

Biblical Dynamics of Human Relationships 9

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[0 : 00] One of my very favorite passages, setting forth the principles of reconciliation. And in this particular session, we are going to engage the ninth in a series of messages that we began some time ago, titled The Biblical Dynamics for Human Relationships.

And this is all predicated upon there being just one thing that is wrong with the world, and that is the way people treat each other. If it weren't for that, this would be a very pleasant place to be just about all of the time.

However, we do know that people do not always treat one another as they should. Sometimes, even those whom they greatly love are not treated the way they should be treated.

So this has led us to engage the general theme of biblical dynamics for human relationships. And today, we look at Part 9, which is Reconciliation and Restoration.

The Lord willing, session following next week will be our tenth and final, as we will attempt to recap everything that has occurred in the preceding nine sessions, try to wrap them all up and encapsulate them in one session of review.

[1 : 22] That will begin all the way back with the offense and move through the process up to and including what we will be looking at this morning, Reconciliation and Restoration.

Our last session concluded the concept of forgiveness. And by the way, as is often the case with this series, I have a number of propositions that I want to run by you and ask you to consider them on the way to the conclusion that we will be drawing at the end.

So, with the concept of forgiveness, it was described as sublime, nothing short of exhilarating.

To know that you are forgiven by the one whom you offended, whether it is God, your next-door neighbor, your mate, your child, your parent, whomever.

There is an exhilaration that can only be described as intensely uplifting, relieving. It is a beautiful thing to know and feel the power of forgiveness and what is conveyed in those words.

[2 : 37] The knowledge and joy of forgiveness is surpassed only by what it leads to. And it is that which provides our topic for today.

I call it a biblical R&R.; So far as the world is concerned and so far as the troops in the field are concerned, when you go on R&R.;, it means a relief from conflict and it is rest and relaxation.

But for our purpose, we're going to call R&R; reconciliation and restoration. Reconciliation and restoration are not feelings.

They are realities. But they are accompanied by feelings. Reconciliation and restoration are realities produced by what has taken place between the offended and the offender.

You'll recall at the very outset, we said that we all offend one another in different ways. And there are only two avenues by which we can do this.

[4 : 05] But they have proved to be enough. It is the things that we say to each other that are hurtful, that constitute, what shall we say?

Well, they constitute a wound that we inflict in the spirit of the individual whom we offend. It may be just a small thing like a dart, not a very great offense.

It may be a larger offense that we could characterize as an arrow. Or it may be something really huge and major that is very painful and very deeply wounding, such as would be a spear in the spirit of an individual.

And the only one who can remove those objects of offense that we inflict upon another person is the one who put them there.

And that is done through apology and an expression of repentance, apologizing, asking for forgiveness, receiving forgiveness.

[5 : 16] This is a process that is set in motion. If the one who has created the offense really wants an in-depth, genuine forgiveness, this is a process through which we must go.

Now, we often don't think of it in these terms specifically, step by step by step. But that is precisely what is involved. And just because we do not stop and think it out and say, well, now let's see what comes next.

And so it doesn't mean that we don't do that. We do do that if we want the healing to be effective and real and genuine, and if we want the forgiveness to be real and genuine, and if we're looking for a genuine restoration and reconciliation.

Very often this is not done, even in Christian circles. Very often the offense and the offender just both tend to think they can just forget about it.

Time will pass and it will all go away. But it doesn't work that way. And the reason it doesn't is because we lodge offenses in our human spirit.

[6 : 33] We warehouse them. We catalog them. We keep tabs, whether intentional or unintentional.

And bear that in mind. We may keep tabs unintentionally without even realizing that we're doing it. And as an individual offends us through things they say or do that are hurts, we warehouse them. We catalog them. And all the while we are unintentionally building a case. We are accumulating hurts that have been inflicted, that are unresolved, and they add up over time.

They accumulate. This is what happens when relationships are broken. Very often, it is not just one thing that breaks a relationship, whether it is a friendship or a marriage.

Almost always, it isn't just one thing that breaks it. What it is, is one more thing. Because offenses have been accumulating in the spirit of that one who is offended, and they are keeping tabs.

[8 : 03] And they say to themselves, boy, if they ever, one more, and we're finished, and we're through. And what happens is, these things accumulate without being resolved.

And they build up, and they build up, and they build up, and finally a person says, that's it. I'm done. No more.

You're not going to hurt me anymore. It's over. And that's often what happens. In fact, it is almost always what happens in the case of a marriage.

It isn't just an offense. It's an accumulation. And it isn't just an offense. It is offenses unresolved. The human spirit can handle almost anything by way of an offense committed against it, if it is properly resolved.

And that's what we're talking about. The resolution of the offense. Because we are working toward reconciliation and restoration. So that things can get back to where they're supposed to be, or be even better than they were before the offenses occurred.

[9 : 20] So, let me move on. Forgiveness. Forgiveness. Once forgiveness has been requested and granted, the dart, the arrow, or the spirit lodged in the human heart or the human spirit of the offended one has been removed by repentance and apology from the offender, and healing has begun.

Healing does take time, even though forgiveness has been granted. The length of the time for healing is proportionate to the size of the wound.

Was it a dart, an arrow, or a spear? Also involved are the complexities accompanying the emotional and spiritual makeup of the offended one.

And this really comes into play in a powerful way, but it is in a way also that I regret I am unable to address as much as I would like.

Because we are incredibly complex human beings, every one of us. Each of us has a different kind of makeup.

[10 : 36] Each of us has emotional strengths and weaknesses. Each of us have areas in our being that allow us to forgive a lot more readily.

And we also have areas in our being that makes it very difficult and more demanding for us to forgive. It is due in part to the way we're put together emotionally.

The way we are psychologically built and crafted by the God who made us. And none of us is simple. We are all complex and we are all different. So these things come into play as well when we are talking about this.

All of the complexities found in the glorious makeup of God our Father have been fully addressed and completely satisfied through the finished work of Jesus Christ, his son, in the payment that he

made through his death, burial, and resurrection.

And this is where the forgiveness thing really looms very, very large. To be able to say to one who has offended us and who has apologized, ask for forgiveness and we've granted forgiveness.

[11 : 51] Then we can get on with the business of R&R.; Reconciliation and restoration. And that is predicated upon what God did for us on the cross.

For Christians, this has an entirely different meaning. There are ways in which this works, these principles that I'm giving you, these biblical dynamics for human relationships. There are ways in which they work to an extent, even for unbelievers, if they would be willing to apply them.

My experience, however, has been that it is difficult enough to get believers to apply these, much less unbelievers. So, in reality, it may be expecting entirely too much for unbelievers to put these things into practice because they are not subject to the laws of God.

Neither indeed can be, as Paul wrote in Romans chapter 8. But I'll tell you this. If they were to implement them, non-Christians, if they were to implement these principles, they would work at least to some degree and better the situation immeasurably than would be bettered otherwise.

But only the believer who is in Christ can know the joy and the freedom of God's forgiveness and is then in a position to be able to extend it to those who have wronged us and ask for our forgiveness.

[13 : 24] It is knowing how greatly you have been forgiven in Christ because of what he did for you that gives you the wherewithal, the rationale, the motivation, the obligation to extend forgiveness to those who have wronged you.

But for those who do not really know, understand, or appreciate the forgiveness that is available through the finished work of Christ, they just don't have the wherewithal to be that forgiving.

And they have every basis in the world for holding a grudge, for being unforgiving, for getting even with you, because they don't know this glorious forgiveness of which the scriptures speak.

So, while we're talking about this, come with me to Ephesians 1, if you would, please. This is one of my favorite passages.

I know whatever passage I'm talking about seems to be my favorite passage, but it is for the moment. So, because the Father is fully satisfied with the Son's redemptive work, He is fully free to extend to all who accept that work of Christ, with His wonderfully forgiven grace that He then lavishes upon the recipients of it.

[14 : 58] And here in Ephesians 1, I'm just going to jump in with verse 3, and we'll read down through verse 8. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him.

In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.

And let me ask you this question. How rich is God's grace? How great and full and free is God's grace? It is unlimited.

For sin abounded, grace did much more abound. The grace of God has no top to it, has no bottom in it. It is just as vast and as great as our God.

[16 : 29] His grace is just, He has freely bestowed it upon us. And in verse 8, we are told that He lavished it upon us.

God did not dip His grace out to us by the spoonful. But He lavished it on us.

God deluged us with His grace. His grace is overflowing to us. It isn't apportioned out a little dab for this one and a little dab for that one.

We are just overwhelmed with God's grace. That's the meaning of lavish. He lavished it upon us in all wisdom and insight.

Absolutely incredible. This enables God to open His arms, embrace, receive, restore, forgive, cleanse, pardon, justify, accept, all who come to Him through His Son, Jesus Christ.

[17 : 39] And God just wraps His wonderful, loving arms around you and embraces you and approves of you.

God not only accepts you, He approves of you. He approves of who you are in Christ.

Christ. This is a wonderful thing. You know, to be accepted is one thing. That's delicious enough.

But to be approved, you know what that really involves? It means God is pleased with you as a person.

God approves of you. Does not mean and does not imply that God endorses, approves, or appreciates everything you do.

[18 : 37] But He loves you. In the same way, only in an infinite kind of degree, that you as a parent sometimes really don't appreciate what your child does.

you really disapprove of what your child does. But you love that child. You embrace that child. All the while disapproving of bad behavior. But you are sold on that child. You love that child. That's the way God loves us. God accepts us and He approves of us because we are clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Incredible. And because God's forgiveness being full and free and forever, He is able to reconcile and restore fallen and sinful man to a status of approval equal to that of His own dear Son.

[19 : 54] And this is what Jesus talked about in His high priestly prayer in John chapter 17, that the world may know and that those who are disciples or believers in Christ, that they may know that you love them just as you love me.

Think of that. you are loved with the same kind of love with which God loves His Son. That is amazing.

And I'll tell you what, if it were not in Scripture, I'd be hard-pressed to believe it. See why this is all part and parcel of what's called good news.

There isn't any better news than this. This is good news. This is as good as it gets. While God does not approve of all we do as His children, He approves of us as persons because we are in Christ. Being in Christ cancels out every vile and sinful thing ever done. can you believe that?

[21 : 25] Being in Christ cancels out every vile and sinful thing ever done. If it doesn't mean that and doesn't extend to that and doesn't include that, it isn't worth anything anyway because nobody would ever be able to figure out, well, just what is it that it does cancel out?

Just what is it that it does exclude? What does it free us from? It frees us from everything. Absolutely everything.

Gives us a slate, a record that is blemish free, that has not one thing negative to our account.

Good news, I guess. Well, I don't think any of us deserve that. I know I don't. Well, that's not the point. Of course you don't deserve it.

that's what makes it so wonderful. You don't deserve it and you get it anyway because Jesus paid for it for you.

[22 : 44] He paid a debt he did not owe because you had a debt you could not pay and he paid it for you and he gives you the benefit of it and you go scot-free.

Wow! Oh yes, you're going to live with consequences. You know why? Because God is a God of reality. He does not undo consequences of bad behavior so that you can just forget the consequences.

No, the consequences are there. God does not rewrite history. But even with the consequences, there is a grace provided to bear up under the consequences.

And even with negative consequences, he is committed to working all things together for good for those who love him who are the called according to his purpose. So the consequences may be ugly, they may be painful, they may be difficult, and I don't know anything other than bad consequences that come from bad behavior.

But even in the midst of the bad consequences, God is committed and God is sovereign to work all things together for our good. And I was talking to somebody about that just this morning.

[24 : 02] And you know what? Our problem is, and this is just part of our humanity, it's part of mine as much as part of yours, we know that God does work all things together for our good, for those who love him, who are the called according to his purpose.

But, here comes the clinker. But, he doesn't do it on our timetable.

I want God to work all things together for my good now, or day after tomorrow at the latest.

first. Because that's my perspective. And my perspective is sorely limited. But I know what hurt is, and I know what pain is, and I know what sorrow is, and I want it relieved pronto.

And if you were any kind of a heavenly father that really cares about your kids, you'll do what they want done. But he doesn't. Because he's too wise, and his perspective is unlimited, and he knows what my needs are.

[25 : 29] I don't know what my needs are. I don't know what my needs are. There's only one thing that I do know. Do you know what I know?

I know what my wants are. Do you? I know what my wants are. If I had my druthers, oh, I'd druther this, druther that. I've got a long list of wants, but I don't know what my needs are.

I just think I know. God, I need this. I need that. God's saying, you don't need that at all, Mark. I know what you need. And do you know what God wants me to do?

This is the only thing he wants me to do. Just trust him. That's it. just rely on him.

Father, you know what my needs are. You know what I'm struggling with. You know what I'm trying to overcome. You know, my preference would be right now.

[26 : 33] Let's change this. Let's fix this. Aren't fathers supposed to be fixers? Let's fix this. Fix it now. I think that's what Paul had in mind when he besought the Lord three times to remove this thorn in the flesh.

We still don't know what the thorn was, but we know one thing. Paul didn't want it. He wanted God to remove it. And here was a man as close to the heart of God, I suppose, as anyone has ever been, and he besought the Lord three times to remove this thing from me.

It's a hindrance. It's a detriment. You can take it out of the way, so why don't you? And God says, that's your want, Paul, but I know what your need is, and I'm going to meet your need, because I promise to meet all of your needs in Christ Jesus, and your need is for an extra portion of grace that you may be able to bear up under this.

grace. That's what I'm going to do. I'm going to give you extra grace, and this grace will be sufficient.

Can you imagine God dispensing insufficient grace? What a contradiction in terms. This grace that is greater than all our sin.

[28 : 05] It is grace to help in time of need, and it is always sufficient grace, never deficient grace.

Lord, I'm just in need of a little more grace. Could you spoon out a little bit more? No, he just lavishes it upon us, and it's always more than what is needed. And that's the kind of forgiveness that we have, too, that comes with that grace.

is that kind of forgiveness lavished upon us? As a result, do you know what God wants us to do with this great grace and great forgiveness that he lavishes out upon us?

Do you know what he wants us to do with it? He wants us to spread it around. Now, folks, this is really spreading the wealth.

because we have an appreciation for the incredible forgiveness we have received from God, we ought to be eager to extend it to anyone who asks us for forgiveness, all because we know how much we have been forgiven for.

[29 : 26] How can we not richly, fully forgive others who seek our forgiveness? God wants us to extend this kind of forgiveness to those who offended us and have repented, apologized, and asked for our forgiveness.

Only those who have experienced this kind of forgiveness in Christ are able to extend a full free forgiveness to those who have offended them.

Only an appreciation of how and to what extent God has forgiven us will let us extend a true forgiveness to our offenders. Our forgiveness of others is conditioned by the knowledge we have of God's having forgiven us.

As we are forgiven, so do we forgive others. I've said that about five different times in a slightly different way, hoping that if four of them don't grab you, one of them will.

All of them have grabbed me and won't let go. And you know what? I'm not struggling to get free either. This is the real key to a wonderful reality of reconciliation and restoration.

[30 : 51] This provides for the genuine forgiveness and genuine embrace and genuine reconciliation and genuine restoration.

It is this that also provides for the new reconciliation being elevated above the position enjoyed before the offense occurred.

and that is simply sublime. What I'm saying is this. The offended and the offender can actually enjoy the depth and the closeness of a relationship that is even greater than it was before the offense occurred.

You see, when we are offended or we offend others, what happens is we create an emotional distancing between the two.

We are not as close as we once were because offenses unresolved drive us apart. There are people who have been married 40 years who are emotionally miles apart.

[32 : 19] They still sleep in the same bed, eat their meals at the same table, but there is a huge gap that separates them emotionally, all because of an accumulation of unresolved offenses that automatically put space, emotional space, between offended and offender.

And usually, usually, the offended one is also an offender because we are almost always both offended and offender.

we offend each other back and forth. And as the barbs and the arrows and the sparrows fly back and forth through nasty critical things that are said, acts of unloving and unkindness perpetrated one upon another, the distance just grows further and further and further apart.

And it is only apology and forgiveness that enables the two to start moving back together where they belong.

And that's a restoration. It's a beautiful thing. It's depicted in Luke 15 that we considered earlier with the prodigal son.

[33 : 54] Remember, I will arise, I will go to my father and say, father, I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Would you make me as one of your hired servants?

He can't even get the words out of his mouth. The father sees him coming from afar off and he runs out to meet him. And he wraps his arms around him and embraces him.

Ah, this is my son that was dead and is alive. Bring the best robe, put shoes on his feet, give him the ring, and let's kill the fatted calf and have a big party.

Celebration, my son has come home. The father has fully forgiven him, embraced him, restored him, reconciliation is wonderful.

Son is repentant, the father is not only forgiving, he is eager to forgive. He is delighted to forgive. And one would think that all is well, but there is a fly in the ointment.

[35 : 08] There's someone nearby with a hardened heart who is lurking. The older brother. Huh.

Think he's going to be forgiving? Not on your life. Hardened hearts don't forgive. Hardened hearts don't apologize.

And if someone apologizes to them, don't expect them to forgive. What they know how to do is, buddy, they know how to hold a grudge. They know how to get even.

They know how to one of these days you are going to get yours and I sure want to be there and see it when it happens. I can't wait for you to get what you deserve.

That's the hardened heart talking. That's the older brother. I've stayed here by the stuff I've labored and swept day in and day out and this young scalawag went off to a distant city, wasted your living, riotous living.

[36 : 10] Now he comes back and he gets a big welcome. He never gave me a party. I never did the things he did. I kept my nose clean. I stayed here. I worked on the grindstone.

I worked my fingers to the bone. What do I get? That's a hardened heart talking. The father tried to reason with him. Son, I have you and you have me always.

But this your brother was as good as dead. and he's alive again. That's a great cause for rejoicing.

And rather than this older brother go out and say, hey, little brother, well, doggone anyway, you finally came to your senses. I'm glad you woke up and saw the writing on the wall and dad's forgiven you and come here and wrap his arms around him and I love you little brother and I'm so glad that you're home and I know you learned some powerful lessons and let's forget all about it and let's make up and enjoy the life we have together.

Wow. Wouldn't that be something? That's forgiveness. That's restoration. That's real reconciliation.

[37 : 32] for believers in Christ it ought to be the norm. Unfortunately it's often an exception.

But you know what? What I've been sharing with you in these last nine sessions and we'll wrap up with the summarizing of all of them next week. What I've been sharing with you ought to be standard operating procedure in the body of Christ.

This ought to be routine stuff. We ought to be implementing and activating this on just an ongoing basis. Because we all say stupid unkind things to one another that we wish we hadn't said that need to be retracted and need to be apologized for.

And we've done hurtful things to one another that wound and cause great pain and injury to those sometimes whom we profess to love. And we all do that.

It's part of the human condition. We come with that kind of mechanism within us. It's part of our nature.

[38 : 46] And when you extend that beyond individuals into parties and groups you have conflict. You have conflict between families and conflict between clans and conflict between nations.

And that's what you call war. international incidents that always begin with somebody offending somebody.

And that's part of our fallen world. But we as believers are to be in the world and not of it. Because we've got a mechanism for resolving our offenses if we will but implement it.

Now I have a question that has been written out. It's a question elaborated on a little bit more from what was asked last week. And I referred to 1 John 1 9 and I called it a principle.

And 1 John 1 9 simply says if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And I dwell a little bit on that word confess because it is often misunderstood.

[40 : 05] understood and all the word confess means is homo legeo is in the Greek and it means to say the same thing. Homo, H-O-M-O, even in English means the same as whether you're talking about homogenized or homosexual or homo sapien or whatever.

It means the same as. And the legeo means is words or to speak or to say. It means to say the same words. And when we confess our sin what we do is we acknowledge it or we say the word whatever the offense is.

And I made a point of this and I'd like to emphasize it even more because I think it's really very, very important. I made a point of saying that when we have wronged another person and we acknowledge our sin and we admit our sin to them and we apologize, we ask them for their forgiveness.

And we should because we are not in a position to demand their forgiveness. We ask for their forgiveness and scripturally speaking they are not in a position to withhold forgiveness. forgiveness. But it is still at the mercy of their volition. They do not have to forgive. God will not make them forgive you.

[41 : 43] They ought to do so because they have been forgiven. But God gives them a volition in the matter and they can withhold forgiveness if they want to.

They shouldn't, but they can. But God can't. When we confess, acknowledge, admit, own our sin to God, he has no choice but to forgive us.

Now I know this sounds radical, but hear me out. If what Jesus Christ accomplished on that cross, God the Father accepted as sufficient, the forgiveness from the Father is automatic.

You do God a disservice if you ask him for forgiveness. And this is a wonderful thing, and I'll tell you why.

Because in the first place, it is automatic and it's predicated upon the work of Christ. And, listen, it is not predicated upon your deserving forgiveness. Of course you don't deserve forgiveness.

[42 : 59] If you deserved forgiveness, there wouldn't be anything to forgive. There wouldn't have been an offense in the first place. So it is axiomatic that you do not deserve it. But God grants forgiveness because the work of Christ was more than sufficient.

And if you ask God for forgiveness, that tacitly implies that God may say, no, I'm not going to forgive.

I've already forgiven you four times for the same thing. I'm not going to forgive you again. He doesn't do that. He can't do that.

The reason he can't is because he is reliable, dependable, obligated to forgive us our sin. The reason he is obligated is because Christ paid for it.

The forgiveness is automatic. So you don't ask for forgiveness. You thank him that forgiveness is in place.

[44 : 02] And when you confess your sin, you name it. That means you say what God says is sin is sin. You don't justify it.

You don't excuse it. You don't hide it. You don't deny it. You admit it. And when you do that, that is confessing your sin. You don't need a little booth.

You don't need a priest or a preacher or a rabbi. You have God. And you acknowledge your sin and thank him for the forgiveness and go on.

Now, what's the alternative to that? And I've never gotten a satisfactory answer from any of the grace people regarding an alternative. They will go so far as to admit that, yes, believers do sin. Well, what do you do about your sin? True, it's already paid for. That's what Christ accomplished on the cross. It's already paid for. So it isn't a question of that.

[45 : 01] So what do you do with it? What do grace people do with it? Do they deny it? That doesn't seem right. You can't deny the reality of your sin.

You ignore it? Just dismiss it? To me, that would seem to pave the way for repetition. What do you do?

You own up to it. You acknowledge it. You admit it. Because God wants to hear us admit, acknowledge, own our shortcomings.

And he is eager and willing to forgive. And the question that was asked, in addition to discussing why 1 John applies to the body of Christ explaining how we who are under the dispensation of grace can recognize principles which are not presented by Paul in the revelation of mystery, can you also address how much of 1 John applies to us?

And where does Paul tell us to ask for forgiveness for each of our sins? He doesn't. Not that I'm aware of. What if we forget to ask for forgiveness for one of them?

[46 : 10] Well, our relationship is not changed, but our fellowship, I think, is going to be affected. So we do not ask, we merely confess or agree and receive immediate forgiveness.

I think when I say that this is a principle that is cross-dispensational, it doesn't apply to any particular dispensation, it applies to all dispensations. There is only one biblical thing that can be done with sin in any dispensation.

And that is, I say, only one biblical thing that can be done, and that is admit it, acknowledge it. That's what we do when we confess our sins.

We own up to it. Now, in the Old Testament and under the Mosaic Law, we saw a condition imposed in the Sermon on the Mount. Christ said, if you do not forgive your fellow man, your Heavenly Father will not forgive you.

And that's in keeping with the Law of Moses, which is spelled out particularly in Exodus and Deuteronomy, and we find under the first covenant, the Mosaic covenant, so much that is conditional.

[47 : 22] That is conditional upon certain behavior. But under grace, it is an entirely different thing. So, I'm saying that the principle of 1 John 1, 9 is a spiritual principle for all dispensations, and I would say Jeremiah 17, 9 says, the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

Who can know it? I can't imagine some grace people saying, well, that's not for us. That's just for the Jew. After all, that's the Old Testament.

That's Jeremiah. No, no, no, no, no, that is a spiritual principle. That is an axiom. That is a truism. The human heart is desperately wicked and deceitful above all things in every dispensation, including this one.

There is much in the Psalms, much in the Proverbs, much in the Old Testament that consists of principles. Biblical principles that apply all the time to everyone, whether you recognize them or not, whether you implement them or not.

And I think that the principle of 1 John 1, 9 is an axiom. It is a truism. It is true. It was true for Abraham. Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness.

[48 : 56] Well, you can't use that verse. That's back in the Old Testament. No, listen. Marv believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. It's exactly what I did. I believed God in what he said regarding Jesus Christ and he took my belief, my faith, weak and lacking as it was, and he said, Marv, I will accept your faith in place of the righteousness that I would ordinarily require.

That's what it means to be justified by faith, simply on the basis of believing. That's incredible.

That's an axiom. That's a truism that applies to any and every dispensation.

I don't care where you are or who you are. If you believe God, it is counted to you for righteousness. God accepts my faith in the place of a righteousness that I can't provide.

But my faith is in his provision of it. that's the best I can do. And perhaps it is inadequate and I can understand that because lots of times these things are not adequate to me.

And if anybody has follow-up questions that they would like to submit, feel free to write them out or ask them here at the close next week.

[50 : 16] I'll try to allow extra time for questions and answers from the congregation. And I would think after we've been in this for nine weeks, you would have a whole parcel of them. So we'll do our best to treat them.

But if you want to write them out, write them out. You don't have to sign them. I don't care who said it or wants to ask it. Maybe some things are embarrassing and you don't want to be identified with it. I understand that. That's fine.

Just drop them in the offering box and we'll try our best to conclude this next week. But it's just, well, let's stand, shall we?

loving father, we are more blessed in more ways than any of us can begin to imagine. All because of what happened on that old rugged cross 2,000 years ago.

We've been so incredibly benefited and blessed. It's going to take us all eternity to ever begin to really appreciate it.

[51 : 13] And we thank you for this great grace. that you have lavished upon us in Christ.

Amen.