from the unsaved person in two ways. Firstly, the saved person is not guilty before God. His sins have been taken away from him and he has been given the righteousness of Christ: he is now justified. And since justification is a once for all legal pronouncement, there will never ever be a time again when the saved person will ever be guilty before God. He has been pronounced eternally righteous. So he is not like the unsaved person. Once he is saved, God has no charges of sin against Him. God does not say to the saved person, "I hold you guilty for certain sins that you have done." All his sins have been put upon Christ and he has been forgiven them.

Secondly, the saved person is different from the unsaved person in that he is being changed into the image of Jesus Christ. The unsaved person, as we have seen, has a sinful nature. He is a sinful character. The person who is saved was at one time like that but God has saved him. This means that God changed his heart. Whereas at one time he loved sin and wanted to do sin, now he hates sin and wants to flee from it. His whole attitude towards sin is different. He no longer finds sin attractive, he now hates it because he is now born again, his heart has been changed.

Also, God is now at work in him changing him gradually into the image of Christ. The

saved person is not perfect yet, there is still a lot of work left before he is perfect and sinless. But he is gradually changing. This is how the saved person is: he is no longer guilty because his guilt has been removed. He does not love sin any longer and does not find sin attractive because his heart has been changed. His character is being changed little by little so that he is becoming more and more like Christ.

(iii) The saved person in heaven. There are two things about the person who is saved and in heaven. Firstly, he has no guilt before God. All his sins are forgiven and he is righteous through faith in Christ. Secondly, he is perfectly Christ-like. There is no sin remaining in him. God has worked in him and has perfected him.

What this means for us today is that the person who is saved is not yet perfect. This is an area where there is a lot of confusion in our country. People expect a saved person to be perfect in all his actions. But he is not yet perfect. His heart has been changed and he no longer loves sin, but he is not yet perfect. It takes many years for a person to have all his sinful habits removed from him. This is why when a pastor is dealing with members of his church, he needs to be patient with them. The work of the pastor is to help his members make progress in their goal to become more and more like Christ. They will not become perfect in a few days or a few weeks. A church member may have lived a very terrible life before he got saved, and all those sinful habits are still there in him. The pastor has to be a shepherd to such a person. He must pray for him and encourage him to fight his sins.

This, then, is what the Bible teaches about justification.

Lesson Two, Colossians 1:13-14, We are removed from the power of darkness and brought into the kingdom of Christ.

In this passage the Bible says, “For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” There are three important lessons we are taught here.

1. We learn in the first place, that our salvation is the work of God.

Paul says in this text, “He has rescued us.” This is something the Bible teaches us consistently and everywhere: it is God who plans our salvation and it is God who saves us: “Salvation is of the Lord” (Jonah 2:9). The Bible makes it very clear that God is sovereign in our salvation. He it is who decides who is going to get saved and when and how. It is not man's choice, it is God's choice: “It does not therefore depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy” (Rom. 9:16).

2. We learn in the second place that when God saves us, He removes us from the power of darkness.

The Bible teaches us that on this earth there are two kingdoms: the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness. It tells us that all of us when we are born are born into the kingdom of darkness because we are born sinners. We are born with hearts that love sin and desire sin. This is our nature when we are born: we are the children of darkness. When God saves us, however, He removes us from the kingdom of darkness.

In v. 14 Paul says, “In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” This is an explanation of what God does when He removes us from the kingdom of darkness. He redeems us and forgives us. All who are unsaved have two major problems: they are slaves of sin and they are guilty of sin. They are slaves of sin because sin has trapped them and imprisoned them. This is why people in this world live lives of sin. It is because sin is their master and sin determines how they live. They are guilty of sin because they have broken God's law and have incurred a penalty. When God saves us, therefore, He deals with these two problems. He redeems us from our slavery. To redeem means to release a slave from his slavery. The Lord Jesus by His death on the cross redeemed His people from their slavery. In addition, God removes our guilt by forgiving us our sins. When Christ died on the cross, He died to pay the penalty for our sins, so that we could have forgiveness. This, then, is how God removes us from the power of darkness: He redeems us from slavery to sin and He removes our guilt.

What this means is that once a person is saved, he is no longer under the power of sin. Paul deals with this matter in detail in Romans chapter 6. He says, “Sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace; But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were

entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves of righteousness; When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness; But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life” (Rom. 6:14;17-18;20;22).

This, of course, does not mean that the saved person never sins. But it does mean that we are no longer slaves of sin and we are no longer under the power of sin. The unsaved person is a slave of sin and is completely under its power. The only thing he can do in life is to sin. He cannot do anything to please God. Even the works that he calls good works have come from a heart that is sinful. But the saved person is not in that position. He may still sin but he is not a slave of sin. He is able to fight sin and put it to death. He is being released from the power of sin and is being transformed into the image of Christ. Sin no longer has mastery over him, it cannot control him. Its grip on him is being loosened day by day. The Holy Spirit now lives in the saved person and the Holy Spirit moves him to obey God's law (Eze. 36:27).

3. We learn in the third place that when God saves, us He brings us into the kingdom of Christ.

Paul says in this text that God “brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves.” Our salvation is a great work of God because a great change takes place in our status. Imagine that a person moves to the USA to begin a new life there. His whole status changes. In the same way when we become the children of God our whole status changes.

(i) We become citizens of the kingdom of God. Before we were saved we were citizens of the kingdom of darkness. We hated the light of God and did not want to come to the light because we were afraid that the light of God would expose our sins. So we lived lives of sin and kept our sins hidden. Now, we are the children of light. We no longer live a double life; a “public” Christian life and a “private” sinful life. Anyone who lives like that is not saved. We are not children of darkness, we have been brought out of the darkness and into the light.

(ii) Our lives change since we are members of God's kingdom now. A person who moves to Europe or the USA cannot continue to live as he used to in his own country. The way of life in the country where he has moved to is different, the weather is different and so on. He has to live in accordance with his new surroundings. In the same way, the person who is saved is now a member of the kingdom of God. He has come into a kingdom whose whole lifestyle is different. We no longer serve sin, we now serve Christ. We no longer live for the pleasures of this world, we live for the kingdom of God.

Lesson Three, 1 Pet. 3:18, We are reconciled to God and to His people.

In this verse Peter writes, “Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring us to God.” One of the greatest blessings we have as Christians is that we are reconciled to God. There are three things of great importance about this that we need to understand.

1. Until a person is saved he is cut off from God.

The Bible teaches us very clearly that those who are not saved in Christ are enemies of God. It is not the case that they are the children of God and that God is pleased with them. Rather, it is the case that those who are unsaved hate God and hate His law and so they are enemies of God. On the outside they may appear good and decent people and perhaps they go to church each week. But if they are not saved through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ then they are cut off from God and are His enemies.

The Bible tells us that God is kind and gracious to His enemies and that He provides rain and sunshine and food for them (Matt. 5:44). But this does mean that God approves of them and is pleased with them. Rather it means that God is so kind and gracious that He even takes care of His enemies. In the end, however, He will judge them with an eternal judgement: “But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars – their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death” (Rev. 21:8).

2. The person who is saved is reconciled to God.

When a person is saved, he receives a number of blessings from God. He receives the forgiveness of sins and he is brought into the kingdom of God. But the blessings do not end there. One of the greatest blessings we have from God is that we are reconciled to God Himself. This is the great purpose for which Christ came: “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them” (2 Cor. 5:19); “Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18).

When we are reconciled to God it means that God is on our side, that He is with us rather than against us. It means that we are in fellowship with Him. Jesus said to His disciples, “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from My Father I have made known to you” (Jn. 15:15). This is what it means to be reconciled to God. It means that God is now our friend.

The friendship that we have with God is not like the friendships we form here on earth. Look again at what the Bible says in 1 Peter 3:18. It says, “Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring us to God.” There are two things about our

friendship with God in this text.

(i) In the first place, this text tells us that God will never betray us. Peter says, “Christ died for sins,” by which he means that all barriers between God and man have been removed: He died for our sins. We all know that friendships in the world can never be fully reliable. A person may say to someone else, “I am your good friend,” but these may just be words. In his heart he may have something against that person, and at sometime in the future, he may betray that person. Here on earth we are never fully able to trust our friends. But Christ by His death has removed all barriers between God and His people, and so the friendship is a solid friendship. God has nothing against us in His heart. When Jesus says, “You are my friends,” He really means that. He will always be for us. As our great High Priest He pleads our cause before God and prays for us. He has our best interests at heart in all that He does.

(ii) In the second place, this text tells us that our friendship with God is an eternal friendship. We all know that among human beings friendships can be very unstable. Two school children might be the best of friends but then something happens to spoil that friendship and they refuse to speak to each other. Or two families may be very close to each other. And then something happens to upset one family and they break off all links with the other family and refuse to speak to them. But the Bible says, “Christ died for sins once for all” meaning that the death of Jesus Christ took place once but its effects are eternal. This means that when the Lord Jesus died, He died for all our sins and when we receive forgiveness, we receive forgiveness for all our sins in eternity. There will never come a day when the Lord Jesus will stop being our friend; there will never be a day when He is so offended with us that He will cut off fellowship. He has died for all our sins, past, present and future.

3. The person who is saved is reconciled to the people of God.

The Bible teaches us that when the Lord Jesus reconciles us to God, He also at the same time reconciles us to the people of God. The Bible tells us that as long as a person is an enemy of God, he will also be an enemy of the people of God. It may be that in his unsaved condition he attends church each Sunday and he seems to be a good man and a friend of the church. But actually, he is not a true member of the church, he is a worldly man who belongs to the kingdom of darkness. Then when he gets saved, he comes into the kingdom of God and becomes a child of God. He is then united to the family of God. This is why the Bible says, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). Before a person is saved, he is very conscious of which nationality he is, and which tribe he belongs to. His loyalty is usually with his tribe. But once he is saved, tribal matters should not matter to him; he should be more concerned with the people of God, whatever nationality or tribe they are.

Lesson Four, Rom. 8:12-16, We are adopted into the family of God.

In this passage, the Bible tells us that when a person is saved he is adopted into God's family and becomes a child of God. There are three important lessons for us from this text.

1. In the first place, we are told that those who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God.

Paul says in this passage, “Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God” (v. 14). This passage teaches us that there are two kinds of people in the world: those who live according to the sinful nature (v. 13), and those who are led by the Spirit of God (v. 14).

(i) Those who live according to the sinful nature. The Bible teaches us that when we are born into this world, we are born sinners. It tells us that we have in us the sinful nature and that because of this, we are born with a desire for sin and a love for sin. We are born enemies of God and are hostile to the law of God. This is our condition when we are born, and we remain in this condition until God saves us. If we do not get saved then we remain in this condition and die in this condition. The person who is not saved, therefore, lives according to the sinful nature. This means he lives a life to please his sinful desires.

On the outside he may appear very religious and may even call himself a Christian. He may attend church each week and perhaps is known by people to be a good person. But actually, if he is not born again then he is a sinful person and lives his life to please the sinful nature. When you examine his life carefully you see that he does not aim to please God. Instead he aims to have the pleasures and possessions of this world and he pursues these things with his whole heart. Even his religion is not for the purpose of pleasing God: he is religious because he wants to be a respectable member of society and he hopes to win the favour of God. This is the person who lives according to the sinful nature.

(ii) The person who is led by the Spirit of God. The Bible tells us that when a person is born again and gets saved, the Holy Spirit of God comes to live in him. This is why in this passage Paul says, “If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ” (Rom. 8:9). The Holy Spirit comes to live in each person who is saved and He leads that person into a life of holiness. God says to each person who is saved, “I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws” (Eze. 36:27). The Spirit of God is the Holy Spirit and His work is to make the people of God holy. He works in each person who is saved, giving that person a hatred for sin and a desire for godliness.

The person who is truly saved will find that little by little as the years pass, his life undergoes a great change. Whereas before his life was full of sin, he now finds that sin does not have the same appeal for him. This does not mean that he is completely perfect and sinless. But it means that little by little he is becoming more and more like Christ. This is why the Bible says, “If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in

you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you” (Rom. 8:11). The ones who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God.

2. In the second place, we are told that those who are the children of God are not slaves again to fear.

The Bible says in this passage, “For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear” (v. 15). Those who are not saved live a life of fear. In particular there are three things that they fear.

(i) They fear God. The person who is not saved knows that God is all powerful and all mighty, and that God controls all things. He also knows that his sins are an offence to God and that God hates his sin. This is why the unsaved person has to live in fear of God. He knows that the judgement of God is upon him, and that God could destroy his whole life in one day. He may be a very rich person who has lots of possessions and lots of money, but he knows that God is the one who is all powerful and that God can take away from him all his money and possessions, and that God can take away his very life. This is why people try to win favour with God. They will go to church on Sunday and put money in the offering in the hope that God is pleased with their efforts and will not destroy them. But they can never be sure if they have pleased God enough and so they live a life of fear.

(ii) They fear the devil. Most people know that the devil is a very powerful enemy who can destroy a person's life. They know that the devil can attack them and there is nothing they can do about it. And so the unsaved live in fear of the devil. This is why people will try to please God. They are hoping that God will protect them from the devil. It is also the reason why people will visit a witch doctor and will give lots of money to him. They believe that he can control the devil and can protect them from the devil.

(iii) They fear death. For the person who is unsaved death is a frightening thing, because it is like a door that leads somewhere, but he does not know where. Most people know that they have sinned against God and that they will face the judgement of God and will spend eternity in hell. This is why they fear death. If a person falls sick, he immediately tries to do everything he can to prevent death. He will spend millions and millions of shillings in hospitals in the hope that he can continue living here on earth. If he thinks that someone has put a curse on him, then he will immediately go to a witch doctor to try and remove that curse and will spend lots of money. When there is a death in a family, the family will go to enormous lengths to make sure that all sorts of traditions and rituals are observed in burying the body so that the spirit of the dead person does not come back to disturb them. Death is something people fear when they are not saved.

The unsaved person, therefore, is a slave to fear. His whole life is governed by fear. The person who is saved, however, is released from these fears. The Lord Jesus came “to rescue

us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear” (Lk. 1:74). The person who is saved is no longer afraid of God because God is now his beloved Father. He is now a child of God and God loves him and cares for him. When the Bible says to us, “Live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear” (1 Pet. 1:17), it means we are to honour God and respect God and love God, not fear Him as the unbelievers do.

Usually, a child is afraid of strangers, but he is not afraid of his father, and in the same way, the saved person is not afraid of God, because God is no longer a stranger to him. The saved person is not afraid of the devil because he knows that God is all powerful and controls all things and works all things for his good. So even when trials and problems come into his life, he does not begin to fear the devil. Rather, he knows that God will use all things for his good; that the trials he faces will be used by God to test his faith (1 Peter 1:7), and to mature his character (James 1:2-4). Also, the believer does not fear death because he knows he will be with the Lord in eternity when he dies. When he is faced with the choice of living here on earth or dying, he is able to say, “What shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body” (Phil. 1:22-24).

Therefore, the person who is saved and adopted into the family of God never again becomes a slave to fear. He never returns to the beliefs he had before he was saved. He has been freed from all these fears and he enjoys the freedom that Christ gives him.

3. In the third place, we are told that when we get saved, we enter into a deep, personal relationship with God.

Paul says in this passage, “You received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba,' Father. The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children” (Rom. 8:15-16). The word “Abba” was a word that a child used when addressing his father to whom he was very close. The word “father” is more formal, the word “Abba” is more informal and it indicates that there is a close, personal relationship between the child and the father. The person who is saved becomes the adopted child of God and therefore enters into a close, personal relationship with God Himself. The Spirit who lives in us enables us to enter into this relationship with Him. This relationship with God is seen in three ways in a person's daily life.

(i) The child of God will have daily communion with God. This is how we find things in families everywhere. A child loves to be with his parents, to talk to them about what he did at school, what games he played, and so on. It would look very strange if a child did not want to speak to his parents. Most children desire to speak to their parents daily and to spend time with them. In the same way the person who is a child of God will desire daily fellowship with God. He will read the word of God each day because His heavenly Father speaks to him through the word. He will spend time in prayer each day because that is how he speaks to God and gives thanks to God for all His wonderful blessings. He will seek out

the fellowship of God's people because when he has fellowship with God's people he is in fellowship with God Himself.

(ii) The child of God will have a daily desire to please God by a life of worship, obedience and service. All children have a desire to please their parents. They want their parents to approve of them and to be pleased with them. A child is delighted when his father says, "You have done really well, I am very pleased with you." This is something children want to hear from their parents. In the same way, the true child of God wants to please his heavenly Father. He will read the Scriptures to find out what God desires and then he will seek to do that. He knows that God wants him to live a life of worship and obedience and service and so he will seek to do this with all his strength so that God may be pleased with him.

(iii) The child of God will seek daily growth into the character of God. Children normally admire their parents and frequently want to be like their parents. This is how children show love to their parents, they follow their parents example in daily life. In the same way the child of God will seek to be like God in his character and in his behaviour. Jesus said, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48), and this is what the child of God will seek to do. He will seek to be as kind, merciful, generous, loving and caring as His Father. He will seek to be as holy and sinless as his Father. This is how he shows that he has a deep, personal relationship with God.

Lesson Five, Rom. 8:16-27, We are given assurance by the Holy Spirit.

The passage we are studying in this lesson is one of the greatest passages in the Bible. Paul in this passage is speaking about our adoption as the children of God, and how the Holy Spirit works in the children of God. There are three very important lessons here.

1. The Holy Spirit gives us assurance.

Paul says, "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children" (v. 16). What he means by this is that the Holy Spirit assures us that we are the children of God. Now we may ask the question, "Why does the Holy Spirit need to do this? Why does He need to come and live in me and to give me assurance that I am a child of God?" The answer is that, as we have seen in lesson one, we are, at the same time, saints and sinners. In other words, we are the beloved children of God. He has saved us by the blood of Jesus Christ and has justified us. He has forgiven us all our sins and has pronounced us legally righteous. But we are also those who have sin still dwelling in them. We are saved and forgiven but we still have sinful habits and we fall into sin many times each day. This is the reason why God has given to us His Holy Spirit. It is so that the Spirit may give us assurance even when we fall into sin that we are still the children of God. There are two very important things we need to understand about assurance.

(i) If the Holy Spirit did not live in us and give us assurance, then our Christian lives would be in a real mess. This, sadly, is how many saved people are today. They are truly saved, but they do not understand what salvation is all about and they do not understand where our assurance comes from. Therefore, you find some saved people trying to find assurance in their own good works. They think that as long as you live a good life and are faithful to God then when you die you will enter heaven. Their assurance is in their own works. There are others who are truly saved but they are depressed and discouraged because they see that sin is still in them and that they are often overcome in the fight against sin. So they begin to wonder if they are saved at all.

(ii) If a person's assurance does not come from the Holy Spirit then he is not saved. There are people in our country today who will tell you that they are saved and are going to heaven. Then when you talk to them you realise that the only place their assurance comes from is their own works. They will tell you, "I made a decision for Jesus Christ, and I go to church each Sunday. I do my best to live a good life and I know that when God looks at my efforts he is pleased with me and will allow me into heaven." This person's assurance is based completely on himself and his works. The Holy Spirit has not given him assurance, he has given himself assurance. Such a person needs to examine himself carefully to see if he is truly saved.

We need to learn that our assurance does not come primarily from ourselves, it comes from God. It is the Holy Spirit who gives assurance.

2. The Holy Spirit gives us assurance that we are the children of God.

Notice carefully what Paul says in Rom. 8:16. He does not say, “The Holy Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are saved.” He says, “The Holy Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.” What the Bible is saying here is that when God saves us we become His children. This means that we have eternal security in Him. If a child displeases his father by doing something wrong, the father may punish that child. But the father would not disown the child and say to him, “You are no longer my son.” Even if the sin was very great and the father was very angry and punished him seriously, the boy is still the father's child. His status as a member of that family is not changed. In the same way, when we get saved, we become the children of God. If we fall into serious sin after we are saved, God will discipline us. But that does not mean that He disowns us and says, “You are no longer my son.” That is the one thing He will never do. Actually, the fact that He disciplines us is proof that we are His children: “The Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son. Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons” (Heb. 12:6-8).

The Holy Spirit's work in us, therefore, is not merely to assure us that we are the beloved children of God; it is to assure us that we are the eternal children of God, that our salvation is an eternal salvation and that we will never lose it. This is the work the Spirit does in us.

3. The Holy Spirit gives us assurance that we are heirs of God.

In Rom. 8:17-27, Paul says that those who are saved and have been adopted into God's family are now heirs of God. An heir is a person who is going to inherit something. A man will sometimes say, “He is my son and heir,” meaning that one day he will inherit all my property. In this passage in Romans Paul says, “Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17). What does Paul mean by this? What is the inheritance of the children of God?

The Lord Jesus taught us that as the children of God, we will inherit two things. He said, “I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life” (Matt. 19:28-29). There are two things that we as the children of God inherit.

(i) We inherit eternal life. Jesus said, “Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.” When the Lord Jesus says eternal life, He means eternal salvation. He means that we are going to be perfected so that we do not have sin still in us, and then we are going to spend eternity with Him. This is the meaning of life: it means to have

perfect and eternal fellowship with God.

(ii) We inherit a new creation. Notice that in Matt. 19:28 Jesus says, “At the renewal of all things.” What does He mean by this? The Bible says in Ps. 37:10-11, “A little while, and the wicked will be no more; though you look for them, they will not be found. But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace,” and the Lord Jesus said, “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5). Both these passages tell us that when the Lord Jesus returns the second time two things will happen: the unsaved will be judged and sent into hell, and the saved will inherit the earth. Paul says in Rom. 8:20-22, “For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole of creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.”

What the Bible is teaching us here is that when Adam and Eve fell into sin in the Garden of Eden, God cursed the earth. This is why we have thorns and thistles and drought and flooding and earthquakes and other natural disasters. The earth is under the curse of God. However, the Bible goes on to tell us that when the Lord Jesus Christ will return, that curse will be removed: “Creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God” (Rom. 8:21). The earth will be restored to the perfect condition it was in before the fall of man. And all who are saved will inherit the earth: this will be our home for eternity.

This, of course, is what God had intended for Adam and Eve when He first created them. He put them here on earth and asked them to care for it (Gen. 2:15). So when the Lord Jesus returns, God's original intention for man will be revived: those who are saved in Christ will be put on the earth and we will work on it and look after it. But it will be a new earth because the curse of sin will be removed from it and it will be perfect again. In addition, God Himself will be with us: “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth passed away...And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away’” (Rev. 21:1; 3-4). This is our inheritance as the children of God.

Lesson Six, Eph. 5:25-27, We are being transformed into the image of Christ.

In this passage Paul writes, “Husbands love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.”

Paul in this passage wants to instruct husbands to love their wives. He gives to them an example of how they are to love their wives: they are to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. He then goes on in vs. 26-27 to show the work that Christ does in His church so as to prepare her for the day when He returns. There are three very important things he teaches in these two verses.

1. Christ is at work making His church holy.

The apostle Paul writes that Christ is, “Cleansing her by the washing of water through the word.” This means that there is a process taking place in the world today whereby the Lord Jesus Christ is cleansing His people from their sins. He is at work in those who are His people, those whom He has saved by His blood. He is at work in them, cleansing them from their sins.

In order to understand this properly, we need to understand the situation of a person who is unsaved. The person who is unsaved has two major problems:

- (i) He is guilty of breaking God's law.
- (ii) He is a sinner by nature.

Perhaps an illustration will help you to understand this. Imagine a street boy who lives his whole life in the streets. He has been born in the streets and has lived in the streets all his life. During his life he has accumulated a number of very bad and sinful habits. He sniffs glue, he smokes *bhang*, he threatens people and steals their money, and so on. These are all habits that this boy has acquired over the years. One day, he sees a lady with a handbag walking along. He snatches the handbag and runs away with it and takes all the money that is in that bag. The lady goes and reports this to the police. This means that the street boy is now both a boy with bad and sinful habits and a boy who has broken the law of the land. When the police catch him they will take him to court where he will be found guilty and given a prison sentence.

This is the condition of all who are unsaved. Like the street boy they have broken the law of God, and like the street boy they are full of sinful habits. They have lived lives of sin for many years. Their hearts are hearts of sin and their entire lifestyle is a sinful lifestyle.

So when God saves a person, there are two problems that need to be dealt with: the person is guilty and he is a sinner by nature. Both these things have to be dealt with if the person is to be saved. The first thing that God does is to deal with the person's guilt. As we saw in lesson one, God takes the person's record of sins and puts it in Christ's record. He then takes Christ's record of perfect obedience and puts that into the record of the person whom He is saving. Once He has done this, He pronounces the person justified: legally righteous. The first problem has been dealt with, the person is now no longer guilty of breaking God's law, all his sins, past, present and future have been put upon Christ. He is now eternally righteous through faith in Christ.

This, however, is only half the problem. The person is still a sinner by nature. He has a heart that loves sin and he has all sorts of sinful habits that he has acquired over many years and this sin is still dwelling in him. God deals with this by giving the person a new heart. This is what we mean when we say a person is born again. His heart of sin has been removed and he has been given a new heart, a heart that hates sin and loves holiness. However, this does not mean that he is now sinless. His sinful habits are still there and they have to be dealt with. The new heart gives him godly desires but it does not make him perfect straight away. He now has to be cleansed of all the old sinful habits that are still there in him.

This is one of the greatest errors in our country today. People believe that the person who is saved is now completely pure and sinless, and that he sins no more. But we know from our own experience that this is simply not true. We may be very good at hiding our sins from others, and to the outside world it may look as if we are sinless, but we know in our own hearts that we still sin. We know that a person who is truly saved can still have sins like selfishness and worldliness and other sins in him. A saved person is one who has been justified and who is being cleansed from the sin that still dwells in him. He has the Holy Spirit living in him and he has sin still dwelling in him. The two are there in him.

This is why Paul says, “So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want” (Gal. 5:16-17). This passage was written to people who were saved. Notice very carefully what Paul is saying in it. He starts by saying that we are to live by the Spirit so that we do not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. This means that we have the sinful nature in us with its sinful desires, but we must not gratify those desires, we must walk by the Spirit. And then in v. 17 Paul says that the two are in us: the sinful nature with its sinful desires, and the Holy Spirit. Both are present in us and they are at war with each other. The sin nature is still there in us, and God the Holy Spirit is now living in us and gradually removing all remaining sin.

We see this clearly in the life of Paul the apostle. He was a man who persecuted the church because he hated Christ. So he had a heart of sin and he had broken the law of God and was guilty before God. But then God saved him. His guilt was removed because Christ paid the

penalty for his sins. He was given a new heart so that he loved God and loved to serve Him with all his heart. But he still had sin in him and that sin had to be removed little by little.

This is what Christ does when He saves us. He first pays the penalty for our sins and gives us His righteousness so that we are no longer guilty. Then He begins to work in us to teach us His ways and to remove from us the ways of sin.

God is at work in us cleansing us so that the sinful nature which is still in us is gradually removed from us. This is a work that takes a life time, it is not something that happens quickly. It is an on-going work and we have a part to play in it. It is Christ who cleanses us, but we have to work out our salvation in fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12); we are to “put to death whatever belongs to the earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry” (Col. 3:5).

This, then, is the first thing that Paul teaches us from Eph. 5:26. He teaches us that Christ is at work in us cleansing us to make us holy.

2. Christ is cleansing us by His word.

Paul goes on to say in Eph. 5:26, “To make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word.” People sometimes get confused when they read this verse and they think that Paul is talking about baptism because he mentions water. However, this is not the case. He is using water as an illustration. Just as water cleans our bodies and our clothes, so the word of God has a cleansing effect upon us. The means by which God removes the sin that still remains within us is His word. His word is the agent that He uses to cleanse us and purify us and perfect us. This is why the Lord Jesus prayed to the Father, “Sanctify them by your truth; your word is truth” (Jn. 17:17). God uses His word to cleanse us and perfect us. There are two important implications from this for us.

(i) In the first place, we must make sure that we read and study the word of God each day. The Bible says, “It is the will of God that you should be sanctified” (1 Thess. 4:3). In other words, it is God's will that we should have all remaining sin removed from us and that we should be perfectly like Him. This is His will. And the means by which we will become perfect is through His word. He uses His word to cleanse us. Therefore it is the duty of every Christian to read and study the word of God each day. This is not something that only pastors need to do, it is something every saved person must do.

(ii) We must attend a church where the word of God is preached faithfully. There are thousands of churches in our country where preaching takes place each week. But if we listen carefully, we find that it is not preaching from the Bible. It is our duty to attend a church where the preacher reads a passage of the Bible and then explains what that passage is saying. If the preacher does not do this then the preaching will not benefit us at all. It might entertain us and make us happy for a short while but it will not cleanse us from our sin. We must make sure we listen to Bible teaching that is good and faithful to the word of

God.

3. Christ will one day present us to Himself as a perfect bride.

Paul says in Eph. 5:27, “And to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.” The Lord Jesus is at work in each of His people, making that person completely pure and clean and holy. This is a work that He is doing and He will complete it: “He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 1:6). This means that Christ guarantees it that when He returns we will be perfect.

The person who is truly saved has this great comfort from God. He may have many sins still dwelling in him and he may sometimes feel that he is defeated by those sins. But if he is truly saved then Christ guarantees him that on the day He returns, this person will be perfect in every way. He will be as holy and as godly and as pure and as perfect as Christ Himself is. This is the guarantee of Christ. The hope of heaven is a very real hope, it is a guarantee. Because we have been given this guarantee of heaven, let us make sure that we fight sin and put it to death and pursue holiness and Christ-likeness whole-heartedly. “Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as He is pure”(1 Jn. 3:2-3).

In this passage, the apostle Paul is writing about the resurrection of the dead. He tells the Corinthians what will happen to all saved people when the Lord Jesus returns. He tells them that they will all receive a new body, what is called the resurrection body. This is what the Lord Jesus taught about the day when He will return: “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice – those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned” (Jn. 5:29). The Lord Jesus is saying here that when He returns all who have died will come back to life and will be given new bodies. The saved will be raised to eternal life and the unsaved to eternal judgement.

In this lesson, therefore, we are looking at this great blessing that God gives to all saved people: He glorifies us. In this passage, Paul says four things about what will happen when the Christian is glorified.

1. We will be given new bodies that will never age or die.

Paul says, “The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable” (1 Cor. 15:42). The body we have at the moment is perishable. This means that our body grows old, our arms and legs lose strength, our eyes and ears become weak, we begin to lose our teeth and so on. This is what happens to this body as we grow old. Then one day the body dies. It is a perishable body. But the body that the Lord Jesus will give to us when He returns will be imperishable, it will not age and die. We will live with God for ever and our bodies will remain strong and healthy throughout that time. Our arms and legs will remain strong, our eyes and ears will remain perfect, the new body will remain strong and healthy and will never die. This is the first thing Paul teaches about the resurrection body.

2. We will be given new bodies that will not be sinful.

Paul says, “It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory” (1 Cor. 15:43). The body we have at the moment is dishonourable to God because it is corrupted by sin. When God made Adam and Eve, they were perfect. Their bodies were perfect bodies, free from all corruption. This is why when God made man, He saw that it was very good (Gen. 1:31). But then Adam and Eve fell into sin, and sin entered their hearts. They were no longer perfect, they were now sinful. And their sin brought the curse of God upon them: God said that the body would no longer live for ever but that it would die.

We have all inherited Adam's sin and so the body we have at the moment has been corrupted by sin. This is why Paul describes it as the “body of death” (Rom. 7:24). However, when Christ comes back, the body will be raised in glory. This means that the new body will not be corrupted with sin, it will be a glorious body, a sinless body.

3. We will be given new bodies in which we can serve God fully and

perfectly.

Paul says the body is “Sown in weakness, it is raised in power” (1 Cor. 15:43). The body we have is a weak body because it still has sin in it, and also because it is a body that is ageing and dying. This means that our service to God will always be in weakness. There are things we would like to do for the kingdom of God but our sinfulness gets in the way. This is why Paul says, “I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me” (Rom. 18-21).

Our service to God is also weak because our bodies are weak and dying. We do not have the physical strength and the mental powers that we should have to do God's work properly. But the resurrection body is raised in power. It will not have any sin in it and it will not be ageing and dying. It will be perfectly fit for worship and service to God. Through eternity we will bring honour, worship and service to God that will be worthy of His name. We will serve Him whole-heartedly in a manner that is fitting for Him.

4. We will be given new bodies which will be spiritual.

Paul says, “It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body” (1 Cor. 15:44). When the Bible says we will have a spiritual body, it does not mean that the new body will be something like a ghost. There are people who think that our eternal bodies will not be physical but like a ghost which can go through walls. Actually the Bible does not teach this. The new body will be a physical body, just as Christ's body was a physical body. Jesus said to His disciples after His resurrection, “Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself. Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have” (Lk. 24:39). So the resurrection body will be a physical body, not like a ghost.

When Paul says, “It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body,” what he means is that the body we have at the moment is very much concerned with physical things. The unsaved person spends his whole life chasing after material things. For him the only thing that matters is good food and a nice house and smart clothing and a nice car. He is concerned only with the physical things of this world. Even after a person is saved, he is still much concerned with the material things of this world. It is the way with us that things like food and clothing and houses take up a lot of our time and attention. But the resurrection body will not be like that. In eternity our main concern will be spiritual things. We will be in perfect and eternal fellowship with God and it is this fellowship that will be the main focus of our existence: “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17).