**What Is The Gospel? (Andy Acreman, TCF)**

**Week 5 – Received into God’s Family**

* Recap the titles of the previous *four* parts of this teaching series.
* *Jeremiah 31:33-34 NIV. “This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time”, declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbour, or say to one another, ‘Know the LORD’, because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest”, declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more”.*
* In this final week, we turn our attention to the writing in green…

**A True Story from 1st Century Judea** *(credit: Mark Hendley, ‘The Stones Cry Out’)*

* *Rabbi Akiba was wandering along the shore of the Sea Galilee. It was late in the afternoon, and he had sent his disciples off to eat before they rejoined him for evening prayers. He had a few precious moments to himself. So he did what all Rabbis would do: he was reciting that day’s portion of scripture to himself, repeating it again and again with all the passion he had in his soul!*
* *As he walked, (not concentrating on his route) he came to a fork in the trail and turned right instead of left. He continued in the gathering darkness until he unexpectedly stumbled upon a small Roman fort. The voice of the Roman sentry boomed into the darkness:* ***“Who are you – and what are you doing here?*** *“What?” replied the disorientated rabbi.* ***“Who are you and what are you doing here?”.*** *This time the rabbi replied with much more confidence: “What do you get paid for asking me these questions?”, he asked the guard. “I get 5 denarii a week Jew: why?” The Rabbi replied: “I’ll give you double if you’ll stand outside my house and ask me those questions every morning as I leave home!”* .
* The rabbi knew that these questions were a fundamental reminder of his religious life and his calling. Similarly, for us, these are the fundamental questions that we must ask ourselves in order to shape our Christian lives. **“Who am I and what am I doing here?”**. What is our identity in Christ, and what is our role on earth?
* Today we are now looking at our new identities, our relationship to God and to his family, and our various roles in life. Here are the topics…
  + ***Some of* our Identities in Christ**
  + ***Some of* our Present and Future Blessings**
  + ***Some of* our Roles in Christ**
  + **Summary**

**Our Identities in Christ**

* **New Birth / New Creation** 
  + *1 Peter 1:3-4 NIV. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us* ***new birth*** *into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, [4] and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you…*
  + *2 Corinthians 5:17 ESV. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a* ***new creation****. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*
  + We are literally a *new creation.* Our human spirit (the non-physical part of our identity) was created when we were in the womb and has now been re-created. We are the same, yet now completely different in our spirits. No longer corrupt, but pure and becoming perfect (Hebrews 12:23).
* **Sons and Heirs of God, and fellow Heirs with Christ:**
  + *Romans 8:14-17 NIV. For* ***those who are led by the Spirit of God*** *are the children of God. [15] The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather,* ***the Spirit you received brought about your adoption*** *to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." [16] The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. [17] Now if we are children, then we are heirs-heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*
  + *Galatians 3:26 NET. For in Christ Jesus you are* ***all*** *sons of God through faith.*
  + So, the New Birth, and the entrance into our bodies of the Holy Spirit make us ‘Sons of God’. The NIV uses the gender-neutral ‘Children of God’, which is OK, but in Roman times, the son was the one who had full inheritance rights and fully authority. The above verses emphasise **inheritance**.
  + We are *adopted* children, *adopted* sons. Jesus was the ‘natural’ son.
* **A Member of God’s Heavenly Council, Seated with Christ Ephesians 2:6**
  + *Ephesians 2:6 NIV. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus…*
  + *Psalm 82:1-2,5-7 NIV. God presides in the great assembly; he renders judgment among the "gods": [2] "How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked?... [5] "The 'gods' know nothing, they understand nothing. They walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken. [6] "I said, 'You are "gods"; you are all sons of the Most High.' [7] But you will die like mere mortals; you will fall like every other ruler."*
  + The original ‘Sons of God’ – God’s Heavenly Council, fell away, and He has chosen *us* to be part of the reformed council. A great honour!
* **Part of the Body of Christ**
  + *1 Corinthians 12:27-28 NIV. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. [28] And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues.*
  + Jesus is, of course, the Head of this great Body – His Body. We are vital parts of it, each with our own special role. We work hard to bless and to grow the Body of Christ on earth.
* **The Bride of Christ (“prepare a place for us”)**
  + *2 Corinthians 11:2 NLT. For I am jealous for you with the jealousy of God himself. I promised you as a pure bride to one husband - Christ.*
  + A Jewish couple who wanted to marry would get betrothed by a ceremony that involved signing a contract (‘Ketubah’). It contained promises made by the Groom to the Bride, and her rights in the future marriage. Once signed, the couple were betrothed, which was a legal marriage. But they lived with their respective parents until the wedding ceremony and consummation of the marriage – which could be a year later. During this year, the Father of the Groom would make the preparations for the wedding and the Groom would prepare a room in his father’s house for his future wife, who would then come to live with them. When the father was satisfied that all preparations had been done, he sanctioned the wedding, and the Groom returned to collect his Bride. (Spiritually, this is analogous to Jesus’ return for his Bride, the church). Now do we understand what He means?...
  + *John 14:2-3 NET. There are many dwelling places in my Father's house. Otherwise, I would have told you, because I am going away to make ready a place for you. [3] And if I go and make ready a place for you, I will come again and take you to be with me, so that where I am you may be too.*
* **The Family of God**
  + If God is our Heavenly Father, we must be brothers and sisters of Christ and of one another. Sharing our lives and all that we have with one another is a vital part of the Christian life. We need to understand that we are ‘family’ and to live day-to-day in that mindset. It’s the first place to exercise ‘love’.

**Some of the Present and Future Blessings**

* **Knowing Him - John 17:3 – The definition of Eternal Life**
  + *John 17:1-3 NET. When Jesus had finished saying these things, he looked upward to heaven and said, "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, so that your Son may glorify you- [2] just as you have given him authority over all humanity, so that he may give eternal life to everyone you have given him. [3]* ***Now this is eternal life - that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you sent.***
  + *Jeremiah 31:34a NIV. No longer will they teach their neighbour, or say to one another, 'Know the LORD,' because* ***they will all know me****, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD…".*
  + Knowing God, knowing Jesus is the very definition of eternal life. We are created to be God’s friends and to confide in Him. He loves us to seek Him and to listen diligently to his inner voice. *“What a friend we have in Jesus!”.*
* **Eternal security – nothing can separate us from God’s love.**
  + *Romans 8:31-39 NIV. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? [36] As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." [37] No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. [38] 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.*
* **Deposit of Holy Spirit – God’s Guarantee** 
  + *2 Corinthians 1:21-22 NIV. Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, [22]* ***set his seal of ownership on us****, and* ***put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing*** *what is to come.*
  + *Ephesians 1:13-14 NIV. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal,* ***the promised Holy Spirit,*** *[14] who is* ***a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance*** *until the redemption of those who are God's possession-to the praise of his glory.*
  + The Holy Spirit living in our bodies is a *non-returnable* deposit, and therefore a cast-iron guarantee of our salvation!

* **Our Future: Redemption of our Bodies!** 
  + *Romans 8:23 NIV. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.*
  + *Philippians 3:20-21 NIV. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, [21] who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*
  + We will not end up as disembodied spirits, but with **solid** resurrection bodies that will last for ever! Heaven’s world will be spiritual *and* physical!

* **While we wait: Transformed by the Renewing of our Minds**
  + *Romans 12:1-2 NIrV. Brothers and sisters, God has shown you his mercy. So I am asking you to* ***offer up your bodies*** *to him while you are still alive.* ***Your bodies are a holy sacrifice*** *that is pleasing to God. When you* ***offer your bodies to God****, you are worshiping him in the right way. [2] Don't live the way this world lives.* ***Let your way of thinking be completely changed.***  *Then you will be able to test what God wants for you. And you will agree that what he wants is right. His plan is good and pleasing and perfect.*
  + As we offer God our old bodies, he will give us new minds! A deal!
  + Like a golfer having his swing remodelled to eradicate those bad unthinking habits and retrain the muscle memory. A new way of thinking leads to a new way of living. Let’s allow the scriptures to direct our minds…
  + *2 Timothy 3:15-17 NIrV. You have known the* ***Holy Scriptures*** *ever since you were a little child. They are able to teach you how to be saved by believing in Christ Jesus. [16] God has breathed life into* ***all Scripture****. It is useful for teaching us what is true. It is useful for correcting our mistakes. It is useful for making our lives whole again. It is useful for training us to do what is right. [17] By using Scripture, the servant of God can be completely prepared to do every good thing.*

**Our Roles in Christ – roles that we *all* fulfil**

* **Ambassadors of Heaven:** 
  + *2 Corinthians 5:20 NIV. 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.*
  + Wherever we are we are in Heaven, operating by Heaven’s rules, Heaven’s power - *not* Earth’s. Diplomatic Immunity!
* **Priests:** 
  + *1 Peter 2:9 NIV. But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*
* **Royalty:** 
  + *Revelation 5:9b-10 NIrV. "With your blood you bought people for God. They come from every tribe, people and nation, no matter what language they speak. [10] You have made them members of a* ***royal family.***  *You have made them priests to serve our God. They will rule on the earth."*
* **Slaves:** 
  + *Philippians 1:1 NET. From Paul and Timothy,* ***slaves*** *of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the overseers and deacons.*
  + We are set free so that we can be obedient to Jesus, not just to do our own thing! We only have authority as we acknowledge His Lordship over us.

**Summary**

* **“Who Am I and What Am I Doing Here?” Just *some* answers…**
* **Our Identity…** New Creation; Sons and Heirs; Seated with Christ; Body of Christ; Bride of Christ; Family of God.
* **Present / Future Blessings…** Knowing Him; Eternal Security; Deposit of Holy Spirit; New Bodies; Renewed Minds.
* **Our Roles in Christ…** Ambassadors, Priests, Royalty, Slaves.

***Knowing you, Jesus, knowing you;  
there is no greater thing.  
You’re my all, you’re the best,  
you’re my joy, my righteousness  
and I love you, Lord.***