

Deliverance from Self-righteousness

A Message by Rockey Jackson, July 26, 2021

Introduction

Hello, My name is Rockey Jackson. I'm a retired Systems Engineer. I had a thirty-four year career in the aerospace industry. Before that, I served two enlistments as an Intelligence Analyst in the United States Air Force. I am an analyst by nature, training and experience. It may take some time, but I figure things out.

I am not Brother Wonderful. Whatever your idea of the perfect Christian leader is, that's not me. I do not represent any church, denomination or ministry. I hold no formal degrees, though I have plenty of credit hours.

I'm going to share with you some of my basic beliefs. They are what I have come to believe after many years of life, study, prayer, meditation and seeking after the Lord. I was raised in the church, from the nursery on up. It was a mixture of religion and relationship. I professed my faith at the age of ten. In my first year of college the Lord introduced me to His Holy Spirit. God's Redeemed Saints have been my passion ever since.

All of us like it when the things we believe are confirmed and we don't like it when our beliefs are challenged. It is called Confirmation Bias. I have it too, but as a hard headed Engineer I would rather know the truth and have hurt feelings than to be happily in error. So please go to your emotional closet, get out your steel toed boots, slicker and rain hat. I'm intentionally going to step on toes and rain on everyone's parade.

My message today is "Deliverance from Self-righteousness." It has three purposes:

- First, to minister deliverance to the Self-righteous and those who may be bound in some way by the teachings or doctrines of self-righteous religion.
- Second, to affirm, liberate and empower God's Redeemed Saints.
- Third, to invite all who haven't done so to enter into a submitted relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ.

I will begin this hour with an introduction that will define Redeemed Saints and Self-righteous Sinners. It will identify many differences between the two. Then I will make three points. The first will be the process that turns Sinners into Redeemed Saints. The second will be how we keep our spiritual life and relationship with God healthy and vibrant. The third will be how we live our lives for God without religious rules or a self-righteous, judgmental spirit. Finally, I will conclude with a summary comparison of Redeemed Saints and Self-righteous Sinners. Everyone will be invited to enter into a submitted relationship with God and instructions will be given on how to do so.

To the Self-righteous let me say that I am for you, not against you. I'm not your judge. I don't know who you are. I can't point you out. All I will be able to do is to give some indicators of self-righteousness by pointing out some differences between Redeemed Saints and Self-righteous Sinners.

I actually love Self-Righteous Sinners in several ways. I love them with storge, the love of the familiar. I grew up in the church. They are like my extended family. I am totally familiar with the Self-righteous and their ways. I love them with philia, brotherly love. We share many things in common. We both want to please God and be acceptable to him. We both want to be obedient to God. We share doing good works in the world. I also love them with agape, the unconditional love of God. I want to see

them move from the Kingdom of Satan to God's Kingdom. One of the saddest things I can think of will be to see those who say: **“Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?”** Only to hear the Lord say: **“I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!”** (Matthew 7:21-23)

All of this is very personal for me. The home I grew up in was divided. My mother had a personal relationship with the Lord. My father was what's called a cultural Christian. It was the culture he grew up in and he acted within those cultural norms. He was an usher and a deacon in the churches we attended. He had to say the words to affirm his faith when joining those churches, but they were just words without substance. He remained a Self-righteous Sinner. People have asked me how I know that. I know it because of my father's testimony. In his early fifties, God convicted my father and he surrendered to God. His life was dramatically changed. What was always just form before then became substance. I want to tell all of the Self-righteous among us here today that they can change too, just like my father did.

That's enough about me. Let's begin.

Saints and Sinners

In Isaiah 64:6a we are told: **“But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags.”** The Hebrew implies that these filthy rags are actually soiled menstrual cloths. Now that is just plain gross and that is how God views our self-righteousness. It is gross to Him.

The Lord gave me this illustration. It shows all of humanity divided into the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan. (See below.)

Saint is the term God uses throughout the Bible for His people. It goes far beyond the religions of Christianity and Judaism. Saint has several meanings, but for our purpose the best definition is: set apart for God, to be, as it were, exclusively His. Saints have been redeemed and their sins are covered by the righteousness of the Lamb of God. They are the Ecclesia. In the Greek, ekklesia means a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place; an assembly. For both Jews and Christians it came to mean the totality of the faithful, especially when gathered for worship. Here I use it to refer to all Redeemed Saints who have been called out of the Kingdom of Satan and gathered into the Kingdom of God.

Sinners are in the Kingdom of Satan. They may be one of three extremes and are usually some combination of the three: Self-righteous, Rebellious, or Worldly. The Self-righteous tend to be legalistic, the Rebellious tend to be satanic and the Worldly tend to be atheistic. The Self-righteous and the Rebellious often have religion in common. The Self-righteous and the Worldly share the trait of doing it their own way. The Rebellious and the Worldly are both ungodly.

The Rebellious and Worldly with their satanic and atheistic ways are pretty easy to distinguish from Redeemed Saints. The Self-righteous, however, can be very difficult to distinguish because they share many commonalities with Redeemed Saints. Both want to please God and be acceptable to him. The Redeemed Saints come to God in humility with nothing but their faith, trusting that God will save and redeem them. The Self-righteous come to God in pride, believing that their good works will make them acceptable in His sight. Both want to be obedient to God. The Redeemed Saints have developed a relationship with God, they are obedient to the spirit of the law that God has written on their hearts.

Kingdom of God

Redeemed Saints, The Ecclesia
(Sins are covered by the righteousness of the Lamb of God)

Faith
Relationship
Humble

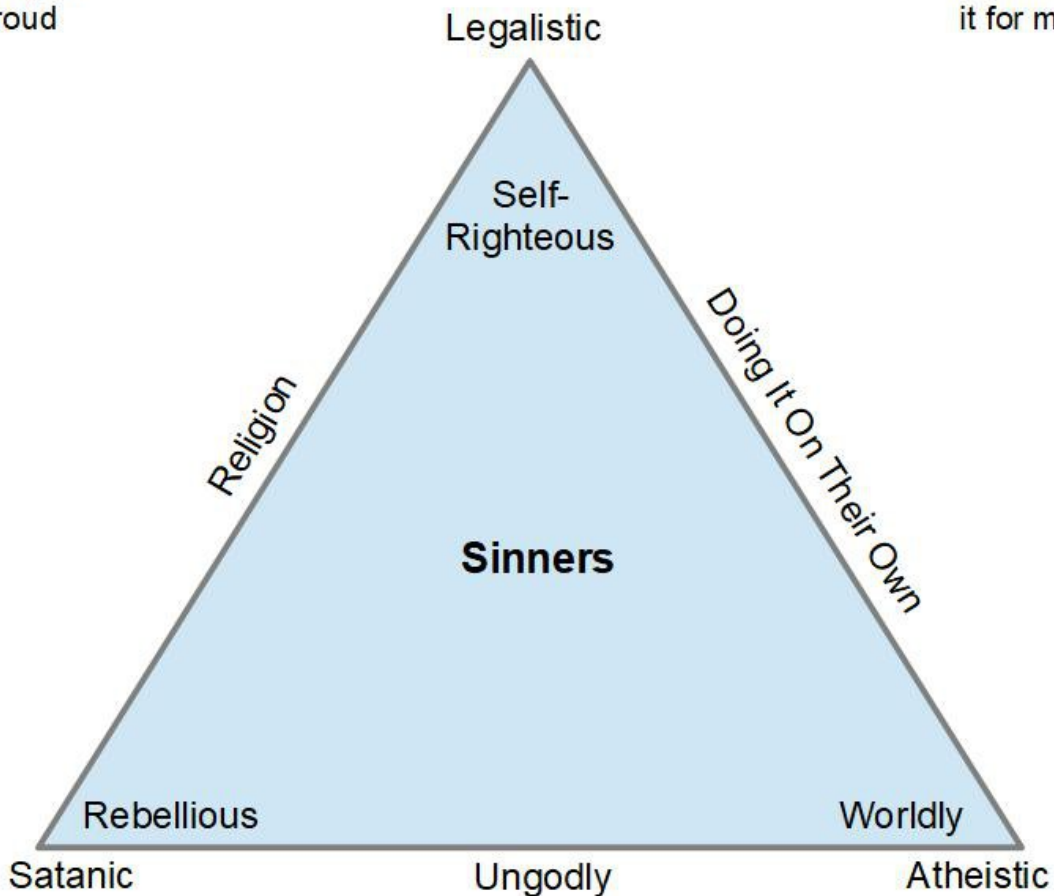
Saved/Redeemed

God's Way
What does
God want?

Works
Religion
Proud

Unsaved/Unredeemed

Their Way
What's in
it for me?



Kingdom of Satan

The Self-righteous are religious and legalistically follow the letter of the law of their religion. Saints and Sinners are separated by the Redeemed Saints doing it God's way while the Self-righteous say in their hearts: "I'll do it my way." In the end the spiritually minded Redeemed Saints are asking the question: "What does God want?" The carnally minded Self-righteous in contrast ask the question: "What's in it for me?"

This gets even more confusing because the Self-righteous want to appear righteous before God and man. They expend great effort to look good. They talk about how faithful they are to their religion, how many meetings they attend and how many religious programs they watch. Often they are much better at performing good works in the world that the Redeemed Saints should also do. They have an objective written set of rules and they can point to them, boasting about how well they obey the rules. The Redeemed Saints, on the other hand, can be a rather motley group. To begin with they were all sinners who were saved by the grace of God. They have no pretense of perfection. Their spirits were reborn at conversion, but their souls are in the process of being sanctified throughout their lifetime and their flesh will not be redeemed until they receive heavenly bodies at the Resurrection of Life. They talk about their relationship with God who to them is a loving Father, Brother and Friend. How can they explain the subjective nature of God's law written on their heart and their obedience to God's individual will just for them?

Redeemed Saints and Sinners have existed together since the fall from grace and will continue to the end of this age. Speaking of the first two brothers the Bible tells us that Cain brought God a sacrifice of his works while Able brought a sacrifice of faith. Cain's sacrifice was rejected and Abel's sacrifice was accepted. In his self-righteous wrath, Cain killed his brother Abel. When Saul was rejected by God because of his fear of man and pride, he persecuted and tried to kill David who God called a man after My own heart, because of his faith. When Jesus ministered on the earth he was opposed by the Pharisees (who were self-righteous), the Sadducees (who held the form of religion while denying its power), the Herodians (who were worldly) and all the rebellious who followed Beelzebub in his many forms. In Matthew 23 Jesus pronounced seven woes on self-righteous hypocrites. In verses 29-35 he details how they persecute the Saints throughout history. In the end the Self-righteous, Religious, Worldly and Rebellious all conspired together to kill the perfect Lamb of God who was their only salvation.

In the world, Redeemed Saints still exist with Sinners in all their various forms and Sinners are in all religious organizations, even those with a Christian label. For the Self-righteous Sinners, it is their natural habitat. Most sincerely want to please God and be obedient to His law. In their pride they believe their own efforts will be enough to earn their redemption. There are some Worldly Sinners in religious organizations for many reasons: it may be the culture they grew up with, it may have to do with relationships or it could be just for the social benefits of belonging. If the Rebellious Sinners belong to a religious organization it is usually one that worships Satan in one form or another. However some of them also attend Christian churches to see if there is anything godly or righteous going on so they can curse it. If they have enough influence they may even throw a monkey wrench into the machinery to stop it all together.

Saints certainly want to accept into their fellowship all who truly want to come to God, but the Sinners described above are hypocrites, actors who can put on a very good show of godliness. A person's faith, humility, desire to please God and be in relationship with Him is easy for God to Judge because He

judges the heart of a person. For the Redeemed Saints it is very difficult to judge because they only see the external actions and fruit may take a lifetime to mature.

In Matthew 13:24-30 Jesus gave the parable of the wheat and the tares. In it He explained how God has sown good seed into the earth, but His enemy has come and sown bad seed in the same field causing tares to grow up along with the wheat. Both the wheat and the tares continue to grow together until the harvest when the wheat is gathered unto God and the tares are burned with fire. Redeemed Saints are God's harvest of wheat. Sinners are the tares sown by God's enemy. This leaves us with the following question. How can the tares escape the fire and become God's wheat? It is said that a silk purse can not be made out of a pig's ear and the world would say that a Sinner cannot become a Saint, but in Luke 18:27 **“Jesus replied, “What is impossible with man is possible with God.””**

How Sinners Become Saints

So, how do Sinners become Saints? Perhaps the greatest treatise on salvation ever written is the Apostle Paul's letter to the Ecclesia at Rome. One evangelical tool uses just a few verses from the book of Romans to present God's plan of salvation. It is called the Roman's Road and it is worth the journey.

The first way point on the Roman's Road is verses 3:10 and 3:23, **“As it is written, “There is none righteous, no, not one:” “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;”** To parody a famous transmission from the near disastrous Apollo 13 Moon mission: “People, we have a problem.” The God who created everyone is holy, righteous and perfect. What people do that is not holy, righteous or perfect in God's sight is sin. No one is perfect in God's sight because everyone has sinned at some point.

The second way point is 5:12, **“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”** In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had only one rule to follow and they still chose to break it. This sin caused shame and a separation between them and God. A curse of sorrow was placed upon Eve and a curse of death upon Adam. Like Adam and Eve, everyone has sinned in some way. Sin separates people from their Creator and separation from the God who created them brings spiritual death.

The third way point is verses 5:8 and 6:23, **“But God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”** In the Garden, God showed that it is by the shedding of innocent blood that sins are covered when he put animal skins over Adam and Eve's shame. It was for sinners that God sent his only begotten son the Lord Jesus Christ to sacrifice his own innocent blood to make atonement for their sins, remove the separation and restore spiritual life.

The fourth and final way point is verses 10:9-11,13, **“That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture says, whosoever believes on him shall not be ashamed.” “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”** If in their hearts, sinners believe that God has made provision to redeem them and they receive Jesus Christ as their Lord, then God will extend grace unto them, forgive their sins and restore them to spiritual life. In response, out of the newly redeemed Saint's heart will flow confession of what God has done for them.

At the end of the Roman's Road, travelers are commonly led in a form of the sinner's prayer. It is a prayer of faithful humility to restore relationship and normally would include:

- confession – admitting to being a sinner and falling short of God's perfection
- repentance – turning from self-righteousness, rebellion, and worldliness to God's way
- profession – announcing belief that Jesus Christ has made the sacrifice for sin
- supplication – humbly requesting that God, in his mercy and grace, will forgive the sinner
- submission – receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and asking “What does God want?”

The Roman's Road and sinner's prayer are good and effective tools for evangelism, but what about those who never hear the gospel? In Romans 1:19-20 it says: **“Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God has shown it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.”** God has made Himself known and revealed the plan of salvation in the creation. There are those throughout the earth who just intuitively understand what God has revealed in the creation. Their faith has saved them without knowing either the plan of salvation or that Jesus died for their sins. They are Redeemed Saints even though they've never said the Sinner's Prayer nor made public confession of their faith.

So what is the necessary essence of salvation? It is this: the humility to recognize one's own imperfection, the belief that God has made a way of restoration, the desire to have relationship with God and to accept God as the Lord of one's life. All of this rests on faith, as it says in Romans 1:17, **“For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”**

So what good then are things like the Sinner's Prayer, public confession of faith and baptism if they are not necessary for salvation? Well if they are performed by Self-righteous Sinners who are taking pride in their works of religion or those who are just looking for fire insurance without any intention of receiving Jesus as Lord, then they have no value at all. They are just words without substance or acts of religion. On the other hand, if they are performed by Redeemed Saints as an act of faith in humble obedience to their Lord and Savior then they are an Ebenezer. An Ebenezer is a stone of remembrance, a memorial, a commemoration of divine assistance. They are announcements before heaven and earth of the redeemed Saint's heartfelt faith and obedience. Memorials that stand for all time in memory of decisions made and commitments accepted.

God is a loving father who desires a relationship with His children. That is why Jesus didn't teach a religion, but as a friend he met individuals at the point of their need: healing for the sick, deliverance for those in bondage, food for the hungry and most importantly revealing the nature of the Father to those who were seeking God. For those seeking salvation, Jesus spoke directly to their individual need:

- To Nicodemus: **“You must be born again.”** (John 3:1-15)
- To a sinful woman: **“Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”** (Luke 7:36-50)
- To the rich young ruler: **“Come and follow me.”** (Matthew 19:16-26)
- To Zacchaeus: **“Today salvation has come to this house.”** (Luke 19:1-10)

- To the woman at the well: **“If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give me to drink; you would have asked of him, and he would have given you living water.”** (John 4:1-42)
- To the woman caught in adultery: **“Neither do I condemn you: go, and sin no more.”** (John 8:1-11)
- To Martha: **“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die.”** (John 11:17-27)
- To the criminal on the cross: **“Today you shall be with me in paradise.”** (Luke 23:39-43)

Each of these could be a separate study in its own right. The point is that religion makes everyone conform, but the infinite and omniscient God is able to see into each person's heart and meet them individually to satisfy their need.

Salvation doesn't depend upon correct doctrine or membership in the correct religious institution, though both can be a benefit. When people stand before the Lord of glory no church membership role will be consulted. The only book checked to see if we accepted the Lord's salvation will be the Lamb's Book of Life.

In Matthew 8:11-12 Jesus said: **“And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”** Are the Redeemed Saints in danger of being cast out? Heaven forbid! Jesus is the Messiah of Israel and the Christ of the whole earth. When He came as the Perfect Lamb of God to be a sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin He came specifically to the Jews. Some believed in Jesus and were saved, but many of the Pharisees (those who trusted in their self-righteousness), the Sadducees (those who held the form of religion while denying its power) and the Herodians (those who advocated compromise with the world) did not believe. What Jesus meant was that these non believing Jews would be cast out. Their membership in the Jewish nation and religion would not save them.

Now this can easily be brought to the present. The church today has many self-righteous, some worldly and a few rebellious members counted in the congregation. How shocked many of them will be when Redeemed Saints are welcomed into the Kingdom of Heaven from every tribe and tongue while the Lord says this to them: **“I never knew you, depart from me.”** (Matthew 7:23) How can that be? How can an omniscient God not know someone? Well obviously this isn't just a casual knowledge of someone's name as an acquaintance. In the story of Adam and Eve it says that Adam knew his wife Eve and she conceived a son. It was an intimate physical knowledge that produced physical life. Here God is talking about an intimate spiritual knowledge that produces spiritual life. That is why it is important to maintain an intimate relationship with God. A relationship with a religion will not suffice.

So how does a sinner become a saint? They must give up their pride, rebellion, and love of the world. In humility they must admit that they are not righteous and believe that God has made provision for the forgiveness of their sins. Finally they must desire to come into right relationship with God, make Him Lord of their life and desire God's will for their lives. All of this depends on faith, for: **“The just shall live by faith.”** (Galatians 3:11b)

Paradise Lost and Found

Now I'm going to share how a redeemed Saint may die spiritually, leave the Kingdom of God and return to the Kingdom of Satan. I also want to share how Redeemed Saints keep their relationship with God vibrant and their spirits alive in the Kingdom of God. In Matthew 24:12-13 Jesus said: **“And because wickedness is multiplied, most men’s love will grow cold. But he who endures to the end will be saved.”**

The Parable of the Sower is found in all three of the synoptic gospels, but Mark 4:3-20 also contains an explanation of the parable by Jesus. In it the Lord says that when an evangelist shares the good news, some of it falls on hard hearts and the devil immediately snatches it away. Other seed of the gospel falls into stony ground where there is no depth of soil. It brings forth new life quickly, but when the first persecution comes it dies just as quickly. Still other seed falls into the weeds and, over time, riches, lusts and other desires of the flesh choke the life out of it. Finally there is the seed that is planted in the good ground, into hearts that hear the gospel, receive it gladly and do not let it go. This seed brings forth the fruit of eternal life in abundance.

In the third chapter of Hebrews the Bible teaches that there are three ways for Redeemed Saints to leave their relationship with God and return to a state of spiritual death. The three ways are: rebellion, loss of faith and sinning unto death. Usually some combination of all three ways play a role in the spiritual death of a redeemed saint. First, rebellion is turning against and resisting God's authority. It is willfully returning to spiritual death. Second, Redeemed Saints are saved from spiritual death, by their faith in God's grace to provide the way of salvation. If they loose their faith, then their relationship with God dries up and their spirits die. Third, sin puts an obstacle of shame in the middle of the Redeemed Saint's relationship with God. This can be seen in the story of Adam and Eve. When they sinned they covered their shame with fig leaves and hid from God. The Father still came looking for his children. When He found them they confessed, God extended His mercy to them and relationship was restored. He then showed them that it was not by their works (the fig leaves) that their shame was covered, but by His grace and the shedding of innocent blood (the animal skins) that their sin was forgiven.

The downward spiral staircase of sin that ends in spiritual death is revealed in James 1:14-15: **“But each one is tempted when they are drawn away by their own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.”**

There are five steps of sin from temptation to spiritual death. They are:

1. Tempted by desires (what the flesh wants instead of what God wants)
2. Enticed by desires (thinking about or dwelling on the temptation)
3. Conception of desire (the plan to fulfill the temptation)
4. Birth to sin (executing the plan to fulfill the desire)
5. Sin full-grown (the desire becomes a way of life with no repentance).

When Adam and Eve broke their covenant with God, their sin and shame became an obstacle in their relationship with the Father. It is the same with all Redeemed Saints. In the beginning when God created the human race, he gave them a bit of his own spirit as it says in Genesis 2:7, **“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”** Both for Redeemed Saints and for sinners, God's spirit is eternal and it

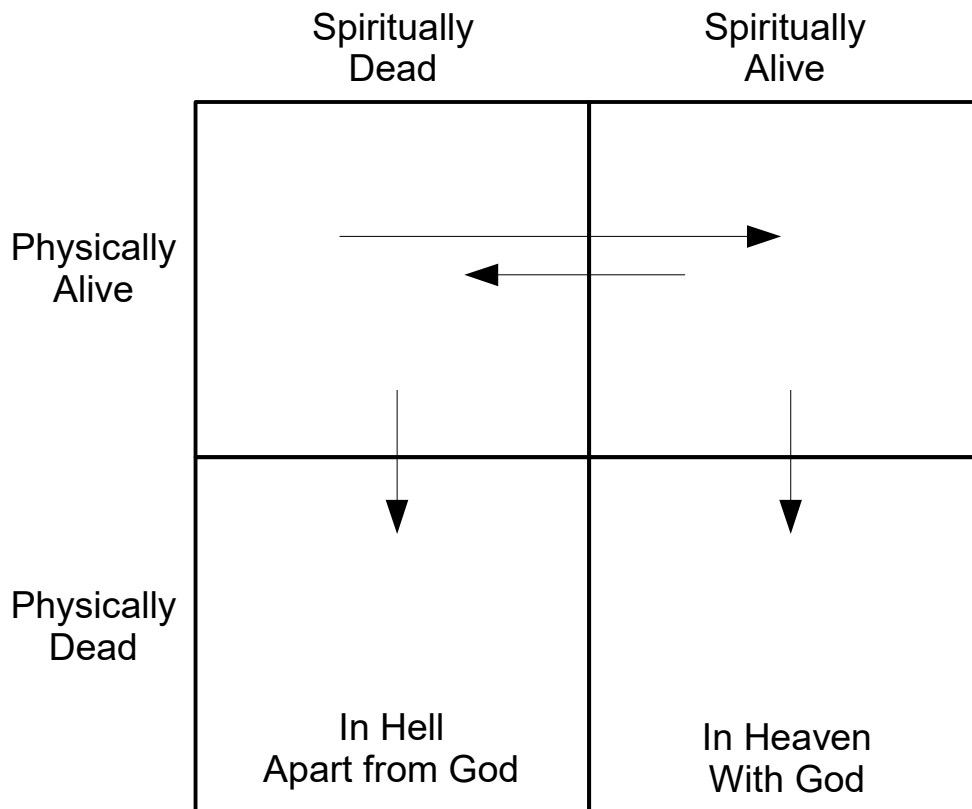
carries a person's soul (mind, will and emotions) into eternity. Spiritual death is not like physical death where one ceases to exist physically. Spiritual death is separation from God. It only takes one original sin to become a sinner. However, once the sinner receives the grace of God and becomes a redeemed Saint, it then takes the five steps listed above to place so many obstacles in the relationship that complete separation eventually occurs. A physical body that receives no nourishment withers and dies. A redeemed Saint's spirit is nourished by their intimate relationship with God. If there is no relationship with the Heavenly Father then the spirit withers and dies. All the while, just like the Prodigal's father in Luke 15:11-32, their loving Heavenly Father is waiting for them to repent so relationship may be restored.

So how does a redeemed saint remove the obstacles they've placed in their relationship with God by sin? They confess their sin to the Father, repent of their sin and ask to be forgiven. As it says in 1 John 1:9, **“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”** This can be just between the redeemed saint and the Father or the redeemed saint can set up an Ebenezer by including one or more other believers to hold them accountable.

A Redeemed Saint may rebel, lose their faith or sin unto death at any age, but it is perhaps most common during the time of life when a youth is straining to become an adult. Many give their lives to God and receive His salvation when they are young and their hearts are tender. Then approaching adulthood they may rebel against their parent's or other authority and carry it over to God. They may feel an injustice if a significant person in their lives dies suddenly from trauma or disease and blame it on God. Then again they may just desire to be lord of their own lives apart from God. Others lose their faith through worldly education that denies the creation and the existence of God. Then there are those who are over taken by the desires of their flesh as they become acquainted with the sinful pleasures of the world. Their relationship with God and their spiritual life dies as sin grows in them. Whatever the cause, it is plainly visible that many youth who make a good start with the Lord do not make it to adulthood as Redeemed Saints.

A person may be physically alive or physically dead. At the same time they may be spiritually alive or spiritually dead. This means that a person can be in one of four states that can be shown in a common four-pane illustration (see below). Because of original sin, everyone begins life in the upper left box as sinners who are physically alive and spiritually dead. If they recognize that they are sinners and in faith receive God's forgiveness, then they move to the physically alive and spiritually alive box in the upper right hand quadrant. People can move between the spiritually alive and spiritually dead sides of the illustration as long they are physically alive. (See Ezekiel 18, specifically verses 21-32.) When people die physically, then they move to one of the boxes in the lower half of the illustration. If they are spiritually dead when they die, then they are twice dead and move into the lower left quadrant where they spend eternity separated from God in the place prepared for them called Hell. If they are spiritually alive, they move into the lower right quadrant and they spend eternity with God in Heaven.

In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Paul compares life to running a race: **“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”** What is the prize? It is eternal life with God in heaven. God does not give participation awards, but to every



redeemed Saint who endures to the end of their physical life God will give them the Crown of Life. They will then continue in their relationship with God forever. No one will be forced to spend eternity with God. Those who choose to do it their own way and follow their own desires will be granted their wish. They will remain separated from God for all eternity. As the scriptures say in 2 Corinthians 6:2b, **“now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.”** Everyone must choose while they still have physical life, hopefully they choose wisely.

Two Witnesses

Now I want to talk about how we live for God without religious rules or a self-righteous, judgmental spirit. We’ll begin by clearly understanding the purpose for God’s two witnesses law and grace.

In Deuteronomy 19:15b we are told **“On the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed.”** In Revelation we are told that Satan and the Beast will make war and try to destroy two people groups who testify to the law and to grace. In Revelation 12:17 it says: **“Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring—those who keep God’s commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus.”** In Revelation 14:12 during the Third Woe that reveals the mark of the beast we are told: **“Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.”** The two people groups who testify for God are the Jews who keep God’s law and Christians who testify to the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So what is the purpose of God’s law and grace?

The law is the body of divine commandments that are codified in the Old Testament. It declares what people must do to be acceptable to God by their works. Throughout history there have been people who reject relationship with God and say in words or deeds, “Just tell us what we must do to be acceptable to You.” They want to know the minimum requirements to go to heaven, but they don't want God to be Lord of their lives. So God gave them the law to satisfy their request. No one is able to obey the law completely. It only takes one original sin to become a sinner, only one black mark to no longer be perfect. Those who obey the law must be perfect to be acceptable to God. As it says in Galatians 3:10-12,

10 “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.” 11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for “the just shall live by faith.” 12 Yet the law is not of faith, but “the man who does them shall live by them.””

One example of rejecting relationship with God occurred when the children of Israel were brought out of Egypt. God wanted them to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation in relationship with Him as it says in Exodus 19:6a: **“You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”** God wanted relationship with all of Israel. However, the children of Israel were afraid of God and withdrew from relationship with Him. It says in Exodus 20:19, **“Then they said to Moses, “You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.””** In effect they were saying: just tell us what we must do to be acceptable to God. That generation died in the wilderness and never entered the promised land.

Grace may be defined as receiving a blessing that we don't deserve. On the other hand, mercy may be defined as not receiving a punishment that we do deserve. The Bible tells the story of what God has been willing to do to make atonement for sin and reconcile a person's relationship with Him. This is salvation from the consequences of sin. It is what theologians call Great Grace. Most often, it is simply referred to as grace. It includes mercy in that Redeemed Saints do not receive the punishment of separation from God that they do deserve. At the same time they also receive unmerited grace to be restored in their relationship with God, which they don't deserve. It is a free gift that cannot be earned, only received by faith.

The law was given for sinners who want to be acceptable to God by their works, but those who come into relationship with God abide in His grace. They only need to submit to God as their Lord to be forgiven. As the Apostle Paul explained in Romans 7:1-6,

“Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. But now we have been delivered from the law, having died

to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.”

The story of the rich young man in Matthew 19:16-26 is an example of someone deciding to live under the law or grace. The young man's first question to Jesus was the age old question, what must I do to have eternal life? Jesus gave the correct answer for someone trying to earn their salvation by their own works. He told the young man to obey the law. The young man replied that he had always obeyed the commandments, but he still wanted to know what more he should do. Jesus perceived that the young man understood that the law could not save him. So in Matthew 19:21, **“Jesus said unto him, “If you will be perfect, go and sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; then come and follow me.”**” At these words, the young man went away with sorrow in his heart because he was not willing to give up his possessions.

There is a great paradox surrounding grace. It is a free gift given by God that no one can purchase. Grace must be received by faith not earned by works. At the same time it will cost the believer everything they have. It is not a wealth transfer, but an attitude adjustment. When a person receives Jesus as their Lord and Savior, they must humble themselves and give up sovereignty over their lives. They stop seeking their own will and asking the question, what's in it for me? They begin seeking the Lord's will and asking the question, what does God want? Their stuff becomes the Lord's possession and they become His stewards with authority over the resources entrusted to their care. If a person can't get past Jesus as their Lord, then they never make it to Jesus as their savior.

God does not treat everyone the same. Those who are in rebellion to God and want to be accepted by their works must obey the law perfectly to be accepted. They see God as a harsh judge. Those who have submitted themselves to God in faith are forgiven their sins. When they do disobey, they can simply repent to be perfectly restored again. They experience God as a loving Father, Brother and Friend.

From the beginning, God has shown grace to His children. The requirements for salvation have always been the same. When Adam and Eve sinned and hid from God, He sought them out and provided the way for their relationship to be restored. Law and grace were contrasted in Cain and Abel. Cain offered a sacrifice of his works that was rejected by God. Able offered a sacrifice in faith and was approved by God. Sacrifices performed by the self-righteous, proudly believing that their works make them acceptable to God are worthless, but if the same sacrifices are humbly given in faith that God forgives sin then they are acceptable.

The law is a witness that tells people what they must do to be acceptable to God by their works. Testifying to the law Jesus said in Matthew 5:17-18: **“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.”** Grace is a witness that explains what God will do to make people acceptable to Him by faith. The first Jerusalem council took up the issue of law and grace in Acts 15:1-29. In verses 10-11 Peter says: **“Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.”** In verses 19-21 James says: **“Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the**

synagogues every sabbath day." The law is for Sinners while grace is for Redeemed Saints. That is why both witnesses endure until the Lord returns and they do not give conflicting testimony.

Since the law is for sinners and grace is for Redeemed Saints, then by what standard do Redeemed Saints live? It is written in Jeremiah 31:33 (and quoted in Hebrews 8:10 and 10:16): **"But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."** Is this a copy of the law that was written on stone tablets? No, this is a law of relationship. It is personalized with the will of God for the individual believer. That is why it is written on their hearts. It takes into account the redeemed saint's level of sanctification, maturity, strengths, weaknesses, gifts and calling. It is obedience to the still small voice of the conscience that leads the believer to do God's will in every situation. Religion demands one rigid set of rules for everyone, the initiate and the proficient. Relationship is with an individual. Jesus said in John 14:15-17: **"If you love me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you."** Redeemed Saints live by the law that is written on their hearts as they are led by the Holy Spirit of God.

Grace is not a license to sin. The law that is written on the redeemed saint's heart contains all of the basics, the things that everyone should have learned in kindergarten. Be kind and don't hurt the other children. Be honest and tell the truth. Be content with what you have and don't take the other children's stuff. Obey your parents and others who have proper authority. Most importantly, we should have learned to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, our souls, our minds and our strength. When Redeemed Saints receive God as their Lord, they make Him the most important thing in their lives.

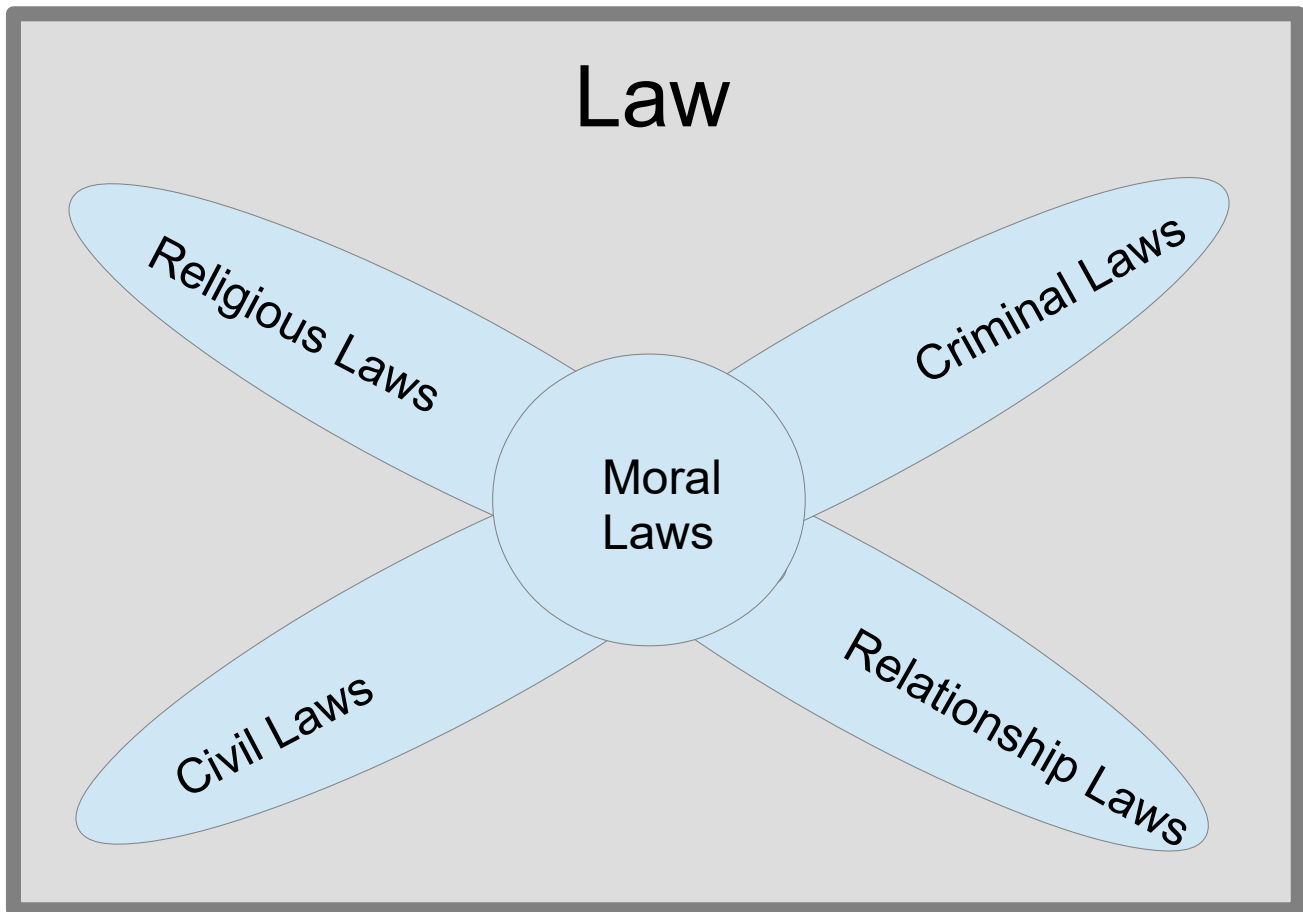
Most of us have some experience with both religion and relationship. We know that they both have some commonality of law. Here is an illustration that I hope will help sort it out (see below). The large square is the domain of all law. There are many laws that I haven't labeled on the illustration. For example the laws of mathematics, laws of physics and laws of Chemistry. I'm sure everyone can think of many more. What I have put on the illustration are the laws of government and God's laws. The laws of government are generally divided between civil laws and criminal laws. They come together or overlap at what we would call moral laws. As we've seen from our discussion above, God's laws are divided into what we might call religious laws written in stone and relationship laws written on hearts. Each of these also overlap the range of moral laws. That we are still under the moral laws is made plain in Galatians 5:19-21,

19 "Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Many Scriptures make it plain that we are free from religious laws. We don't have time to go into them in this message, but here is a partial list.

- Dietary laws – Mark 7:17-23 and Acts 10:9-16.
- Sacrificial laws – Hebrews 10:1-10.

- Sabbath laws – Luke 6:1-5 and John 5:16-17.
- Laws of the Religious Calendar – Colossians 2:16-23.



Redeemed Saints are no longer subject to the letter of the law that was given to sinners. Now they obey the spirit of the law who is their Lord. This goes beyond the minimum requirements. It is the moment by moment obedience to the voice of the Lord. It's not following the religious rules, but walking in relationship with God by the leading of the Holy Spirit. Religious people do not understand this. They demand one set of immutable rules. It is simple and clear cut. God, on the other hand, does not want automatons. His desire is for people who willingly enter into a submitted relationship with Him. He wants them to obey His still small voice of conscience.

Relationships are messy. There are misunderstandings. Two egos are not always aligned together. There are disagreements and battles of two different points of view. God understands this. It is what He chose to create. He is willing to work with people, teach them and shape them as long as they choose to stay in a submitted relationship with Him. When His people disobey and repent, He forgives them. People also need to forgive themselves and God after there has been stress in the relationship. The relationship is strengthened by overcoming these trials. It endures all tests as long as Redeemed Saints do not shut the Lord out of their lives by rebellion, loss of faith or sinning unto death.

Judging

If we understand that God has written an individually tailored law for each Redeemed Saint, how then can we judge them? The law of relationship with God has been written on their hearts. It includes the moment by moment leading of the Holy Spirit for their lives. How can one man know God's specific will for another? It is impossible to judge this as it is written in Romans 14:1-4,

“Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. Who are you to judge another’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.”

We can replace the things eaten in this passage with almost anything that separates us including denominations, doctrines and practices. We stand before and are responsible to our Lord, not other people of religion.

Another thing we cannot judge is whether or not another person is saved. God judges our hearts, not the religious things we have or haven't done. The Lord judges our inner thoughts and attitudes, not our outward appearance. As it says in 1 Thessalonians 2:4, **“But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.”** And in Luke 16:15, **“And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.”** God knows our hearts, but we cannot see into the heart of another person. We may have impressions based on the evidence that comes out of a person's heart, but we never have complete knowledge like God does and we therefore cannot rightly judge if a person is saved or not.

About judging others, it says in Luke 6:37, **“If you don’t want to be judged, don’t judge. If you don’t want to be condemned, don’t condemn. If you want to be forgiven, forgive.”** Many people take from this that all judging is bad and they should never judge another person. However we have seen that we are still subject to what may be called the moral laws.

In the fifth chapter of 1 Corinthians, Paul confronts the issue of gross immorality in the church. He concludes with this statement in 1 Corinthians 5:12-13, **“For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore 'put away from yourselves the evil person.’”**

We cannot judge another person's heart or God's specific will for them, but we can and must judge the immoral acts committed by members of the congregation. Most of the time it isn't judgment that is required, but a simple willingness to confront with truth. This must not be done based on accusation or gossip. There must be two or more witnesses or verifiable evidence. Even if there is not enough evidence to make a judgment, we can still validate the victim by affirming that what happened to them was wrong and not their fault.

So what judging needs to be avoided? A person's deeds are visible to the world. Facts simply exist, they don't require judgment. A person's heart cannot be adequately judged by another person. Their thoughts, motives and relationship with God are not visible for the world to see. It is the self-righteous judgmental spirit that needs to be avoided.

Conclusion

The time has come to conclude this message. If you have felt gut punched and/or become mad while I shared some of my basic beliefs, it is a strong indication of self-righteousness. Redeemed Saints should have felt affirmed, liberated and empowered. For some of them, there were things that finally clicked into place. If you know for certain that you are a Redeemed Saint and you still felt like your ear was flicked or that you were gut punched, then it may indicate a mixture of relationship and religion. Our lives are like our houses, they get cluttered. From time to time we need to clean them. If so, confess and ask God's forgiveness. Set things right again. It may also indicate that you possibly have an emotional attachment to a false doctrine. I don't ask you to believe me. I do ask you to search the scriptures to see if these things are so.

Today, I've been preaching to the congregation, to the choir, to the worship team, to the worship leader, to the senior pastor, to the church staff, to the elders, to the board members, to the Sunday School teachers and all of the other volunteers. Think about it. If a Self-righteous Sinner wants to be acceptable to God by their works of religion, what better place is there to do so than in the church?

If you are asking the question: "What will people think?" It is another strong indication of self-righteousness. I can't speak for everyone, but I rejoice with God and the angels whenever a sinner is saved. When it is a Self-righteous Sinner who is already a member of the church, then I'm also very happy to have one more Redeemed Saint and one less Self-righteous Sinner to put up with in the congregation.

In the table below I've listed fifteen more things that may indicate if a person is a Redeemed Saint or a Self-righteous Sinner. I invite each of you to put a check mark beside each one you think fits you. When done you can see which side is weighted heavier.

Redeemed Saints	Self-righteous Sinners
Faith Humility Relationship	Works Pride Religion
God's Way What Does God Want?	My Way What's in It for Me?
Worship the Lord of the Book	Worship the Book of the Lord
Obey the Spirit of the Law God's Individual Will Just for Them See God as Loving Father, Brother and Friend	Obey the Letter of the Law Follow the Rules View God as a harsh Judge
Sinners Saved by Grace Motley Group No Pretense of Perfection	Faithful to their Religion Look Good Appear Righteous
Spirits reborn at conversion Souls being sanctified throughout life Bodies Not Redeemed until Resurrection of Life	Meetings they attend Programs they watch Good Works they do

Redeemed Saints come to God in humility, believing that their faith will make them acceptable to Him. They have entered into a submitted personal relationship with the Lord of their lives. Self-righteous Sinners take pride in their works, they believe that their acts of religion will make them acceptable to God.

Redeemed Saints are concerned with doing things God's way. They are always asking the question: "What does God want me to do in this situation." They are led by the Holy Spirit. Self-righteous Sinners do things their own way. They decide what is right by their religious rules. They ask the question: "What's in it for Me?" They might object to this, stating that they are following God's will when they follow their religious laws. I know that they are sincere, but they have chosen their religion and their desired reward is eternal life as they strive to meet or exceed the minimum requirements to make themselves acceptable to God by their works.

Redeemed Saints worship the Lord of the Book. Self-righteous Sinners worship the Book of the Lord. Anyone who doesn't understand the difference is probably on the self-righteous side of the table.

Redeemed Saints obey the Spirit of God's law. They are free to do God's individual will, just for them, in every situation. They are in a submitted relationship with God and He knows they will make mistakes. The pressure of perfection is gone. They view God as a loving Father, Brother and Friend. Self-righteous Sinners obey the letter of the law. They must perfectly follow the rules of their religion. They see God as a harsh judge.

Redeemed Saints were sinners who were saved by the grace of God. They are now separated unto God, Who calls them saints. Sometimes they still make mistakes and disobey their Lord. I'm afraid that they are a motley group who are going through the process of sanctification as their souls, mind, will, and emotions are being formed into the image of Christ. They have no pretense of perfection. On the other hand, Self-righteous Sinners are faithful to their religion. They expend a great amount of effort to look good and appear righteous as they try to set an example of perfection.

Self-righteous Sinners testify to the number of religious meetings they attend, the religious programs they watch and the good works they do. They believe that God could not possibly overlook their efforts. Redeemed Saints tell about the rebirth of their spirits when they surrendered to God and entered into a submitted relationship with Him. They share their failings, testifying to God's sanctification process in their lives. They also tell about their struggles with the desires of their flesh which will not be redeemed until the Resurrection of Life.

The Self-righteous Sinner might say that these are just nuances. Well, sometimes a nuance can make all the difference. Let me share an illustration that I hope will help. We can all go to the firing range. Everyone will point their rifle down range. Everyone intends to hit the target, but some will and some won't. Anyone who readies their rifle, fires and then aims is almost sure to miss the mark. The proper sequence is ready, aim and then fire. It makes a difference. Even with the proper sequence, failing to aim and fire properly will still result in a miss. We must correctly sight the rifle on the target, take a breath, let it partially out and then squeeze the trigger. Observing these nuances will result in a high probability of hitting the target with every round we fire. I ask you to stop aiming your life with pride that your works will make you acceptable to God. Aim your life in simple faith that God will forgive

your sins. Don't pull the trigger of religion, but squeeze the trigger of a submitted relationship with God.

If the Holy Spirit has convicted you today, if you see that you are a sinner in need of salvation, then do these five things in your heart, expressing them to God.

- Confess – Admit to God that you are a sinner and fall short of His perfection.
- Repent – Turn away from self-righteousness, rebellion, and worldliness. Determine to live in relationship with God, learn His will for you and obey His commands that He gives specifically for you in every situation.
- Profess – Announce your belief that Jesus Christ has sacrificed his own innocent blood in payment for your sin.
- Supplicate – Request that God, in His mercy and grace, will forgive your sins. State by faith that your sins are forgiven.
- Submit – In humility, receive Jesus Christ as your Lord. Ask Him to write His law on your heart and to fill you with His Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will lead you to follow the law God has written on your heart and to do God's specific will for you in every situation. Finally, ask Jesus: “Lord, what do You want of me?” As He reveals His will for you, do it!

If you have truly, in your heart, entered into a submitted relationship with God today, then you have become a Redeemed Saint who is set apart unto God. I welcome you into the Ecclesia. Congratulations, you have been called out of the Kingdom of Satan and you are now a Redeemed Saint in the Kingdom of God. Now live for God as you are led by His Holy Spirit! Your spirit has been reborn, it is alive again. You don't have to be perfect anymore. God will be working with you for the rest of your life sanctifying your soul, mind, will and emotions. You now have the sure hope that you will be resurrected to eternal life with a spiritual body when the Resurrection of the Living occurs and you will live eternally with God in Heaven.

If you gave up self-righteousness, worldliness and rebellion today and received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and you want to give testimony to the change in your life, then stand up where you are. If you were already a Redeemed Saint and you were affirmed, liberated and empowered by this message and you want to show your support for those who are standing, then stand up with them. This is the Ecclesia in unity.

As we end, please receive this benediction:

“May the Lord bless you and keep you; may the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; may the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.” (Numbers 6:24-26)

May you be truly blessed and highly favored as you leave here and live your life for the Lord. Thank you.