

NazaRemix Series — Just What IS a Nazarene? We Are Christ-Centered

August 22/23, 2009

Digging Deeper (Questions are on the last page)

NazaRemix Series — Just What IS a Nazarene?: We Are Christ-Centered

Written by: Robert Ismon Brown (bbrown@chicagofirstnaz.org)

Background Notes

Key Scripture Texts: Romans 4:16-5:2; John 17:13-20; I Corinthians 6:11

Introduction

The *Articles of Faith* for the Church of the Nazarene contain some distinctive statements about the central place of Jesus Christ. At least three Articles speak to the questions, "Who is Jesus Christ?" and "What has he achieved?" Theologians often speak of the "Person and Work of Jesus Christ" when they want to stress both the *character* and the *actions* of Jesus within God's larger purposes for the world. We begin with the verbatim reading of three Nazarene Articles of Faith which reveal that we are Christ-centered people:

Article II. Jesus Christ

2. We believe in Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Triune Godhead; that He was eternally one with the Father; that He became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and was born of the Virgin Mary, so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say the Godhead and manhood, are thus united in one Person very God and very man, the God-man. We believe that Jesus Christ died for our sins, and that He truly arose from the dead and took again His body, together with all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, wherewith He ascended into heaven and is there engaged in intercession for us. (Matthew 1:20-25; 16:15-16; Luke 1:26-35; John 1:1-18; Acts 2:22-36; Romans 8:3, 32-34; Galatians 4:4-5; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:12-22; 1 Timothy 6:14-16; Hebrews 1:1-5; 7:22-28; 9:24-28; 1 John 1:1-3; 4:2-3, 15).

Article IX. Justification, Regeneration, and Adoption

9. We believe that justification is the gracious and judicial act of God by which He grants full pardon of all guilt and complete release from the penalty of sins committed, and acceptance as righteous, to all who believe on Jesus Christ and receive Him as Lord and Savior.

10. We believe that regeneration, or the new birth, is that gracious work of God whereby the moral nature of the repentant believer is spiritually quickened and given a distinctively spiritual life, capable of faith, love, and obedience.

11. We believe that adoption is that gracious act of God by which the justified and regenerated believer is constituted a son of God.

12. We believe that justification, regeneration, and adoption are simultaneous in the experience of seekers after God and are obtained upon the condition of faith, preceded by repentance; and that to this work and state of grace the Holy Spirit bears witness.

(Luke 18:14; John 1:12-13; 3:3-8; 5:24; Acts 13:39; Romans 1:17; 3:21-26, 28; 4:5-9, 17-25; 5:1, 16-19; 6:4; 7:6; 8:1, 15-17; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 6:11; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Galatians 2:16-21; 3:1-14, 26; 4:4-7; Ephesians 1:6-7; 2:1, 4-5; Philippians 3:3-9; Colossians 2:13; Titus 3:4-7; 1 Peter 1:23; 1 John 1:9; 3:1-2, 9; 4:7; 5:1, 9-13, 18).

Article X. Entire Sanctification

13. We believe that entire sanctification is that act of God, subsequent to regeneration, by which believers are made free from original sin, or depravity, and brought into a state of entire devotement to God, and the holy obedience of love made perfect. It is wrought by the baptism with the Holy Spirit, and comprehends in one experience the cleansing of the heart from sin and the abiding, indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, empowering the believer for life and service. Entire sanctification is provided by the blood of Jesus, is wrought instantaneously by faith, preceded by entire consecration; and to this work and state of grace the Holy Spirit bears witness. This experience is also known by various terms representing its different phases, such as "Christian perfection," "perfect love," "heart purity," "the baptism with the Holy Spirit," "the fullness of the blessing," and "Christian holiness."

14. We believe that there is a marked distinction between a pure heart and a mature character. The former is obtained in an instant, the result of entire sanctification; the latter is the result of growth in grace. We believe that the grace of entire sanctification includes the impulse to grow in grace. However, this impulse must be consciously nurtured, and careful attention given to the requisites and processes of spiritual development and improvement in Christ-likeness of character and personality. Without such purposeful endeavor one's witness may be impaired and the grace itself frustrated and ultimately lost.

(Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27; Malachi 3:2-3; Matthew 3:11-12; Luke 3:16-17; John 7:37-39; 14:15-23; 17:6-20; Acts 1:5; 2:1-4; 15:8-9; Romans 6:11-13, 19; 8:1-4, 8-14; 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Galatians 2:20; 5:16-25; Ephesians 3:14-21; 5:17-18, 25-27; Philippians 3:10-15; Colossians 3:1-17; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; Hebrews 4:9-11; 10:10-17; 12:1-2; 13:12; 1 John 1:7, 9); ("Christian perfection," "perfect love": Deuteronomy 30:6; Matthew 5:43-48; 22:37-40; Romans 12:9-21; 13:8-10; 1 Corinthians 13; Philippians 3:10-15; Hebrews 6:1; 1 John 4:17-18; "Heart purity": Matthew 5:8; Acts 15:8-9; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:3; "Baptism with the Holy Spirit": Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27; Malachi 3:2-3; Matthew 3:11-12; Luke 3:16-17; Acts 1:5; 2:1-4; 15:8-9; "Fullness of the blessing": Romans 15:29; "Christian holiness": Matthew 5:1-7:29; John 15:1-11; Romans 12:1-15:3; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 4:17-5:20; Philippians 1:9-11; 3:12-15; Colossians 2:20-3:17; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 4:7-8; 5:23; 2 Timothy 2:19-22; Hebrews 10:19-25; 12:14; 13:20-21; 1 Peter 1:15-16; 2 Peter 1:1-11; 3:18; Jude 20-21).

In placing these *Articles of Faith* at the beginning of this week's study, we run the considerable risk of puzzling the readers of our *Background Notes*. Admittedly, there is a great deal of language in these *Articles* which appears strange and even confusing. How many of our church members have even read or studied the information set forth in these heavily worded statements of faith? Of course, that could be asked about many of the great creeds of the Christian church. What must be born in mind is that doctrinal statements are generally the result of group efforts by one segment of the Christian Church to express the essential beliefs of historic Christianity. This is not the place to squabble over the idiosyncrasies of one denomination or another. Perhaps it would be better to consider such Articles as *teaching documents* which attempt to explain certain aspects of Christian belief. Even a cursory survey of the *Articles* printed above will reveal the numerous biblical references which follow each, positively underscoring how important it is to ground any claims about belief in the witness of Scripture itself — the true source for what we believe (see last week's study).

This week's study can scarcely scratch the surface of the key points raised by the *Articles*. The text of Scripture itself occupies a more central role in what we will be saying about the central place occupied by Jesus Christ in our overall system of belief. Just as last week's study reminded us, authority does not rest in a book but in a person, we might equally affirm for this week's study, our emphasis is not on what we believe *about Jesus Christ* but rather on the ways that we believe *on Jesus Christ*. Articles of faith can become mechanical checklists which adherents of any given church might smugly tick off, saying in effect, "Yes, I accept this one, and that one, and, of course, I completely believe the other one..." Accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior doesn't work that way. We are not called upon to subscribe to a "dead letter" but to embrace the "living Lord." Not that doctrine is unimportant or that statements of faith don't matter: they certainly have their place in helping to focus attention on what matters to a family of Christians like the Nazarenes. But becoming a Christian is not about joining "our club" and giving lip-service to our particular list of doctrines. It is far more than that; it is becoming a devoted follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We may disagree with a human document's attempt to express in written form what the Bible states about this or that topic. In fact, on certain matters claimed in the articles cited above, many Christians have overtly disagreed. Often the discord arises from the meaning of this or that *word* or the assumptions about this or that *emphasis*. However, when we compare the simplicity of the earliest creeds of the whole Christian church (*Apostles'*, *Nicene*, etc.) with more recent renderings by specific denominations, it ought to give us pause when we settle on what *we consider of first importance*. For example, listen to the *Apostles' Creed* when it states that we believe "... in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; [He descended into hell.]¹ The third day He arose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there he shall come to judge the living and the dead..." And in conjunction with Jesus' personal identity, the creed also reminds us that we believe "In the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic (universal) church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting" — each of these belonging to the overall achievement of Jesus Christ for His people.

Nothing is stated explicitly about either "justification" or "sanctification," although certain aspects of each are implied in the unique accomplishment of the Lord Jesus Christ when he died and rose again for us. The early fathers of the church reached for "essentials" where there was the utmost unity and the absence of acrimonious debate. The ancient creeds were (and are) Christ-centered in what they affirmed, and left the details to other venues, such as theologies and catechisms. We underscore this distinction in order to stress the Christ-centeredness of our own movement — the Nazarenes.

In the September 15/16, 2007 edition of the *Background Notes*, we devoted one entire study in our *NazaWhat?* series to the affirmation, "We are Christian." You are encouraged to review what we wrote on that occasion

¹ Some manuscripts of the *Apostles' Creed* do not contain this oblique statement.

(the church website maintains an archive, or you can request a copy from the author: bbrown@chicagofirstnaz.org). Among the essential points made in those original comments, was the idea that the word "Christian" denotes a person who *belongs to the Messiah (Christ)*. What makes us "Christian" is not what we bring to Christ, but what he accomplishes in and through us. Our *Articles of Faith* repeatedly state that what happens to us is due entirely to the *work of God* through Jesus Christ. At some point in our lives we heard the proclamation of the Gospel, namely, that Jesus is the Messiah and Lord of the world by virtue of his death and resurrection. That message became for us Good News, announcing the wonderful fact that God has become King in a new way. The Holy Spirit opened our hearts to that message, and faith in Jesus Christ was the result. Once the Gospel (Good News) took root in hearts of faith, God accomplished a number of things. This week's study will refocus our original statement, "We are Christian," by emphasizing the *special works of God's grace* which began once faith took root within our hearts when we believed the Gospel.

Perhaps a couple of key passages will help identify our emphasis this week:

He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30).

But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:11).

Saying that Jesus Christ is *the source of our life* is what we mean by saying we are "Christ-centered." Whatever we *have as Christians* we possess *because of Jesus Christ*. Paul in his letters especially liked to speak about being "in Christ," as he does in the two passages above: "your life *in Christ Jesus*," and "*in the name* of the Lord Jesus Christ." The very fact that the pronoun "our" appears in connection with "wisdom" and "righteousness" shows how utterly dependent we are on the achievement of Jesus Christ for what we understand about the things of God, and about what He has done for us.

Justification: When God Renders a Favorable Verdict and Shows Mercy to Us

¹⁶ That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring- not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ¹⁷ as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations"- in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. ¹⁸ In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be." ¹⁹ He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. ²⁰ No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹ fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. ²² That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness." ²³ But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone, ²⁴ but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, ²⁵ who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification. ^{ESV} Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God (Romans 4:16 - 5:2).

Our first reading this week joins mid-stream Paul's thought in Romans 4. That said, several important themes immediately present themselves to the reader. Each of them belongs to a very old story which began in the Old Testament with God's special call of Abraham to be His covenant partner. That call made Abraham the "father" of a "chosen people." However, to be *chosen* did not mean that Abraham somehow eclipsed God's choice of anyone else. Rather, God chose Abraham precisely so that he might become the instrument *through whom* the whole world might be positively affected by the grace of God. What Paul does in Romans 4 is to tell the story of *Abraham* so that he might tell the story of *Jesus Christ*, the descendent of Abraham who would bring God's promises to their climax. This isn't just a matter of *using Abraham as an elaborate example* of the purposes of God. Abraham is essentially and wholly a participant in God's "big story" which reached its goal when Jesus Christ came into the world. When Paul tells us about Abraham he is, in effect, telling us about what Jesus had come to achieve. Paul makes several large points:

1. What God does for us in Jesus Christ rests on God's *grace*, depends on *faith*, and includes us Abraham's world-wide family (4:16).

2. What God does for us in Jesus Christ places us in the *presence of God* who gives *life to the dead*, doing for us what looks every bit like "new creation" since it "calls into existence the things that do not exist" (4:17).
3. What God does for us in Jesus Christ is made possible by *believing against hope* — that is, plunges us into God's future when our own future seemed quite dark and uncertain (4:18).
4. What God does for us in Jesus Christ assumes that we cannot do anything for ourselves, since we are "as good as dead" (4:19).
5. What God does for us in Jesus Christ creates and then strengthens our faith in His promises, believing that what God promises us He will achieve for us (4:20-21).
6. What God does for us in Jesus Christ is give to us a *new status*, a *new standing* before Him as persons who hear the Judge issue His verdict in His law-court: "Not guilty!" (3:22-23a).
7. What God does for us in Jesus Christ is grounded in His verdict about His own Son, that "Jesus [is] our Lord," whom He raised from the dead as proof of this verdict (4:23b-24).
8. What God does for us in Jesus Christ is to *take away our sins* and thereby accord us this *new status* before Himself — a standing which we call "our *justification*" (4:25).
9. What God does for us in Jesus Christ, because we are "justified through faith," is to grant us "peace" (*shalōm*) with God — that is, *restoration and wholeness* within God's new creation (5:1).
10. What God does in Jesus Christ opens up for us further access into the *grace* of God: first our *standing*, to be followed by *hope of the glory of God* — that is, what he plans to do for us now and in the future (5:2).

This, in a nutshell, is what God has accomplished for us because of Jesus Christ. At every turn in the argument, Paul ties in the Abraham story with the Jesus story, and in each case, he reinforces the *special status or standing* that we have within the *grace of God*. That is, at the very core, what Paul means by using the word *justification* or *justified*. And we need to spend some time examining closely the unique meaning that word has within the wider context of Paul's letters and thought.

As we dig deeper into the meaning of the word "justification," we are deeply indebted to the rich and helpful scholarship of N.T. Wright who sheds fresh light on the meaning of this crucial term. What follows borrows, cites and quotes extensively from that research.² In addition, I am also particularly grateful for the many fellow Christians at Chicago First Nazarene who studied Paul with me during the Winter Session (2002-2003) of the *Institute for Ministry Training*. My notes from that series, informed by student's questions and contributions, also appear throughout what follows.

Key Words for Understanding Justification

Paul believed God's promises to Israel and the world reached their fulfillment in the coming of Jesus Christ, the Jewish Messiah, in his death and resurrection. How could this be? How could these events be the fulfillment of God's plan for Israel? And what could all this mean for Israel? When Paul wrote his most famous book, *Romans*, he tried to work out the details. In doing so, he used the important phrase "righteousness of God" (*dikaiousunē theou*).

The Greek work *dikaios* can mean either "righteous" or "just", as can the word *dikaiousunē* mean either "righteousness" or "justice". Add to these, the Greek word *dikaion*, which is regularly translated "to justify", but harder to render as "to righteous", although it might be handled as "to put to rights" (i.e. "to make right"). What is the background, for a Jewish thinker, of these words? Answering that question will open for us the door to "good news" for Israel.

² Several Wright works are worth mentioning: *The Climax of the Covenant*, Fortress Press, 1991; *What Saint Paul Really Said*, Eerdmans, 1997; *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision*, IVP Academic, 2009. Also, Wright's commentary on *Romans* in the *New Interpreter's Bible*, Volume X, is an excellent resource for following the argument of Paul, as well as helping understand the fine points of Romans 4 — this week's text on justification.

Covenant, Court and Coming Judgment

The Septuagint translation (in Greek) of the Hebrew Bible (no doubt one of Paul's Bibles) uses the phrase "righteousness of God" to refer to God's *own faithfulness to his promises*, that is, to the covenant. Reading the general sense of Isaiah 40-55, for example, we hear the prophet tell us how God saves Israel, though she is lost and perverse. God has made promises, nonetheless, and he is trustworthy to save Israel because of it. This is most vividly seen in Isaiah 53, where God's suffering servant-Messiah finally accomplishes God's "righteous purpose". We may also look to texts like Daniel 9, where God shows himself "faithful to his covenant" and saves his people from exile in Babylon. At the heart of "God's righteousness" is his *covenant with Israel*, the covenant through which he will address and solve the problem of evil in and for the whole world.

But, of equal importance, is the metaphorical value of the expression, for it comes from the language of the Jewish *law court*. To appreciate the value of this context, several things need explaining:

1. The Jewish law court had three participants: the judge, the plaintiff and the defendant. There is no prosecutor in this scenario. All cases involve one party versus the other party with the Judge deciding the issue.
2. So how does "righteousness" fit into this context? When applied to the judge it means that the judge must try the case "according to the law" and be impartial, while punishing sin or upholding those who have no one to plead their cause.
3. For the plaintiff or the defendant to be "righteous" in the biblical sense in a court of law means for them to have that *status* as a result of the decision of the court. How does this work out, exactly? Should the court uphold the claims of the plaintiff, then the plaintiff would be "righteous". That does not mean the plaintiff is morally good or free from evil, only that, in this case, the court vindicates him. Likewise, when the court upholds the defendant, acquitting him of the charges, then the defendant is "righteous". Once again, this does not mean the defendant is morally good or free from evil, only that he has been vindicated, by the court, against his accuser--as we would say, acquitted.

It is important to hang on to these meanings, even though it is tempting, because of the way we use language, to apply a *moral tone* to the words "righteous" or "righteousness." But for plaintiff and defendant, "righteous" is the status they have when the court *finds in their favor*. In light of this, it is important to observe that "righteousness" does not somehow flow from the judge to either defendant or plaintiff, as if somehow it could be transferred to them like a substance. When the judge tries the case legally and impartially, he is just. When the defendant or plaintiff are vindicated, they are "righteous": no more, no less. But how does this work out with Paul and his use the terms?

What happens, then, when we put the *covenant* meaning of God's righteousness together with the metaphorical level drawn from the *law-court* scene? God, of course, is the judge. Israel comes before him to plead her case (as plaintiff) against the wicked pagans (defendants) who are oppressing her. She longs for her case to come to court, for God to hear it, and, in his own righteousness, to deliver her from her enemies. She wants, that is, to be "justified, acquitted, and vindicated". And, because God who is *the judge* is also her *covenant God*, she pleads with him: be faithful to your covenant! Vindicate me in your righteousness! The Psalmist expresses this sentiment: "O LORD, hear my prayer, listen to my cry for mercy; in your faithfulness and righteousness come to my relief. 2 Do not bring your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before you" (143:1), and Paul echoes it in Romans 3:20. When God does act, then his people will have the status of "righteousness"--be vindicated.

Covenant and law court both look forward to a future event: namely, that God will vindicate his people by being faithful. This is largely what *eschatology* ("last things") is about — awaiting and hoping for God to finally do what he promises. God's righteousness is what Israel invokes when she is in trouble, in the hope that God will vindicate her in the future. But who is this Israel who will be vindicated? Is it all Jews or only some? Can one tell in advance who precisely will be vindicated when God finally acts in fulfillment of his righteousness and of his covenant obligations? If you were a Jew like Saul of Tarsus, before the Damascus Road experience, your

answer would be, "yes". "In the present, we are loyal to our covenant obligations. Our 'works of the law' demonstrate in the present that, when God acts, we will be seen as his people." But how will Paul, the fulfilled Jew, the Messianic Jew, answer this question? Our answer must come from Paul's letters where he makes use of the phrase "the righteousness of God" (*dikaïosunē theou*).

Philippians and 2 Corinthians

We start with Philippians 3:20 where Paul expresses his desire to "gain Christ":

and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ [or, through the faithfulness of Christ]--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith [or, upon faith].

Here, we see a different phrase in Greek: *dikaïosunē ek theou*. In this passage, Paul tells us about the righteousness that God confers, the status he gives to the vindicated party as a result of his decision. But this is not God's *own* righteousness. Now consider another text in 2 Corinthians 5:20-21:

We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. {21} God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

The last phrase, in this case, is the *dikaïosunē theou* expression which means "God's own righteousness." However, in this passage, it takes a new turn. It refers to Paul's ministry as an apostle in which he calls for the reconciliation of human beings with God. His "appeal" in some real way embodies and incarnates God's own covenant faithfulness in seeking out and saving his people, Israel. By suffering and hardship, Paul has brought his royal proclamation to the world, a faithful witness in spite of adversity. In so doing, Paul and his fellow apostles are living examples of God's righteousness, of his faithfulness to do what he promised for Israel and the world. The reader of this text needs to note the use of the first person plural "we", as distinct from the second person plural "you". Speaking as the apostle and his fellows, he uses the "we" to indicate his royal mission--which is to reveal God's righteousness to the world. What this passage does not teach is that somehow God's righteousness gets "imputed" or "transferred" to us in a mysterious way.

Romans 3

When the reader comes to Romans 3, he has already heard Paul say that God has renewed his covenant with both Jew and Gentile who now belong together and for whom circumcision has no lasting value. Does this mean that God has forgotten his covenant promises to Jews by themselves? Paul writes in 3:5,

But if our unrighteousness brings out God's righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us?

The meaning of "righteousness" is closely related to the idea of God's faithfulness or unfaithfulness in the preceding verses. The verses in question clearly have to do with the vocation of Israel, with God's purposes for Israel, and with Israel's failure to fulfill those purposes. This is Paul "covenant theology" and his affirmation of God's faithfulness to his covenant. As he ploughs through the second half of chapter 3, Paul sharpens his point:

(Rom 3:21-26) But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. {22} This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, {23} for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, {24} and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. {25} God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished-- {26} he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

Remember that "justify", "justifier" and "justification" in Greek have the same root as "righteous" and "righteousness" (*dikaïosunē, dikaïos*). What is Paul doing with these words here? The flow of Paul's argument through 3:20 is that both Jew and Gentile are in trouble in God's law court. No longer is it a case of Israel coming into court as the plaintiff charging the Gentiles (defendants) with some crime. Gentile and Jew alike are now guilty defendants. In terms of the covenant scenario for which the law-court scene is the metaphor, God intended to be faithful to His covenant, His intention was to vindicate Israel and so to save the whole world, through the faithfulness of Israel; but Israel as a whole were faithless. What is God to do?

Paul's answer is that the Messiah, King Jesus, has been the true, faithful Israelite. Underneath the dense theology of this passage, stands Paul's central gospel scene: the death and resurrection of Jesus, seen as the point at which, and the means by which, God's covenant purposes for Israel, that is, His intention to deal once and for all with the sin of the world, would finally be accomplished. God has dealt with sin in the cross of Jesus; He has now vindicated Jesus by raising him from the dead. "The faithfulness of Jesus" (also called the "obedience of Jesus" in Romans 5) is thus the "means whereby the righteousness of God is revealed". God is himself righteous, as the covenant God who has made promises and kept them. In terms of the law-court metaphor, He has been true to his word, He has been impartial (deals with Gentile and Jew alike), and has dealt with sin. He has also thereby vindicated the helpless: he is "the justifier of the one who has faith". This theme of God's own righteousness, understood as His covenant faithfulness, and seen in terms of the law-court metaphor, is the key to this vital passage.

Romans 9-10

While this is a rather long and involved section for Paul, we can go after its heart by listening to 10:2-4:

For I can testify about them [fellow Jews] that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. {3} Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. {4} Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

This is actually a fine summation of Paul's argument found in 9:6-39, where, though the phrase "God's righteousness" does not occur, the whole discussion is about whether God has in fact been righteous, has in fact kept his covenant promises, and if so how. We must beware of thinking that the idea is present only when the phrase is present; the whole context is about nothing else than "God's righteousness". Israel, says Paul, is ignorant of what God has righteously and faithfully been doing in her history. In seeking to establish a status of righteousness, of covenant membership, which will be for Jews and Jews only, she has not submitted to God's righteousness. The covenant always envisaged a worldwide family; Israel, clinging to her own special status as the covenant-bearer, has betrayed the purpose for which that covenant was made. It is as though the postman were to imagine that all the letters in his bag were intended for him.

When Paul says that Israel "did not submit to the righteousness of God", he is clearly referring back to Romans 3:21-26, the passage discussed a few paragraphs above. There, Paul declared that "the righteousness of God" had been revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ, the gospel which declares that God has one way of salvation for all, Jew and Gentile alike. When Paul's fellow Jews rejected Jesus (as did Saul of Tarsus), and when they continue to reject the message about Jesus which Paul now proclaims, he sees the underlying reason: they recognize, as he had to recognize, that it will mean abandoning the idea of a covenant membership which will be inalienably Israel's and Israel's alone. So the great argument of Romans 9-11 goes on its way, reaching at its climax the most significant statement, quoting from Jeremiah 31:33 and Isaiah 27:9 — this will be my covenant with them, when I take away their sins (Romans 11:27). Paul holds firmly to the hope that the renewal of the covenant which has taken place in Jesus the Messiah will be effective not only for Gentiles but also for Jews who will come, as he himself has done, to faith in Jesus as the Jewish Messiah.

Romans 1:16-17

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. {17} For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

This concise statement is what Paul gradually unpacks throughout much of the rest of the letter. He is explaining why he is eager to announce the gospel, the royal proclamation of King Jesus as Lord of the world, throughout the world and at Rome itself. The gospel, he says, unveils God's own righteousness, his covenant faithfulness, which operates through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ for the benefit of all those who in turn are faithful. I take that to be the meaning of the difficult phrase in Greek, "from faith to faith". In other words, when Paul announces that Jesus Christ is Lord, the Lord of the world, he is in that very act and announcement

unveiling before the world the great news that the one God of all the world has been true to his word, and is now restoring justice, peace and truth.

This is the fundamental thing that Paul wants the Roman church, and indeed the whole world, to grasp. What happened in the events concerning Jesus was not a puzzling or peculiar turn of circumstances, but was the outworking of God's age-old plan and purpose. If the church in Rome can grasp this, they will be in exactly the right position both to support the urgent missionary work which must now take place, and to live as the one people of God, putting aside their cultural distinctions so that they can worship and serve the one God as brothers and sisters.

Summarizing *Justification*

Since the law court metaphor has much to do with our understanding of the word "righteous", we might imagine, wrongly, that salvation is a mere legal transaction, a cold piece of business, almost a trick of thought performed by God who is logical and correct but hardly one we would want to worship. But if we enlarge our understanding of "righteousness" in terms of God's faithfulness to his covenant, then we move in a direction that opens up for us the possibility of knowing the God who makes himself known in Jesus and by the Spirit. Paul moves on in Romans 5 and 8 to show how the cross of Jesus reveals supremely the "love of God" (5:6-11; 8:31-39). Justice and love cannot be played off against each other. God's justice is his love in action, to right the wrongs of his suffering world by taking their weight on Himself. God's love is the driving force of His justice, so that it can never become blind or arbitrary, a cold system which somehow God operates, or which operates God. Because the gospel reveals this covenant love, this covenant faithfulness, of the living God, Paul knows that, whatever happens, the future is secure. He can announce the gospel in the face of the powers of the world, and they can do their worst to him. The death and resurrection of Jesus have unveiled the faithful love of God, and nothing can separate him from it:

(Rom 8:38-39) For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, {39} neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The language of theology, properly understood, gives birth to the language of love. Paul has no problem about a split between head and heart, or between right-brain and left-brain. He has grasped the truth that the one true God is now made known in Jesus and the Spirit. And, grasping that, he knows that he is himself grasped, held, sustained and saved by the faithful love of the faithful God.

Sanctification: Sharing in God's Holiness

¹³ But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. ¹⁴ I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. ²⁰ "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word... (John 17:13-20).

When we introduced this study, we cited two texts from 1 Corinthians (1:30 and 6:11) which placed the ideas of *justification (or righteousness) and sanctification* in close relationship to each other. Then, as we examined *Romans*, we encountered Paul's assertion, "justified by faith...we have access into this grace in which we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Clearly, the statement, "we stand" (Romans 5:1-2) (from the Greek: *histēmi*, "to cause to stand," expressed in the perfect tense, pertains to *justification*. However, Paul *begins* with the word for "justified" in 5:1, implying that it comes *first*, to be followed by further "works of grace" in the life of God's people. The verb form *dikaiōthentēs* is an aorist participle and appears with the word "therefore" (*oun*), forming a clause which means "Since we have been justified..." That is, since God has accorded to His people a new *status* as acquitted persons in His law-court and blessed by the covenant mercies through the death and resurrection of Jesus, they have a wonderful future opening before them. Being a Christian does not end with receiving God's favorable verdict, "Not guilty!" We are given that standing before God so that "He who began a good work in you *will bring it to completion* at the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

The continuing work of God in the life of the Christian is punctuated by yet a further "work of grace" which the Bible refers to with the term "sanctification." The Nazarene *Articles of Faith* carefully distinguish this experience from the ongoing "growth in grace." However, not all theologians in our movement see this exactly the same way. Plainly, there is a work which God must do, and yet there must be continuing obedience on our parts. Our wills must surrender to the purposes of God so that our hearts might be purified and filled with God's perfect love. Looked at biblically, this involves both a *crisis* and a *process*. The crisis is the punctuating work of God which inaugurates fresh moments of spiritual growth and progress. While we are inclined to see a *decisive event*, we can hardly hamstring this experience within a neat little formula, nor would theologians like Wesley necessarily do so. From time to time, after God has granted us *status* as part of His people, the Holy Spirit works in our hearts, pointing out those areas where we have not completely *surrendered* to God, and the resulting obedience on our part leads to an even deeper experience of God's grace and a fuller devotion of our hearts to God's will. After all, does it really make a great deal of sense to argue for a limited number of "works of grace" (*first* and *second* being the traditional quota!), when Paul clearly tells the Roman Christians that after justification (and as a result of it), we have *access into this grace* and have *joy in the hope of the glory of God*?

By describing the *next step* as involving *access into this grace*, Paul uses the Greek expression, *tēn prosagōgēn eschēkamen eis charin*. The word *prosagōgē* means "the freedom or right to enter." When God declares us "Not guilty!" and gives us a standing among His people, He thereby *justifies us*. Now, Paul says, that *opens the door* (gives us entrance) to an ever richer life of grace, the life of *sanctification*. Because he uses the perfect tense of the verb "to gain" or "to have," Paul is telling us that the door is *already open*: nothing stands between us and the sanctified life! Nothing remains to be *done* which has not already been provided for by Jesus Christ himself. What lies ahead of us is *the hope of the glory of God* — the confidence that God will transform our lives in such a way as to bear His image — His glory — in the world.

Let us turn, then, to the second main text from John 17. We leave the densely worded writings of Paul and eavesdrop on the prayer of Jesus to his Father in the hours before his crucifixion and death.

Overview of the Prayer in John 17

We hear Jesus speaking words to his Father, praying this great "high priestly prayer" before his death. Jesus has the perspective of eternity when he offers up these words. A few general remarks will help place our chosen text (17:13-20) in its context. It is common to outline this chapter in three sections:

- a. Jesus prays for himself (17:1-5)
- b. Jesus prays for his disciples (17:6-19)
- c. Jesus prays for his disciples' converts (17:20-26)

The section we are considering picks up sections of the second and third divisions, where reasonably, it addresses itself to present and future generations of Christians (Christ followers; Christ "belongers").

What is the scope of this prayer? Jesus sees his entire earthly work as belonging to a larger purpose, conceived in the loving councils of God. The moment of the prayer is the moment of the great climax of that purpose. In some ways, Jesus sees the events he describes, including his obedience to the Father's will in dying on the cross, *as already finished*. This alone, makes the prayer a source of great wonder and majesty.

Lying at the center of the purpose is the familiar theme: Jesus is the revealer of God:

1. "This is eternal life, that they may know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (17:3).
2. "I have glorified you on earth" (17:4).
3. "I have manifested your name to the people you gave me out of the world" (17:6).
4. "They have come to know the truth that I came from you" (17:8).
5. "I have given them your word" (17:14).
6. "The glory that you have given me I have given to them" (17:22).

7. "I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me" (17:24).
8. "I have made known your name, and I will continue to make it known" (17:26).

Further, this revelation of God's true nature to the disciples was *to become for them a transforming experience*, not leaving them untouched, but wonderfully united with the Father and the Son:

1. "To give eternal life to all whom you have given him" (17:2).
2. "All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them" (17:10).
3. "Keep them in your name, which you have given me" (17:11).
4. "That they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves" (17:13).
5. "Sanctify ("make holy") them through your truth. Your Word (*logos*=Jesus) is truth" (17:17).
6. "That the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them" (17:26).

In light of this larger context, we consider 17:13-20.

The Context for Sanctification: The World

The words of Jesus in 17:13 underscore that he offers this prayer "while [he is] still in the world." The reason he gives for doing so is so that the disciples "may have the full measure of joy within them." Further, he reflects on the fact that "the world hated" the disciples because they had been the recipients of Jesus' word (17:14a). In the same vein, he observes that the disciples "are not of the world" just as he, Jesus, is "not of the world" (14b). Given the hostility of the world to the disciples, one would think that Jesus would simply remove them from the world. But he says precisely the opposite. His prayer is *not* that the Father would "take them out of the world," but that the Father would "protect them from the evil one." Once more, Jesus reiterates that neither the disciples nor he are "of the world."

It is at this point in the prayer that Jesus petitions his Father, using the word which is the second topic of this week's study:

Sanctify them by the truth;
Your word is truth (17:17)

We will return to this all-important key passage shortly.

Once more, Jesus returns to the theme of "the world," and notes that the Father "sent [him] into the world," and in the same way he, Jesus, sends his disciples "into the world."

In each case, John uses the Greek word *kosmos*, translated by our English word, "world." Eleven times this term appears in 17:13-20. If we add up all the occurrences in John 17, there are eighteen of them. From this we discover the importance of Jesus' prayer for those who are "in the world." Each of his disciples share a human connection to "this world," having been born within it as part of the human family, descended from Adam, and with a sinful nature. The world, *kosmos*, is a perilous place. Consider the other comments Jesus makes about "the world" in 17:1-12 and 17:21-26:

1. Before the world existed, Jesus shared the full character of God with his Father (17:5). The word "glory" (*doxa*) generally applies to the majesty, brilliance and supreme character of God, corresponding to the Hebrew idea *kābōd* which points to the dignity and "heaviness" of God.
2. In some sense, the Father gave the disciples to Jesus as persons who, in some sense, are now "out of the world" (17:6). The Greek reads, *moi ek tou kosmou*: "to me out from the world." The preposition *ek*, used with the genitive case, suggests origin or source. A better translation would be simply, "from the world." The disciples were, after all, persons who belonged to this world, having been born here. However, the Father rescues them "from the world" by giving them into the care Jesus.
3. Jesus, on this particular occasion, does not pray for the world, but for those who belong to God and whom God places into his care (17:9). Of course, Jesus will pray for the world when, on the cross, he asks his Father "to forgive" those who were responsible for his crucifixion.

4. Once more, Jesus speaks *as if his work of dying and rising were already completed*: he declares that he himself is "no longer in the world," but his disciples, by contrast, "are in the world" (17:11). He means by this that he no longer lives an *earthly existence* since he has ascended to be with his Father. By contrast, the disciples face the daily reality as those who are "not of the world" but still "in the world." In this paradox lies both the pain and the mission of the Christian church.
5. When Jesus continues his prayer in 17:21, he announces the unity of Father, Son and disciples, and declares it to be a *missional unity* by which the world may believe that the Father sent the Son. Thus, *kosmos* takes on a hopeful quality, since Jesus contemplates finding faith in the lives of those who are part of "the world."
6. Similarly, "the world" is portrayed as potentially coming to know the love of God as revealed in the Father-Son-Church relationship (17:23).
7. The Father's love for the Son existed *before the foundation of the world* (17:24). This statement corresponds to the request of 17:5 where Jesus asks the Father for the heavenly glory originally possessed "before the world began."
8. The final use of "the world" in John 17 occurs in verse 25 which highlights the need for mission: "the world does not know you," though, of course, in time it will.

Therefore, among the more obvious themes of John 17, is the role of "the world" in the life of Jesus and his followers. Were we to more thoroughly trace John's use of *kosmos* throughout the Gospel and into the letters (1, 2, and 3 John), we would discover numerous occurrences of the word, both as the hostile context for both Jesus and his followers, and, at the same time, the place where mission must take place.

Perhaps, outside the Gospel of John, the most telling Johannine use of "the world" appears in 1 John 2:15-17, and offers yet another connection to the topic we are considering:

15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.
 16 For all that is in the world- the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions- is not from the Father but is from the world. 17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever (1 John 2:15-17).

Parallel to Jesus' affirmation that his followers are "not of the world" (*ouk ek tou kosmou*) (17:14) is the command "Do not love the world or the things in the world" (1 John 2:15). When someone "loves the world," he betrays the absence of "the love of the Father" (*hē agapē tou patros*). That is, the Father's own love becomes *crowded out of the heart* which loves the world. Human desires (Greek: *epithumia*) originating from sinful flesh, lusting eyes and boasting possessions, find their root, not in God's love, but in "the love of the world." Since the world is a fragile place, love for its goods puts human beings at risk to suffer the same fate as the world itself. John characterizes the world and its desires as "passing away" (*paragō*).

Returning to our text in John 17, Jesus is envisioning a near future for his disciples (which he speaks of *as though it had already arrived*) when they will no longer be *ek tou kosmou*, that is, "from the world." What accounts for this radical change in their state of affairs? The answer lies in 17:17, the text we set out above. In order for the disciples to cease being *ek tou kosmou*, they must undergo a radical transformation. They must in some definite sense sever their ties to the *kosmos* as *the source of the existence*. Instead, their hearts must be flooded with "joy's fullness" and holy love (17:13). When this takes place, though the disciples still live *in the world*, they will cease to be *of the world*. Again, drawing on the material from 1 John 2, they will cease to "love the world," precisely because they have surrendered their hearts to the love of God instead.

This entire process falls under Jesus' general petition to the Father: "Sanctify them by the truth...the truth that is your word..." (17:17). John uses the Greek verb *hagiazō*, and inflects it as an imperative aorist, suggesting a *decisive and completed action*. The Father is the *agent* of the action, and the "truth" — which is the Father's "Word" — is the *means* for its completion. When John uses *logos*, he invariably links it to the person of Jesus. "In the beginning was the *logos*..." begins the Gospel of John (1:1), and "the *logos* became flesh..." (1:14). The construction "your word is truth" has a personal nuance. The Greek has *ho logos ho sos alētheia estin*: "the word, the one which is yours, is truth." Compare this with John 14:7, "I am the way, the truth, and the life..."

And so, when Jesus requests that the Father "sanctify" the disciples "by (or in, with) the truth," and then proceeds to reveal that the truth is "your word," he intends to say that the Father sanctifies the disciples by the Word who is Jesus himself. That is, in fact, what he goes on to say in 17:19: "For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified." How does this work out in practice?

A few remarks about the intent behind the "self-sanctifying" of Jesus. What is it that Jesus *does* so that this statement becomes true of him? The answer to that question brings us to the heart of the Greek word *hagiazō*, and its Hebrew equivalent *qādash*, the verbs meaning "to sanctify." Whatever Jesus means, he clearly implies that he *himself* must undergo a "sanctification" as "the word of truth" in order that his ordeal might lead to the sanctification of his *disciples*. Our preliminary impression is that Jesus speaks here about his coming death on the cross in which he becomes the "faithful high priest" who offers himself as the sacrifice for sin, but also who does battle with the world, the flesh and the devil, "triumphing over them" by the cross (Colossians 2:15).

A Closer Look at The Verb "To Sanctify"

In the September 22/23, 2007 edition of the *Background Notes*, I explored the biblical concept of "holiness" in some detail. You are encouraged to re-read that material for the fuller picture it provides. However, we need to glean some essential ideas from that study to further appreciate Jesus' words in John 17:17. At the core, the biblical terms for "sanctify" and "sanctification" have to do with "holiness" and being "holy." Ordinary things normally are not holy, in biblical terms. They belong to what the ancients called the "common" or the "profane". Put simply, they are merely items in the universe. They aren't necessarily bad or evil, but they are also nothing special. And this is where the biblical idea of holy or holiness becomes interesting. One simple statement puts this in focus: Only God is truly holy. All else derives its holiness from God, and then only by having a proper relationship with Him.

Were we to read the writings of the pagans who lived in the same world as the ancient Israelites, we would also discover the words "holy" and "holiness". Whenever "the gods" were looked at as living in a world quite different from the human world, they were in that sense "holy". "Sacred", the place where gods live, and "secular", the ordinary world of human beings and things — these were two distinct places in the ancient mind. The place where gods lived was just plain "different", even weird and mysterious. Things happened in the world of the gods that didn't usually happen in the ordinary world. Certain people, dubbed "holy men", had an uncanny access to the "other world" and, through special texts or rituals, guided the ordinary person into the dimension of the holy. These were usually the priests of the pagan religions. Fear and dread surrounded their activities, much as we still find in certain stone-age cultures where the shaman or "witch doctor" maintains an atmosphere of fright in the presence of sacred objects or places. Part of the priest's role was to make peace between the sacred and the secular.

The Hebrew language (in which the Old Testament was largely written) had a basic root word for this special reality: *qōdash*, and its various derivatives with meanings like: "holy", "be holy", "holiness", or "make holy". In addition, the idea of "sanctify" or "sanctification" comes directly from the same roots. For example, "to sanctify" means "to make holy", while "sanctification" is the "state of being holy" or "the process by which something becomes holy". When we examine the actual Old Testament material, the following profile emerges from the data.

1. The earliest reference to "holy" is found in Genesis 2:3 where God blesses the "seventh" day and "made it holy". Here's a simple example of an ordinary thing, a day in the week, being brought into the sphere of the holy.
2. Our next encounter with the word "holy" is in Exodus 3:5 where Moses sees a desert bush burning with fire, but not consumed by its flame, an odd and uncommon thing to be sure! Approaching this extraordinary phenomenon, Moses suddenly hears God's voice warning him, "Do not come any closer. Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." Although the text does not explicitly say this, the very presence of God, the One Who calls Himself "I Am" (a variation on the personal name, Yahweh),

modifies the natural world around the bush and around Moses, rendering it sacred, bringing it into the sacred realm of God. This was no ordinary bush nor was Moses standing on "common" ground. Instead, God had lifted this small piece of desert landscape into his Presence and thereby making it holy. A special conversation was about to take place between God and Moses, one which would have far-reaching consequences for Moses' people Israel. Divine purposes were about to be revealed by God to His prophet, and any "place" where such momentous words "appeared" could not remain common or profane (Compare also the experience of Moses' successor, Joshua: Joshua 5:15).

3. And once the words of God come true in the life of Israel, through the Exodus from Egypt, Moses gives heart-felt expression to the true meaning of holiness as it applies to God: "Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you-- **majestic in holiness** (Hebrew *qodesh*), awesome in glory, working wonders?" (Exodus 15:11). **What we see here is the use of holiness to define the incomparable, unparalleled, unequalled nature of God:** "Who is like you?" Yahweh, the God who delivered Israel from Egyptian slavery, defeated the armies of Pharaoh, and brought his people across the Red Sea, **He has no peer.**
4. God's holiness as His utter and unmatched uniqueness is found in these passages:
 - a. "I will show **the holiness of my great name** (the "name" of God is another way of speaking of His true nature, His true character, His identity)" (Ezekiel 36:23).
 - b. "And so I will show **my greatness and holiness**, and **I will make myself known** in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am Yahweh" (Ezekiel 38:23). "There is **no one holy like Yahweh**; there is **no one besides you**; there is no Rock like our God" (1 Samuel 2:2).
 - c. "Glory is his **holy name**" (1 Chronicles 16:10). Note: "Glory" (Hebrew *kabod*="honor", "brightness", "weightiness", "dignity") pertains to the essential character of God. To "glorify God" means to turn the spotlight on Who He is so that others can see Him clearly.
 - d. "Your ways, O God, are **holy**. **What god is so great** as our God?" (Psalm 77:13). "Let them praise your great and awesome name--**he is holy**" (Psalm 99:3). "But Yahweh Almighty will be exalted by his justice, and **the holy God will show himself** by his righteousness" (Isaiah 5:16).
 - e. "**Holy, holy, holy** is Yahweh Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isaiah 6:3). Note: the three-fold use of the term "holy". At the least, the ancient prophet intended his audience to see the multiplied and dimensional nature of Yahweh, or, as he tells them, His fullness of glory. For the New Testament reader, the three-fold expression (called the "trisagion" from the Greek *tris* ("three")+ *hagion* ("holy")) points to the Trinity: God in three persons, adding to the mystery and wonder of God's person. Once God the Son comes into the world, the world is truly "full of his glory" as Isaiah affirms! The New Testament picks up the trisagion in Revelation 4:8, "Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come."
 - f. "To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal? Says the Holy One" (Isaiah 40:25). "For I am God, and not man--the Holy One among you" (Hosea 11:9). "Who will not fear you, O Yahweh, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed (Revelation 15:4).
5. God's "name" is frequently called "holy". The "name" (Hebrew *hashem*) is identical with God's person: God *is* His Name. And that name is Yahweh, the "One Who Is Who Will Be". There is "no other name" like His Name. This is the meaning of the statements, found throughout the Old Testament, "holy is your name", or "my name is holy" (See the following examples: Leviticus. 20:3; 22:2, 32; 1 Chronicles. 16:10, 35; 29:16; Psalm 30:4; 33:21; 97:12; 103:1; 105:3; 106:47; 145:21; Ezekiel 20:39; 36:20; 39:7, 25; 43:7-8; Amos 2:7).
6. In summary, then, to speak of God as "holy" is to describe Him as the Wholly Other One, the One Unlike Any Other, Matchless, Unique, Supreme. All other gods are no gods alongside Him, but poor parodies of the One True God. All other gods are impersonators, fakes, counterfeits, who pretend to be God, but fall far short of His majesty, greatness and glory. In His presence, they must become ashamed at their pretense.

Creation itself must bow before Him and acknowledge its complete dependence on Him for its existence. This is why the Sabbath assumes such significance in Hebrew thought, for it celebrates the fact that God made the world and everything in it, and that He alone can take credit for its existence. And so, He blesses the Sabbath and declares it to be "holy", as He is, for Creation is the work of His hands. "It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves," declares the Psalmist (100:3).

7. Though the "holiness of God" sets Him apart from all else, it does not place Him in isolation from fellowship with His creatures. This is the wonderful irony of God's holiness. One Isaiah text expresses this beautifully: "For this is what the high and lofty One say--he who lives forever, whose name is holy: I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite" (57:15). "But also", writes the prophet, and then reveals the wonder that the high and holy God "stoops down" and takes up His home in the human heart. Holiness is not snobbish, nor is the holy God "cut off from" His creation. This holy God does not keep His holiness to Himself. Though holiness defines the true nature of God, it also becomes the invitation for His creatures to resemble Him, to become the very image for which they were originally created ("God made man in His own image...", Genesis 1:26-27). **Holiness is the call to be restored in the image of the One who made all things.** As St. Paul reminds us in his letters, "...you have taken off your old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator" (Colossians 3:9-10). And again, "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, **created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.**" (Ephesians 4:22-24). This, then, is the human destination for God's holiness, nothing less than the full restoration of God's creation, starting with His people!

God's Search for a Holy People: The Old Testament Story

No sooner had God brought His ancient people out of Egypt, than He led them to the southern tip of the Sinai Desert, far away from fallen world of Egyptian slavery and its vaunted civilization, and into a solitary place where they might more easily hear His voice and see His glory. Here, at the foot of Mount Sinai (also known as Mount Horeb, nicknamed "mount of God") Yahweh speaks these words to Moses and unveils His long-term purpose for Israel:

"You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. 5 Now if you obey me fully and keep **my covenant**, then out of all nations you will be **my treasured possession**. Although the whole earth is mine, 6 you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a **holy nation**." (Exodus 19:4-6).

Remember what I did for you. Keep my covenant. You will become Mine. You will become a holy nation. Not as if the rest of the world isn't mine, but you become Mine in a special sense, in a holy sense.

And so, holiness is shared with God's people, bound to Him by sacred covenant, sealed by the Passover lamb, and authenticated by their safe passage out of Egypt to the foot of Mount Sinai. "Out of all nations"--this becomes the pattern throughout Scripture, namely, that God calls out a people **to become His Prototype People**, or in the language of the Old Testament, "Israel was holy to Yahweh, **the firstfruits** of his harvest" (Jeremiah 2:3). If Israel was His firstfruits, then **He expected more of the same to come**. But how are *they* His people? They "keep covenant" with God, that is, they enter into the most solemn and sacred of relationships with the Creator God.

1. As "priests", each and every Israelite has access to the holiness of God.
2. Being in touch with God's holiness transforms this people into a holy nation.

Of course, readers of the Old Testament books of Exodus through Deuteronomy discover that God's plan for the holy nation requires obedience to Himself and to His word. One long section of the book of Leviticus is called the Holiness Code (chapters 17-26) because it details the kind of life the people of Israel are to live. The

modern reader is puzzled by the level of detail and the seemingly endless lists of "do's and don'ts" found there. So that we don't lose the forest for the trees, it might help to focus on the reason God gave this "code" to His infant people. It was so that Israel might develop what we would call a "moral sense", the ability to make distinctions between right and wrong. Consider these texts:

"You must distinguish between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean" (Leviticus 10:10).
"They are to teach my people the difference between the holy and the common and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean" (Ezekiel 44:23).

Only by continuous exposure to God's word, as communicated by His prophet, could Israel "know" what this distinction meant. In the Holiness Code, God said to His people: "Be holy because I, Yahweh your God, am holy" (Leviticus 19:2) "Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am Yahweh your God. Keep my decrees (that is, God's words) and follow them. I am Yahweh who makes you holy. You are to be holy to me because I, Yahweh, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own" (Leviticus 20:7, 8, 26). Repeatedly these words appear throughout this section of Leviticus: "I am Yahweh who makes you (or them) holy" (21:8; 22:9; 22:32; 22:32).

The Book of Leviticus consistently connects the expression "is holy" with the phrase "belongs to Yahweh" (see 27:30). Under the "Code", all kinds of things are "handed over" to God, including tithes, sacrifices, children, priests, garments, pots, days, places, and people. To "consecrate" simply meant to "dedicate" or "give to" Yahweh for His purposes and his use. This is what it means to "make holy", **to remove from ordinary use and devote to God's use.** The ancient sacrifices symbolized the act of consecration in powerful and dramatic ways, as animals were placed on the altars and consumed by the flames, their smoke ascending into the skies above, as if into the very presence of God. By original design, the rituals of Israel were **not** empty and meaningless exercises, but dramatized what Yahweh wanted from His people: **that they would wholly and completely give themselves to Him.** Only then could He "re-fit" them for His larger purposes. Only then could they start to reflect in their own lives what He was in His. The "holy person" is the one who "belongs to God" (see Numbers 16:5) as His "treasured possession" (Deuteronomy 14:2).

This holiness which God shares with His people "sets them apart", which is another strand of meaning found in the root of *qōdesh*. It is also a rather tricky one to explain, and to practice. A person is set apart in one of two ways: 1) in isolation, or 2) in distinction. Kept in balance, these two ways of being holy contributed to making Israel God's holy nation. It was necessary for God to isolate His people, at least for a time, from the contaminating influence of the pagan world left behind in Egypt. But Egyptian culture had a powerful hold on Israel, even after she left. "You can take Israel out of Egypt, but it's hard to take Egypt out of Israel." Well put. So does that mean that holiness makes God's people into a monastic community, living forever separated from its pagan neighbors, untouched by the contaminating influences of the surrounding kingdoms? It is true that during a later period of Jewish history, some people thought that's what it meant. In previous studies we have talked briefly about that group called the Essenes (residents of the Dead Sea Scroll community at Qumran). They saw the whole world as arrayed against them, and even questioned the purity of their fellow Jews in Israel. And so they withdrew into an isolated community, trying to live out the ideal of the holy life. But this was not Yahweh's intention.

Not isolation alone. But distinction, as well. Distinction as the chosen people of God, not for their own glory, but for His. **In and through this people God wanted His holiness to be expressed through theirs. He wanted the whole world to see what He was like by shaping a people who was holy as He was holy.** Consider these texts:

"I will show myself **holy among you in the sight of the nations**" (Ezekiel 20:41). That is, God's holy character, His uniqueness, will be visible through Israel so that the nations can see it.

"Then the nations will know that I am Yahweh, declares Lord Yahweh, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes" (Ezekiel 36:23). This passage follows a section in which God expresses concern for "my holy name" (36:21) because it had been profaned ("made common") when Israel was driven out of its land. The nations looked at exiled Israel and said, "How can this be the unique people of God, the holy people of God? They are no different than other nations who fall to mighty empires like Babylon!" By bringing His people out of exile, Yahweh will once more show that they are His "holy" people, the people of the Holy God.

"And so I will show my greatness and my holiness, and I will make myself known in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am Yahweh" (Ezekiel 38:23).

"I will make my holy name known among my people Israel. I will no longer let my holy name be profaned, and the nations will know that I Yahweh am the Holy One in Israel" (Ezekiel 39:7). By bringing back His people from exile, Yahweh shows Himself strong and faithful "through them". "I will show myself holy through them in the sight of many nations" (39:27).

When God first told Israel, "Be holy, for I am holy", he was setting His people on a course intended to bring the knowledge of His Holy Name to the whole world. Israel was to be the bearer of the holy God to the nations. Israel was to become a "light to the nations", reflecting the glory of the Holy God in their own lives, in their worship, in their social relationships, and in their hearts. To be holy is a vocation, a calling from God, and it has a world-wide mission attached to it. As we shall see in our next study, holiness is intrinsically missional as God explained it to Israel. Whenever God's people allowed the commands of God to guide her national life, she brought glory to Him and He vindicated her with His blessings--blessings which the nations around her could see and exclaim, "Look, here is a nation blessed by her God. He must be God, holy and true!" On the other hand, when Israel left the "highway of holiness" and walked her own paths, she became "common" and "profane", an ordinary nation, like all of the other nations. And she thereby lost her distinctiveness and also lost the blessing of God, going into exile. Then the nations would taunt her, "Look, here is a nation cursed by her God. He must not be God, after all!" The reputation of God was bound up with the reputation of His people.

Jesus and the Renewed Call to Holiness

The story of national Israel reached its crisis during the days of Jesus and shortly thereafter. The expectations found in Ezekiel about a holy people having a favorable effect on the surrounding nations failed to materialize. "Holiness" became a badge of honor for a select few within Israel, people like the Pharisees whose very name means to "separate". They became more dedicated to the outward forms of the holy life than to its inner soul. Having cleaned the outside of the cup, Jesus reminded them, they have left the inside untouched. For it is "out of the heart", he reminded them, that man's serious problems arise (Matthew 12:34; 15:18-19). Unless holiness touches there, it looks like the religion of the Pharisees: **heavy on separation, but light on distinction**. By contrast, when Jesus instructed his disciples in the discipline of prayer, he framed for them these familiar words, "Our Father in heaven, holy is your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven". Israel needed holiness, that was certain. But the kind Jesus proposed required a willingness to allow God's name to be holy once more on earth as it is in heaven, by allowing His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. How open would Israel be to the will of God? There were plenty of personal agendas voiced by Israel's leaders. There were plenty of human wills, vying to influence their choices. Jesus called Israel back to her true vocation: to live holy lives which reflected the true character of God so that the world could see once more that God was in their midst.

That was, of course, a controversial teaching for Jesus' contemporaries, since it meant setting aside the Pharisee agenda, the Essene agenda, the Zealot agenda, and allowing God's kingdom to take form in the life and work of Jesus of Nazareth. That was at the heart of the idea of repentance: to set aside their own agendas and allow God's agenda to take their place. Israel had been told that they were the chosen people, and they had better keep to themselves, else they would lose that distinctive role. The idea of holiness held by the Pharisees saw things like Sabbath, Torah, land, food laws (kosher), and purity laws as markers or boundaries drawn around national

Israel. By holding fast to these things, the Pharisees taught, Israel could truly be God's holy people. But (and Jesus frequently pointed this out) that meant excluding people who they considered to be "sinners" and "unholy"; people like tax collectors, harlots, and Samaritans. Even the sick were placed under a cloud, for after all, why were they sick, if not because God was judging them in some way for their sins. Jesus rejected all of this.

What Jesus tried to do was bring the sinner to the table where God could forgive him. Jesus invited people to come to him for the very things they ordinarily went to the Temple or the priest to find. Jesus became in a real sense "the Holy One of God", the embodiment of the Holy for Israel. A number of key texts underscore this:

1. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So that the **holy one** to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). These words were, of course, spoken by the angel Gabriel to the virgin, Mary, about the conception and birth of Jesus. It is of some interest that "Holy" Spirit is the divine agent for the conception and birth of the "holy" one. What we see in this passage is the "incarnation of the holy" in the person of Jesus. This sacred title, "holy one", reserved for God in the Old Testament, comes to be applied to Jesus, God's Son who assumes human form in the body of Mary through the Holy Spirit. This was what God wanted all along: that His holiness would become flesh, and thereby be accessible to the world.
2. In her confession of praise to Elizabeth, this same Mary exclaims: "For the Mighty One has done great things for me--**holy is his name**" (Luke 1:49). Those "great things for me" refers to the conception of Jesus "the holy one" in her body.
3. Early in Jesus' ministry, he encounters the presence of the demonic. When the holy arrives in the world, the unholy challenges it. From the mouths of demons we hear: "Ha! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are--the **Holy One** of God" (Luke 4:34).
4. Peter, speaking for the disciples of Jesus, confesses: "We believe and know that you are the **Holy One** of God" (John 6:69).
5. Later, this same Peter will quote the Psalms and apply them to the resurrection of Jesus in this way: "...because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your **Holy One** see decay" (Acts 2:27; also, Paul quotes the same Psalm in Acts 13:35).
6. Challenging the Jewish leadership for handing Jesus over to death, the apostles boldly say, "You disowned **the Holy and Righteous One** and asked that a murderer be released to you" (Acts 3:14).
7. Praying for God's protection, the apostles said: "Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your **Holy Servant Jesus**, whom you anointed... Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your **Holy Servant** Jesus" (Acts 4:27).
8. The writer to the Hebrews calls Jesus "Such a high priest" who "meets our need--**one who is holy**, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens" (Hebrews 7:26). This is an especially important text because it teaches that Jesus assumes the role once held by Israel's High Priest, the person entrusted with overseeing the sacrificial system which made possible Israel's approach to the Presence of the holy God, Yahweh. It is as our High Priest "in heaven" that Jesus "meets our need", including the forgiveness of sins and cleansing of our hearts before God. The term "holy" is explained in this passage as meaning: 1) blameless; 2) pure; 3) set apart from sinners, 4) exalted above the heavens, while at the same time, 5) the one who meets our need. In the person of Jesus, the holy God has come into relationship with human beings, bringing his holiness into our lives.
9. The last book of the Bible, *Revelation*, refers to Jesus in this way: "These are the words of him **who is holy and true**, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open" (Revelation 3:7). The idea of "holy" is connected to the idea of "true". Were we to examine the word "true" in its Hebrew setting, it would approximate the ideas of "trustworthy", "faithful", and "loyal". Jesus fulfills the covenant promises of God for His people by assuming David's throne as King. Entrance to this kingdom is administered by his holy and righteous rule.

These texts, when taken together, present the picture of Jesus as the bringer of God's holiness into the world of human beings. Through the words and deeds of Jesus, climaxing with His death and resurrection, we are shown what it means for God to be called "holy". **Jesus is the embodiment of the holiness of God.**

When Jesus goes to the cross, he becomes holy priest and holy sacrifice, reconciling both God and man through the atonement he made there. Not only is Jesus "holy", his redemptive work brings holiness in our lives, and sets us on the path of holiness. The prophet Isaiah foresaw this when he wrote in 35:8, "And a highway will be there; it will be called the **Way of Holiness**. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in **that Way**; wicked fools will not go about on it". The way to God is the way to holiness, and Jesus is that way (see John 14:6; Acts 19:23).

Jesus is the Center of the Holy life

Whatever we might imagine holiness looks like, its most perfect embodiment is in the life and work of Jesus himself. As the overview of the biblical material above reveals, our sanctification — our holiness — depends entirely on the achievement of Jesus himself. Jesus is God's provision for the holy life. The Old Testament was clear in affirming that because God is holy, His people should be holy as well. When the New Testament takes up that theme, it preserves two distinct ways of seeing God's people as "holy": 1) They are holy in their ***position***; 2) they are holy in their ***practice***. Briefly, the position of God's people is established by their acceptance of God's gracious offer of salvation in Jesus. No sooner does God accept someone into His family than He declares that person to be "holy" in His eyes. For after all, once "born again", a person becomes God's child, someone who bears His very nature, or as John puts it in 1:12, has "authority to be called children of God, those who believe in His name". Consistently throughout the New Testament, we read that children of God are called "saints". That word has many popular associations, usually with extraordinary people who have died and now have special places assigned them in heaven. But the biblical usage is quite straightforward. The common Greek word for "holy" is *hagios*, the word for "holiness" is *hagiosune*, and the word for "make holy" is *hagiazō*, commonly translated "sanctify". The word "saint" is simply built off of the Greek root and means "one who is holy". The New Testament uses this term in different contexts, but with roughly the same meaning:

"To all in Rome who are loved by God and **called to be saints**: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 1:7).

"Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of **the saints** there" (Romans 15:25).

"For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in **all the congregations of the saints**" (1 Corinthians 14:33).

"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the church of God in Corinth, **together with all the saints throughout Achaia**" (2 Corinthians 1:1).

"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To **the saints in Ephesus**, the faithful in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 1:1).

This pattern is repeated in other passages, such as: Philippians 1:1; 4:21-22; Colossians 1:4; Philemon 1:5; Jude 1:3; 1 Timothy 5:10. Of special interest is that God has called His people to be "saints", and those who are "holy" by God's calling (His vocation for them) are living human beings who live in specific places in the world. "Sainthood" is seen as "holiness", and it is something intended for God's people in **this life**. This perspective is, of course, completely consistent with what we have already seen in the Old Testament. God chose His people and revealed His word to them so that they might be the "bearers" of his holiness for all the world to see. The same is true for the followers of Jesus. By His finished work on the cross, Jesus has provided for holiness, here and now. Our position as God's holy ones is clearly expressed in this way:

"We **have been made holy** (Greek: *hagiazō*, commonly translated "sanctify") through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10).

"Because by one sacrifice he has made perfect (Greek: *teleioō*, used in the perfect tense, "complete", "whole", "fulfill") forever those who are **being made holy**" (Hebrews 10:14).

"The blood of the covenant [that is, Jesus' blood on the cross] that **sanctified** him" (Hebrews 10:29).

"God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying [that is, the "making holy"-work] work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

"But you were washed, **you were sanctified**, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11).

Then from this week's text:

"For them I sanctify myself [referring to Jesus surrender of himself to the Father on the cross], that they too may be truly sanctified [refers to God's people who are now made holy]" (John 17:19).

But the New Testament places even more emphasis on the idea of "holy" in relationship to our actual practice, that is, the way we live our lives. While we are "called to be holy", positionally, there is yet a further work of God's grace for the follower of Jesus. Having cleansed our sins and lifted the sentence of death because we are sons and daughters of Adam, Jesus further offers a cleansing of our hearts so that our wills will gladly chose to do God's will and not our own. This is what our theological mentor, John Wesley, meant by "perfect love". To want what God wants lies at the heart of holiness in the practical sense. While it is true we may not always succeed in our execution of God's will in our lives, God offers us the work of His grace which sets the heart free to choose the will of God. And Jesus is the perfect example for us in this regard. His will was to do the will of the One who sent him (John 4:34; 6:38). "Not my will, but yours be done", he prayed in the garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:42). At the heart of the Lord's Prayer are the words "your will be done on earth as it is in heaven".

We often speak about this aspect of the "holy" as the "doctrine of entire sanctification", to use the language of our *Articles of Faith*. Historically, the way this has been explained took on different forms. Some exponents of the doctrine claimed "sinless perfection", a rather imposing phrase. The debate often divided Nazarenes around semantics, a regrettable thing to be sure. This confusion ought to drive the serious student of the teaching back to the Bible for a careful look at the texts, many of which we have already examined. That being said, we can be confident that **God's work of making us holy is not a work left half done**. What God sets out to do, he will finish, as Paul expressed it in Philippians 1:6. Jesus is the "author and finisher of our faith", says Hebrews 12:1. So, at least in this sense, "sanctification" is "entire", because God through Jesus, the holy one, is bringing it to completion.

Perhaps the "prince" of holiness texts is this one:

"May God himself, the God of peace, **sanctify you through and through** [the Greek here is: *holoteles*, "in every way complete"]. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24).

1. This text makes clear that it is God who does the work. Paul includes the title "God of Peace" for good reason. "Peace" comes from the Hebrew *shalom* and means "wholeness", "completeness". Literally, Paul is saying: "God who makes things whole, who makes things complete--this God make you holy in every way complete." The work of holiness, the work of sanctification, is the work of making complete what has already been started by God. Embedded in the work *holoteles* is both the idea of "whole" and the idea of "end or goal". Sanctification (the "making holy"-experience) is a life-long process, begun in earnest at some point in our lives, but awaiting fulfillment. It is God Himself who has set us on this course.
2. Paul ensures that the reader sees how thorough this experience actually is, including "spirit, soul and body". Some scholars want to make a great deal out of the three-fold description of human beings contained in these words. Whatever Paul intended, he, at the least, meant to say that **every aspect of our being** should be affected by this "holiness" experience. What we think, how we relate to God and others, and how we express holiness in our everyday life. This is a "whole work" by God for the "whole being" of God's people. No aspect of our lives is left untouched by the work of holiness.

3. God is committed to fulfilling this: "...is faithful and he will do it", Paul writes. From the earliest chapters of the Bible, God has shown Himself committed to raising up a people in the world who will "bear His holiness". It is His kingdom purpose which climaxes "at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ", writes Paul. Not only does Paul suggest that this is a process in our individual lives, it is, in fact, the whole scope of salvation history as envisioned by God *from the very beginning*, when he called upon human beings to be His image in the world, and continues *to the very end* when He "makes all things new".

Concluding Thoughts

Paul referred to our "entrance into the grace in which he stand" (Romans 5:2), a fine way of distinguishing justification ("standing") and sanctification ("entrance into the grace"). All works of grace flow from the achievement of Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection. All works of grace require acts of faith on our part to make them operative in our lives. Claiming Christ as the center of our lives is — to borrow a metaphor from John 15 — to abide in the vine as the branches of Jesus. The German theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, urged his students to live at the center with Christ and not on the circumference.

Nothing could be more central than grounding both our *status* and our *sanctification* in Jesus Christ. Recall 1 Corinthians 1:30 in which Paul declares that, by God, Christ has "become for us" "our righteousness and our sanctification." The Greek expression *egenēthē* means "to become" and it joins together our *dikaioisunē* ("righteousness"=*justification*) and *hagiasmosi* ("holiness"=*sanctification*). For Christ to *become* these things *for us* clearly implies that we cannot *give them to ourselves*. What God asks of us is *faith*: trusting God to confer on us the verdict, "not guilty," based on the simple fact that He is faithful to His promises which has kept in the sacrifice of Jesus the Messiah, who died for our sins. What God asks of us is *surrender*, also *faith*, in giving our whole lives to Him — body and mind — so that God's good, acceptable and perfect will might be done in them (Romans 12:1-12).

"Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God" (2 Corinthians 7:1).

Glory to God. Amen.

Digger Deeper: *NazaRemix — Just What IS a Nazarene?: We Are Christ-Centered*
(Bob Brown)

To gain a deeper understanding of *NazaRemix — Just What IS a Nazarene?: We Are Christ-Centered*, carefully read the selected passages below. To aid you in your study, we invite you to visit the website <http://notes.chicagofirstnaz.org>, or pick up a copy of the *Background Notes* at the **Information** desk, or from your ABF leader. Now consider the following questions, as you ask the Lord to teach you.

1. "We are Christ-centered" is the theme for this week's study. How do the following Scriptures support that affirmation: 1 Corinthians 1:30; 6:11?
2. Carefully read our first text from Romans 4:16-5:2. Before examining this passage in detail, make sure to read the material which precedes and follows it. What seems to be the main idea?
3. The phrase "counted to him as righteousness" appears in 4:22, applied both to Abraham and to us (see 4:23-25). How is the word "righteousness" used in this passage? What does the word "counted" mean in this context?
4. We also discover the phrase "justified by faith" in 5:1. In what ways does Paul connect "righteousness," "justification," and "justify" in this passage? You will want to read the *Background Notes* as they explain the setting of these terms in the context of both the *covenant* and the *court of law* (pages 4-8).
5. In what sense is *justification* about our *new standing* or *status* before God? What makes this possible?
6. What does God declare about us when He "justifies us," according to this passage? Explain the twin role of *grace* and *faith* in this declaration by God.
7. On what basis does God the Righteous One declare sinners to be "not guilty" in His court-room? What role does Jesus Christ have in this court-room drama? How does Jesus' role fulfill God's covenant in rescuing lost humanity?
8. The second reading this week is from John 17:13-20. As you study these verses, place them in the large context of chapter 17. What is Jesus *doing* in this chapter? At what point does this take place in Jesus' life? What role does Jesus seem to assume as he takes to his Father?
9. According to Jesus, *where* are his disciples *now*, and where will they be *in the future*? In what sense is their environment a potential danger to them, and why is this the case?
10. What special "work" does Jesus ask the Father to do for the disciples in order to protect them while they are "in the world"? See also 1 John 2:15-17 as you think about the meaning of being "in the world." Can the disciples be *in the world* but not *of the world*?
11. Carefully define the word "sanctify" and explain how God will sanctify the disciples (see 17:17). Note: the words "sanctify, sanctification, and saint" are all based on the same root words as "be/make holy, holy, holiness."
12. What does Jesus mean when he says "I sanctify myself" as a pre-requisite for the sanctification of his disciples? Compare Hebrews 10:10, 14, 29.
13. The death of Jesus on the cross rescued us from our sins, providing the basis for God to declare that we are forgiven. But the death of Jesus also promises to *purify our hearts*, providing the basis for God to set us free from the power of sin. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 and discuss the extent of this "work of grace" as Paul explained it.
14. Sanctification involves having a "pure heart." Study the following passages which discuss this idea: 1 Timothy 1:5; 2 Timothy 2:22; 1 Peter 1:22.
15. What person of the Trinity is especially involved in sanctifying our hearts? See Romans 15:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 10:29.
16. What does God ask of us so that we might live the sanctified life? See Romans 12:1-2 as you think about your answer. See also Romans 6:19, 22.