

Sermon Notes

(A basic transcription with modifications for style and clarity)

GETTING OUT OF THE MESS WE'RE IN

Michael McKinney, March 25, 2017

There is one thing we have in common with everyone else. And it's not just something we have in common with people who are just like us or our friends, but it's something we have in common with people we don't even know—with people very much unlike us. Make no mistake; we all have a mess in our lives. And even if you're lucky enough to be between messes right now, you're still just a decision away from creating a brand-new mess.

We are all good at hiding our messes. In fact, we usually are better at hiding our messes than we are dealing with them. While we can look good while we're mired in our mess, don't be fooled. There isn't anyone here that hasn't made a mess of things at one time or another. We can fool some of the people some of the time, but we can't fool all the people all the time.

We make a mess of our finances. We make a mess of our academics. We make a mess of our relationships. We make a mess of our careers. We make a mess of our parenting. Maybe you're being parented by a mess.

The simple fact is: life is messy. And the messes differ from person to person. Some have a stigma attached to them and some are simply given a nod by those around us. But they are still a mess.

Some messes overcome us slowly and some messes consume us very quickly. Some of our messes we've had so long that they feel like an old friend. We don't know what we would do without them. It's easier to live with them than to deal with them. Some messes are addictions. Some are alcohol. Some are anger. Some are envy. Some are gossip. Some are financial. But we all have them.

The only thing that makes us feel better about our mess is to look around and find someone with a bigger mess than ours. But you'll remember that Jesus said two-thirds of His way through the *Sermon on the Mount* in Matthew 7 that before we get too critical of others we need to go look in the mirror. If we can be honest with ourselves, there is quite a mess right there to deal with. But what we want to do, as He said, is get all amped up over their mess to make ourselves feel better—to take the attention off our

own mess. Fixing others is rarely about them, it's all about making ourselves feel better or, frankly, it's just a way to make our mess easier to maintain.

But then Jesus added that no matter how good you make yourself look, no matter how well you clean it up, no matter how well you can deflect the scrutiny your own mess is coming under; if you don't deal with it now, then when He returns He'll look at you say, "I don't recognize you—I never knew you." Jesus wasn't pulling any punches in that sermon. At the end of that sermon He's trying to convince us to deal with our own messes because the consequences are dire. Therefore we need to take a good hard look at our own messes for our own good.

As we approach the Days of Unleavened Bread and meditate on the sacrifice that was made for us, it is a good time to see what kind of progress we have made in dealing with our messes. The Days of Unleavened Bread are like a report card. It is a period of time given to us to see how well we have dealt with our messes.

Are we actually making progress or have we spent the year crafting better excuses—shoring up the holes in our rationalizations? Have we dismissed our messes as not all that bad? Have we made them someone else's fault?

We can always tell ourselves and others a good story, but it's not going to be honored by God. And the consequence is our eternal relationship with God.

It is because of our messes that we are here today. It is our collective messes that make up the body of Christ. And it is acknowledging our messes that draws us closer to God.

God's plan for mankind addresses God's desire to help us begin to see the depth of our mess and to help us out of it. Passover represents the foundation of that plan. God's first step in drawing us to Him.

If you can see your mess for what it is, it is because you can see what God is. If any area of my life—especially the part I don't want anyone to see—doesn't resemble God's nature, then I have a mess to deal with.

To recognize the mess is to acknowledge the law of God. The apostle Paul explains this in his letter to the Romans in chapter 3, beginning in verse 19.

Romans 3:19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.

What Paul begins to explain here is simply that if you acknowledge the law, you are under it. It is over you. It rules your life. You are accountable to it. The law sets a standard for you. It gives you a vantage point from which to see yourself.

If you live in the United States, you are under the Constitution. It is over you. You are accountable to it. A mess is a mess because the law we are under says it is a mess. If we don't measure up to the law, we have a mess on our hands.

We sometimes say, "Hey, nobody's perfect." And when we do, we are acknowledging that there exists a "perfect" as defined by the law that nobody lives up to. And no one does. We acknowledge that there is a perfect that I am not. Nevertheless, I am accountable to that perfect as defined by the law that is over me.

Mankind, whether they acknowledge it or not, is accountable to the law of God because He made us. If you draw breath, you are part of His creation and the laws that govern it. Like the law of gravity, we are accountable to it whether we acknowledge it or not. The consequences of breaking it are relatively quick. So God's law is mankind's reference point. That is the function of the law. The point is, that when I look in the mirror and see the mess that I am (since I can see that don't measure up to the law), I am silenced because I know that I am a mess. When we look in the mirror, the gravity of what we see should make us—all of mankind for that matter—fall silent because we are accountable to God and we fall excruciatingly short.

Looking in the mirror, our ego is placed in perspective. Suddenly, our agenda doesn't matter. What we *are* is making us a mess and we are silent before God. We are without excuse. There's nothing to say. The stories we tell ourselves and others to justify what we do, to justify the breaking of God's laws and principles, no longer hold any validity. We are convicted. In that moment, looking in the mirror, we are silenced before God. God is not mocked. We can't blame our way out of a mess before God. If we are still talking, it is because we are fighting God.

Again, in verse 19 Paul says:

19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.

20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.

The reason we see the mess is because of the law. That's the purpose of the law. Because of the law we are reminded that we don't measure up. It's taking us somewhere.

When I read the Word of God I am consistently reminded that I don't love my neighbor as I should; that I don't treat the people around me in a godly manner; that I don't serve with the right motives. I am reminded that I am consistently pushing my own agenda; that I don't forgive quickly enough; that I hold grudges. I am reminded that I

am not what I should be to the people I love the most, because the law of God is a mirror and a reminder that I am a mess.

What does God's law remind you that you are not?

Doesn't that take your breath away? If you are being honest, doesn't that silence you? Is it the same thing over and over? Is it that same behavior that you can't break away from? It's that thing you've told your spouse you'll stop doing? That thing you've told your parents you'll never do again?

In that moment, you are experiencing the law for exactly the reason God gave it. Nothing can move us into a dependent relationship with God more effectively than honestly facing our image in the mirror.

The first mess we should encounter daily is the one in the mirror. That should give our day the proper perspective.

Paul's bottom line in verse 23 of Romans 3 is the perspective we should start with daily. Paul writes:

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

"Nobody's perfect." Quite often we fall short of even our own standards. "I will never do that again." Yeah, right. But in that mirror we should all be silenced before the law of God because we fall short.

The reason you recognize a mess when you see one is because every mess has a reference point. God's law is that reference point. You know what the "non-mess" should look like. You know what you should do. You know how you should respond. God's Word and Christ's example show us what our lives should look like without the messes. It is the awareness of our messes that awakens us to something outside of ourselves to which we are accountable. This is a reason God reminds us through His word of our messes. The mirror is a tool to bring you closer to God.

When we face ourselves in the mirror and see the mess, it's not just about being a better person; but to see our need for God. It is for us to see our need to build a relationship with our Creator. In that moment we should see that there is a God who is above our mess and has the power to help us overcome it.

In the moment when we acknowledge the mess we are—"I've made a mess of things"—we should see our need for God.

We all have messes. I know one when I see one, because I am one. When you see their mess and it reminds you of your mess, Paul says everyone is silenced. But we tend to talk when we should be silent. The only way out of our messes is to begin to think like God. To listen to God. But giving up the self, and all of the devious means we have to protect it, is beyond our ability to do it alone.

But here's the good news. Our mess has the potential to bring us closer to God like we have never experienced before. God can use our mess to bring us closer to Him if we will only yield to Him; if we are silenced before Him; if we are honest with ourselves; if we take full responsibility. It's natural and carnal for us to blame others, but it will never move us closer to God. In fact, it separates us.

In a well-known scripture found in John 3:17, Jesus is talking to Nicodemus and He tells him the end game in God's plan:

John 3:17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

God doesn't reveal our nature to us just so that He can tell us what a mess we've made of our marriage, or what mess we made of our friendships, or our reputation or our future. God has called us to save us from ourselves. God wants that for all of mankind.

You'll remember how Jesus dealt with the woman caught in adultery in John 8. She made a mess of things. She messed up her marriage; someone else's marriage and her own reputation. After Jesus held a mirror up before her accusers and they were silenced, we read in verse 9:

John 8:9 At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there.

10 Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

11 "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

Jesus offered a solution to her mess.

In Luke 19 we read of a rather short tax collector named Zacchaeus who had to climb up into a tree to see Jesus passing by. This is a short guy. In verse 5 Jesus tells him to come down, for He intends to stay at his house. Naturally this caused judgment by the observers round about since Zacchaeus was perceived to be quite a mess because of his collaboration with the Romans and having a tax collector's reputation for being corrupt. Luke 19, beginning in verse 5:

Luke 19:5 When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today."

6 So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

7 All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner."

8 But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”

9 Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.

10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

That was His purpose. That was His message. Jesus honored Zacchaeus’ honest assessment of himself and his desire to change because His purpose was and is, as He said in verse 10, to seek out and save the lost.

In one more example, we come to the Samaritan woman Jesus talked to at Jacob’s Well in John 4. This woman had a history of making messes. She had been married five times and was now living with a man who was not her husband. She had a history of trying to fix her messes by creating new messes. She had spent her life trying to fix her mess on her own. It hadn’t worked. But Jesus offered her a way out of her mess. He didn’t condemn her. He showed her the way and it says she believed, as did many of those who witnessed how Jesus dealt with her.

Jesus acknowledged her mess in a somewhat humorous exchange. Verse 16 of John 4:

John 4:16 He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.”

17 “I have no husband,” she replied. Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband.

18 The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.”

19 “Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet.

There at the well He shows her a way out of her mess. Verse 13:

13 Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again,

14 but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

It will do a work in them.

21 “Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.

22 You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.

23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.

24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”

What Jesus offered all of these people is Himself as the solution to their problems. Jesus came to reveal the Father. “You can know what God is like by watching Me,” Jesus said.

If we have problems in any area of our lives it is because we refuse to submit to God in that area. We are breaking laws and principles and either don't know how or we refuse to stop and correct it.

In a recent movie, a teenage girl summed up where we often find ourselves. Apologizing to her brother for her approach to life she said, “I think some deranged part of me likes to think that I'm the only one with real problems; like that makes me special. You know ever since we were little, I would get this feeling like I'm floating outside of my body looking down on myself and I hate what I see. How I'm acting, the way I sound, and I don't know how to change it. And I'm so scared that the feeling is never going to go away.”

“My mess is so deeply rooted that I don't know where to begin.” That is the hole God is offering you and me a way out of. That is the Gospel message in a nutshell. The question is whether or not we will stop digging it deeper, step out in faith and submit to the approach to life that God has laid out for us to follow. And it takes faith because it's not natural. The way is unseen to our human eyes.

In John 8:12 Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” Jesus said, “I will show you the way forward and I will show you the way out.”

You talked yourself into the mess you are in. You didn't follow God into your mess. So it is time you follow Him to get out of your mess. The only way out is to follow His light.

If you are in a mess—you are in a dark place and you need a light. God's Word is that light. But here's the thing you need to be aware of. God's word—His plan—the Gospel message—turns everything as you understand it, upside down. It is not normal. It is uncomfortable.

In Acts 17:6 Luke records that the rulers of the city described Paul and Silas as men who have turned the world upside down with their message. And they were angry. We get angry too when God is working to turn our world upside down. We don't want to hear it.

But here's the thing. If God doesn't turn our world upside down, if we don't accept what God is trying to do in us, if looking at ourselves in the mirror doesn't turn our world upside down, we will be sidelined. We cannot draw near to God without changing our old ways of thinking. And admittedly that is painful.

Typically, we call on God when we want Him to fix our mess. But that's not how He works. His goal is not to fix our mess, but to build a relationship with us to become like Him and lead us out of our mess. God is not interested in a casual relationship. "Clean up my mess and I'll let you know if I need you again." God wants more than that. He asks us to follow Him.

Back to the *Sermon on the Mount*. Matthew 7:26.

Matthew 7:26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice (will end up in a mess. He says) they are like a foolish man who built his house on sand.

27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.

Our relationship with God begins by acknowledging that our house is built on sand and that I am reaping now what I have sown. My house is falling down around me and this isn't working.

A person who surrenders to God is like the person in verse 24:

24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

God's Word, God's law, is a solid foundation to build our life on.

To surrender means, I am not just going to God to fix things. I'm not just looking for advice. I am committed to doing what God wants me to do. Jesus' metaphor of building indicates that this is a process. This is not a quick fix; a few surface changes and we're on our way.

God wants us to get behind the mess. He wants us to begin to build up all the areas of our lives—spiritual, professional, academic, financial, relationships, parenting marriage, home—around His teachings, His word. He says, "If you do, I will lead you out of your mess." It's about following.

If we are not careful, we can fall into this cycle of sin and forgiveness, sin and forgiveness. We treat God like He is a forgetful old man. It's not about messing up over and over again and getting forgiven over and over again. That's Satan's perversion. We can't do whatever we want and then ask for repentance and think that it is all OK.

It's deeper than that. We can't reduce our relationship with God to that idea. There isn't a hack (a shortcut) for your relationship with God. God is not just looking for us to stay out of trouble. He wants like-minded beings to share a relationship with Him for all of eternity. It's not a game. It's a complete conversion of our mind to His.

However, there is no magic formula to make this happen. The only way out is to follow God. God gave us the light to see the path we should be on and if we had followed it, we could have avoided our mess. It was avoidable, but we didn't choose to follow. Our mess is an opportunity to surrender to Him and begin to follow our way out of our mess.

In Matthew 9:9 we read where Jesus walked up to another tax collector (think mess) named Matthew and invited him to follow Him. Matthew stood up and followed Jesus.

Matthew 9:9 As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him.

10 Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, *that* behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples.

11 And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said to His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

And again, this is important:

12 When Jesus heard *that*, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

13 But go and learn what *this* means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

We're here today, so to try to pretend that we're not a mess is silly. God has begun a process in us when He called us and we can choose to surrender to it or not.

Let's look at Philippians 1 beginning in verse 3. Paul, imprisoned in Rome, is writing to the church in Philippi. Notice his prayer for them.

Philippians 1:3 I thank my God every time I remember you.

4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy

5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now,

6 being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

When you were called, God began a work in you. He said, "Follow Me." "Follow Me" is a process until the day of Christ's return. It's a life-long process. Growth takes time and the endgame is spiritual maturity. There is a process going on inside of you in

order to create something God-like in you. This is not behavior modification. This is not better acting. This is not a good show in front of your friends. It's renewing our minds to be like Him. A process that is eventually demonstrated in our behavior. We must choose to participate with God because He has begun something in us. That is what our calling is all about. But the choice is ours.

7 It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me.

8 God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

Paul's prayer reflects what God is trying to accomplish in us. And it's big.

9 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight,

Paul didn't say, "This is my prayer for you that you stay out of trouble, and God will fix things in your life."

What kind of prayers do we pray? "God I've got this issue and that issue. Please fix it." Many times, our prayers are very shallow. And so maybe that's why our spiritual lives are not advancing like they should. Little prayers yield little results. If our prayers are emanating from insecurity and fear, we will just experience more of the same in our life.

Do you pray for your love? Of course, we pray for other's love that they love better, but do we pray for our love. Paul didn't pray that we become better rule-keepers, but that we learn to love others as God loves us.

10 so that you may be able to discern what is best (not what I can get away with) and may be pure and blameless (in the way you treat other people) for the day of Christ,

The essence of spiritual maturity is when we can love another person that is difficult to love. That's when we know we're making progress. An immature person only sees things their way. Spiritual maturity is when you can see people as God sees them and respond accordingly. When you move beyond simply seeing what they did to you, seeing how they responded to you and begin to see that person through the eyes of our Heavenly Father and you begin to respond accordingly, that is a mark of spiritual maturity. It's not "How can I figure out why people who view things different than me are bad", but "How can I love them where they are". That's a much better goal and way of life than just trying to stay out of trouble.

Doing what's right is all about you. Jesus came along and said you will know how you are doing with God by how you treat other people. In Matthew 5:23 Jesus said

when you go to make a sacrifice you make things right with others first. That's how you put God first.

Matthew 5:23 Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you,

24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

When you put the needs of others before whatever is going on with you, that is how you love your Father in heaven. So Paul's prayer for the Philippians is that their love becomes deeper and more abundant. It's not about just doing what's right, but doing what's right for others.

You rarely make a mess by doing what is best for other people. When you are focused on you, you have the potential to make another mess. Often messes have unintended consequences and become bigger than you. And we never see it coming, because we are focused on ourselves. We can't see it coming because our view is too small. We think we are doing what's best because it is what feels best for me and so we never see the consequences coming until it's too late.

Now every mess we get into comes with some bad options. And the problem is that they are usually the most sensible and most reasonable and even unavoidable options from our perspective. So we tend to make our messes messier.

The relationship between King Saul and David was complex. David was married to Saul's daughter Michal. That made them family. David had been anointed to become the next king over Israel. David had a big mess on his hands and it wasn't all his fault. But no matter what David does, things get worse. His successes and popularity were a problem for the insecure Saul. So much so that we learn in 1 Samuel 19 that Saul eventually wanted to kill David. So David flees into the wilderness with men loyal to him.

What we find in this story is an example of someone who handled their mess correctly. David didn't take the most justifiable option out of his mess. He didn't dig his hole deeper.

In 1 Samuel 24 a situation arises that could only be described as a miracle. I mean, what are the odds? Saul is out hunting David with 3000 chosen men of Israel when he decides to relieve himself in the very cave that David and his men are hiding in. Saul's guard is down to say the least. This is a godsend.

In verse 4 of 1 Samuel 24, David's men say to him (no doubt quietly to avoid alerting King Saul):

1 Samuel 24:4 “This is the day of which the Lord said to you, ‘Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand, that you may do to him as it seems good to you.’”

Come on! You bet! Whatever you think of this option, it seems completely reasonable. I mean, it’s really just self-defense. Right? Seriously, what are the odds of this? If God ever performed a miracle, this is it. Everyone around David certainly thought so. Can you imagine the drama of this moment? Caught up in the emotion of the moment, with only seconds to decide what to do, what would you do?

But in those fleeting seconds between what his men told him he was justified in doing and not just justified—it was God’s will—David realized that, if I’m not careful, I’m going to make my mess messier. He realizes that if I murder the king, this will be my story forever.

Later, when he sat around with his kids and they asked “Daddy, how did you become king?” he would tell the story of how he killed their grandfather. “Tell us again, Dad.” But seriously, what do you expect? Saul was trying to kill him. If he had brought Saul’s head out of the cave and showed it to Saul’s army, they would have honored the decision and followed David. In the short term, problem solved. Mess over.

At the root of most messes is a breakdown of character like integrity, self-control or patience. If you ignore these things in your finances, your relationships, your profession, you will eventually make a mess.

Every mess comes with some bad options. And the thing is, they look really good. They feel good. They are often the easiest options to justify, especially in the moment. And anyone else would agree with you. But that’s not where someone who is looking to God as a standard in their life lives. It’s never about what they deserve. It’s always about our character.

We have heard it said that two wrongs don’t make a right. Bad behavior usually comes from an inward/selfish mindset. Another’s bad behavior doesn’t cause us to respond in a selfish way, but it does invite us to. Our challenge is to respond with an outgoing/loving response even when others invite us to do the opposite. We can’t fix a mess with another failure of character. But this is often what we go for because it seems like the quickest way out of our mess.

Back in verse 4 we learn that David instead decided to cut the corner off Saul’s robe. But even this option distressed David because, as he told his men in verse 6:

1 Samuel 24:6 He said to his men, “The Lord forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the Lord’s anointed, or lay my hand on him; for he is the anointed of the Lord.”

7 With these words David sharply rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul. And Saul left the cave and went his way.

In that moment, everyone knew exactly what did *not* happen. Not only did David save Saul's life, he protected him. Again, it's not about what they deserve or what we think is fair. It's about our character.

8 Then David went out of the cave and called out to Saul, "My lord the king!" When Saul looked behind him, David bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground.

9 He said to Saul, "Why do you listen when men say, 'David is bent on harming you'?"

10 This day you have seen with your own eyes how the Lord delivered you into my hands in the cave. Some urged me to kill you, but I spared you; I said, 'I will not lay my hand on my lord, because he is the Lord's anointed.'

11 See, my father, look at this piece of your robe in my hand! I cut off the corner of your robe but did not kill you. See that there is nothing in my hand to indicate that I am guilty of wrongdoing or rebellion. I have not wronged you, but you are hunting me down to take my life.

12 May the Lord judge between you and me. And may the Lord avenge the wrongs you have done to me, but my hand will not touch you.

13 As the old saying goes, 'From evildoers come evil deeds,' so my hand will not touch you.

David knew evil does not bring forth righteousness. Two wrongs don't make a right. David could have done the reasonable thing, the arguably right thing to do, but instead he showed love, patience, peace, faithfulness, humility and self-control. He waited on God. God eventually lead him out of the mess.

The way out of your mess is to follow Christ. The way out of your mess is to apply the fruits of the Spirit. Respond to your mess with love. Respond with joy, peace and patience. Respond with kindness, goodness, faithfulness. Respond with humility and self-control.

These, of course, are not the natural, go-to responses to the events in our lives. They often don't feel right. But when you look in the mirror, any other response will leave you silenced and unreconciled before God. These are the only responses that will be honored by God. They are the only responses that will get to the bottom of our messes and eradicate them.

As Jesus warned us, we must build our life on the Rock—the firm foundation of God's word, or, when Christ returns, we will be swept away. ♦