

Saved by the Free Gifts!

New Life by the Gospel of Grace

Perhaps the hardest thing for all of us to believe is that God really does want to give us everything that we need for free. You don't have to deserve His love and mercy, or His unfailing help. You certainly can't earn it. You can't make up for lost time. You can't bring forth a better version of yourself. But you can learn to trust and believe in what He is giving you. That's a lot! So, take a good look at the many ways you are saved by the "Free Gift" and let it overwhelm you... and transform you.

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23 WEB

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We all want to be accepted, don't we? What if there is Someone who will never push us away, but always welcome us with open arms? Wouldn't you want to go running to that Person? Wouldn't you always want to be with that Person?

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Why do we all need adoption? The truth is you were abandoned long ago and the consequences have been showing up painfully in your life ever since. Our Father has the perfect remedy, but first you have to recognize the disease.

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This is usually the first, the biggest and the most desperately needed gift of all—apart from the never-ending wonder of discovering that Jesus is alive and well, Risen from the dead and Ruler of the universe. You can't really top that one! But being forgiven comes close.

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Glorification is God going "over the top." All we really needed Him to do was "save" us from our earthly hells that bound us and from the hell we were inevitably earning by our accumulated sins. He did that, then went light years beyond it...



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Gifted with the Holy Spirit

Adding the divine Person of the Holy Spirit to this list of gifts is like adding the sun to a bag of marbles. He is so far above and beyond any mere thing we can be given. Yet, Holy Spirit is truly one of the "gifts" of saving grace we received from the Father.

Gifted with Justification

It is bad enough feeling guilty when we are guilty, but because we have an enemy (A.K.A. "The Accuser"), we also need powerful protection against that "shadowy" voice which is always finding fault. God's answer to both? He "justified" us!

Gifted with Love

Love is the greatest gift of all. It is the reason that all the other gifts have been given. If you have received faith in Christ, this is no accident. So great is the mystery of God's love for us that Jesus said the Father loves us even as much as He loves Jesus!

Gifted with Propitiation

This is a word we never use, but is it an action we no longer do? We do it all the time! In trying to gain favor, placate anger, or appease demands we have been "propitiating" without even know it. Yet, God did it best of all when God did it for God...

Gifted with the Ransom

The Lord's rescue of us has all the elements of a great romance. It is the hidden truth of our story. What could turn the bride-to-be's heart better than that sight of her Beloved risking His all to ransom her from the grip of pure evil?

Gifted with Reconciliation

It feels terrible when a relationship is out of whack—and so peaceful when it is restored. Our relationship with God was in desperate need of reconciliation, even if we didn't know it. The peace of Christ is the peace of reconciliation!

Gifted with Redemption

The idea behind redemption is payment of a debt, setting free from slavery or captivity, or buying back something sold. Jesus, our mighty Redeemer, does all of the above! That's the meaning. The application has endless possibilities...

Gifted with Regeneration

Regeneration means that we have been brought back to life: re-generated. Of course, it can be made much more complicated by asking the obvious question: "Was I dead and didn't know it?" Yes, that's it! "But in what way dead?"

Gifted with Relationships

You may be thinking, "I already have lots of people in my life—that's the problem!" We all have relationships with other people, but that's not what the new birth brings us. It doesn't bring us more of the same; it radically changes what we have.

Gifted with Repentance

Have you ever thought of repentance as a gift? It sure doesn't feel that way! When we do wrong, we feel guilt which feels lousy—not at all like receiving a present. Not good, right? Just guessing: you probably didn't like to take your medicine either.



[Gifted with Resurrection](#)

Because He lives, we have a solid hope that we too will be raised from death. Don't stop there. Many things go down towards death: hopes die, relationships die, careers die, loved ones die, dreams die. Our need for "resurrections" is life-long!

[Gifted with Revelation](#)

You are trapped in a dark room and can't find the door. Then, some kind Person turns on the lights for you. Now you can see your way around. You can even see the One who took pity on you and enlightened you. What a revelation!

[Gifted with Salvation](#)

Get used to being saved. It is a whole new way of life. From reminders that come in the nick of time, to deliverance from oppressive feelings, to helping with problems at work, at home, with finances, etc. Make sure His number is on speed dial!

[Gifted with Sanctification](#)

Sanctification simply means that we are being washed clean. We are being cleansed of wrong thoughts, mistaken beliefs, sinful practices—all kinds of things that get in the way of the peace-filled, grace-full way of life set before us.



About the Author: [Steve Evans](#)

For over a decade Steve Evans and [Healing Streams](#) have been helping people recover inner peace and freedom through the free eCourse for healing, [Matters of the Heart](#). Through Forerunners4Him he has been showing how we can be saved for heaven and teaching the way to live a Spirit-filled life on earth. Go now to receive a completely free primer, [Getting to Heaven](#) and/or an introduction to [Living in the Spirit](#) at our website.



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CHAPTER ONE

A Father's Love

What loving father doesn't delight in giving good gifts to his children? Our heavenly Father is no different. John, "the Beloved Disciple," treasured the love he had received, digging deeply into God's heart to "mine" the precious gift. He wants us all to take a good look and "see what kind of love the Father has given to us..." (1 John 3:1 ESV)!

We all are invited to go as deeply as we can into this immense heart of love. He loves us first so that we can learn to love Him in return. Where to begin? With the Great Exchange. We give Him our sins, weaknesses and failures: He gives us endless mercy and everything else necessary for new life in abundance.

Have you ever seen Russian Christmas dolls? One is nested inside the other, and on and on. God has done something like that with the "free gift" of salvation. What catches your attention at first won't be the only thing that catches your heart. There is so much more hidden inside. Have a good look at all that is here (but even this isn't all—it's just an overview). Take time to treasure each one as you open it.



CHAPTER TWO

Gifted with Acceptance

We all want to be accepted, don't we? We yearn to find those people, places and events where we feel like we truly belong, where we can "be ourselves" and not have to put up a false front. What if there is a place we can always go and be accepted immediately—just as we are, even when we are most messed up? What if there is someone who will never push us away, but always welcome us with open arms? Wouldn't you want to go running to that Person? Wouldn't you always want to be with that Person?

To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. Ephesians 1:6 KJV

God's Invitation? Come as You Are!

The wonderful thing about dogs, best friends and grandparents is that we can usually go to them and be loved and accepted just as we are. This is all the more important because we secretly know deep down that we aren't as we ought to be. We aren't really acceptable, not even to ourselves, if you take our moral failures into consideration. Don't believe it? Would you want your innermost thoughts displayed on a screen above your head—at all times and in all situations? Enough said.

Yet, God our Father accepts us just as we are! Once we've turned to Jesus and asked God to forgive us and save us, God "is able" to do something absolutely remarkable and outrageous: He places us "in Christ" and completely accepts us, holding nothing back. He accepts us as fully as He accepts Jesus! Then, He goes even further. He promises to never leave us, forsake us, or reject us. Trusting to His unbounded acceptance frees us to finally and fully accept ourselves and live with grace and freedom, confident that even if we need correction, it will come with a soft touch, not hard blows. This is a Friend who sticks closer than a brother.



Total Acceptance of Us, Not Our Ways

This does not mean, of course, that He accepts or approves of our sins. No, He loves and accepts us perfectly, but He continues to hate and oppose our sins. Thanks to the [reconciliation](#) Jesus accomplished (at the His request), the Father is able to [justify](#) us—to look upon us or



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relate to us just as if we didn't have any sin. He is not blind to what is there, but He sees our sins as no longer who we are, but as something clinging to us like dirt. Just as we "reject" the dirt that is upon us and wash ourselves to get free of it, so too the Father wants to cleanse us of any sin He sees. But He is singing gently as He draws the bath.

When you think about it, that's just the way we would want it. As attached as we may be to some of our more "cherished" sins, we still recognize deep down that they are wrong and therefore harmful both to us and to the ones we love. We really do want to have a God who can ultimately "go to war" against our sins and liberate us from them—so long as we are not destroyed along with them in the process. What we don't want is a God who hates and rejects us for being stuck to them like glue! What we want is what we have, a simply divine Friend who loves us enough to accept us just as we are, while all the while drawing out of us our better side. We are truly gifted with acceptance—all we could ever desire or need.



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CHAPTER THREE

Gifted with Adoption

Maybe you don't think you need this one or that it could possibly apply to you. Maybe you were one of the fortunate ones who was never abandoned by either of your birth parents. That's a good beginning, but it sure isn't the end of the story. The truth is you were abandoned long ago and the consequences have been showing up painfully in your life ever since. Our Father has the perfect remedy, but first you have to recognize the disease.

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" Romans 8:15 ESV

Abandoned and Left for Dead

Most of us probably think that everyone is a child of God. Not the Bible. Scriptures paint a different picture. God the Father is indeed Father of all living creatures. Our natural life comes from Him. However, we were created to have a spiritual life directly united to Him as His children. When the Fall happened through Adam and Eve, we fell so far! We lost the most important relationship in our lives: God could still see us and know us; but we could no longer see Him or know Him. According to Jesus, Satan became our "father", ruling over us under his dominion, the kingdom of darkness, and enslaving us to his sinful ways. Like orphaned infants we barely had any sense that something had gone wrong!

In a sense, Adam and Eve abandoned us to the enemy when they chose to sin. This made us orphans of God, not by His choice, but by theirs. To see this better consider how grandparents "lose" their grandchildren when the birth parents abandon their infants as orphans, giving them away to someone else. The grandparents often have no choice in the matter and it can be heart-breaking for them to never have a relationship with those "lost" grandchildren. It was truly heart-rending for Father God to have to "stand by" as Adam and Eve consigned their entire line of descendants to the predatory influence of the enemy. All of us died!



Our Inheritance Restored by Adoption

Since then none of us have ever been born into our proper inheritance in the Lord—not by natural birth. That's where the Adoption comes in! God the Father saw that we had been abandoned by our natural parents (Adam and Eve) and has freely chosen to adopt us into His Family, restoring us to the full inheritance we had always been intended to enjoy. But first He



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had to break the “spell” of the evil one which held us all imprisoned in the delusion that it was normal for us to be orphans of God, not knowing our Father or our true position in His Family.

As we receive faith in what Jesus has done for us, we are restored at last to our true inheritance as His beloved children. Scripture says that we are placed “in Christ” and now are qualified to receive everything that is His. We are adopted as God’s sons through faith in Jesus Christ. OK, we can say with the apostle John that we all (men and women, boys and girls) have become God’s children.

Strictly speaking, however, we are raised into the Sonship of Jesus. We inherit through Him, thereby becoming sons through Him. If that sounds weird to women, consider how men are asked to think of themselves as the Bride of Christ who is now our Husband and you will see (with a wink) that God is having fun with us, even as He works out the deadly serious issues of our eternal salvation.



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CHAPTER FOUR

Gifted with Forgiveness

This is usually the first, the biggest and the most desperately needed gift of all—apart from the never-ending wonder of discovering that Jesus is alive and well, Risen from the dead and Ruler of the universe. You can't really top that one! But being forgiven comes close.

And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:38 ESV

Everyone Needs This

At least in practical terms, we have to be forgiven—truly and thoroughly forgiven—or we can't live with ourselves. The burden is simply too great upon our conscience: of guilt, shame, self-blame, reproach, inward accusation, and fear of eventual and eternal punishment. What are we leaving out? How the unrelenting burden of remembered sins hardens our hearts. The only way to get a fresh start is either a lobotomy or to have our slates wiped clean.

God chose to forgive us. This way (unlike the lobotomy method) we have the opportunity to learn from our mistakes. We summoned the faith courage to name sin as sin, making no excuse for ourselves, but admitting the truth about our moral failure instead. We have gone as beggars to God, hoping against hope that there might be just enough mercy for us to get by. Perhaps He can find it in His heart to forgive us just this once.



Then comes the astonishing revelation of grace: We will not be punished for our sins; just the opposite is happening. A great love is being revealed to us in spite of them! It is a love so great and a work so thorough that all of our sins—past, present and future—have been atoned for by the Blood of Christ. God has not only cleared our past record of wrongs, He stands ready to wash us clean from any new sin we are willing to confess and forsake.

Forgiveness Clears the Way to Heaven

The forgiveness of our sins and our future resurrection to heaven go hand in hand. Because our sins are forgiven, because Jesus paid the death penalty that we deserved, we can live with confidence that we will make it home to heaven, living eternally with the One who died to save



us. Forgiveness clears the way for us to enter our eternal inheritance in heaven; faith-confidence enables us to take joy in our bliss-filled future even now.

The forgiveness of our sins and the gift of new life through the Holy Spirit also go hand in hand. Because we are forgiven, because we have asked to be separated from our sins, God has placed His Spirit within us so that we can be “resurrected” into a new life of grace right now. Upheld by His Spirit, we can live with freshness like little children once again, trusting in and relying upon the One who loved us enough to die for us. Forgiveness clears the way for us to enter our God-given inheritance on earth; faith-confidence enables us to take peace and joy that we can start fresh with God in any moment down here.



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CHAPTER FIVE

Gifted with Glorification

Glorification is God going "over the top." All we really needed Him to do was "save" us from our earthly hells that bound us and from the hell we were inevitably earning by our accumulated sins. Just let us escape either one of those hells and God could have our praises into eternity! So He did; and so we shall. And still there is more...

For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 ESV

A Further Surprise down the Road

Not content with stopping there, our Loving Father has not only opened a way to heaven, He has made a way for us to become fully like Jesus in heaven. Let me hasten to clarify that we will most definitely not be like Jesus in being Sovereign Lord or in having any of the unique attributes of the Godhead such as omnipotent (all powerful), omniscient (all knowing) and omnipresent (everywhere at once).



In fact, nothing we will ever "have" will ever be anything other than a pure, unending gift of the Father's grace. God is the source of all life, all wisdom, all power—everything that is good, praiseworthy and enduring. Yet He pours it out upon us so freely that it seems to be completely ours: We say "My life, my face, my hands, my friends, my family, my abilities, my ideas..." These are all "borrowed" things, given to us with unstinting liberality by the Master Giver!

What He Said He Would Never Do

Glorification is, perhaps, the ultimate marvel. He will give to us what He swore in the Hebrew Scriptures that He would never share with anyone: His glory! The same glory that He revealed to Moses at Sinai will be shared with us. That same glory that John and the other disciples saw covering Jesus, will be covering us.

One aspect of this will be the glorified bodies that will be ours. Jesus displayed some of the curious qualities of a glorified body during His post-resurrection visits to His friends. Apparently, He could eat and speak, walk through walls and ascend "bodily" into heaven. Can't wait to test drive one of those babies! Even so, by far the greater side of the glory will be the glorious inward nature of our beautiful Lord brought to fullness within us. That's the glory that God revealed to Moses at Sinai. It will be heavenly to be filled to overflowing with the very nature of God inside of us!



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CHAPTER SIX

Gifted with Holy Spirit

Adding the divine Person of the Holy Spirit to this list of gifts is like adding the sun to a bag of marbles. He is so far above and beyond any mere thing we can be given, even so great a thing as eternal salvation. Yet, Holy Spirit is truly one of the "gifts" of saving grace we received from the Father when we accepted Jesus as our Savior. The Holy Spirit came immediately to live within us! Oh, but there is so much more to this gift than even that stupendous display of Self-giving love.

And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Acts 2:38 ESV

Help on the Inside

Jesus said that He would send the Holy Spirit to be our "Helper." This has been wildly misunderstood with people thinking that only Christians "have" the Holy Spirit or that the Holy Spirit only came to help people after the resurrection. God has always and will always be doing things for us by the Holy Spirit. That is nothing new.

The Holy Spirit did all kinds of great things for Jewish believers in the Old Testament. He does great things for everyone who calls on the Lord and always has. Not only that, He has always been the giver and sustainer of life for everyone and every creature in creation, regardless of whether they know Him or not. None of this has changed through anything that Jesus did for us by His death and resurrection. What did change?



To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Colossians 1:27

The altogether new thing that God is doing for us is that the Holy Spirit now lives inside all who give their lives to Christ through faith-conversion and the new birth. This (along with Christ's sacrifice) makes the "new and living way" possible. The Holy Spirit lives inside of us as our Helper, helping us to live in a "new way" that was never before possible outside of childhood—the way of surrender and trust.

Before we became Christians, the Holy Spirit our Helper was always doing things *for us*, even if we didn't know it, but now that we are Christians, He is helping us from the inside to live *through*



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Him.^[7] Faith conversion helps us in two tremendous ways. We can call on the Lord with confidence that God by His Spirit will do *for us* more than we can ask or think. We can also call on the Lord for His help in surrendering so that God can live *through us* in ways He never could before.

A New Way of Life

Naturally, God will go on doing things for us. He always has! The missing element—the part the “sending” of the Holy Spirit is intended to correct—is that now we can truly live for God by trusting Jesus and obeying Jesus with the Holy Spirit *helping us on the inside*. By indwelling us the Holy Spirit is able to help us live as we were always meant to live with real joy, peace, freedom and faithfulness.

By all means, keep on thinking of God as “out there” and “up there,” but add to that “in here.” Think of Him as willing to work for you, but think also of Him as wanting to live through you. If you are in Christ through faith, then the Holy Spirit is in you, working, working, working to help you learn how to live in and with and through His inner Life.



CHAPTER SEVEN

Gifted with Justification

Don't you just hate feeling inwardly accused or condemned? It is bad enough feeling guilty when we are guilty, but it really stinks to feel like a skunk for no good reason! The truth is that we need to be convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt that we have truly been forgiven where our real sins are concerned. But because we have an enemy (A.K.A. "The Accuser"), we also need powerful protection against that "shadowy" voice which is always finding fault. God's answer to both? He "justified" us!

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 5:1 ESV

You Can Stand on This

[Martin Luther](#), the leader of the Protestant Reformation in the sixteen century, said that the church would "stand or fall" based on whether it believed in and grasped [this one concept](#). That's a good enough reason for us to try to get it and—wouldn't you know?—it has proven to be a tricky one to get right. The main idea is easy enough; it is the all the related questions which become slippery and sticky to deal with.

What it means to be "justified" is nicely summed up in this statement: "*God looks upon me 'just-as-if-I'd' never sinned.*" Paul calls justification by faith the "free gift." It's as if he knows that we are going to have a very hard time believing that God would do this for us.



Actually, it is a gift that contains many gifts. When we turn to God through faith in Christ, God forgives our sins, separates us from them, places us "in Christ", puts a new heart and a new spirit with us, covers us with the righteousness of Christ, chooses to see and relate to us as if we are sinless (justified), and grants us high favor as an adopted child. *Top that Santa!*

Learn to See How God Sees You

Now try to get this from your head into your heart: Because of your faith in Christ, the righteous God has chosen to see you—sinner that you have been and still are—as if you are sinless already. He declares you "Not guilty!" He will relate to you as if you have no sin (even when you do, even when He is working to turn you from it). He will always give you grace, affection and favor just as if you were His perfect Son, Jesus.



This means that no matter how richly you deserve to be cast off, put down, rejected and condemned and no matter how “right” and “well-deserved” the feeling of rejection and condemnation seem to be—they are not coming from the Father. In His eyes you already are that sinless, graced being that you will one day become in heaven. He sees you—the “new creation”—as already made righteous in His eyes.

This never-ending “free gift” is extended to us at all times and in all situations. Free means freely given—no strings attached. No forms to fill out. No complaints on God’s part that you need it so badly! At any time, you can trust yourself to God and receive it as a present covering and basis for relationship with Him. It is always there and it is never revoked.

Justification means...

- 1) Justification means that it is NOT about your feelings. God loves you and has established you in a great relationship with Him (highly favored, forgiven and free) even when you don’t feel like thanking Him, praising Him and are struggling to obey.
- 2) Justification means that it is NOT about you, about how good you are or how well you are doing. It is about Him and how loving and kind and generous He truly is.

Now can you see what Martin Luther was getting at? If we can find the faith courage to believe God at His Word, then no matter what charges the Enemy, or our own thoughts bring against us, we can stand with confidence in our hearts before God, knowing that we are justified in His sight.

We can quickly and easily confess any sins that may be on our conscience and know that we are forgiven. We can float above the opinions of others; we can sail heavenward on wings of faith that—no matter what—we are loved and highly favored by our God! On the other hand, if we don’t believe what justification is telling us our feelings will take us on a roller coaster ride...



CHAPTER EIGHT

Gifted with Love

Love is the greatest gift of all. It is the reason that all the other gifts have been given. If you have received faith in Christ, this is no accident. Long before any of us were born, God loved us and chose to save us. For the sake of love all of the other gifts have been given. It was for love that the Father sent Jesus to die for us. It is for love that the Father sent the Holy Spirit to live inside of us. So great is the mystery of God's love for us that Jesus said the Father loves us even as much as He loves Jesus!

For the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. John 16:27 ESV

The Love of God

Fortunately, not all of our moments are embattled by trouble or temptation. During those times the love of God has unhindered opportunities to lift our hearts and lead us out into the many positive things that rightly inspire our action or give us pleasure. Nothing grows the love of God better than a grateful heart, so try to keep His goodness in remembrance. Warm your heart by thanking Him for the many ways He has blessed you in the past and ask the Holy Spirit to help you see fresh blessing in previously overlooked things that God does for you. With that in mind, seek to learn how to thank God in all things and for all things. This carries genuine praise and gratitude into whole new dimensions. (For more on this see the [Pick Ax of Praise](#) and the [Bring the Hammer Down](#).)



There are two sides to the love of God as a motivation: one is soft and tender; the other is tough as nails. The soft and tender side is primarily a feeling. We love Him because He first loves us—this is a natural response of our hearts. We also love Him because He gives us a love to love Him with—this is supernatural assistance. Scripture says that God sheds His love “abroad in our hearts.” However little we may actually feel His love, this is the deep wellspring of an unending desire in us to love and please him.

Consider how deep [the love of God](#) really is: His feeling of love for us is an ocean compared to ours; His passionate affection a torrent like Niagara Falls. Not only is His love in us as a love for us; it is in us as a love for God and for others. This river wants to flow! Because it can easily be blocked by unforgiveness, doubts and fears, our job is to keep our hearts cleared of these obstacles. (See our lesson on [Spiritual Strongholds](#).) By “un-damming” our hearts of anything that obstructs the love of God, we not only allow feelings of peace and love to resurface; we are



actually fulfilling our Number One assignment—to love God first and foremost! Paul gives us a sparkling vision of what that can be like.

So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 3:17-19 ESV

A Love as Strong as Death

Since not everything in life is “sweetness and light,” true love has to grow a tougher dimension than simple feelings of affection. This “tough as nails” side of love is best described as loyalty. We want to be loyal to the One who took that beating and died that death for us! We want to show Him how much His sacrifice means to us by being willing to lay our lives down for Him. Above all, we don’t want to disgrace the One who brought such saving grace to us. This is a fierce loyalty that would rather [die to self](#), or even die in this life, than turn against or stray away from the Greatest Friend we have ever known. Hear the heart cry of the beloved in the Song of Solomon and make it your own.

Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised. Song of Solomon 8:6-7 ESV

This motivation operates by a higher desire than the fear of God which is inevitably attached to our own self-interest, no matter how enlightened it may be. The love of God in us wants to become as self-forgetting, self-giving and self-sacrificing as that love that we see in Jesus. Because we love Him, we want to live under His leadership and stay intimately united to His Presence. Since we love Him because He first loves us, it is essential that we keep putting our spiritual eyes back on Jesus and the grace He supplies.



CHAPTER NINE

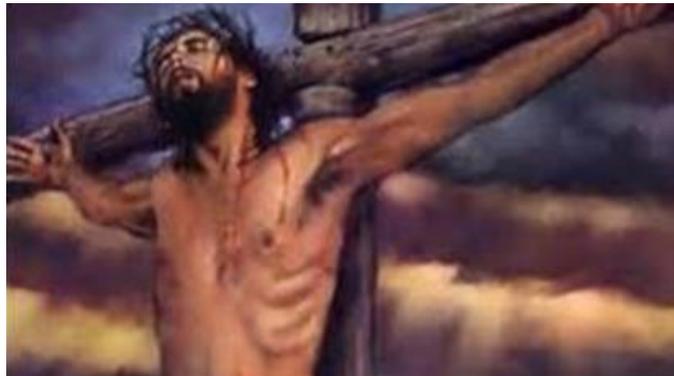
Gifted with Propitiation

This is definitely an old-fashioned word, a relic from the ancient past which sounds as if it can have no relevance to our life and times. Certainly, it is a word which we never use anymore, but is it an action that is no longer done? In fact, it is done all the time! Whenever we try to gain someone's favor, placate their anger, or appease their demands we have been "propitiating" without even know it. Yet, God did it best of all when God did it for God...

But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 John 2:1-2 ESV

Why This Is Important

In the ancient world around the Mediterranean basin it was well known that "the gods" could angry with you in a heartbeat. Even if you weren't trying to offend them, they could still kill you or make your life miserable if anything you did set a match to their temper. To placate the anger of the gods, sacrifices were offered to restore the hapless worshipper to favor. This is the origin of propitiation. The human initiated attempt to turn a god's anger aside is the desperate impulse behind all religious sacrifice—apart from Christianity.



We know what that impulse is like don't we? We hate the feeling of someone's anger hanging over us like a sword. Is God's anger "hanging over" us too? Even in Christianized countries where the image of God as a loving Father has been somewhat restored, the impulse to fear God's sudden wrath runs strong in many imaginations. It appears that the fear of God as an angry God is deeply embedded in our hearts—and with good reason it would seem. Is God not justly angered over our sins?

Amazing Grace to the Rescue!

Thankfully, He is not. This alone would set Christianity apart from all other religions: God has placated His own anger! He offered up His own Son in propitiation for the sins of the world. God the Son's punishment's fully satisfied God the Father's righteous indignation. The wrath that should have been ours has completely been turned aside and we (who believe) have been restored to high favor with God through the sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad: Your Father is not mad at you (and never has been)!



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There are three powerful “theories” of what God was doing through the sacrifice of Jesus at the cross (see [Victim, Victor, Vision](#)). The earliest idea was that of Christ as Victor: He defeated Satan who held us captive. This builds on the ransom. During the Middle Ages Anselm of Canterbury set forth the idea of Christ as Victim: His death fully satisfied God’s wrath. This built upon propitiation and justification. A third idea focuses on the vision of sacrificial love that transforms us. This builds on revelation. All three ideas have great merit and, happily, there is no need to choose between them. God is fully capable of accomplishing many things at one time!



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CHAPTER TEN

Gifted with the Ransom

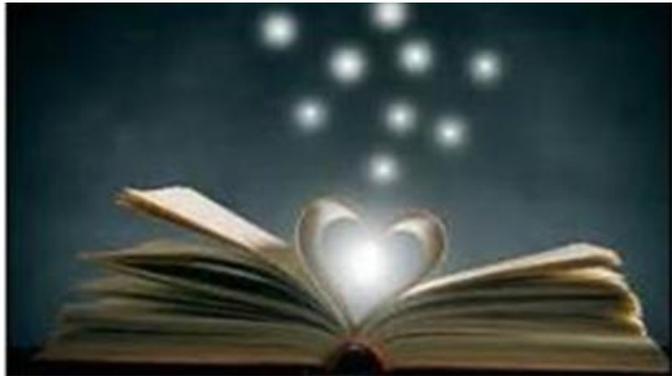
Everyone loves a good romance. The idea of star crossed lovers, of undying love, of wicked villains and heroic sacrifice—these are the stuff of legend and great movies. They are also the hidden truths of your story. The Lord's rescue of us has all the elements of a great romance. What could turn the bride-to-be's heart better than that sight of her Beloved risking His all to ransom her from the grip of pure evil?

"Even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Matthew 20:28 ESV

Our Fragile Sense of Self-Worth

What do you think you are worth? Many people struggle to find some sane and stable sense of self-worth. We don't want to overvalue ourselves—that's obvious conceit and pride. But it is very hard not to undervalue ourselves whenever we get honest about our moral failure. The truth of the matter is we are so morally bankrupt that we can't begin to work our way out of our genuine debt to God. We owe Him everything, especially our steadfast love and obedience. How are you measuring up on that one?

Even Jesus has a low opinion of our potential contribution. He once said emphatically, "Apart from Me you can do nothing." That's not intended to bolster our flagging self-esteem! Then there is Paul, who set the highest possible standard for Christian faithfulness under outrageously adverse circumstances, who nevertheless lamented that "In me dwells no good thing." This description of human failure apart from Christ applies to us too, leaving us nothing to boast about, and much to shrink from. Where can we go to get our sense of self-worth restored?



Your True Value to Jesus

To the marketplace! It turns out that our true worth can be valued by what someone is willing to pay for us! (Who ever said that the free market was heartless?) Jesus was willing to lay down His life as a Ransom for our own. Nothing less would do; and He was willing to do all it took. Like the love-stricken man in the story He told, He saw a treasure hidden in the field, then went off to sell all that He had to gain what His heart desired. You are the treasure He saw. You have been "bought with a price"—the price of His own Blood.

The Ransom tells us that we have a Hero, One who is totally, even recklessly, devoted to us. Our sense of self-worth is founded upon the solid Rock of His love for us. Period. Add



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exclamation point! But the Ransom also tells us that some cruel captor held us in bondage and, like Pharaoh of old, wasn't about to let us go. We have an implacable enemy and it is good to be reminded to stay on guard against his incursions.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Gifted with Reconciliation

Have you ever had someone so upset with you that no matter what you did, you couldn't help them get over it? It feels terrible when one of our relationships is out of whack—and so peaceful and life-giving when it is restored. Our relationship with God was in desperate need of reconciliation, even if we didn't know it. Have you noticed, though, how much more peaceful you feel now that you believe in Jesus and have Him living inside of you? That peace—the peace of Christ—is the peace of reconciliation!

That is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 2
Corinthians 5:19 ESV

The Incomparable Peace of Christ

A loss of peace alerts us that something is going wrong. We need this kind of warning system: there are so many things that can go wrong! What we don't need is to be stressed up all the time. To help us with this and so many other things, our Father has sent the Peace of Christ into our lives. But first He had to help us recognize the Main Thing that had gone wrong: We were separated from Him by our sins. Then He had to help us figure out that there was nothing we could do about it. Then He had to help us discover and believe in His answer: Jesus!

Probably while all of this was going on you were stressing up even more. Right? The closer we try to get to God—without Christ bridging the gap—the more we inevitably feel the anguish of God's apparent absence. When Jesus finally showed up as Answer to your prayers, the peace flooded in to fill you. What a relief! [St. Augustine](#) called this deep-seated emptiness on the inside, the “God-shaped void” because only He can fill it.



God, you made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you.

God's Answer to Our Emptiness

Along with conscience that void is God's homing beacon. God didn't make it, though—we did. It is the hole left when Adam chose to feed on forbidden fruit, rather than stay in fellowship with his God. He pushed God out to let sin in! Don't be shocked: We do it all the time, too. Keeping God out, living without God in the inside, felt so natural that many of us hardly questioned it. To



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make matters worse, some of us actually let the devil in. All of us let Self take over. As they say, nature hates a vacuum. So it seems, does the spiritual life.

God, however, saw how desperately empty we were and He grieved over the lost and broken relationship with us, even if we didn't. He set out to make things right, saw that we could in no way ever hold up our end, and decided to do it all Himself. There! That's salvation history in a nutshell. Any good church will fill you in on the whole story (be sure to find a good church—it is one of the Two Key Acquisitions listed in your ["Quick Start" Guide](#)). For now, let's consider how good the Peace of Christ is now that it has become a treasured part of your inheritance in Christ.

Living in the Fullness of His Peace

The peace lets us know that we are reconciled with God and He is reconciled to us. On God's side the reconciliation is complete. That is why the peace is always available to us. The faith that we have received through the gospel—the good news that God is for us—gives us a baseline level of peace. We, however, can easily lose the fullness of the peace. Any “step” away from trusting the Lord, any actual step into disobedience will weaken the bond of peace.

This is God's way of alerting us that we are drifting away from where we need to be—sticking close to Jesus. The Holy Spirit watches over us, alerting us by lifting the peace if we are letting go of trust or failing to follow through on something Jesus is asking us to do. Eventually, this peace can grow so powerful within you that it becomes a might river lifting you over things that used to stress you in daily life. For now, learn to notice when the peace goes missing, and RUN back to Jesus to get it restored!



CHAPTER TWELVE

Gifted with Redemption

Redemption has many meanings and practically infinite applications. The idea behind it is payment of a debt, setting free from slavery or captivity, or buying back something sold. Jesus, our mighty Redeemer, does all of the above! That's the meaning—treasure it in your heart. Then saturate it with faith and spread it all over every troubled area of your life. The application has endless possibilities...

For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth.

Job 19:25 ESV

Our Relentless Redeemer

Redemption is probably not a word that is easy for most of us to define, though we do have common everyday experiences with it. Nevertheless, we have an instinctive sense that it is important. In fact, it is woven into the very fiber of God's secret, unceasing labor in our daily lives. Some of the most powerful Christian songs focus on Jesus as our Redeemer.

Follow this link to hear Keith Green's "[There Is a Redeemer.](#)"



Have you ever pawned something, but eventually had enough money to redeem it? Redemption at the pawn shop means buying back the thing you still want. Have you ever disappointed a friend, and later tried to find a way to redeem yourself? Personal redemption is making amends for social blunders. When you have coupons, do you look for opportunities to redeem them? Redeeming a coupon is getting an actual cash value for an otherwise worthless piece of paper. When you read a novel or watch a movie, aren't you hoping for a good ending to redeem the hero or heroine's suffering? Wanting good to triumph is looking for redemption.

From Trivial to Titanic

These trivial uses of the term give us tantalizing hints of the reality scripture seeks to describe. We have a God who will stop at nothing to buy us back. We sold ourselves into slavery and captivity to sin, Jesus paid the price of our redemption with His own Blood. We have seriously disappointed the heart of God and could do nothing to redeem our failures. The Father sent Jesus to be our Redeemer—only He could make amends to God and satisfy the Father's heart. Now that He has redeemed us, Jesus is able to "cash in" on His investment and bring forth our true value as Bridal lovers. These are tremendous acts of redemption.



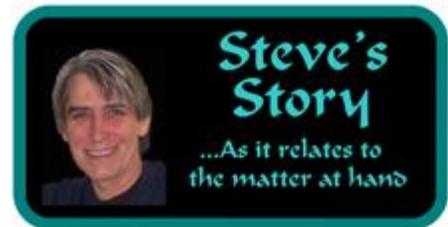
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Good triumphing over evil is the ultimate demonstration of redemption. That's probably why every "good" movie has powerful undercurrents of redemption to it. Something has gone wrong. How can it be overturned? People are suffering, but the problems seem insurmountable. The ending has to more than make up for the struggle the main characters have had to go through. These images are so powerful; the hero/heroine's final triumph touches us so deeply. No wonder we love to watch good movies!

A Lifetime of Redemption

Welcome to your new life in Christ. You, too, have a Hero who is completely committed to overturning all the works of spiritual darkness in your life. His first task has been to free you from spiritual blindness and separation from your God. Now that you know your Redeemer lives you can cooperate with Him as He works to rebuild your life upon His ways. He sees the gold of His own nature inside of you and is eager to lead you into becoming the person He created you to be. Not only that but He is determined to overturn every evil the enemy has ever sent or will send against you. That's a lifetime work of redemption!



The "magnificent promise" of redemption is Romans 8:28. That's what I always call it for nothing describes better the way my heart feels about it. Coming out of immense and intensely oppressive spiritual darkness, I needed a LOT of redemption. That story is told in [Rescued from Hell](#). The essence of what I learned along the way is this: You can release any damage, any loss, any failure to God and feel very good about the whole thing, IF you learn to believe this one promise over each remembered point of pain:

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28 WEB

Everywhere the curse has gone, everything the enemy has bent or twisted, now is subject to our Redeemer's secret, relentless labor to overturn it and make it serve his redemptive purposes. I have learned to take every negative or broken thing in my life as a captive to Romans 8:28. Holding the offense up to the light of Christ, I pray my heart into the power of believing that somehow it is being made to work for my good, the greater good and God's glory. Then the river of peace is released. That's magnificent redemption!



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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Gifted with Regeneration

Regeneration simply means that we have been brought back to life: re-generated. Of course it can be made much more complicated than that by asking the obvious question: "Was I dead and didn't know it?" Yes, that's it! "But in what way dead? And how was I brought back to life? And why didn't I know it? And why don't I always feel more alive?" Now, that's too many questions!

He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.

Titus 3:5 ESV

Reborn with "Eyes" of Faith

Let's start with the Biblical fact: We have been "born anew" or "born from above" in the words of Jesus. The common phrase for this nowadays is being "born again." In speaking with Nicodemus, Jesus said that without this new birth, we would not be able to "see" or "enter" the kingdom of God and then He said that these were "earthly" things. So the new birth brings us into a life on earth in which we can see something previously hidden from our eyes. Without the ability to see we cannot even enter this kingdom. What is He talking about?

The new birth gives us eyes of faith to see Jesus as both Savior and Lord. For me this was the absolute first thing about it. I suddenly "knew" that Jesus was Lord, had always been Lord, and I was only now "seeing" the truth that had been there all along. I'm sure most, if not all, Christians can say with the formerly blind man at the Pool of Bethesda, "I was blind, but now I see."



Regenerated Vision

According to Paul, we were all blind from birth with our spiritual sight veiled from "seeing" the Lord of glory. This was due to the Fall when our first father Adam lost the ability to hold an accurate Image of God in his heart. Adam's blindness was passed on to all of us. With the new birth spiritual sight is restored! This is a major part of what brings us to life: We are now able to behold Him who is our life.

John says that to know Jesus is eternal life. To not know Jesus is, therefore, a form of "living death" from which we have now been delivered. The unveiling of our spiritual eyes enables us to see Jesus and that unites us to His eternal life. This is one aspect of what took place in the regeneration and it is likely the one with the most immediate and profound effect upon us.



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Another side to regeneration is that until Christ came we were "dead" in our trespasses and sins. Even our spirit—which we may not have known we had—was dead; it could not produce life in us. In seeking the salvation that God offers, we [repented](#) of our sins and asked to be forgiven. The Father then came mercifully to our rescue by forgiving us, [justifying](#) us (through faith and through the Blood of Christ), giving us a new heart, a new spirit and placing His own [Holy Spirit with us](#). What a whirlwind of activity that is! All of this effectively brings us back to life. We are raised by grace as [New Creations](#) into a brand new life of faith.



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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Gifted with *New* Relationships

You may be thinking, "But I already have lots of people in my life—that's part of the problem!" We all have relationships with other people, but that's not what the new birth brings us. It doesn't bring us more of the same; it radically changes what we have had in every dimension. Here's how:

From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh... Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 2 Corinthians 5:16-17 ESV

Three Transformed Relationships

It's likely that you didn't see this coming, either. Many of us sought the Lord to get free of our personal hell on earth, or to escape the hell waiting to claim us down the road. We wanted salvation! We didn't realize that God's way of saving us would transform every relationship we had and bring new ones into play we didn't know existed.

1. Your Relationship with God

You have had a relationship with God all of your life and likely didn't know it. He has always been there—in your life and in your mind. Now that God is in your heart, revealing Himself to you through the Person of His Son, you are entering into a whole new level of relationship with Him. It's an eye open, ear open, heart open communion and communication with God Himself. This was not possible before faith removed the veil.

God has given you a true knowledge of Himself through your new-found faith in Jesus.

However, don't make the mistake of thinking that now that you are born again you know who Jesus is—as if you know all that is necessary about Him. You know

Him truly, but you don't know Him fully. In any moment of life—if we know Jesus as fully as we need to in that moment—there would only be perfect peace and joy going off inside, no matter what might be happening around us. God is a huge Mystery. The adventure of discovering who He is more fully has now begun!



2. Your Relationship with Others

You have known people all of your life, but you have only known them "according to the flesh"—right up to the moment that Jesus came to save you. Now that Jesus is living inside you several things have radically changed. First of all, you are now united in an eternal family with everyone else that He is saving. The Body of Christ stretches from here to heaven. The number of your "Blood relatives" instantly leapt into the untold millions! And they are all alive in the Spirit, especially the ones in heaven. Those are the ones who are most fully and gloriously alive. All of them are alive to Christ—that's the key and it unlocks the second radical change.

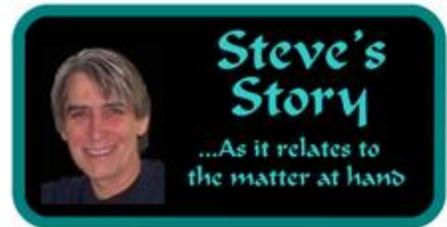
People are a vast mystery! You can only truly understand, relate to and know other people now through Him. He is the measure of all things!

You are going to want to learn how to gain His heart for the lost, His compassion for the broken and His chaste love for the lovely. There is no one He doesn't love and no one He loves in a wrong way. And he is now inside you, resisting all of your wrong ways of relating to people and blessing all of your right ones.

3. Your Relationship with Yourself

Here you might be thinking, "Well, at least I know myself!" Oh really? You were actually dead from God's point of view before Jesus came to live in you. Even your spirit was dead. Did you know that? That old you has now died—even if it still seems to be alive and kicking. Who you really are now is a mystery hidden with Christ in God.

Jesus in you is the absolute game changer! You are destined to become just like Him. In fact the New Testament is very bold in stating that that new you is already inside of you! Anything in you that doesn't match up with Jesus is not you—not the real you, the you that will live forever. That would be the old you, the you that is passing away. You will end up repenting if you go along with any attitude that doesn't match up with Him. No matter how long you have held it, it is still not the real you, because the new you wants to break through to the surface. The real you wants to get the old you out of the way! Shakes hands with the mystery of you!



What a gift! All three possible kinds of personal relationships transformed: with God, with others and with ourselves. Certainly, none of them are restored yet in anything like the fullness to come. Some are still in need of tremendous repair. Nevertheless, with faith and grace now working for us, and with renewed hearts to work with, we can at last make headway on [the great purpose](#) of our lives: to love God to the uttermost and to love others as ourselves. And did you notice the restoration of Mystery surrounding all three? It had always been there, but in our cynical, know-it-all way, we thought we knew ourselves and others. Now, we know that limitless exploration and adventure lies ahead.



CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Gifted with Repentance

Have you ever thought of repentance is a gift? It sure doesn't feel that way! Usually, when we realize that we have done wrong, we feel guilt which feels lousy—not at all like receiving a present. We may also feel fear ("What kind of trouble am I in now? Is God going to be mad at me?"). That certainly doesn't feel like a blessing! We may also feel the sting of wounded pride and shame ("How could I have done that? I'll just die if _____ finds out!"). Not good, right? Just guessing, you probably didn't like to take your medicine either.

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. 2 Corinthians 7:10 ESV

Why We Have It Better Than the Angels

Have you ever thought about why we get to repent and the angels didn't? Sometimes it helps to see something that feels onerous in a different light. Repentance can be onerous: We hate getting it wrong and having to go back to someone to apologize. Even worse is having "our noses rubbed in it" by someone who is lording over our moment of abasement. Being "called on the carpet" by God may seem like the ultimate affront to our dignity. But perhaps we are seeing repentance in the wrong light.

You don't "have to" repent. That's the God's honest truth. You could easily refuse to repent and guarantee hell as your ultimate destination. That is your choice and no one, not even God who loves you best, will ever take your control over that decision away from you. You alone get to choose life or death, blessing or cursing. God can't choose it for you—or



you would be enslaved to His will. He wants you free! But He will do everything in His power to help you see that choice (and every other choice) in the best possible light, so that you can make the right decision, if you want to. One definition of grace is that God is giving us time to turn around and helping us see our need to turn to Him.

The Angels Didn't Get to Repent

The angels didn't get that. Why? One third of the heavenly host fell from grace in an instant, never to recover, never to repent. We have been falling for six thousand years! God is always sending His Word to us, His Spirit to us, and His servants to us to try to get us to turn before we burn. Not only that (though that should be sufficient), He whispers within our conscience and shouts at us through the glory of creation's beauty. If we still don't get the message that we are



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going the wrong way, He allows consequences to work us over. Don't blame Him for the pain: Whenever we choose to sin, we are also choosing the consequence that comes with it. It's a real world, a moral and spiritual universe not of our making, with consequences going out in every direction.

Why weren't the angels given our blessing of being wooed and winnowed into repentance? In one terrible moment of time they made their decision and God made His. God saw their rebellion and they were instantly, finally and fatally banished from His presence. No right of appeal, no opportunities for pardon, only the unbending decree: "Depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness." Why? Here it is in a nutshell: They were born into the light; we were born in darkness, spiritually blind.

A Strange Benefit of Spiritual Blindness

The angels always live in that realm of spirit now invisible to us; there is nothing hindering their spiritual vision. They could see the Lord God in all of His beauty and majesty and still freely chose to reject Him, following Lucifer instead into eternal darkness. It was impossible for God to reveal more of Himself than they were already seeing, so their decision to turn away from the Light was irreversible. Not so with us.

We have been "in the dark" from the beginning. That's our problem—we are blinded by our sins and our ancestral separation from being able to see God as originally intended. But the problem is also our salvation. The "safety net" God created for us is the material world. That same veil of time and space which now keeps us from seeing God also gives us the opportunity for God's saving grace to work. It is because we cannot see directly by heaven's Light that we have the opportunity to repent and return to it. As Jesus comes into our lives, the "lights go on" and God begins a slow, lifelong process of drawing us out of darkness into His marvelous light. One step of repentance at a time.



CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Gifted with Resurrection

Naturally enough, the big resurrection that has all of us shouting is that Jesus has been raised from the dead. Because He lives, we have a solid hope that one day we too will be raised from death to live eternally with Him. But don't stop there. Many things go down towards death: hopes die, relationships die, careers die, loved ones die, dreams die. Our need for "resurrections" is life-long!

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life." John 11:25 ESV

The Possibility of Endless Resurrections

What does "resurrection" mean to you? Usually, it means that of Jesus being raised from the dead or our own future resurrection to heaven after death. These are incredible, heavenly gifts. Had Jesus stayed dead two unspeakable horrors would have befallen us:

- a) We would have been carried to hell by our sins—there would be no atonement.
- b) We would never be able to know and love the Lord—there could be no new life through faith in Him.



Can any of us fathom how utterly empty our universe would be—even if we could be spared hell—if Jesus were not here to fill it? One day, one Everlasting Day, He will fill our lives, not just with good things, but with Himself. We will see Him and know Him even as He now knows us. He is already the Source of unceasing delight to countless throngs of angels and innumerable believers who have gone before us. His resurrection not only gives us a life in heaven, but it gives us Him in heaven—and that is by far the greater gift!

Resurrection Is Also for this Life

Even so, the gift of resurrection doesn't end there! So many relationships, events and things in life have a way of going downhill. Even our physics tells us that the universe itself is winding down towards death—Entropy rules. No, it doesn't—Resurrection rules! Jesus is Lord of the Resurrection—He says that He *is* resurrection.

By His death He descended into death. Now that He has been raised by God, Jesus stands ready to raise anyone and anything that is attached to Him by faith. Is your marriage going down towards death? Jesus can raise it. Is your business going down towards bankruptcy? Jesus can



raise it. Have your hopes and dreams gone into the tank? Jesus can raise them. There is nothing that He cannot raise from the dead!

We Follow Him into Resurrected Life

So bold is He about His abilities that He calls us to willingly go down into death by embracing our crosses in life. This is the famous “dying to self” which is so hard to master, but which every new disciple (follower of Jesus) has to begin learning. The promise behind it is that if we learn to say “no” to ourselves and “take up” our cross (the thing that is “killing” us), we will follow Jesus into a resurrected life like His. There is clearly a mystery here as great as the promise, but it is one we need to grasp. C.S. Lewis wrote this about it:

The principle runs through all life from top to bottom. Give up yourself, and you will find your real self. Lose your life and you will save it. Submit to death, death of your ambitions and favorite wishes every day and death of your whole body in the end: submit with every fiber of your being, and you will find eternal life. Keep back nothing. Nothing that you have not given away will ever be really yours. Nothing in you that has not died will ever be raised from the dead. C. S. Lewis: [Mere Christianity](#)

The truth is that we who now live by faith have been united by God's Spirit to the "indestructible life" of Jesus. Nothing that is truly His can ever be held by death—much less be destroyed by it. Death has no power over those of us who are now "in Christ." What gets raised to life may be nothing like what went down into death, but it WILL be worth the pain of the passage. Take heart, dear believer: Resurrection is always in our future.



CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Gifted with Revelation

You are trapped in a dark room and can't find the door. You can't think of a way out. You can't grope for and find the way out. You are getting increasingly worried and desperate. Then some kind Person turns on the lights for you. Now you can see your way around. You can even see the One who took pity on you and enlightened you. What a revelation!

For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. Galatians 1:12 ESV

The Spiritually Blind Need Revelation

Revelation is a saving gift of grace every time it comes our way. God reveals something we couldn't grasp without His help. We could have all the knowledge, facts and earth-bound understanding at our fingertips and still not know a thing of real, spiritual value. We could even read the Bible day in day out, study and argue it with the best of them, and still not be transformed by the truths it contains. Even with the Bible, perhaps especially with the Bible, we need heaven's perspective and the Holy Spirit's help to see, understand and deeply believe truth in a way that will liberate us.

God Reveals Himself to Us

God gives His saving truths to us. God also reveals Himself to us. He didn't have to do that: He might have been able to save us by giving us saving knowledge alone—by revealing truths to us. Instead, God chose to save us by revealing Himself to us—by revealing the One who is Truth to us.



Revelation is intensely and inseparably personal—salvation is nothing less than the revealing of Jesus Christ to a soul lost in darkness. We are intended not just to know about God, but to intimately know God Himself. To know Him for ourselves. Revelation is designed to draw us deeper into the endlessly fascinating Mystery of who He is.

God Reveals Truth to Us

Revelation is also designed to liberate us so that He can live in us and we can live through Him. In any moment no matter what our situation, if we knew the truth from God's perspective, we would be singing with the angels. God wants us to re-gain His perspective, to see truth through



His eyes, so that we can see our way to recover the path of life we lost due to our Fall from grace.

The main things standing in our way are the things we already believe as true. These are often so deeply held within us that we don't question them or even recognize that they are there. It's become our way of seeing the world, of judging and understanding people and events and of assessing our own situation, hopes and concerns. Our deepest beliefs are held tenaciously within our hearts, often locked down tight by our minds.

God Reveals Our Self to Us

Revelation, therefore, is also about God revealing things about ourselves to ourselves. Who we really are—both in our fallenness and in our new life—are mysteries that require God to unveil. It takes the considerable power of the Spirit's revelation of a truth for it to get past our mind and penetrate our deep heart. When that kind of light dawns, it always ushers forth a "new day" in our lives. Here's the way Oswald Chambers put it in *My Utmost for His Highest* (January 13th):

If you are going on with God, the only thing what is clear to you, and the only thing God intends to be clear, is the way he deals with your own soul.

Never settle for head knowledge alone. Press in to know the Lord!



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CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Gifted with Salvation

Have you just been saved? Get used to being saved. It is a whole new way of life. When the Lord put in scripture three times that everyone who calls on His name would be saved, He wasn't wasting the ink. He knows He will have to save us often. Like toddlers who need a lot of looking after so do we: From reminders that come in the nick of time, to deliverance from oppressive feelings, to helping with problems at work, at home, with finances, etc. Make sure you know how to call His number!

Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. Hebrews 7:25
ESV

How Great Is this Salvation?

The Lord is unstinting with His gifts! Salvation is the gift that goes on giving. Increasingly, as you go along you will experience wonder at the magnitude of His love and of His power at saving you through your faith in Christ. Let's hope that you will always be able to keep your heart fired-up by fanning the flames of gratitude over what Jesus did for you at the cross.

Such thoughts as these are the source of a truly endless capacity to take fresh joy at the realization of how great a salvation we are receiving. Let exclamations of "Jesus, You saved me from hell. You are saving me for heaven!" propel your heart into gratitude in times of worship. Use it to re-adjust your perspective over current troubles you may be facing: "Well, at least I'm only going *through* hell. Thank God, I'm not going *to* hell!" Keep in mind, though, that this is only the beginning...



Everything Between Heaven and Hell

The gift of salvation also covers everything thing between heaven and hell. Salvation is not just about rescuing us from hell and giving us safe passage to heaven—as eternally important as that is. In every situation we may face where earth experience is less than heavenly, God wants to bring His salvation. And He desires to work through you to do it. Sure, He will work for you, rescuing you in countless ways in which you call upon His Name or when others are calling out to Him on your behalf, but it doesn't end there.



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Because we do get things wrong so often, saving us will always entail outside rescue from time to time. Still, the greater part of the long-term rescue He intends is teaching us to walk in His ways, so that (among other blessings) we won't need to be bailed out nearly as often. Teaching us His ways as we come to Him for guidance is the "painless" form of saving us. It saves us from the disasters that follow whenever we go our own way away from Him. However, even when we initiate a disaster by misuse of our free will, He will kindly use the pain of what follows to help save us from ever wanting to go that wrong way again. He works to save us coming and going!



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CHAPTER NINETEEN

Gifted with Sanctification

Maybe you didn't ask for this, but your prayer to be saved has now enrolled you in a life-long process of being "sanctified." Yes, that is a \$5.00 church word if ever there was one, but it means something you won't want to miss. It means that we are being washed clean. We are being cleansed of wrong thoughts, mistaken beliefs, sinful practices—all kinds of things that get in the way of the peace-filled, grace-full way of life set before us.

And such were some of you [sinful]. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. 1 Corinthians 6:11 ESV

You May Need a Good Scrubbing

In seeking to be saved, we began by turning from sin to God. God saves us by forgiving us and justifying us. Usually some of our former sinful ways are taken from us. He even starts making us "holy as He is holy" by putting His Holy Spirit within us, united to us. This is just the beginning. By these means we are reborn as "new creations." However, just because a sudden conversion may make you *feel* like an entirely new person, doesn't mean that you are even remotely free of sinful ways, wrong beliefs, or false understandings. That will require a lot of scrubbing!

Sanctification saves us from sin; it is the necessary sequel to [justification](#). The forgiveness we receive through being justified by faith saves us from the penalty of sin—from the punishment our sins deserved. We don't have to experience hell after we die! God's work in sanctifying us goes even further. Through sanctification God works to free us from the power of sin—so that we don't have to experience being controlled by hell while we live.



Time, Truth and Holy Spirit

This process takes time, our hearty cooperation and two things: the Holy Spirit and belief in the truth. God's part in this comes through the Holy Spirit; our part comes through our belief in the truth. What holds us in the power of sin is essentially a deception. The enemy is a past master at making the right thing seem wrong and the wrong thing seem right—and then convincing us that his thoughts in us are actually our own. Only truth can break the grip of spiritual darkness. That's why Jesus stressed the need to intimately know the truth:



"If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8:31-33 ESV

God's Part and Ours

The Holy Spirit has been sent to us to reveal the truth. Only He can do this. Only God can "turn on the lights" for anyone trapped in the darkness of a sin pattern they cannot even see to break. But there is so much we can do to cooperate with the Holy Spirit: We can seek to maintain a teachable attitude (open to correction) and we can seek the Lord "where He can be found." It is well known that the Lord loves to hang out with us through [the "Big Five" Connectors](#): Bible study, prayer, worship, fellowship and service. Through these activities He is able to lead us into greater revelations of truths which ultimately can liberate us.

It is our job to believe the truths which the Holy Spirit reveals. It is of little practical value, for instance, for me to believe in my head that God loves me, if in my heart I'm convinced He doesn't; or to memorize the scripture that God "works all things for good," but to go on believing in my heart that I'll never get over past hurts and disasters. No, truth was NEVER intended to be a mere thing of the mind. It only has fulfilled its true purpose of liberation and transformation when we believe it from the heart. That's when the lasting change arrives!

