

# In Covenant With The King

## Growing Faith, Session 3

*Warm-up Question: If Satan were to take control of your town, what do you think he would do?*

### **Know Who You Are in Christ**

Over half a century ago, Donald Grey Barnhouse, the pastor of the Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, was asked that same question, “If Satan could take control of a town in America what would he do? He surprised everybody by saying, “If Satan were in charge in Philadelphia,” he said, “all the bars and the pool halls would be closed, pornography would be banished, there would be pristine streets and sidewalks, occupied with tidy pedestrians who smile at each another. There would be no swearing and the kids would answer “yes sir, no ma’am,” and the churches would be full on Sunday where Christ is not preached.”

Satan has been very busy seeking to make people religious and respectable. If he can produce a pseudo-Christian, he can lull that person into a mediocre state which will keep the individual from hungering for a real relationship with Christ. On the surface, everything may look fine. That is the nature of a good counterfeit. There is more than one way that Satan can deceive someone to follow him. If Satan can lead an individual down a path of obvious self-destruction, a life which is full of recklessness and harm to others, he will do so, causing as much destruction along the way as possible. Often however, he takes a more subtle approach which is less noticeable, but just as effective. If he can gently and quietly lead multitudes down a path that appears to be safe and self-righteous, and keep them self-satisfied and unaware of the life they could experience with Christ, he will still succeed in leading those individuals into the darkness just as easily. Either way will do. There are two things that Satan tries his utmost to hinder: 1) He seeks to keep the “not-yet Christians” from entering churches that preach Christ. 2) The other strategy is to keep the true Christians in the dark concerning who they are in Christ after they are converted in order to hinder their fruitfulness. The enemy’s first objective in other words, is to keep us from experiencing life in Christ. If he fails in this task, the second objective is

to keep that life of Christ from spreading to others (his plan of “damage control.”) After all, if we live a life of fulfillment in Christ, and realize the power that is available, it will attract many others to true faith. People are attracted to the “real thing.” They know it when they see it. If we are ever to live a life of faith in Christ, we must view ourselves as God sees us.

We must know who we are in Christ. I don’t know about you, but when I became awakened to my sin nature I tried to better myself by self-reformation. I thought that if I could just live a moral life, an upright life, I would assuage my guilt about the way I was living my life. The problem was that I had come across the law of God, the Ten Commandments. Satan had me convinced that I could reform myself and be a better person if I just lived by the Ten Commandments. No matter how hard I tried, it did not work. I was a sinner by nature and by choice. The Ten Commandments served to show me that I had fallen short of God’s law and that I was a guilty sinner in need of forgiveness by a Savior, which is the very purpose of the law (Romans 7:7). I saw how futile it was to overcome my sin nature by trying in my own strength to live a moral life. Only then did God allow me to see the good news that Christ had taken my sin upon Himself, and that if I repented and believed the Gospel, I would be saved. I had not understood the finished work of Christ until I came to the point of seeing that I was helpless in trying to save myself. Trying to live an upright life was admirable, but I needed to connect to the life of Christ to make it happen. God saw my hunger for a righteous life and my desire to be free from sin and showed me His righteousness, giving me more than I could have imagined; a real relationship with Him. How wonderful it was to feel free from my burden of sin, and know that it was buried there at the foot of the cross. Life is completely different when a person comes to Christ. There is a different Spirit at work in your life—life can never be the same as it was before. From that point on, the only strategy left for Satan is to deceive you and try to limit your growth in Christ to one of mediocrity so that your life is not damaging to his kingdom.

*If you are a Christian, Satan has a plan to thwart your growth in Christ; his objective for your life is mediocrity, can you think of ways that he might accomplish this?*

In accordance with the prophecy of Joel 2:28-29, God is pouring out His Spirit on all people. The phrase all people includes each of us that are reading these words. God is opening our eyes in a spiritual sense, making us aware of the power and authority that is available to us when we step out in faith in Christ. At the cross of Christ the enemy's power was broken:

<sup>14</sup> Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity **so that by his death he might destroy him** who holds the power of death—that is, the devil (Hebrews 2:14).

Satan was not annihilated, but his power was destroyed. Christ has given to His Church the mission to enforce what Christ accomplished at the cross. This, in essence is our ministry. We that are Christians are the Body of Christ; He is the head. He said, "I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you" (Luke 10:19). We are to be the extension of our Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, in carrying on His work in the world. Whatever He did when He walked on Earth, we are now to do, by the power of the Spirit who lives in us. Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did (1 John 2:6).

John the apostle also wrote, "the one who is in you is greater than the one [Satan] who is in the world (1 John 4:4). When we begin to believe what God says about us, we can begin to step out in faith and take steps to minister in the power of the Spirit of God. Satan attempts through all kinds of lying and deception to keep us from receiving a God-given vision of who we are in Christ. More than at any other time in history, Satan is losing ground to the Church as Christ's followers learn how to walk in obedience to the Spirit and His power to use us in supernatural ways. As we said in the last two sessions, it is not about how big your faith is, it can be as small as a mustard seed. It is about our obedience to the Spirit in stepping out with the little faith we have. Let me tell you the story about the faith of Nneka, a Nigerian pastor's wife:

On the morning of November 30, 2001, Daniel Ekechukwu, the pastor of Power Chapel Evangelical Church in Onitsha, Nigeria, with his friend Kingsley Iruka, took a Christmas present of a goat to a village near the town of Owerri. On the way home, going down a steep road, the brakes failed on Daniel's 20-year-old Mercedes 230. Gathering speed, it hurtled downhill and smashed into a stone pillar.

Without a seat belt, Daniel was catapulted violently forward. His head hit the windshield, and the steering wheel knob punched into his body. Iruka, shocked though not badly hurt, turned to Daniel, hoping all was well. But the sight appalled him. Blood was pouring from Daniel's nose from a head injury, and then he began vomiting blood from heavy internal hemorrhage.

Rescue came soon. Marvelously, Daniel held up until he was placed in the local hospital's intensive care, or the best Nigerian equivalent of it. They sent for his wife, Nneka. She found Daniel still alive, but just barely. He hung onto life to ask her to have him taken to his family doctor's hospital in Overri—a very serious mistake. It meant anything but a smooth ride for one-and-a-half hours. Within minutes of being lifted into the ambulance, Daniel felt himself dying. He tried to whisper his last words and instructions to Nneka. But his speech slurred, became incoherent, and stopped as he drifted into unconsciousness.

The ambulance driver pushed on at full speed, however, warning sirens blaring. Reaching the Owerri Regional Hospital, they ran in shouting, "Emergency! Emergency!" Daniel's doctor was not on duty so a member of the medical staff took charge and checked Daniel's limp form. He turned to Nneka with a sad face. He could only certify that Daniel was already dead.

Naturally, Nneka was shocked. But a bible verse had been ringing in her mind from Hebrews 11:35, "Women received their dead raised to life again." Then a non-rational conviction seized her: This meant her! The text in Nneka's head made it impossible for her to accept the plain evidence that Daniel had gone or allow him to be buried. Her agitation dictated that something must be done. But at 11:30 P.M., when they brought Daniel's body to Dr. Jossy Anuebunisa at the St. Eunice Clinic, he confirmed the death.

From there the body was taken a short distance to the Ikeduru General Hospital Mortuary. The resident mortician, Mr. Barlington R. Manu, carried out the normal checks at 1:00 A.M. on Saturday. The mortuary having no cold storage facilities, the mortician administered the

usual chemical preservative injection and prepared the body for embalming on the following morning. With help from a staff member he laid the body out on a mortuary slab between two other dead people. Everyone then retired for the night.

Convinced her husband would live again, Nneka wanted the body taken to the church in Onitsha where Reinhard Bonnke, the famous German evangelist, was to speak at a dedication ceremony of the Grace of God Ministries. So the next morning, Sunday, December 2, they went to the mortuary to take the body. But the mortician was worried about their intentions. To hide the fact that a body was being taken to a church service, she dressed it for a funeral as a pretext, placed it in a coffin, and shut the lid. They took Daniel in his coffin and set off on the long drive to Onitsha.

Arriving at the Onitsha church compound, the state security officer and the ushers saw them driving up with the coffin and ordered them to turn around and leave. But Nneka pled and persisted, so after checking the coffin for a terrorist bomb, they relented and allowed the body to be taken out and carried into the church, but only to the downstairs area.

The church bishop's son, Paul, and another pastor on the church staff, Bathcomery Nkwando, laid the body on a table and found rigor mortis had made the limbs "stiff as an iron rod," they said. Two other staff pastors, Lawrence Onyeka and Luke Ibekwe, joined them to guard the body. Upstairs, meanwhile, Reinhard Bonnke went on preaching and praying with no knowledge of the body downstairs. Before long, the pastors noticed a slight twitching of the stomach of the corpse. Then they saw the corpse draw a breath and begin breathing "in short bursts." Encouraged, they called for a video camera and threw themselves into powerful petitionary prayer, stripped the body of the mortuary gloves, socks, and shirt and began massaging it from head to foot. As this news broke out in the sanctuary above, it created pandemonium. Then at 5:15 P.M., nearly two days after his death, Daniel opened his eyes, sat up, and leaned on Pastor Lawrence. To give him a clear space, they seated him on a chair on the platform, where hundreds of people saw him slowly recovering. He had not yet collected his thoughts, and for a

while could not recognize anyone, not even his own son. By evening, however, he was fully coherent and he is 100% lucid today. This was a very public event and has been documented like no other resurrection. <sup>1</sup>

We do not know where Nneka was in her journey of faith when this event happened. How many times had she responded before to the promptings of God? This was clearly a Spirit inspired Word to her heart which she grabbed hold of and did not let go. Where did this faith come from that arose in Nneka's heart? It arose when the Spirit of God prompted her with a scripture that she had read sometime previously.

The Spirit reminded her of God's Word and she did not dismiss the Spirit's promptings. It was a rhema word from God that caused faith to arise and believe that even death could not hold her husband down. This kind of rhema word drops into your mind as a distinct thought separate from the normal chain processes of thought. What do I mean by that?

Let me give you a simple example of hearing a rhema word. In the year 1983, Sandy, my wife, left me in England to visit her parents and family in the States. She had been gone for two weeks. Her plane was due into Heathrow Airport in London at around 5:30 A.M. It was a good two hour drive from our house in Harwich, Essex, for me to pick her up from the airport. I was very tired when I arose at 2:30 A.M. As I was getting dressed a sudden thought dropped into my mind, "take your passport." That was weird, I thought, why on earth would I want to take my passport to the airport? I wasn't going anywhere, I wouldn't need my passport. I immediately dismissed the thought out of my mind. Twenty minutes later, I was just getting my keys together to go out the door to the car, when the sudden thought dropped into my mind again, "take your passport." It was such a different kind of thought, like a thought "out of the blue." I responded by dashing upstairs and getting it, just in case. When I got to the airport, I checked on the screens everywhere to find the carrier and the flight number. The plane was on time and had just landed. Two hours went by and still no Sandy. I was very worried and wondered if she had a problem and couldn't get on the plane. When I was beginning to lose my patience, a voice came over the loudspeaker system, "Would Mr. Keith Thomas come to the Infor-

<sup>1</sup> Taken from the book, Megashift, by James Rutz, Empowerment Press, Copyright 2005. Page 10-13.

mation Office?” Now I was scared! As I walked up to the office, there was a man in uniform waiting for me. “Mr. Thomas?” he asked. “This can all be cleared up quite easily if you happen to have your passport with you.” Smiling to myself I gladly pulled out my passport and showed it to the British Immigration Officer. Sandy just needed to prove that she was married to a British citizen in order to be able to enter as a Resident of Britain. They had not given her the correct stamp in her passport when she had left, and it was not clear why she had been allowed to stay in the country for such a long period before. She happened to have a copy of our marriage certificate in her passport case, so all she needed was to prove that Keith Thomas was a British citizen in order to enter the country. How glad I was to have heard God whisper in my ear to bring my passport. That is a much smaller matter than the previous story, I know. The point is, faith grows as we exercise it. Why do I share that story? To share that often God is speaking to us—our problem is that we are not always listening:

<sup>14</sup> For God does speak—now one way, now another—though man may not perceive it (Job 33:14)

I wish I could always be that perceptive, but I, like you, are learning how to hear the voice of the Spirit. The voice of the Spirit did not come as a scripture, but as a distinct thought that does not always follow a pattern of cognitive reasoning. Nneka had a scripture that was dropped into her mind. When she realized how specific it was to her situation, she could stretch her faith to believe that God would raise up her husband from the dead, even though such a proposition to all intents and purposes, was such a crazy thought. God is looking for His people to see things with His perspective and to step out in new ways in these days to trust Him to continue His work of the Kingdom here on earth. We are called to do His will on earth.

*Why does the enemy want to keep people in the dark concerning the power of the cross and what happened there?*

Sir Francis Bacon once said “knowledge is power.” When we know something, it affects how we see the world; our “world view.” This affects how we act and the choices we make. Four times in the sixth chapter of his letter to the church at Rome, Paul wrote about truths that they should know, using phrases such as “don’t you know...” that would help them become mature in their

faith (Romans 6:3, 6, 9, 15). Knowledge of what God has given us in Christ is crucial to living a life of faith. When we have knowledge of how God works in us and through us we can expect for Him to move in supernatural ways. Faith is expectation. What are you expecting God to do at any given time? Do you input your mind and heart with God’s Word for the Spirit to use in the same way as Nneka did? Each of us, I hope, can believe that with God all things are possible (Matthew 19:26), but can you dare to believe that it is possible for you? Faith is not just believing that God can do something for you, faith is believing that God will do something which you have asked Him about. Satan would like to have us believe that Nneka was a super saint, and that kind of miracle is way beyond you or me to dare believe God for. But as we considered in the previous session in which we meditated on the account of the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15, we see that the supernatural acts of God are the children’s bread, the staple diet of the one that is in covenant with God. The Canaanite woman was not in a covenant relationship with God, but her faith made up for it. This is part of our inheritance as a child of God, one that is bound in covenant with Christ. Paul is very clear in his writings that the Gentile believers, you and me, have been grafted into the nourishing sap of the Olive Tree of the covenant that God made with Israel, and being joined together with them, we are able to receive the same promises that were made to Abraham and his descendants (Romans 11:17-24).

### **We are in Covenant with God**

When God wanted to enter into relationship with the human race, He called one man, Abram, who lived in Ur of the Chaldeans (present day Iraq). God told him to leave his country, and his father’s household to go to a land that God would show him (Genesis 12:1), the land of Canaan, later to be called the land of Israel. It was quite a leap of faith for Abraham. He went, not knowing where he was going. “By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going (Hebrews 11:8). His faith arose because he listened to God and he had learned that He could expect God to keep His word.

*How do you imagine Abram telling his wife Sarai (their names were changed to Abraham and Sarah at a later date) about the conversation he had with God?*

When Abram, under the direction of God, arrived in the

land of Canaan, God told him that He would give all the land to him and his descendants after him (Genesis 13:14-17). God confirmed this to Abram by entering into a covenant with him:

<sup>8</sup> But Abram said, “O Sovereign LORD, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?” <sup>9</sup> So the LORD said to him, “Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon.” <sup>10</sup> Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. <sup>11</sup> Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away. <sup>12</sup> As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. <sup>13</sup> Then the LORD said to him, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. <sup>14</sup> But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. <sup>15</sup> You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age. <sup>16</sup> In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.” <sup>17</sup> When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. <sup>18</sup> On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, “To your descendants I give this land (Genesis 15:8-18).

The covenant was sealed with the shed blood of innocent animals. The heifer, goat and ram were cut in half and God walked between the animals to confirm and assure Abraham that He would keep His side of the covenant. In ancient covenants of that time period, people pledged to keep their side of the covenant by assuring each other that the same act of being cut in half should be done to either if they broke their side of the covenant. God put Abraham to sleep because this covenant was not conditional on Abraham doing anything; it was all because of God’s grace. God was the only one that shed innocent blood. Later He told Abraham that the sign of the covenant between them was that he and his descendants would undergo the rite of circumcision, an outward sign of an inward change that they would understand at a later date.

This kind of agreement between two or more persons, to do or not do something specified, was known as a covenant. Blood Covenants were solemn and binding on those that entered into them and were not to be entered into lightly. When one violated or defaulted on their

side of the covenant, there were usually consequences for such actions. There were great blessings to being in covenant with God if there was obedience, but also curses for disobedience (Deuteronomy 28). I believe this nation, America, has been under the benefits and blessings of the covenant of God for many years now, and my longing, and yours too, I’m sure, is that we may stay obedient to God that His blessings may continue to us as a nation. It is interesting to note that the most solemn covenant between a man and woman, the union of a man and woman in marriage, is taken before God and relatives, and ratified by the shedding of blood. The hymen is broken on the wedding night. The marriage was not considered ratified until the act of marriage had taken place (Deuteronomy 22:13-22). Blood has always been a vital part in the meaning of covenant, as it is a message that God has woven through His relationship with man. The shedding of blood is a continual theme, as a shadow and image of the Blood covenant He would establish through the shedding of the blood of His innocent Son.

Four hundred years later, when the nation of Israel, Abraham’s descendants, was in slavery to Pharaoh in Egypt, they cried out to God (Exodus 2:23) under the terms of the covenant for God to deliver them. God sent a man, Moses, the deliverer. The token of their obedience to God resulting in their deliverance from Egypt, was the shed blood of an innocent lamb on the door of each house (Exodus 12:7).

*Why would God require blood to be on the door of each house for each Israelite family to be delivered from death?*

The Passover lamb looked ahead and spoke of the deliverance for every man, woman and child that would place their faith in an innocent Savior, Jesus, the Messiah or Christ, who would shed His blood in payment for the wages of sin that we have all incurred (Romans 6:23).

*Do you think that the Egyptians, if they had obeyed God’s requirements, would have saved their firstborn sons? (Exodus 12:38).*

Scripture tells us that many other people went up with them when the Israelites left (Exodus 12:38). We don’t know if those that left with them were Egyptians or people from other nations that had been enslaved, too.

We are not told. It is intimated that those people had also put the sacrificial lamb upon the doorposts and left with Israel. All that acted in faith and trusted the sacrificial lamb's blood on their door were delivered from the angel of death as he went through Egypt, killing every first born son. God is not wanting that any should perish, but that all may come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

It is estimated that over 2 million people left Egypt and were led by God to Mount Sinai in the desert. At this point in their history God revealed His law to the Israelites and the sign of their promise to keep His covenant was the sprinkling of blood, not only on the altar, but upon the people. It was a solemn promise to keep His covenant and to walk in obedience as God's people:

<sup>3</sup> When Moses went and told the people all the LORD's words and laws, they responded with one voice, "Everything the LORD has said we will do." <sup>4</sup> Moses then wrote down everything the LORD had said. He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. <sup>5</sup> Then he sent young Israelite men, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the LORD. <sup>6</sup> Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and the other half he sprinkled on the altar. <sup>7</sup> Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey." <sup>8</sup> Moses then took the blood, **sprinkled it on the people** and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words" (Exodus 24:3-8, Emphasis mine).

The history of the nation of Israel records that again and again they did not keep their side of the covenant, to love the Lord their God and to walk in obedience to His commands. They had said, "Everything that the LORD has said we will do" (Exodus 24:3). The nation of Israel slid further and further into depravity and disobedience until God righteously judged them, disciplining the whole nation to seventy years captivity in Babylon (Jeremiah 25:11), for their callous disregard for the terms of the covenant they had entered into with God. Even in the midst of their painful trial God did not leave them without hope. He spoke to them through the prophet Jeremiah about a new covenant:

<sup>31</sup> "The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make **a new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. <sup>32</sup> **It will not be like the**

**covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt**, because they broke my covenant, **though I was a husband to them**, "declares the LORD. <sup>33</sup> "This is the covenant I will make with the house 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. <sup>34</sup> No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, '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" (Jeremiah 31:31-34 Emphasis mine).

*What things stand out to you about this new covenant relationship?*

Notice in the above passage that God says that the relationship that the Israelites enjoyed was one of the most intimate, that of a marriage relationship. He says that He was their husband (Verse 32). This has always been what God has been looking for, a body of people that will lovingly enjoy God forever in the most intimate of terms, that of a marriage relationship. He wants the Israelites and every Gentile (Non-Jew) to enter into a covenant relationship by the shedding of an innocent substitute, removing the sin barrier to the kind of relationship that God wants for all of us. We are told in the books of Leviticus and Hebrews:

<sup>11</sup> For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life (Leviticus 17:11).

<sup>22</sup> In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (Hebrews 9:22).

*Why can't God just look the other way when it comes to our sin? He's God; can't He do anything He wants?*

An innocent substitute had to pay the purchase price, the price of death, the just demands of a holy God for sin. God is holy and righteous, and cannot look the other way and disregard sin. To do this would be to deny His very nature. He needs to judge sin and in so doing this, He also wants to show us His immeasurable love. In this way, mercy triumphs over judgment (James 2:12-13). God has always spoken to His people in pictures. When Jesus came, he did the same, speaking to

His disciples and to the crowds in parables, which are “word pictures.” When God showed us the need for an innocent blood sacrifice, He was showing mankind, in a very real and graphic way, the true nature of sin and the death that it causes. He shows us, in the need for a blood sacrifice, the seriousness of our sin. This is an issue mankind has always wanted to hide from as early as Adam hid himself in the garden after the first sin was committed. We want to believe that our sin is not so wretched, and we try and cover ourselves with our own good deeds and rationalizations. Since God cannot deny His own nature, and therefore has to pronounce righteous judgment on sin, He had to pay the penalty for sin in some way. The way He chose was to pay this penalty Himself. In this way, He shows us the ultimate sacrifice and demonstrates the greatest expression of love. He Himself has come and paid the price of death in order that we can be forgiven our debt of sin, and go free from the penalty that our sin incurs. <sup>23</sup>For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23).

This kind of covenant relationship is not only for the Jew but to every Gentile that will come under the bonds of the covenant too. In the Book of Isaiah the prophet, the Lord speaks of the One who will pay the price, Jesus, as being a light to the nations or Gentiles, calling us out of spiritual darkness into covenant relationship with Him:

<sup>6</sup> “I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and **will make you to be a covenant** for the people and **a light for the Gentiles,** <sup>7</sup> to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness (Isaiah 42:6-7).

This covenant relationship makes us one with Him. When we repent (change our minds and the direction of our lives), believing and trusting in the finished work of Christ on the cross, we enter into a relationship which can be likened to a marriage relationship where the Spirit of God comes and takes residence upon the throne of our lives. In this relationship, we share our suffering, and our joys, and become one with Him. Jesus prayed for us at the Last Supper with His disciples:

<sup>20</sup> “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, <sup>21</sup> that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. **May they also be in us** so that the world may

believe that you have sent me (John 17:20-21).

Can you ever imagine Christ praying for something that the Father would not give? No, never! If Christ prayed that we may enjoy a life so intertwined in God, it is not only possible, it is also His will that we experience this. Just so we may know that God’s ultimate purpose is that we may be one with him, He says it elsewhere:

<sup>27</sup> To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, **which is Christ in you, the hope of glory** (Colossians 1:27).

<sup>17</sup> But he who unites himself with the Lord **is one with him** in spirit (1 Corinthians 6:17).

What difference does it make for us to be in covenant with God? It makes a great deal of difference, for He has promised that if we ask anything in his name He will do it (John 14:14). He has given us a signed check to ask what we will and it shall be done for us (John 16:23). What is lacking is our perception of who we are in Christ, that we are in a marriage relationship with the God of the universe because he brought us into a covenant relationship with Himself. When we are in a covenant relationship with someone, our desires change. If it is a truly loving relationship, the things that are important to God will be important to you. We need to align our will with the will of God. He also wants to give us the desires of our hearts, and those desires need to be in line with and in accordance with His will and purposes. If we ask according to His will, we know He hears us, and that we will receive what we ask for (1 John 5:13-15). We are told to “Ask and you will receive that your joy may be complete” (John 16:24).

Knowing who we are in Christ and knowing that He desires us to live a life of faith, united with Him, gives us confidence to live a life which soars far above the mediocre life of just living day to day. So many possibilities open up to us when we truly believe what God says about us and our standing with Him. He wants us to take steps of faith, believing that He WILL work on our behalf. What things do you believe God wants to do in your life? Are there positive changes that you desire, but have not dared to believe possible? God wants you to experience the joy of answered prayer and the reality of living in a covenant relationship with Him!

In closing, let me finish with an excerpt from a book by

Paul E. Billheimer entitled: “Destined for the Throne.” In it, he has an affirmation which he calls “Affirmation of Identity.” As a child of God, I encourage you to repeat this affirmation and make it a personal affirmation of who you are in Christ. Let it sink in so that it may remind you of your true identity:

“Because I am a part of Christ, “accepted in the Beloved” I hold the same place in the Father’s bosom as Christ does. Because I am a part of Him, the Father loves me as much as He loves Christ. Because I am a part of Christ,

I have His wisdom—because He is made wisdom to me (1 Corinthians 1:30). Likewise I have His righteousness. My righteousness is as good as His in the eyes of the Father because it is His righteousness. Because I am organically a part of Him, because Head and Body are one unit, all that Christ is and has is accredited to me.”<sup>2</sup>

Prayer: Father, thank you for bringing me into a covenant relationship with You. May Your Spirit living in me have the reins of my heart so that I may be led and guided by You.

Pastor Keith Thomas  
Website: [www.groupbiblestudy.com](http://www.groupbiblestudy.com)  
Email: [keiththomas7@gmail.com](mailto:keiththomas7@gmail.com)  
or: [pastorthomas@groupbiblestudy.com](mailto:pastorthomas@groupbiblestudy.com)

<sup>2</sup> Destined For The Throne, Paul E. Billheimer, Published by Bethany House, Page 92.