

THE DESTINY OF SONS

- A. Introduction: For a number of weeks we have been taking time to magnify God. When we magnify God we make Him bigger in our eyes by seeing Him as He truly is according to His word.
1. For the past two weeks we have been dealing with the fact that, in order to magnify God or see God as He truly is, you must know and believe, you must see and understand, that we are now beloved sons of God. I John 3:2
 - a. You magnify God when you see Him as He truly is and yourself as you truly are in relation to Him.
 - b. This is reality: God is a Father, your Father, and you are His beloved son.
 2. Many of us have trouble accepting this reality. There are a number of reasons for this, but one important one is that we start our understanding of ourselves, of God, and of our destiny with us in our fallen condition.
 - a. We begin with the fact that we are born into a fallen race and we are corrupted by sin. As a result, God can seem small and our sin, failure, and brokenness seems insurmountably big to us. Or, God does seem big to us, but He looks like a big judge.
 - b. If we are ever going to live and walk this life as God intends -- as sons of God who walk even as Jesus walked (I John 2:6) -- we must understand that our destiny did not begin at our birth, it began in eternity past. Our destiny is to be sons of God, holy and blameless, before Him in love.
 3. We want to continue our discussion of these issues in this lesson.
- B. We magnify God when we talk about His wonderful plan for man. When we see how awesome the plan is, we realize how wonderful the Designer of that plan is. Rom 11:33
1. God made men to be His sons. God is a Father and He desires a family with whom He can have relationship.
 - a. God made men for sons to whom, on whom, He could demonstrate His love. Eph 1:4--For consider what He has done -- before the foundation of the world he chose us in Christ to become his holy and blameless children living within his constant care. (Phillips)
 - b. God made men for sons through whom and with whom He could rule and reign, sons with whom He could share His power and authority. Gen 1:26; Ps 8:5
 - c. God made men for sons through whom He could express Himself. I Pet 2:9
 2. Gen 5:1,2--God created the whole race in Adam. Eve came out of Adam and the rest of the race was to come out of the two of them.
 - a. In the creation account we are given two key facts about how God made His sons and daughters. He made them in His image (Gen 1:26) and He made them very good (Gen 1:31).
 - b. However, Adam, and man in Adam, sinned or chose independence from God. Through Adam mankind went into the pigpen of sin and death.
 1. Man began to experience all the consequences of sin -- death in all its forms.
 2. Men were lost to their created purpose, to their destiny.
 3. However, lost men still have value to God because they are His creation, His offspring. Jesus told us that when He was on this earth. Luke 15:1-32; Acts 17:28
 - a. God loved His offspring so much that He became a man and came to seek and save the lost. Luke 19:10
 - b. We never lost God's love when we were in the pigpen. We never stopped being His offspring.
 - c. When we come back to Father's house He accepts us, welcomes us, and restores us to our destiny.
 4. Jesus, as a man, shows us what sons of God are supposed to look like. He shows us the kind of

relationship that is supposed to exist between God and His beloved sons.

- a. Jesus, as a man, was loved by God the Father and He lived with a conscious awareness of that love. John 15:9
 - b. Jesus, as a man, ruled and reigned with and by the power of the Father. Acts 10:38
 - c. Jesus, as a man, perfectly expressed the Father. John 14:9,10
5. The Father's heart is to restore His offspring to their destiny. God is not gathering a bunch of forgiven sinners for heaven. Salvation is about restoring man, every man who will come back to Father's house, to the image and likeness of Christ. It's called being conformed to the image of Christ.
- a. Our created purpose, our destiny, is to be sons who are conformed to the image of Christ. Rom 8:29--To be made like the pattern of His Son (Coneybeare); to share the likeness of His Son (Weymouth); to be moulded into the image of His Son (Knox).
 - b. Jesus, as a man, showed us what a man in the image and likeness of God is supposed to look like.
 - c. To be like Jesus means to be a son of God. It means to be like Jesus in character and power. It means to accurately express your Father.
- C. Being conformed to the image of Christ is a process. It begins when we are born again.
1. At the new birth we receive eternal life in our spirit. Our nature is changed and our spirit is conformed to the image of Christ.
 - a. To express what happens the Bible uses the language of union. We have union relationship with God. John 3:16; 5:26; I John 5:11,12
 - b. You become a new creature. It's new to you, but, it's not new to God. He has begun restoring you to the image or picture He has had of you since eternity past. Consider these facts about what happens to you.
 1. II Cor 5:21--Him who never knew sin God made to be sin on our behalf, so that we through our union with Him might become the righteousness of God. (20th Cent)
 2. Eph 4:24--And put on the new nature (the regenerate self) created in God's image (Godlike) in true righteousness and holiness. (Amp)
 3. Col 1:22--He reconciled you in the body of His flesh through His death in order that He might present you holy and without blemish and unchargeable before His searching and penetrating gaze. (Wuest)
 2. This process continues after we are born again as we let that new life within change the life without--the way we think, feel, and act.
 - a. This process is called putting on the new man. It involves our cooperation. Eph 4:23,24
 1. We must study God's word and choose to think and act as it tells us to. Rom 12:1,2
 2. Then, the Spirit of God and the word of God work in our mind, emotions, and body to conform them to the image of Christ. II Cor 3:18
 - b. The final stage of conformity to the image of Christ will occur when our body is made alive with the life of God -- like Jesus' resurrection body. Phil 3:20,21; I John 3:2
 3. You must understand that God now sees you, not just as His beloved son, but as His holy son. You are holy and beloved to God. Col 3:12
 - a. This verse is a strong verse exhorting Christians to walk as Jesus walked by loving people as He loved people. But, notice, it is done in the context of who and what you are from God's point of view -- holy and beloved.
 - b. Knowledge of what you are to God will help you live as what you are, act as what you are.
- D. This brings up all kinds of issues. If I really am holy, how come I don't feel and act like it? And, how

could God possibly love someone as rotten as me? Consider these points.

1. God's love is unconditional. God doesn't love you because you are good. He doesn't not love you because you are bad. God loves you because He is love and He can't do anything but love. God loves you because He is a Father and you are His offspring.
 2. You must understand that you are a finished work in progress. You are fully God's son but not yet fully conformed to the image of Christ, not yet fully restored to the picture God has had of you since eternity past.
 - a. I John 3:2--Beloved, now are we the sons of God (finished) and it does not yet appear what we shall be (works in progress). But, the Master Designer sees the end result, the finished product, and He is working in us to bring His original picture of us to pass.
 - b. Phil 1:6--He who has begun a good work will complete it, and, God can see through the part that is not finished to the part that is finished and to what I was always destined to be.
 3. You must understand that in Christian life there is position and there is experience. Position is what you are. Experience is how you actually live. The two don't always match yet.
 - a. Part of the challenge of Christianity, part of the process of growth as a Christian, is bringing the two closer together.
 - b. But, you must understand that God sees you and deals with you on the basis of the part that is finished.
 1. Nobody junks a building because it is not finished, even if there are problems with the construction.
 2. Why? The architect sees the final picture in the blueprints and he knows it will be accomplished.
 4. We have to learn to agree with God's view of us. We have to learn to relate to God on the basis of reality as it truly is. We are beloved sons of God who are not yet fully conformed to the image of Christ. We are finished works in progress.
 - a. We must learn to agree with God's view of us so that we do not live in continual guilt, condemnation, and unworthiness over the part that is not yet finished.
 - b. We must learn to agree with God's view of us to help us be what we are supposed to be and act like what we are.
 5. We feel secure before God when we know we please Him. But, many of us would say: That's just the problem. I don't please God. But, there are two ways to please God: by what you are and by what you do.
 - a. Knowing you please Him by what you are (His offspring, His beloved son, His workmanship) will help you when what you do isn't pleasing to Him.
 - b. Knowing that what you do does matter, can and should be pleasing to Him, should inspire you to do what He wants you to do.
- E. From the parable of the prodigal son we can learn a lot about what it means to be a finished work in progress. Remember, the parable is not really about the son, it is about the father and his reaction to and treatment of his returning lost son. Luke 15:1-32
1. We see position and experience (a finished work in progress) in this parable. The father had two sons. They were sons by birth. That is position. That is the finished work.
 - a. The sons did not earn the position, did not work their way into the position, they were born into it. They were just as much sons on the day they were born as they would be the day they died.
 - b. But, they were clearly works in progress. Neither son fully benefited from their position, their sonship. And, neither son lived fully as the father desired.

2. We can see the kind of relationship the father wanted with his sons by the way he treated the returning son.
 - a. He wanted an expressive relationship based on love. v20
 - b. He wanted a relationship where past failures are past, not even to be discussed. v21,22
 - c. He wanted a relationship in which he gives the best to his kids. All that he has is theirs. v22,23;31
 - d. He wanted a relationship where he celebrates the fact that his sons are his. v23-25;32
 3. Yet, neither son enjoyed that kind of relationship with their father. Consider these points.
 - a. It doesn't say why the prodigal left home. Obviously, he felt there was a better deal elsewhere. He either did not understand his position or his father's character or both.
 1. We see that clearly when he returned home. He said: I'm no longer worthy to be called your son, father. I'll be your servant. v19
 2. The son didn't earn sonship. He was born into it. Yet, he thinks he is going to pay his father back for the wrong he did to him and earn his position back. He did not understand the present tense reality of relationship with the Father.
 - b. The elder brother stayed home. He was the "good boy". But, we see he did not understand his position either. He did not understand the present tense reality of relationship with the father. v29
 1. He was trying to earn and deserve blessing and response from his father and missed what had been there all along.
 2. The father begged him to come into the party. The father pointed out that all the father had was his. Yet, the elder brother's own misperceptions stopped him.
 4. Notice, in both cases, the father offered words to clear up their misunderstandings or to renew their minds to reality as it truly is.
 - a. What if the prodigal had not "renewed his mind" or listened to his father? What if he had turned down the party and gone to the slave quarters? What if he had gone outside to mope with his elder brother?
 - b. Although he would have been back at father's house, he would have lived as a servant. There would have been no intimacy to the relationship with his father. He would not have been a full sharer in his father's blessings.
 5. Neither son's experience matched his position as a son. Each was a finished work in progress.
 - a. While the prodigal was gone from Father's house he did not stop being a son. His experience did not match his position. But, when he returned to father and received the father's love, the prodigal's experience changed.
 - b. The elder brother's position was a son in father's house, with full rights and privileges. Yet, his experience did not match his position completely. Why? He either did not know or believe his position. He, too, had to acknowledge the present tense reality of his father's love, acceptance, and provision.
- F. Conclusion: Your destiny is not to be a forgiven sinner who barely makes it to heaven. Your destiny is to be a son of God fully conformed to the image of Christ, in loving relationship with your Father, fully expressing His character and power.
1. The Father's present attitude toward you is: His lost son has been found. His son who was dead is alive. And, He's glad you're back!! He can clean the muck and mud of the pig pen off of you and restore you to your created purpose, to your destiny.
 2. Right now, you are a finished work in progress. Let that be a source of comfort when you blow it and a source of inspiration to act like what you are.