

LOVE THE LEARNING

Building on the basics!



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INTRODUCTION

1John4:17

"And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.

If we are to live like Jesus, it makes sense to know His ways and how to operate in the power and authority he demonstrated. It makes sense to know who we are in Him and how it all happens. It makes sense to understand the Truths of Scripture, as well as the contradictions and lies we might encounter. Welcome to my eBook, "Love The Learning." It covers topics such as what it means to be born again, the Cross, repentance, renewing your mind, prayer, baptism and ministry. "Love The Learning" is suitable for both new believers and those seeking deeper theological insights. It adopts a practical and reflective approach that is easy to understand. It is for the new Christian, the mature Christian, the student, and as a refresher of the basics. Paul speaks for all Christians when he wrote this pivotal scripture,

“Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled and became slaves to many lusts and pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy, and we hated each other. But—When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit. He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior. Because of his grace he made us right in his sight and gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life” (Titus 3:3-7).

THE CROSS

From the moment of creation, God has had a plan for humanity. This plan is described as a "secret for centuries and generations past, but now it has been revealed to God's people" (Colossians 1:26). We can know the secret or the truths because it was revealed to us. Verse 27 tells us the secret: "Christ lives in you."

The Cross is the centre of God's entire plan of redemption, the centre point of history. It was not something God thought up at the last moment. From the moment of Adam's fall, the plan of the Cross was put in motion (Genesis 3:15; Revelation 13:8).

The "heart" of the Cross has always been in the heart of the Father. "For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16 NLT)

There came a time in history, approximately 2000 years ago, when the time was right for God to enact His plan of redemption. He sent His only Son from heaven to earth; Jesus was born under the Law of Moses to redeem the whole population of the world from the death penalty (Galatians 4:4). According to the Bible, the crucifixion of Jesus is a great

accomplishment. Jesus achieved things by his suffering and death that his teaching and miracles could never have accomplished.

The Cross is the basis of the Good News that God has for the world. Everything we know about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus is found in the Bible. From Genesis to Revelation, the scriptures point us to one thing: Salvation through Jesus Christ, achieved through faith in Him. It makes great sense, therefore, to understand the finished work of the Cross.

We can only understand something in the Bible if we understand it in the light of the Cross. Any message that is not consistent with what Jesus accomplished for us at the Cross is not valid. For example, to say that you can get to heaven by just belonging to a church is not true. To say that doing good and just being a good person can get you to heaven is just not true. To say that doing penance will get you to heaven is not true. To say that all religions are paths to God is not true. These sentiments are invalid because they ignore the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus. There is only one way.

There Is No Other Way. Salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus and what He did on the cross for us. No amount of good works or obeying the laws (self-righteousness) will gain our salvation. Jesus is the only way to Heaven.

Acts 4:12 NLT clearly says, "There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved." And John 12:48 tells us, "All who reject me and my message will be judged on the day of judgment by the truth I have spoken." Let's look at this in context.

"For Jesus is the one referred to in the Scriptures, where it says, 'The stone that you builders rejected has now become the cornerstone.' There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:11–12).

Peter and John had healed a crippled man, and they were arrested and stood before the council of all the rulers, elders and teachers. The council demanded to know by what power and in whose name they had healed a helpless man. Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said, "Are we being questioned today because we've done a good deed for a crippled man? Do you want to know how he was healed?" "Let me clearly state to all of you and to all the people of Israel that he was healed by the powerful name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, the man you crucified but whom God raised from the dead." (Acts 4:9–10).

The Jewish leaders were jealous of Jesus, so they rejected and crucified Him. But God raised Him from the dead and placed Him at His right Hand in Heaven. Jesus was the stone they rejected—the chief cornerstone, the Messiah, the foundation who strengthens the whole building. There is no salvation without Him. Matthew 16:18 says, "Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means 'rock'), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it." The Rock is Christ. The church is built upon Christ. We have Peter's explanation of this in his first letter.

"You are coming to Christ, who is the living cornerstone of God's temple. He was rejected by people, but he was chosen by God for great honor. And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple. What's more, you are his holy priests. Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God. As the Scriptures say, "I am placing a cornerstone in Jerusalem, chosen for great honor, and anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced" (1 Peter 2:4–6).

Peter makes it clear that the living stone is Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Saviour, that is His name. In Matthew 1:21, the angel said to Joseph, "And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." There is no other name under heaven that can save you from God's wrath at sin. 1 Corinthians 3:11 Paul wrote, "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one we already have—Jesus Christ."

Why A Sacrifice, And Why Jesus? Because God's judgments, holiness, and righteousness required that when somebody sinned, somebody had to pay. Jesus was the only man who did not sin. Hebrews 9:13–14 explains it for us,

"Under the old system, the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer could cleanse people's bodies from ceremonial impurity. Just think how much more the blood of Christ will purify our consciences from sinful deeds so that we can worship the living God. For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins" (Hebrews 9:13–14).

And Paul explains it in his letter to the Romans, 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord."

Under the Law, an animal without blemish was sacrificed, and the animal died as a substitute for the sinner. Hebrews 9:22 NLT says, "In fact, according to the law of Moses, nearly everything was purified with blood. For without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness."

The blood of the sacrificial animal temporarily cleansed the Old Covenant believer. However, the blood of the Lamb of God continually cleanses the conscience of the New Covenant believer. How? Jesus paid our debt—the penalty of death with His own death. God forgave and took sin away. Declared us innocent of all charges and made us righteous in His sight. We are now the justified, sanctified and redeemed children of God who have access to His Throne of Grace. Someone say Hallelujah!

For years, the Jews had stood over their sacrificial offering and confessed their sins. Then, they would witness the killing with their own eyes, and they would see this innocent animal receive the death they were worthy of.

Next, they would watch it burn as payment and appeasement for their sin.

On the annual Day of Atonement, a goat was sacrificed to pay the penalty for the sins of the people. Leviticus 16:21–22 describes what happened to the goat.

"Through this process, he will purify the Most Holy Place, and he will do the same for the entire Tabernacle, because of the defiling sin and rebellion of the Israelites. No one else is allowed inside the Tabernacle when Aaron enters it for the purification ceremony in the Most Holy Place. No one may enter until he comes out again after purifying himself, his family, and all the congregation of Israel, making them right with the LORD. "Then Aaron will come out to purify the altar that stands before the LORD. He will do this by taking some of the blood from the bull and the goat and putting it on each of the horns of the altar. Then he must sprinkle the blood with his finger seven times over the altar. In this way, he will cleanse it from Israel's defilement and make it holy. "When Aaron has finished purifying the Most Holy Place and the Tabernacle and the altar, he must present the live goat.

He will lay both of his hands on the goat's head and confess over it all the wickedness, rebellion, and sins of the people of Israel. In this way, he will transfer the people's sins to the head of the goat. Then a man specially chosen for the task will drive the goat into the wilderness. As the goat goes into the wilderness, it will carry all the people's sins upon itself into a desolate land" (Leviticus 16:21–22).

The sacrificial system was based on a substitute to atone for sins. The Old Covenant believers exercised their faith and believed that God would turn His judgment from them because judgment was satisfied in the death of the animal. But the blood of the animal could not bring forgiveness or take sins away. However, it did temporarily appease God's wrath.

There had to be a death; God had to become a man, and as a man, He took the sentence of death we deserved. It was a life for many lives, a once-and-for-all sacrifice so that sins could be taken away. On the cross, Jesus took responsibility for human sin and suffered punishment and death on our behalf. Only His sacrifice could bring peace between God and

humanity and bring people back to God. "For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Jesus became sin! He was not a mere offering; He did not just offer Himself to God as an appeasement. Jesus became sin. Isaiah 53:6 says, "The LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

Matthew 20:28 Jesus said of Himself, "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many." He gave His life to become sin, and the Father forsook Him. Mark 15:34 says, "Then at three o'clock, Jesus called out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means 'My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?'"

Paul explains it this way, "He was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised to life to make us right with God" (Romans 4:25).

What Did The Cross Accomplish? What did Jesus actually achieve when he suffered and died? The Bible gives an excellent summary in the letter to the Hebrews.

"Because God's children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying. We also know that the Son did not come to help angels; he came to help the descendants of Abraham. Therefore, it was necessary for him to be made in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters, so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. Then he could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people. Since he himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested" (Hebrews 2:14–18).

Here, in just a few sentences, God shows us three significant things that Jesus accomplished on the cross:

1. He destroyed the tyranny of the devil;
2. He bridged the gap between sinful people and the holy God.
3. He became a companion and helper to us in times of testing.

Let's look at each of these accomplishments in more detail. At the cross, Jesus overpowered Satan and completely disarmed him by turning the devil's weapons against him. By the Death and resurrection of Jesus, Satan's two deadliest weapons, sin and death, were destroyed. Jesus didn't just defeat Satan at the cross; He disarmed him, disgraced him and made a public spectacle of him by turning the devil's very own weapons against him. Colossians 2:14–15 tells us that, "He (Jesus) canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross."

Because we belong to Jesus, we are no longer under Satan's power. The menace of death, the horror of sin, the power of Satan, and the dread of hell have been conquered once and for all by Jesus' victory at the cross. Satan's grip has been broken!

A second great accomplishment of the cross is that Jesus bridged the gap between sinful people and a holy God. Being both God and man, Jesus could stand between God and humanity and bridge the gap created by sin. On the cross, Jesus joined himself to us and us to

himself. He who knew no sin became sin for us. He took our guilt and shame and suffered the penalty we deserved, paid the price we owed, made atonement for our offences, and took responsibility for human sin and the punishment for it. Jesus bought us with a price (1 Corinthians 6:20). One aspect of that purchase is that He takes personal responsibility for all our debts, problems, and sins. He made our problems His problems, and His resources our resources. In Christ, we are adopted into God's family. Jesus made it possible for us to have a son/daughter relationship with His Father. "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father" (Romans 8:14–15).

A third accomplishment of the cross is described in Hebrews 2:18, "Since he himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested."

How comforting and inspirational it is for us to know that not only is Jesus the Son of God, but also that He has been through the same struggles we face. Our biggest problem is ourselves. I am the one constant factor in all my problems. Even with Satan and his demons out

of the picture, we'd still be in big trouble without the victory Jesus gained for us.

There Is No Other Way. Salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus and what He did on the cross for us. No amount of good works or obeying the laws (self-righteousness) will gain our salvation. Jesus is the only way to Heaven. Acts 4:12 NLT clearly says, "There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved." And John 12:48 tells us, "All who reject me and my message will be judged on the day of judgment by the truth I have spoken."

What the Word Says. In Ephesians 2:8–9 we read that God saved us by his grace, and we can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

In John 14:6, Jesus clearly states that He is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and that no one can come to God without Him. 1 John 5:12 says that He who has Jesus has life. In John 10:9, we read that Jesus is the door to Heaven. John 11:25 says that Jesus is the resurrection and the life and that through Him we live. Acts 10:40-43 states that God raised Jesus from the dead and commands us to preach that whoever believes in Jesus has forgiveness of sins. And

John 3:3 says that unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Questions That Demand Answers—Why Did Jesus Have to Die? Because the death penalty was what God's righteous judgement demanded, and the only thing that satisfied God's righteous requirements was the death of His sinless and only begotten son, Jesus. (Romans 8:3-4).

What Happened At The Cross? God showed us how much He loved us by paying the death penalty for our sin. Jesus died in our place so we could live free from the shame and burden of a guilty heart and know the Father intimately. The Cross totally disarmed Satan's control over your life (Revelation 1:18). We now have the freedom to make the right choice. Paul wrote in Romans 6:14, "Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace." And "God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children" (Galatians 4:5). We are free to receive Jesus.

What does 2 Corinthians 3:17, "For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom", mean for you?

What Has God Done For Us? In a nutshell

- God now accepts us. He translated into His Kingdom. (2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 1:4-6)
- We are forgiven forever (Mark 3:8; John 1:19; Romans 6:10; Colossians 1:13-14; 2:13; Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 10:12; 1 John 2:2), and God will not hold our sins against us (2 Corinthians 5:19) nor remember them (Hebrews 8:12).
- We are members of God's family (Hebrews 2:11-12; 8:15; John 1:12)
- Nothing can separate us from God's love (Romans 8:38–39).
- We have victory and power over sin. We are no longer slaves to sin. (Romans 6:6)
- We have freedom from sickness (Matthew 8:17; 1 Peter 2:24; Isaiah 53:5).
 - Freedom from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13).
- Freedom from judgment (Romans 8:1; Hebrews 9:26-27).
- Freedom from everlasting death (John 3:16; Romans 5:15, 17, 21; 6:5, 6:23).
- Freedom from the old self (Romans 6:6-7, 14, 17-18).

- The old has gone (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 2:20).
- We have a new nature (Colossians 2:9, 10, 11; 3:10-11; Ephesians 4:24; Galatians 3:27)
- God has put all believers together as one body, reconciled to God and called to live in peace (Ephesians 2:16; 3:6; 4:4; Romans 7:14; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Colossians 3:15).
- We have the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:5; Acts 2:17-19; Galatians 3:14; 1 Corinthians 12:8-11; Galatians 3:5).

On The Cross, God Dealt With Your Old Life Once For All Time.

We must not waste time beating ourselves up for the sins of our lives before we knew God (and even since we knew God). We cannot kill the old life off. God has already done that on the Cross (Romans 6:2-11).

We must receive it as a fact by faith. As a Christian, you too can say—"As for me, may I never boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of that cross, my interest in this world has been crucified, and the world's interest in me has also died"

(Galatians 6:14). Still, we should be looking back 2,000 years to decide whether we are stubbornly

going to believe what God **has already done** in Jesus.

There Is No Separating Who Jesus Is From What He Has Done; He Is Called The Saviour. To live by faith is to live by the simple truth, trusting in, dependent on, adhering to, and deriving power from what Jesus did at the Cross.

When Jesus died on the Cross, God counted His death as our death. Our old life was nailed to the Cross together with Jesus. The Cross of Christ is the turning point of our lives. We have died with Christ and have begun a new life with Him as well.

Ask Yourself:

- "Do I really know what Jesus accomplished at the Cross?"
- "And if so, do I really believe it?"
- What has the cross accomplished in my life?
- "Is the Cross the pivotal point of my life?"
- How do you accept the fact that God has dealt with your old life on the cross?
- Receive the fact by faith.

It takes a decision, not a decision made by someone else on your behalf. Your personal decision determines your eternal destiny, but if you make a decision solely so you can get to Heaven, you will be saved. Still, your Christianity

will not amount to anything. You will not get caught up in God's exciting, dynamic, adventurous and wonderful plan for your life right now.

God's plan of salvation was put into operation the moment Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden. God had you in mind, and everything that God did from that time on was purposed to bring the Saviour into the world.

It is finished—When Jesus died on the cross over 2,000 years ago, he cried, "It is finished" (John 19:30). It was finished; God's whole plan was sealed in the shed blood of Jesus. All the sin of the world was forgiven in that sacrifice. That's the power of the cross.

To All Who Receive Him He Gave! John 1:11–13 says, "He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God."

All people are created in the image of God, but not everyone is a child of God (John 1:11–13). It is a privilege to be a son or daughter of God. It is a privilege that the angels do not have. See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! (1 John

3:1). The promise to us is this: "as Jesus is, so are we." Except that He is God and we are not. "And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world" (1 John 4:17).

If we abide in Jesus and He in us, then our identity is in Jesus: we live like Jesus in this world. 1 John 4:13 says, "By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit." Our identity is in Jesus: we live like Jesus in this world. We are like Jesus because He lives in us.

Here are the likenesses—

- Jesus died and was raised from the dead; we died with Christ (Romans 6:8) and were raised to new life (Romans 6:4).
- Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:16); we, too, are filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2).
- Jesus was sinless (Hebrews 7:26). We are forgiven all our sins (Colossians 2:13; Ephesians 1:7).
- Jesus knew His Father God; 1 John 4:7 says, "Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God."

- Jesus was the Son of God; we are now children of God. Now we call God, "Abba, Father." (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6).
- Jesus is an heir of God, so are we (Romans 8:17).

Responsibility. Along with the right to be children of God, like Jesus, comes authority and responsibility. Receiving Jesus is a big decision. We come to God on His terms and surrender our terms, and we can face our Father with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world. 1 John 3:9 says, "Those who have been born into God's family do not make a practice of sinning, because God's life is in them. So they can't keep on sinning, because they are children of God." God's life in us and enabling Grace make it possible. Receiving and accepting God's forgiveness must be an active, aggressive and deliberate act of our whole being. It is not passive acceptance that we might repeat as a prayer. It is an aggressive acceptance.

What Happens When You Are Born Again? You are born again when you accept and believe what Jesus did for you on the cross, and your new life begins.

Firstly, we must establish the truth that receiving and accepting God's forgiveness must be an active, aggressive and deliberate act of our whole being. It is not passive acceptance that we might repeat as a prayer. It is an aggressive acceptance. We must understand that along with the right to be children of God comes authority and responsibility. Receiving Jesus is a big decision. We come to God on His terms and surrender our terms, and we can face our Father with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.

Secondly, all people are created in the image of God, but not everyone is a child of God (John 1:11–13). It is a privilege to be a son or daughter of God. It is a privilege that the angels do not have. See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! (1 John 3:1).

We are all born as a result of the biological urge between a husband and wife. The Apostle John writes of a birth on another level. A birth that has nothing to do with the human desires of a marriage. John, inspired by the Holy Spirit, writes of a new birth that comes from God, with the right to become His children. It is a sovereign gift that cannot be earned. This is known as conversion or being saved.

"There was a man named Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader who was a Pharisee. After dark one evening, he came to speak with Jesus. "Rabbi," he said, "we all know that God has sent you to teach us. Your miraculous signs are evidence that God is with you." Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God." "What do you mean?" exclaimed Nicodemus. "How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?" Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. So don't be surprised when I say, 'You must be born again' (John 3:1–7).

Ezekiel, an Old Testament Prophet whose ministry extended over twenty-three years from 595-573 B.C., prophesied of a time when this new birth would be a reality. "And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart" (Ezekiel 36:26).

Therefore, we must begin at the beginning with a brand-new birth. We must be born from

above—born into eternity. Otherwise, you can never see the kingdom of God. The expression born again then means born from above by God and the Spirit. As physical birth is necessary to experience life, then spiritual birth is necessary for a life with God.

Jesus is now in Heaven, sitting in judgment at the Right Hand of the Father. He came into the world and suffered the punishment that our sins deserved. He has finished the work of redemption. All our sins were judged at the cross over 2000 years ago! We are born again, filled with the Spirit, as Jesus was and is; so are we. Wow!

What Does Repentance Mean? The word repent in Greek is *metanoeō*. Thayer's Definition: G3340, 1) to change one's mind, i.e. to repent. 2) to change one's mind for better, heartily to amend with abhorrence of one's past sins.

The Prodigal Son changed his mind, turned around and went home to his Father. There was no opportunity to confess all his sins. The Father ran and welcomed him home with a forgiving embrace. (Luke 15:17–19).

At another time, Simon, a Pharisee, asked Jesus to have dinner at his home, when an immoral woman of the street, known to be a prostitute, gatecrashed the dinner party. She

heard that Jesus was eating at Simon's house. She brought a beautiful alabaster jar filled with expensive perfume, knelt at Jesus' feet, and wept. Her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them away with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and applying perfume to them. Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven; your faith has saved you; go in peace." (Luke 7:36–50). The immoral woman did not confess her sins. But she went on her way forgiven, and her life had been turned around. This was a premeditated and planned event on her part. She brought the alabaster jar, filled with perfume. The woman changed her mind before she met the Lord; humility and repentance were the evidence of this change. Jesus affirmed that she was forgiven and that it was her faith that saved her; it was her faith that believed the words Jesus said the first time, "Your sins are forgiven." Faith enabled her to take the grace God gave her. She came to Jesus with a humble attitude that she was not worthy to be in His presence. Jesus did not want her to stay there; He acknowledged her love, forgave her sin, and sent her in peace. There is no record of her confessing sin.

The woman caught in adultery, her sin so serious she faced stoning to death, was thrown at the feet of Jesus. Jesus looked at her with His

Father's heart and said, "I do not condemn you; go and sin no more." (John 8:11). She was not condemned; she did not confess one sin, and her life was turned around with one encounter with the Lord Jesus and the Father heart of God.

Don't get stuck on the word 'repentance'; it does not mean beating ourselves up or showing super sorrow, but a willingness to change from sinful ways. However, confession is good. We come to God and confess to be healed but not to receive forgiveness.

TWENTY-FOUR, FOREVER, FORGIVEN SCRIPTURES FOR YOU—

1. "Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men" (Mark 3:28a).
2. "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29 NLT).
3. "Turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away" (Acts 3:19b).
4. "Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sins are put out of sight" (Romans 4:7).
5. "For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies." (Romans 5:10).
(Notice this verse says we were

reconciled while we were enemies, not after we became friends with God.)

6. " When he died, he died once to break the power of sin" (Romans 6:10a).
7. "So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).
8. "For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:19).
9. "For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:21).
10. "We have been set free because of what Christ has done. Through his blood our sins have been forgiven. We have been set free because God's grace is so rich" (Ephesians 1:7 NIV).
11. "Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you." (Ephesians 4:32).
12. "To make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle

or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault." (Ephesians 5:26, 27).

13. "Because of what the Son has done, we have been set free. Because of him, all of our sins have been forgiven." (Colossians 1:14 NIV).
14. "And through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross." (Colossians 1:20).
15. "You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins." (Colossians 2:13).
16. "He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross." (Colossians 2:14).
17. "Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others" (Colossians 3:13).
18. "By God's grace, Jesus tasted death for everyone." (Hebrews 2:9b).
19. "But our High Priest offered himself to God as a single sacrifice for sins, good

for all time. Then he sat down in the place of honor at God's right hand." (Hebrews 10:12).

20. "I will never again remember their sins and lawless deeds." And when sins have been forgiven, there is no need to offer any more sacrifice." (Hebrews 10:18).

21. "He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world" (1 John 2:2).

22. "But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:7).

23. "I am writing to you who are God's children because your sins have been forgiven through Jesus." (1 John 2:12).

24. "When Jesus had tasted it, he said, 'It is finished!' Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit." (John 19:30).

Every Sin For All Time Has Been Forgiven. All

our sins were in the future when they were forgiven over 2000 years ago. Hard to accept, but it is the truth. Rather than treating us as our sins deserve, God removed, forgave, pardoned, blotted out, wiped away our sins from us "as far

as the east is from the west"—an immeasurable distance (Psalm 103:12). His grace and mercy are far greater than our sins. There is no end from the east to the west. This is how far our sins have been removed from us. That is far out indeed! Our sins cannot affect our relationship with God now.

"Let all that I am praise the LORD; with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name. Let all that I am praise the LORD; may I never forget the good things he does for me. He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases. He redeems me from death and crowns me with love and tender mercies" (Psalm 103:1–4).

Before we received new life in Jesus, we were dead in sins. We were dead because we overstepped God's boundaries and were cut off from the life of God. At the death of Jesus, all our sins were cancelled, nailed to the cross, and the debt was fully paid. But now, He has made us alive together with Him. "He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross" (Colossians 2:14). He forgave all our sins and the sins of the whole world at the cross, and now He is not counting people's sins against them. (2

Corinthians 5:19), because all our sins were yet to come (Colossians 2:13). We can never experience a new life apart from Jesus. Romans 6:6 NKJV says, "Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin"

What Does The "Old Man" Mean? The old sinful self is sometimes referred to as the "old man", and this old man was patterned after Adam. That is the part of us that wanted to rebel against God and His ways. The system of the Old Covenant of Law was unable to deal with the "old man" because it can only tell the old man what the righteous standard of God is. The law tried to reform the "old man", but it failed big time. But God, brought in a New Covenant of Grace to deal with the "old man." It required putting him to death with His Son, Jesus, on the cross. The death of the "old man" is a work of God. We cannot nail ourselves to the cross. It is all God by His amazing grace. But that's not all God gave us a "new man" who is raised to life with Christ in His resurrection. Ephesians 4:24 says, "Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy." Colossians 3:10 says, "Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him." This "new man" is hungry to know what God says in

His Word in order to know God and be like Him. Paul wrote to the Colossians, "For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3).

God wants us to consider ourselves as having died with Him, so it is up to us to think of ourselves that way, and it has a hope of becoming a reality. Not only have we died, but also our life is hidden with Christ in God. Because our real lives are often hidden from others, they may not understand our thoughts and what motivates us to love and forgive. Paul wrote to the Galatians, saying, "My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Notice Paul said, "My old self has been crucified." He was not seeking to "live the crucified life". He had already been crucified with Christ. Paul could say with absolute certainty that—"It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." It is the same for us. The cross of Jesus was so powerful and final that everything concerning our salvation was accomplished the moment Jesus said, "It is finished!"

What Does "It is Finished Mean? The Old Testament was concerned with the sacrifice of animals to temporarily appease

God's wrath for the people's sins. Look at Genesis 22, Leviticus 16, Psalm 22, Isaiah 42, 51, 53. Twenty-eight prophecies were fulfilled while Jesus was hanging on the cross. In Psalm 69:21, the psalmist wrote, "But instead, they give me poison for food; they offer me sour wine for my thirst." The fulfillment is found in Matthew 27:34, 48. The work of redemption and atonement that His Father gave Him to do was finished. Through His resurrection and ascension into heaven, the way had been opened for all people to receive their forgiveness. Jesus had finished the eternal purpose of the cross. It is referred to today as the finished work of the cross.

What Are We To Make Of John 20:23? "If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." Nowhere in the Book of Acts or the Epistles do we find any instance of an apostle remitting the sins of anyone. Instead, they went everywhere, proclaiming the forgiveness of sins and the good news of the Gospel (Acts 10:38; 1 Thessalonians 3:2). The confession of sin is not the basis of our forgiveness because all sin has been forgiven. Our salvation is in confessing with our mouths the Lord Jesus and believing in our hearts that God has raised Him from the dead (Romans 10:9).

The power to forgive sin belongs only to God, but Jesus also had the power and authority on earth to forgive sins (Mark 2:5–7). We have the power and privilege of giving assurance of the forgiveness of sins by God by correctly preaching the truth of the Gospel that all sins have been forgiven forever. We have the right to declare that all sins were forgiven at Calvary. If we neglect this privilege, people will not know how or why they should choose the Saviour. Paul preached to the men of Israel in the synagogue at Antioch. "Brothers, listen! We are here to proclaim that through this man Jesus there is forgiveness for your sins. Everyone who believes in him is made right in God's sight—something the law of Moses could never do" (Acts 13:38–39).

Peter preached to the Gentiles in the home of Cornelius, a Roman Officer (Acts 10:43). Please note: First-century Christians were the first people apart from Jesus to disregard racial prejudice and cultural limitations and line up with the New Covenant of unearned grace, where we are all equal in Christ. We have to remember that Peter was preaching to a Gentile audience when he referred to the prophets. Then he testified to the fact that he and others were witnesses "who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead."

However, sadly, enthusiastic and well-meaning preachers spread the word, saying drunks, homosexuals, adulterers, liars, fornicators, thieves, atheists, and idolaters that hell awaits them unless they repent and turn to Jesus. In my opinion, this does not win anyone because the command to repent comes with the connotation that you have to clean yourself up, beat yourself up, and show some super sorrow before you can even think about coming to Jesus to escape hell. Well, that is never going to happen. There is no way anyone can save themselves from their sin first and then turn to Jesus. Our sin has been dealt with, taken away, and cast as far as from east to west. We just have to receive it.

The Truth is that "Everyone who believes in him is made right in God's sight—something the law of Moses could never do." Everyone means Jew or Gentile! Black or white! Rich or poor! Male or female, slave or free! Peter preached the genuine Gospel, and the Holy Spirit fell upon everyone who was listening to his message (Acts 10:44).

What does "It is Finished" mean for you?

RENEWING YOUR MIND

The renewing of the mind, as the Bible talks about, is based on the new life we have in Christ. The holy and living sacrifice the Apostle Paul speaks about is not in our manufactured holiness, but rather, we are made holy by the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 3:17b says, "For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are." We are the holy temple of God, and the Holy Spirit dwells in us. That is what you and I are. Whether we feel like it or not.

Why Should We Renew Our Minds? So that we don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world. Romans 12:2 says it all. "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect."

We must let God transform us into the new person we have become. Why? Because the prevailing tribal culture of the world is in rebellion against God and His ways, it must be resisted. Peter wrote in his first letter, "So you must live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your

own desires. You didn't know any better then" (1 Peter 1:14).

We are born again into a living hope with a new way of living. The Apostle Peter wrote to his friends,

"Dear friends, I warn you as "temporary residents and foreigners" to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls. Live honorable lives as you mix with unbelievers, even though they accuse you of being evildoers. For they will see your beautiful works and have a reason to glorify God in the day he visits us" (1 Peter 2:11–12).

And John wrote, "Don't set the affections of your heart on this world or in loving the things of the world. The love of the Father and the love of the world are incompatible." (1 John 2:15).

There are two good reasons to co-operate with the Holy Spirit in the process of renewing our minds right there—

1. Unbelievers will see that we are different in a good way.
2. The love of the Father and the love of the world are incompatible.

Ephesians 4:23–24 says, "Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy."

This points to a complete about-face in our thinking and attitudes. Why? Because we now belong to God. "It is no longer I who live." The "new man" is what we are in Christ. But we don't always act like it. That's why we allow the Holy Spirit to transform us. Our part is to put off "the old man" and put on the "new man." The new man has been declared righteous in Jesus Christ; he is holy, sealed with the Holy Spirit and seated in Christ in the heavenly places. The "old man" is dead and buried.

The Holy Spirit produces the God-life in us. However, without renewed minds, we remain influenced by the culture in which we live. We need the transformation by the Holy Spirit through a complete reformation of our thinking.

An unrenewed mind cannot line up with God's plans because we look to the world for answers. It is wrong to lower the standard of the Word of God to the level of our experience. We need a correct view of God's nature.

It is time to re-examine our belief system and discover what the Bible teaches about the

nature of God, as revealed in the person of Jesus Christ.

Describe the culture you live in.

THE NATURE OF GOD

The Attributes or Qualities of God. God is far too great for us to understand fully. He has no beginning and no end. But what is God like? First of all, let's establish who God is.

God is All-Powerful (Omnipotent)—

God's power is without limits (Matthew 19:26; Ephesians 3:26). The Scriptures tell us that everything in the universe, including you and me, everything seen and unseen, was created by God's hand (Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 11:3). "You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it" (Psalm 139:13–14 NLT).

God is Everywhere (Omnipresent)—

God is everywhere. His presence is not just limited to a church. He is in us (Colossians 3:3), and He will never leave us (John 14:16; Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5).

He is All-Knowing (Omniscient)

He is all-knowing (Psalm 139:1–4, 1 John 3:20). He knows everything; His knowledge and power are unlimited (Hebrews 4:13).

God is Unseen—

God is unseen (1 Timothy 1:17), but He has revealed Himself in

His creation (Romans 1:20) and in His Son, Jesus (John 1:18, Colossians 1:15). Paul wrote, "For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God" (Romans 1:20 NLT).

God is Sovereign—God is eternal and infinite. He has all authority, power, and wisdom; He is all good, and His love is perfect. "The LORD is good to those who depend on him, to those who search for him" (Lamentations 3:25). He is the Most High, Creator, Redeemer, and Sovereign over all Satanic power. Our God reigns!

If God Is Sovereign, Is He In Control?—For the sake of time, I believe the short answer is No! God gave every person the gift of free will. Still, God reigns over all; He is the Sovereign God, and everything belongs to Him. Therefore, nothing is outside of His reach or concern. So if God is in control, we have to credit Him with Hitler's genocide of 6 million people and every calamity, cancer, sickness, and disease known to humanity. But God is good, so we could say that God is in charge, not in control. Jesus demonstrated the will of God in facing our problems. The Sovereign One Himself placed us

in charge of planet Earth. Paul told the Galatians. "Oh, foolish Galatians! Who has cast an evil spell on you? For the meaning of Jesus Christ's death was made as clear to you as if you had seen a picture of his death on the cross" (Galatians 3:1-5).

Control is a form of witchcraft. The Galatians had been brought under an evil spell or the control of the Judaizers. Of course, the Judaizers had justification for their control. In their minds, they were acting on behalf of God. The problem is that God never uses control to accomplish His will. He works in His unending love in people's hearts.

Paul asked them again; "I ask you again, does God give you the Holy Spirit and work miracles among you because you obey the law? Of course not! It is because you believe the message you heard about Christ" (Galatians 3:5). Paul came to the Galatians not as a Pharisee preaching the Law, but as an apostle preaching Jesus Christ. That was something these people had experienced, and the Galatians had forsaken the truth. That's the power of control at work.

At another time, James and John informed Jesus that they wanted to sit in places of honour next to Him. After further questioning, Jesus said to them, "But I have no right to say who will

sit on my right or my left. God has prepared those places for the ones he has chosen." When the ten other disciples heard what James and John had asked, they were indignant. (Mark 10:35–41). So Jesus called them to Himself and said to them,

"You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:42–45 NKJV).

We sometimes overlook the part where Jesus said, "It shall not be so among you" (verse 43). This is a cutting rebuke to the Twelve, and it applies to us as well. The Church of Jesus Christ must not operate in the same manner as the world, with its hierarchical systems and control over people. The chief must be the servant of all. Why? Because Jesus "did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." Jesus demands loyalty, but

he never uses control. Our goal for every conversation, especially in ministry, should be to bring people into a loving experience with God. People will always have needs. Our speech should uplift people, not tear them down. Jesus never attacked anyone's self-worth.

The Nature of God—God is absolute in knowledge, unlimited in power, and absolute in presence. He is everywhere, and there is no place we can escape His loving gaze. So, if we know only the attributes of God and nothing about His nature, we have every reason to fear Him. (A good reason for theological study is to discover the nature and character of God.)

The Bible does not give us a definition of God. However, Jesus said, "God is a spirit" (John 4:24; 1 Timothy 6:16). He is infinitely perfect (Psalm 147:5), yet He can be known personally (John 17:3; 1 John 5:20). There is none like Him (Exodus 15:11), yet we are made in His image (Genesis 1:26).

The love of God, the nature of God, and the character of God are all entirely good. There is not one example in the Gospels of Jesus excluding, punishing, condemning, giving a disease to anyone or sending a devastating weather event.

God is a God of Love—It is essential to perceive God's entire nature. In Jesus, we can see the nature of God expressed. He is the perfect image of God, an exact likeness. In Christ, we see God's great love, compassion, mercy, holiness, wisdom, and power. God is a God of love, and He longs to have an intimate relationship with us. This distinguishes Christianity from every other religion, along with the truth that we can do nothing to make God love us more or less.

Unlike other so-called gods, He is a Person with whom we can have intimate knowledge. James 4:8 NLT says, "Come close to God, and God will come close to you." Moral codes and laws govern many belief systems. But Christianity is not about law. It is about people having a relationship with Almighty God. God so loved us that He sent Jesus to reconcile/join us with a holy God.

God is Holy—According to the Bible, God is love, and there is no one like Him (1 Samuel 2:2; Isaiah 6:1–5); however, He is also a God of holiness. He is a God of compassion (John 3:16; 1 John 4:10, 16) but also a God of justice (read Jeremiah 9:23–24). Because of His great love for us, God sent Jesus to take our place in bearing the penalty of death that each of us deserved. He satisfied the requirements of the Law on our

behalf. He then qualified us to receive the inheritance that only Jesus deserved. Romans 5:8 says, "But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners."

God does not leave us wondering or doubting whether we are saved or not. Instead, he tells us that we belong to Him and that nothing can separate us from His love. Not even sin!

"Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us. Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death?"
(Romans 8:34–35 NLT)

God is separate from evil and driven by love in every deed. God is the ultimate in perfect holiness and purity. He has never sinned. He is infinitely good, holy, powerful, beautiful, magnificent, and glorious. No one is more beautiful, more overwhelming, more majestic than Jesus. He is the person of holiness. He is

delightful in every way and perfect from every viewpoint (Song of Songs 5:16). He is altogether lovely.

God is a God of Justice—When mankind sinned, God had a problem—How could He save sinful people, the people He loved, from His anger and wrath at sin? So God sent Jesus to die in our place instead of punishing us, as He had every right to; God took on Himself the punishment His holiness demanded. The Cross was where the love of God and the holiness of God met. Romans 5:8 "But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners."

God Is So Good!—God is good, and He always has been. He has not changed. We have to choose to respond to His goodness. We celebrate His goodness because He cannot fail to inspire us. When Jesus was born, the angels announced peace and goodwill to all people. "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased" (Luke 2:14). At that time, the people were out of touch with God's will for their lives. The passion for knowing the one true God was gone. Jesus came to reveal His Father as a loving, forgiving, merciful, and good God.

As we study God's nature, we are confronted with the reality that God is good

100% of the time. His love for people is beyond comprehension and imagination. He is for us, not against us! The heart to love and seek after God is born in us by God Himself, and it grows as we "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8).

God is Merciful—Psalm 107:1: "Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever.

Does God Cause or Allow Evil So That He Can Display His Mercy? There is no doubt that God can turn any situation around for His glory and our benefit. But if God causes evil, then how can we discern the difference between God's discipline and a demonic attack? Jesus gives us the answer in John 10:10–11, "The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life. "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep."

Jesus is the GOOD Shepherd who gives abundant life. Destruction and evil are bad; God is good! The Apostle John wrote, "The Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8b).

'Destroy' in Greek (Thayer's Dictionary) is *luo*, which means to undo, dissolve, annul, or to declare unlawful. Metaphorically, to overthrow, to do away with. The coming of the Lord Jesus

was to annul, overthrow, and do away with the works of the devil. Jesus could have destroyed the kingdom of darkness with a breath; instead, He came to earth, set aside His deity and wore a crown of thorns. By His death, He defeated the one who had the power of death. "This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him" (1 John 4:9). Hebrews 2:14 tells us. "Because God's children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death" (Hebrews 2:14).

If it cost the Saviour so much to put away sin, what should be the attitude of those who have trusted Him as Saviour?

Jesus taught us how to recognise the Devil's tactics and how to destroy them. We need to recognise that the Devil is the source of all sin. He is the one who is responsible for sin being brought into the world. He is the one who led our first parents into sin. However, we humans commit evil acts by our own choice. We choose to listen to the lies of the enemy, but we also have a choice to say, "How about no", and the devil has to flee.

PRAYER

Why Pray?—The early Christians "devoted themselves to prayer" (Acts 2:42). And a deep sense of awe came over them. Through the book of Acts, prayer is emphasised again and again as being the key to their ministry to others (Acts 6:6; 8:14-15; 9:40; 13:3; 14:23; 20:36; 28:8), and their survival in persecution (4:21-31; 16:22-26).

Prayer was also the key to their walk as Christians. Peter went to the rooftop to pray and received a vision that altered his entire understanding of God's will for the Gentiles (Acts 10:9). The great Apostle Paul prayed in the temple after his dramatic conversion and fell into a trance. "He saw a vision of Jesus saying to him, 'Hurry! Leave Jerusalem, for the people here won't accept your testimony about me'" (Acts 22:17-18). "The church then had peace throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and it became stronger as the believers lived in the fear of the Lord. And with the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, it also grew in numbers" (Acts 9:31).

Why Is Prayer So Necessary? If God is knowing and all-powerful, surely He would answer our needs without us having to tell Him

about them? Prayer fulfils two vital functions in our relationship with God:

Communication—In any relationship, whether it is between husband and wife, parents and children, or between friends, effective communication is essential. Without it, a relationship will soon wither. The two people need to share their desires and frustrations and find the answers together. It is the same with our relationship with God. How can we really love Him unless we share our heart with Him, and how can we begin to think like Him unless we ask Him what He thinks about the situations we face each day? It is NOT a religious duty or a parrot-like repetition of words. It's part of our fellowship with a personal God. The more time we spend in prayer with God, the closer our relationship will become.

Joining in Purpose—The foundation for prayer is a knowledge of who we are in Him, knowing the power and authority we have that we've been given and the tactics of the enemy. We are sons and daughters of the King of kings. Galatians 4:6 says, "Because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, 'Abba, Father.'" That makes us heirs.

"So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father." For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering" (Romans 8:15-17).

Let this powerful truth sink into your being. "God has united you with Christ Jesus. For our benefit God made him to be wisdom itself. Christ made us right with God; he made us pure and holy, and he freed us from sin" (1 Corinthians 1:30).

We have been brought into right standing with God. Now, we come confidently before the throne without fear or condemnation. As Ephesians 3:12 says, "Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence." We have also been delegated His name to use in any situation. Jesus said, "You may ask me for anything IN MY NAME, and I will do it" John 14:14.

When we begin to realise that millions of people are being swept into a lost eternity every day, God will give us a burden to pray. What a life-changing experience it is for us when God draws us to enter into His concern for the lost.

"I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them. Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity. This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth" (1 Timothy 2:14).

"He gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone. This is the message God gave to the world at just the right time" (1 Timothy 2:6). And "In every place of worship, I want men to pray with holy hands lifted up to God, free from anger and controversy" (1 Timothy 2:8).

We Are Empowered To Walk The Walk—Paul, who prayed for the Ephesians, wrote.

"Asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual

wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance" (Ephesians 1:17–18).

Spiritual wisdom comes through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

"And the Holy Spirit. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will" (Romans 8:26–27).

Have you ever gone to God in prayer when you didn't know what to pray for? All you could do was go to Him and say, "Father." At times like this, the Holy Spirit "helps us in our weakness, and He knows what to pray for."

"The groanings that cannot be expressed in words" includes the gift of tongues. 1 Corinthians 14:2 explains, "For if you have the

ability to speak in tongues, you will be talking only to God, since people won't be able to understand you. You will be speaking by the power of the Spirit, but it will all be mysterious." If God knows and searches our hearts, He can interpret the mind of the groanings of the Spirit, which are always in accordance with God's will and, therefore, suitable for us. The next verse says it all, "And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28). How wonderful that is!

Learn to Discern The Voice of God and The Voice of The Enemy—As believers, we must learn to distinguish between the voice of God and the voice of the enemy. How can we tell the difference? It is not difficult, especially when we recognise that any influence seeking to condemn is not from God. Romans 8:34 says, "Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us." Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life" (John 5:24). Oh, what a Saviour!

Jesus said in John 10:10, "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." Clearly, then, our enemy is a thief who kills and destroys, and Jesus gives abundant life. The devil comes for purely selfish motives. Jesus said in John 10:8, "But the true sheep did not listen to them." True sheep will not listen to the selfish schemes and the lies of the enemy; they know the voice of the Shepherd and follow Him (verse 4). True sheep are in a covenant relationship with God. John 10:14 Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me."

The first-century Galatians listened to the Judaizers, who were Christians who taught that it was necessary to adopt Jewish customs and practices, especially those found in the Law of Moses, to be saved. Paul dealt with them sternly and called them foolish. This was so serious that Paul wrote, "Let God's curse fall on anyone, including us or even an angel from heaven, who preaches a different kind of Good News than the one we preached to you. I say again what we have said before: If anyone preaches any other Good News than the one you welcomed, let that person be cursed" (Galatians 1:8–9).

We may hear at times speakers who try to give us a different kind of Good News. True sheep know that their salvation is by faith, through grace. We are counted righteous, not by works but because of our faith in God. The Galatians had been fooled by those who deliberately twisted the truth. Don't be fooled. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep (John 10:15). Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8), He came to reveal the goodness and mercy of a loving Father, and He put a face to grace and mercy. He declared the acceptable year of God's unmerited, unearned, undeserved favour. We have to test everything against the Bible and the life and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. The devil is a liar, a deceiver, a thief, a murderer and a destroyer, and he is free to operate only when Christians believe his blatant lies. "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!" (Psalm 34:8).

Faith is a Requirement—Matthew 21:22 says, "You can pray for anything, and if you have faith, you will receive it." Hebrews 11:6 says, "And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him."

Firstly, we must understand the promises of God if we are to have confidence in them. Secondly, we have to have faith in God to do His part. All the heroes of faith in Hebrews chapter 11 acted by faith in God's promise to them. Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and all the prophets overthrew kingdoms, ruled with justice, and received what God had promised them. They shut the mouths of lions, and it was all by faith (Hebrews 11:32–33).

Desire For God's Will—1 John 5:14–15 says, "And we are confident that he hears us whenever we ask for anything that pleases him. And since we know he hears us when we make our requests, we also know that he will give us what we ask for."

How Can We Know The Will of God?—God's will is revealed in the scriptures. That's why study is essential in order that we might know better what God's will is and how we can pray in line with His will.

Promises to the Believer—Instant Audience, Hebrews 4:16 says, "So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most."

Our confidence is based on the knowledge that He died to save us and that He

lives to keep us. We are assured of an instant audience because He has told us to come. Thayer's definition of the word 'Boldly' in Greek is *parrhēsia*, which means 1) freedom in speaking, unreservedness in speech, 1a) openly, frankly, i.e. without concealment, 1b) without ambiguity or circumlocution, 1c) without the use of figures and comparisons, 2) free and fearless confidence, cheerful courage, boldness, assurance. We can safely tell God things no other person should know. We come to Him in worship and with reverence. But we are free to speak and open our hearts to Him. There is no condemnation. Ephesians 2:18 says, "Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us."

We Are Promised an Answer To Our Prayer. As my friend says, the answer is either "Yes", "No", or "Wait". In Matthew 7:7–8, Jesus said, "Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened".

Taken out of context, verses 7 and 8 might seem like a blank check for believers, i.e., we can get anything we ask for. But this is not true.

The verses must be understood in their immediate context and in light of the whole Bible's teaching on prayer. We are to pray in faith.

"But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind. Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Their loyalty is divided between God and the world, and they are unstable in everything they do"(James 1:6–8).

A lack of trust in God indicates that we have no foundation; our loyalty is divided and unsettled. We have one foot on the rock and the other on sinking sand. Sometimes, we ask for what we wish to have or for our will to be done. Jesus said, 'When you pray, say this. "Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Luke 11:2). We must pray for God's will to be done in this situation. 1 John 5:14 says, "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us." The wisdom is in knowing God's will for a particular person. We know it is

God's will to heal, restore, set free, restore sight and raise the dead.

Healing in His Name—James 5:15a NKJV says, "And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up."

"Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed" (1 Peter 2:24 NKJV). Peter quotes Isaiah 53:5 here, which refers to spiritual healing but also definitely includes physical healing. The provision for our healing (both physically and spiritually) was made by the sufferings (stripes) of Jesus. By the sufferings of Jesus, we were healed, forgiven and saved. All we must do now is accept them.

Matthew 8:1 says, "This fulfilled the word of the Lord through the prophet Isaiah, who said, "He took our sicknesses and removed our diseases."

Other promises include guidance (James 1:5), comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3–4), and fullness of joy (John 16:24). "Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20).

Do you know God's will for your life?

WATER BAPTISM

Jesus instituted baptism after His resurrection (Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:16). He charged His disciples to make disciples and baptise them, “into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” that is, into a special relationship with the triune God.

“Those who disobeyed God long ago when God waited patiently while Noah was building his boat. Only eight people were saved from drowning in that terrible flood. And that water is a picture of baptism, which now saves you, not by removing dirt from your body, but as a response to God from a clean conscience. It is effective because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now Christ has gone to heaven. He is seated in the place of honor next to God, and all the angels and authorities and powers accept his authority” (1 Peter 3:20–21).

This is a picture of the believer's baptism. The immersion in water is an outward sign of what has taken place spiritually; we have been baptised into Christ's death. As we go under the

water, we acknowledge that we have been buried with Him. As we come up out of the water, we show that we have risen with Him and want to walk in newness of life. Verse 21, “And that water is a picture of baptism, which now saves you”, Paul wrote, “When he (Jesus) died, he died once to break the power of sin. But now that he lives, he lives for the glory of God. So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:10–11).

Jesus died, then Jesus rose from the dead. Now He lives to God in a new relationship, as the Risen One, seated at the Right Hand of the Father in the place of honour where sin cannot reach. Now we are to consider ourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God. That response is a decision we are free to make from a clean conscience.

To Be "Baptised" Means To Be "Immersed"—When a person believes in Jesus as their Saviour, they are to be baptised or immersed in water. Why would Jesus command that his believers do such a strange thing? (Matthew 28:19; see also Acts 2:38-41).

Water Baptism Is The Key To A Victorious Christian Life—The act of going under the water and rising up from it again is a picture of what has happened to the Christian.

In baptism, the four stages of Christ's redemptive work on our behalf are enacted out:

Jesus died, we died in Him—"We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin" (Romans 6:6).

He was buried, we were buried in Him—"For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives" (Romans 6:4).

He rose, we rose in Him—"For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was" (Romans 6:4-5).

He ascended, we ascended in Him—"For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6; Colossians 3:1)

Water Baptism Is Our Funeral Service! A burial service is not designed to kill someone off. It is only performed when a person is dead already. And so, because you have "died" in Christ, you bury your old life in water baptism.

Baptism is a declaration to God, to the world, to Satan, and yourself that the old life is dead and gone. The old you, who was an enemy of God (Colossians 1:21), is dead and buried. You rise out of the water, demonstrating and declaring you are a new creation in Christ! It is a resurrection to new life.

In God's sight, the world has only two kinds of people—those who are "in Adam" and those who are "in Christ."

In Adam. Adam was a representative man. He was the father of the human race. When Adam sinned, he opened the door to death and judgment for every generation to come. Every person born into the world was born "in Adam." That is the "old man".

In Christ. God did not try to patch up fallen humanity. Instead, He put an end to that race on the Cross and began a whole new race in Christ. Like Adam, Jesus was a representative man. He was called the "last Adam." When Jesus died, He hung on the Cross as the last of Adam's race. But in His resurrection, Jesus rose not as the "last Adam" but as the "second man", the beginning of a whole new race of humanity—the New Creation—the "new man."

The Scriptures tell us, 'The first man, Adam, became a living person.' But the second Adam—that is, Christ—is a life-giving Spirit (1

Corinthians 15:45). “Adam, the first man, was made from the dust of the earth, while Christ, the second man, came from heaven” (1 Corinthians 15:47; see Romans 5:12–19). In baptism, we are declaring that we are no longer part of Adam's fallen race but are a part of the New Creation in Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!” (See also Ephesians 2:10).

When someone is water baptised, they are entirely submerged, which is a vivid picture of plunging into death with Jesus and then, as they come out, a picture of rising to new life. Romans 6:4–5 explains it this way—“For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was.”

Paul's Experience—The apostle Paul knew from his own experience the amazing meaning of baptism. At one time, he went by the name Saul and was a cruel killer of Christians. Then he encountered the living Lord Jesus and found how wrong it was to fight against Him. Ananias, who was a godly man and

well-respected by the Jews of Damascus, stood beside Saul and said, “For you are to be his (God’s) witness, telling everyone what you have seen and heard. What are you waiting for? Get up and be baptized. Have your sins washed away by calling on the name of the Lord’ (Acts 22:16). Water baptism does not wash sins away, 1John 1:7 says, “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” It is in calling on the name of the Lord (Romans 10:13). Saul received baptism as a physical witness to having experienced God’s salvation, with all his sins washed away.

“For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead. You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins” (Colossians 2:12–13).

“For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the kindness and the love of God

our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit," (Titus 3:3–5).

Two Old Testament Stories Illustrate What Baptism Means To Us: The Exodus and the Flood. 1 Corinthians 10:1-2 says, "For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (see verse 11).

For the people of Israel, the Red Sea was a barrier between the old and the new. When they passed through, they left the armies of Pharaoh drowned in the sea. But although they came out of Egypt, God had great difficulty getting Egypt out of them (read Exodus 16:3; 17:3; Numbers 11:4-5; 14:2–4). Baptism for us not only testifies to our personal "exodus" from the world; it also marks the taking of the world out from us!

The Flood—The Flood was God's judgment against a race of people who were beyond help. In the same way, baptism marks the cutting off of the old creation and the start

of the new creation life in Christ! (1 Peter 3:20-21).

The Flood was God's judgment against a race of people who were beyond help. In the same way, baptism marks the cutting off of the old creation and the start of the new creation life in Christ!

What Is Resurrection Life? Resurrection life empowers or strengthens you to live for God (Ephesians 3:16,20;Philippians 4:13). Paul wrote to the Ephesians 3:16, “I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit.”

Paul prayed for the saints to be empowered with inner strength in abundance and not according to our miserly thinking. His power is at work within us. “Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think” (Ephesians 3:20).

The Power That Raised Jesus From The Dead Is Available To You—John 11:25 says, "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying.'" (See also Philippians 3:10).

The resurrection of Jesus is not just for the future, but for your life now. The power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to you. What for? To empower you to live for God

victoriously! (Romans 8:11) says, “The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.”

BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Not only does the Holy Spirit indwell the believer, but He also desires to fill him with power to be an effective witness. The Bible calls this infilling being "baptised in the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 3:11; Acts 1:5). Just as water baptism means to be immersed in water, so baptism in the Holy Spirit means to be immersed in the power of God's Spirit. This is God's promise for every believer.

Being Filled With The Holy Spirit is A Command From God—Ephesians 5:18 says, "Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit." (see also Acts 4:31).

Jesus did not perform any miracles, heal any sick, raise any dead, or cast out any devils until the anointing of the Holy Ghost came upon him in the form of a dove. Mark 1:10 says, "As Jesus came up out of the water, he saw the heavens splitting apart and the Holy Spirit descending on him like a dove." This is why He told his disciples after his resurrection to wait for the promise of the Father, the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 1:4). That gift would endue them with power, the same power that launched

Christ into His ministry of performing mighty signs and miracles among the people.

John 20:21-22 NLT, after the resurrection, Jesus appeared to the disciples and said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:21-22 NLT).

They all received the Holy Spirit as Jesus breathed on them, but Jesus had not returned to His Father. This is understood to be when the disciples were born again and received the Holy Spirit to guarantee their salvation. 2 Corinthians 1:22 says, "and he has identified us as his own by placing the Holy Spirit in our hearts as the first installment that guarantees everything he has promised us." And 2 Corinthians 2:5 says, "God himself has prepared us for this, and as a guarantee he has given us his Holy Spirit".

The indwelling presence of the Spirit comes about at our conversion, when the Spirit of resurrection brings our spirits to life, just as God breathed into Adam's nostrils in the garden and he became a living being. The Holy Spirit indwelling us is the mark that we now belong to God and are eternally secure. We have, inherently, a sincere desire for more of God and more knowledge of His Word.

Every believer possesses the indwelling Spirit of God, and it is a pledge that God will fulfil what He promised—the empowerment of the Holy Spirit so we can do what Jesus did. It was the measure of God’s Spirit that He poured into us when we were saved. We all have the indwelling Holy Spirit as our faithful guide for life’s significant issues and decisions. It’s by the Spirit that we have intimacy with God. We know Him intimately, and Jesus Christ, whom He sent, because the Holy Spirit lives in us. But after Jesus rose from the grave victorious, they were given the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16–20).

At His Ascension, Jesus promised what His Father had promised; He told His disciples they would be clothed with power from on high. Jesus told these same people that the Holy Spirit was going to come upon them. The Holy Spirit was already in them, but now He was going to come upon them with power in order to make them witnesses. Luke 24:49 says, “I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high”

John the Baptist referred to this promise when he said of Jesus in Luke 3:16 NLT. “I baptize you with water; but someone is coming

soon who is greater than I. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”

Remember, Jesus said to His twelve Apostles at His last Passover celebration. "I have spoken these things to you, being present with you. But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said to you" (John 14:25–26 NKJV).

The Holy Spirit is named the “Comforter.” In Greek, it is *paraklētos*, meaning intercessor, consoler, advocate, and comforter. The Holy Spirit has different names: Counsellor, Comforter, Helper, Intercessor, Advocate, Strengthener, and Standby. When Jesus asked the Father to send the Holy Spirit, the Father sent Someone who would counsel and help them. Intercede and advocate for them, someone who would strengthen them and stand by them in all circumstances. The Holy Spirit would put in our minds and remind us of what Jesus said about receiving the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

In the 40 days following His death and resurrection, Jesus spoke often to His disciples. “Once when he was eating with them, he commanded them, 'Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised,

as I told you before. John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:4–5 NLT).

Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would

- Represent Jesus
- Act on His behalf
- Teach them all things
- Cause us to remember everything Jesus told them.
- Empower them to fulfil the Great Commission by laying hands on the sick and seeing them recover, casting out demons, and raising the dead.
- Empower us to be His witnesses to all the earth
- Empower us to baptise and make disciples.
- To give us the Gifts of the Holy Spirit as tools to execute the Great Commission.

If We Want To Be Witnesses, We Need To Be Filled With The Holy Spirit—Jesus commanded His disciples not to leave Jerusalem and to wait for the gift the Father promised. What did He say would happen to them in a few days? You shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said to His Apostles, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8 NLT). Then Jesus left them and ascended into heaven.

This passage would indicate a difference from when Jesus “breathed” on them. This time, the wording suggests the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon them—an immersion or baptism in the Holy Spirit. Jesus wasn’t recommending that they witness; He was saying they would be witnesses. If we want to be witnesses, we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

In Greek, the word used for power is *dunamis*, from which we get our words dynamite and dynamic. *Dunamis* is also translated as strength, ability, authority, and might. That is why these encounters with the Holy Spirit are sometimes called baptisms. When they occur in the book of Acts, we see a dramatic transformation. The disciples went from being confused and fearful to being full of boldness, power, and the ability to receive and communicate revelation from God. They could operate in the Gifts of the Spirit, which come with baptism (see 1 Corinthians 14).

This feast of Pentecost, which the Lord commanded Israel to keep, was the Feast of Weeks or the Feast of Pentecost as the New Testament calls it. Exodus 5:1 says, “After this presentation to Israel’s leaders, Moses and Aaron went and spoke to Pharaoh. They told him, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Let my people go so they may hold a festival in my honor in the wilderness.”

The Old Testament feast of Pentecost pointed to the coming of the Holy Spirit to form the church of Jesus Christ and the writing on the hearts and minds of believers the New Covenant commandments.

Pentecost Means “Fiftieth”—Under the Old Covenant, the Feast took place on the fiftieth day after the waving of the sheaf of firstfruits (Leviticus 23:15–16). These three months were after the Exodus from Egypt’s bondage.

Jesus came to accomplish the purpose of the Old Covenant Law (Matthew 5:17–18). The Book of Acts shows that Pentecost took place 50 days after the Passover. We see 40 days where Jesus ministered after His resurrection. He ascended to heaven and commanded His disciples to wait in Jerusalem. They waited ten days. That’s 50 days.

The Law (Ten Commandments) was given at Mt Sinai 50 days after the Israelites left Egypt. The disciples experienced the coming of the Holy Spirit to write His laws on their hearts, 50 days after the completion of Passover—the resurrection of Jesus.

“On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability” (Acts 2:1–4).

One hundred and twenty believers were meeting together in one place, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages (Acts 2:1-8). They were ready to be witnesses of the Lord Jesus; they cast out devils, healed the sick and testified of the resurrection of Christ. Throughout the book of Acts, we see groups of people experiencing the infilling with the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues. (Acts 8:14–18; 10:45–46; 19:5–6).

Consider for a moment the sound of the breath of God blowing across the hearts of one hundred and twenty people, releasing a sound over Jerusalem that changed the atmosphere. Destinies were changed by the atmosphere that day. It was not necessarily the speaking in tongues that gathered the people together; it was the sound of a mighty rushing wind—the Presence of God.

After the infilling or Baptism of the Spirit at Pentecost, the disciples proclaimed the good news that Jesus was God’s Messiah. God’s plan to rescue the world has been fulfilled; it was finished at Calvary and the empty tomb. Now, everyone could be saved: Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female. It was the sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind. It penetrated their hearts and prepared them to receive Peter’s power-filled first sermon. And 3000 people were saved.

The Holy Spirit Is a Gift—Peter preached his first sermon, and people asked, “What shall we do? Peter replied, “Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” Acts 2:37–38). We must understand here that the nation of Israel crucified Jesus. They declared in Matthew 27:24–26

“When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. “I am innocent of this man’s blood,” he said. “It is your responsibility!” All the people answered, “His blood is on us and on our children!” Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified (Matthew 27:24–26).

Now, after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, they realised their guilt. That’s what the Holy Spirit does. At the first Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended as a mighty rushing wind, the upper room was filled with His Presence, tongues of fire sat on the heads of the disciples, and they all spoke in tongues as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:1–4; 4:31). When this noise was heard outside, thousands of Jews from every nation gathered to hear the Word of the Gospel of Grace. The manifestations of God’s Presence bring conviction and wonder to the hearers. This was the birthday of the New Covenant church.

The Holy Spirit Was The Power Behind Jesus—Without the Holy Spirit, we are just

flesh, bone, and body. It is the Holy Spirit who gives the power. The Holy Spirit was the power behind Jesus. Jesus Himself could do those great and mighty works only as the Holy Spirit moved him. The apostles and Christians in the 1st Century Church, moved by the Holy Spirit, did supernatural things. The same Holy Spirit is in us.

The New Way Of The Spirit “But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code” (Romans 7:6).

The old way of religion is to try to be accepted by God through self-effort. But God's standard is so high, no one can reach it in their own strength. So the Gospel has introduced another way—"the new way of the Spirit." It is the Holy Spirit who causes us to live a life pleasing to God. He is the inner power that changes us from the inside out. In 2 Corinthians 3:17-18, Paul wrote, “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

He reveals the finished work of the Cross and makes it a daily reality in our lives. He sets us free so that we can walk with God. "Because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death" Romans 8:2).

Empowered By The Spirit—"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses..." Acts 1:8 (see also Luke 24:49). In Ephesians 3:16,20, Paul wrote, "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being...who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us"

The Baptism Of The Holy Spirit is Something We Ask For—Luke 11:13 Jesus said, "So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him." The Holy Spirit is the power that empowers us to live in the new and living way. So Jesus pictured God as anxious to give this power to those who ask.

Interesting that this was before the Holy Spirit outpouring, and Jesus told a crowd of people, including His disciples, to ask for the Holy Spirit, but as far as we know, the disciples never did. They received the Holy Spirit when

Jesus breathed on them (John 20:20). Then, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon them with power.

The Holy Spirit anoints us with the same anointing that Jesus had (Acts 10:38; John 14:12). Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we become the hands of Jesus, touching people's lives today. God desires every believer to experience the power of the Holy Spirit both in him (for personal growth) and through him (in empowered ministry to others).

MINISTRY

Let's talk about ministry. Matthew 24:14 says, "And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then the end will come."

The preaching of the Gospel to the world holds such a priority in God's plan and purpose that Christ's return hinges on its successful completion.

Witnesses—At the Ascension of Jesus, the apostles asked Jesus a question, "Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?" (Acts 1:6) Jesus replied, "The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8; see also Matthew 10:18; Luke 21:12–13)

We are not called to witness; we are called to be witnesses. The original Greek word for "witness" is *martus*, which means "a witness, a record." It is a noun, not a verb.

2 Corinthians 3:3 says, "Clearly, you are a letter from Christ, showing the result of our ministry among you. This "letter" is written not with pen and ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. It is carved not on tablets of stone, but on human hearts."

Being a Witness Involves Three Things:

1. Your words (Matthew 10:18-20)
2. Your deeds (1 Peter 2:12)
3. Your life (Philippians 2:14-16)

God always uses real people to reach real people. Jesus didn't come as a superstar or as a salesman. He came as a human being in order to reach human beings (Philippians 2:5-8). He is our role model of how to be a witness God's way.

The Message Never Changes. "For you have been born again, but not to a life that will quickly end. Your new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living word of God. As the Scriptures say, "People are like grass; their beauty is like a flower in the field. The grass withers and the flower fades. But the word of the Lord remains forever." And that word is the Good News that was preached to you" (1 Peter 1:23-25).

The Message that Jesus and the early Church preached is the same Message we preach today. But as you look through the New Testament, you find that neither Jesus nor His disciples used any set formula. The Message was always the same, but the way that Message was expressed varied from audience to audience. The Message is translated through our lives and words in a language that the people can understand.

"So let everyone in Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord and Messiah!" Peter's words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" Peter replied, "Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"(Acts 2 36–38).

Peter did not use the exact words that Jesus did. Yet the Message had not changed. But before he challenged the people to repent, something had already happened in their

hearts. They had a revelation of who Jesus is: both Lord and Christ.

The problem with leading someone to accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour by saying a quick prayer on the street is that the phrase is never explained at length. What does it mean for the one doing the accepting? However, we have to trust God to do the rest. He knows their hearts, and He is a loving, faithful Saviour, and He will have His way with those people. Jesus is Saviour, He is Lord (see John 4:42; Philippians 2:9–11), and He is our life if we allow Him to be. He has all authority and power, and we must trust Him to complete the work He began in all of us (Colossians 2:10).

Salvation is a gift that eliminates boasting. It is all of God and not of us. It is God's gift. It is not because of what we do to achieve it. Salvation is by Grace; you have been saved through faith. It is not a matter of us giving God anything. Grace revolves around what God has given us. We receive eternal life because Jesus gave us His life. For a gift to be valued, it must first be received. A revelation of Jesus to the individual is necessary to produce a genuine change of mind and repentance, which leads to accepting the gift. Romans 10:9–11 tells us, "If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from

the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved."

When we openly declare or confess with our mouths what we believe in our hearts, we are agreeing with what God said about Jesus and what Jesus said about Himself—that He is the Messiah and His finished work on the Cross is the only way of salvation. The problem is how to explain all this clearly and understandably in a short amount of time; it is impossible. The repentant thief had no time for a New Christian's class; he was running out of time (Luke 23:39–43). You know the story. One thief mocked Jesus, the other knew that Jesus had done nothing wrong and that Jesus was a Messiah King with a Kingdom. He called on the name of the Lord Jesus. "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom." The repentant thief went straight into the presence of God; he had an encounter with Jesus, and it changed his destiny. Everyone needs an encounter with the Lord Jesus. The Samaritan woman at the well had been married five times, and she wasn't currently married to the man with whom she was living. She became the first evangelist and was instrumental in converting many people from her village. She had an

encounter with the Lord Jesus, and it changed her life forever. Everyone Jesus encountered was changed and became a follower. It takes an encounter with the Lord, and we have to facilitate that encounter and not be tempted to get in the way and demand that they do things a certain way.

God Is The Initiator. Salvation revolves around Grace and what God has given us, not what we give to Him. We receive salvation not because you gave your life to Christ. We receive eternal life because He gave His life! Salvation is God's work, and our response is a result of His initiative. He found the lost sheep and brought it back to the sheepfold. From start to finish, it is all about Jesus and the finished work of the Cross. WE freely give because we first received from God, we love God, because God first loved us, we forgive because God first forgave us (Colossians 3:13; Ephesians 4:32). In everything, God is the initiator, and we are the responders. I like to think of myself not as a servant but as a responder to His great love, grace, mercy and forgiveness, because without Him I am without hope.

"For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16).

"For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:19).

"This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins" (1 John 4:10). There is nothing left for people to do except believe it and say, "Thank you, Lord." Paul wrote to the Ephesians in 2:8–9, "God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it."

I wonder if any of us truly understood the wonder of salvation when we began our Christian life. We can be grateful that salvation doesn't require perfect understanding on our part.

WHO YOU ARE IN GOD

Who we are in God has everything to do with how God sees us. God has done what law-keeping, and you and I could never have done! One of the most extraordinary things God ever created is our free will, because we now get to become lovers of God and willing co-labourers with Him. Jesus calls us friends, and God calls us sons and daughters. The point is, we have a privileged relationship with an Almighty, loving God whose love transforms us. The whole gospel is a story of God wooing the hearts of humanity through His love. This requires a response from us based solely on our free will.

When David, as a boy, faced the giant Goliath, he was armed with knowledge and a good memory, as well as five smooth stones. He knew some essential things that helped him face a man of whom everyone was afraid. He knew who God was, he knew who he was, and he knew about his enemy. If we know God and know who we are (in God) and know the wiles of the devil, then the devil cannot deceive us or taunt us as Goliath did to the Israelites (see 1 Samuel 17). We not only have to know who we are, but also remember it so that we can use the Shield of Faith and the Sword of the Spirit when

we are facing a giant. We will experience a victory that is already ours, just as Jesus did when tempted by the devil in the desert. Jesus used the Word of God as a weapon to silence the enemy.

David said to King Saul, "The LORD who rescued me from the claws of the lion and the bear will rescue me from this Philistine!" He knew who God was because he had experienced it in the field looking after a flock of sheep. David also knew his enemy was a pagan Philistine. He spoke defiantly to the giant. He said, "You come to me with sword, spear, and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of Heaven's Armies—the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. Today the LORD will conquer you, and I will kill you and cut off your head. And then I will give the dead bodies of your men to the birds and wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel!" (1 Samuel 17:45–46). David came against Goliath "in the name of the LORD of Heaven's Armies." David knew he was a "sent man" on a mission. He knew who God was—the Lord of Heaven's armies, and he knew who the giant was—an uncircumcised, pagan Philistine. This was not a fair fight in the natural. But in David's eyes, it was Goliath and his armour bearer against David and the LORD God of Israel.

David knew who he was and who his God was. His faith enabled him to go out to meet the giant and defeat him. "For every child of God defeats this evil world, and we achieve this victory through our faith" (1 John 5:4).

Our Standing Before God Is In Jesus.

God looks at you and me and sees Jesus, and that makes us one in Him. You belong to God! This, then, would have to be, in my opinion, the most profound thing that I can get out of the Word of God. You and I belong to God; He has taken ownership of us and adopted us into His family, and it is forever. He will never leave us nor forsake us! We are forgiven, and this says to me that we cannot lose our salvation. God will never abandon us. He cannot because we are His sons and daughters and His heirs (Romans 8:17), and the Holy Spirit sealed the deal with Himself, guaranteeing our salvation (Ephesians 1:13). You are stamped with God's approval! Do not let anyone tell you otherwise, especially yourself!

Paul asked this question thirteen times in various epistles, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16). I think he wanted you to remember who you are. You are a carrier of God, and God is ever-present in you!

Let us get this settled: if God is in you, your old life is gone. It is only a memory. It has passed away, gone dead and buried. You have received a new life to take its place, and now you have a new and living adventure every day to encounter, a radical life to live. Paul wrote, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

In this new and living way, there are good (God) works for you to do, works that God has already worked out for you to work out. Remember, these amazing works do not save us, and yet, somehow, it all works out for your good. You can now put on the new creation person and put off the old you. (Ephesians 4:24). The new you is made holy, which is the cleanness of heart and mind made right by God.

What Exactly Has God Done?

God sent Jesus to die on your behalf because of His great love for you (John 3:16). He put all your shame, all your weaknesses, wrongdoings, and sicknesses on Jesus, and Jesus took it on Himself on the cross. (Isaiah 53:10; Matthew 8:17).

By the sacrifice of Jesus' brutal crucifixion, the penalty was paid for you to be without guilt, condemnation and shame. Jesus took the punishment that makes you whole,

rescued you from the powers of darkness and put you in the Kingdom of His Son. Memorise this scripture—

Colossians 1:13–14

"For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins."

The ransom for our release from the tyranny of the kingdom of darkness was paid by the blood of Jesus. The Greek word for forgiveness in Strong's concordance is "aphesis", which means freedom, pardon, deliverance, liberty, remission. Never forget this powerful truth—You have been delivered from the powers of darkness and have been translated into the kingdom of God. All your sins have been forgiven.

God made Jesus, who knew no sin, to be sin for you (2 Corinthians 5:21) and forgave all your sins (Colossians 1:14, 2:13; Ephesians 1:7; Titus 2:14; Romans 4:6–8). He cancelled the debt you owe (Colossians 1:13, 14), dropped all charges against you (1 Corinthians 5:19) and made a public display of the cancellation

(Colossians 2:14–15). He closed the case, found you not guilty and placed you in Christ Jesus. He cannot condemn you now (Romans 8:1). He removed every sin you have committed and will commit from you and cast them away as far as the East is from the West (Psalm 103:12).

He transferred His righteousness to you and declared that you are justified by faith alone. Now you have peace with God (Romans 5:1). He set you free from every trace of sin by the power of the Blood of Jesus (1 John 1:7).

He cut away (circumcised) all the guilt and the power of sin. He removed it all from you (Colossians 2:11). Jesus was made a curse for you, redeemed you from the curse of the Law so that Abraham's blessing can come to you that you might receive the promise of the Holy Spirit through faith (Galatians 3:13–14).

He gave you perfect standing with Him by washing you clean, making you holy and acquitting you in the Name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 6:11). God has reconciled you to Himself through Jesus Christ and given you the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18). He crucified you in Christ, making you free from the power of sin and giving you fruit to holiness and everlasting life (Romans 6:22–23).

God gave you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. He has taken your heart of stone and replaced it with a new heart. He put His very own Spirit in you, and He causes you to walk in His statutes (Psalm 51:10; Ezekiel 36:26–27) and made your heart pure. Now, you can follow the ways of righteousness, faith, love, and peace (2 Timothy 2:22).

God chose you before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4), He brought you out of the miry clay and set your feet upon a rock (Psalm 40:2–3), called you out of darkness into His marvellous light (1 Peter 2:9). He rescued you from a dead-end life and set you into the Kingdom of the Son He loves (Colossians 1:13)—His kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17)

He redeemed you through the Blood of Jesus; you have the forgiveness of sins, and all according to the riches of His grace (Ephesians 1:6–7).

He made you alive to God (Romans 6:11) and gave you a fresh new start and a new life (Colossians 3:1–3). He accepted you in the beloved and made you a new person, recreated in righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 4:24).

He made you more than a conqueror (Romans 8:37), called you according to His

purposes (Romans 8:27–30) and made His grace abundantly available for you (2 Corinthians 12:9).

He gave you a measure of faith (Romans 12:3), a victorious life, the resurrection life through Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:57). You are His chosen generation, His royal priesthood, His holy nation, and you are set apart for Him (1 Peter 2:9).

God Has Placed Jesus in You, And You in Jesus. God put you in Christ Jesus and gave you grace, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 1:7).

He made you an entirely new creation with all things made new (2 Corinthians 5:17). He put the living Christ in you, the hope of Glory (Colossians 1:27), and hid your life in His Son Jesus (Colossians 3:3). When He looks at you, He sees Jesus (Colossians 3:3). God has clothed you with the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 13:13) and put His Holy Spirit in you. He makes your body alive (Romans 8:11) and has given you the victory over death through Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:57).

He implanted His Word in you (James 1:21) and clothed you with the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 13:13). He raised you up, made you sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians

2:6) and made your way perfect (2 Samuel 22:33). He made you complete in Jesus, who is the Head of every kingdom and authority. He has filled you with Himself (Colossians 2:10) and made you perfect, holy and complete for all time (Hebrews 10:13).

Joy and Peace—God gave you the oil of joy for mourning and the garment of praise for depression. He calls you a tree of righteousness. You are the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified (Isaiah 61:3). He has given you great everlasting joy and blessing and adds no sorrow to it (Proverbs 10:22), and He gave you the power to hold yourself calm in the days of adversity (Psalm 94:13).

He has borne your grief and carried your sorrow (Isaiah 53:4) and predestined your life according to His plan (Ephesians 1:11). He fearfully and wonderfully created you (Psalm 139:14) and strengthened you with all power according to His glorious might (Colossians 1:11–12). You have peace like a river and righteousness and forgiveness like the waves of the sea (Isaiah 48:18). His peace surpasses all understanding and guards your heart and mind through Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6–7). Since you have been justified, vindicated, acquitted, and exonerated through faith, you have peace with God (Romans 5:1).

A Sure Hope—God gave you the sure hope of your salvation (1 Thessalonians 5:8), made Jesus your Head, the Head of the church and the Head of all principality and power (Colossians 2:10; Ephesians 1:22). He made Jesus to be poor for your sake so that you might be made rich (2 Corinthians 8:9) and made His wisdom available to you. It is pure, then peaceable, gentle, full of mercy, good fruits, without partiality and hypocrisy (James 3:17), and supplies you with mighty weapons to pull down the stronghold of fear (2 Corinthians 10:4).

He has given you the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord (Isaiah 11:1–3), and faith, which does not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God (1 Corinthians 2:5).

He chose you for an inheritance and predestined you according to His purpose. He works all things out for your good (Ephesians 1:11, Romans 8:28). How good is that? He made you His workmanship and created you to do good works according to His righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 2:10, 2:23–24). He has made all grace abound toward you for every good work (2 Corinthians 9:8), redeemed you from the curse of poverty and made Abraham's

blessing available to you by faith. He made you Abraham's seed and an heir (Galatians 3:13, 14, 16, 29).

Rest—God has given you the promise of rest from working for your salvation (Hebrews 4:1, 9). He gives rest for your soul (Matthew 11:28), and He put His Word near you, in your mouth and your heart, that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved (Romans 10:8–9). He blessed you with every spiritual blessing in Christ (Ephesians 1:3) and made known to you the mystery of His will (Ephesians 1:9).

God Made It Possible For You to Enter His Presence. God has made it possible for you to boldly enter into the Holy of Holies, without hesitation, by the Blood of Jesus (Heb 10:19), all because of His great love (Ephesians 2:6).

God Has Always Loved You. God loves you with an everlasting love that even when you are living a life of sin, the Bible calls it dead in sin. God made you alive in Christ (Ephesians 2:5). God loves you so much that He sent Jesus to die for you so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16). He promised you that nothing should be able to separate you from His love,

which is in Jesus (Romans 8:39). He poured out His love upon you and gave you true hope that does not disappoint (Romans 5:5). It is a confident hope that only expects good in every situation. He set His love on you and made a safe place for you to take shelter and refuge under His wings (Psalm 91). He made you in His image and made you His elect, holy and beloved (Colossians 3:10–12). God has honoured you in His sight; He has not ever rejected you (Isaiah 43:4). God has called you by your name; you are His (Isaiah 43:1). He formed you and created you for His glory (Isaiah 43:7).

God Has Strengthened You With The Power of the Holy Spirit. He makes your body alive all through the Holy Spirit who lives in you (Ephesians 3:16; Romans 8:11). He gives you victory over death through Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:57).

God has given you righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17) and sealed you with the Holy Spirit of promise (Ephesians 1:13). He has filled you full of the Holy Spirit. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty (2 Corinthians 3:17). He baptised you with the Holy Spirit and freely gave you the Spirit's gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4, 30; Romans 11:29). He sent the Holy Spirit to help you, to

comfort you, and He will never leave you (John 14:6), and He gave you a spirit of power and love and a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7).

God Has Made You a Son or Daughter of His. Through faith in Jesus, God predestined you to be adopted as a son or daughter by Jesus Christ according to the pleasure of His good will (Ephesians 1:5). He has made you a son or daughter of His (Galatians 3:26) and adopted you into His family. You are His child. He sent the Spirit of His Son into your heart so you can call Father God your Father (Galatians 4:6) and gave you a Spirit of Adoption (Romans 8:15), and an heir of His through Jesus Christ (Galatians 4:7). He created you, formed you and redeemed you, called you by your name. Now you belong to Him (Isaiah 43:1). He has taken ownership of you, and now you belong to Him as a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a person set apart to speak His praises. He has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light (1 Peter 2:9) and made Jesus the Author and Finisher of your faith so you can always look to Him (Hebrews 12:2).

It is a fact: God has officially adopted you. You are under His love and protection and covering, and His love covers everything. You belong to God! "For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the

Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15). For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26), and sons have full rights. There are no exceptions!

"You are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Galatians 4:7). Every born-again person, male or female, boy or girl in the Bible is a "son". We are all sons of God through Jesus. We are all one in Christ (Verse 28). I cannot find any expression in the New Testament that calls me a daughter of God, with the exception of 2 Cor 6:18, which is a quote from the Old Testament. 1 John 3:2a says, "Beloved, now we are children of God." For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:27–28).

God Has You Covered. God promised to cover those who trust in Him with humility. There is freedom from fear in Him. Jesus trusted His Father in the midst of great anguish.

"Those who live in the shelter of the Most High will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty. This I declare about the LORD: He alone is my refuge, my place of safety;

he is my God, and I trust him. For he will rescue you from every trap and protect you from deadly disease. He will cover you with his feathers. He will shelter you with his wings. His faithful promises are your armor and protection. Do not be afraid of the terrors of the night, nor the arrow that flies in the day. Do not dread the disease that stalks in darkness, nor the disaster that strikes at midday. Though a thousand fall at your side, though ten thousand are dying around you, these evils will not touch you. Just open your eyes, and see how the wicked are punished. If you make the LORD your refuge, if you make the Most High your shelter, no evil will conquer you; no plague will come near your home. For he will order his angels to protect you wherever you go.” (Psalms 91:1–11).

God covers you with His feathers, and under His wings, there is refuge, and His truth is your shield and buckler (Verses 4, 5). A 'buckler' in Hebrew is *sôchêrâh*—something surrounding the person, that is, a shield—buckler. You have protection all the time! You are safe! You are a precious child of the Almighty God, who actually lives in you!

Accept What God Has Done. God has clearly made known to us His creation, eternal power and Godhead, so we are without excuse (Romans 1:19–20). Jesus said in John 6:37: "However, those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them." When we come to Jesus, it is a choice we are free to make. The Father gives them to Jesus, but we have to come. We have free will, and we have to exercise it. We have to accept what God has done for us!"

At another time, on the last day, the climax of the Feast of Tabernacles, the eighth day (eight speaks of new beginnings). "Jesus stood and shouted to the crowds, 'Anyone who is thirsty may come to me!' (John 7:37). And, "Anyone who believes in me may come and drink!" (John 7:38). It is our choice to come and take Jesus into our lives as we would take a glass of water into our bodies. As always, God is the initiator, but we must choose to respond.

Another time, Jesus replied to the crowd, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty" (John 6:35). To believe, we must have confidence in what God has done for us and then be fully persuaded that it is true. It is an aggressive acceptance of the truth found in Jesus Christ.

Another time, Jesus said to a crowd of people, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light" (Matthew 11:28–30). The Message Bible says it this way—

Matthew 11:28-30 (The Message)

"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

Come to me, get away with me, walk with me, work with me, watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace, learn how my unearned, free, unmerited grace works. Keep company with me, and you will learn to live freely and lightly. Come to me! Jesus says Come to me, I am the way to the Father, I am the bread of life, I am the light of the world, I am the truth,

I am the only way to the Father, I am Grace. My burden is light!

HOW GOD SEES YOU HAS EVERYTHING TO DO WITH WHO YOU ARE IN CHRIST.

You are God's child (Romans 8:16). God loves you (Romans 5:8). Nothing can separate you from God's love (Romans 8:38–39). You were created in God's image and for His glory (Colossians 1:16). You are free from the power of darkness (Colossians 1:13). All your sins are forever forgiven (Colossians 1:14). You have new life in Him (1 Peter 1:3). You are forever free from punishment (Romans 8:1). You are right with God (1 Corinthians 1:30). You have eternal life in Him (John 3:15–16). You are set-apart (1 Corinthians 1:2). You are covered and protected by God Himself (Psalm 91:4). You can go to God with freedom and confidence (Ephesians 3:12). God's power works in you (Ephesians 3:20). You are alive to God (Romans 6:11).

You can do all things through Christ (Philippians 4:13). You have victory (1 Corinthians 15:57). The Holy Spirit lives in you (John 3:24). What God has started in you, He will complete (Philippians 1:6). You are seated in Jesus in Heaven (Ephesians 2:6). You are God's temple (1 Corinthians 6:19). You are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14).

You are chosen and appointed by Jesus to bear His fruit, and this fruit will remain (John 15:16). You are a son or daughter of God through faith in Jesus (Galatians 3:26). You are a joint heir with Jesus (Romans 8:17). You are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (Ephesians 1:13). You are a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). You are God's workmanship (Ephesians 2:10). You are righteous and holy (Ephesians 4:24). You are hidden with Jesus Christ in God (Colossians 3:3). You are a saint (Ephesians 1:1). Greater is God in you than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4). You are strengthened with power through the Holy Spirit who lives in you (Ephesians 3:16).

You are an overcomer by the Blood of the Lamb (Revelation 12:11). You are unafraid, for God is with you. His rod and staff comfort you (Psalm 23:4). You are born again of incorruptible seed (1 Peter 1:23). You are full of the love of God (Romans 5:5). You are justified by faith alone (Romans 5:1). You are a conqueror through God who loves you (Romans 8:37). You are complete in Jesus (Colossians 2:10). You have the spirit of power and love and a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7). You are healed by the stripes of Jesus (1 Peter 2:24). You are called by your name (Isaiah 43:1). You are a tree of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified (Isaiah 61:3). You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a person set apart for possession by God (1 Peter 2:9). His Word is a lamp to your feet and a light to your path (Psalm 119:105). As far as the east is from the west, so far have your sins been removed from you (Psalm 103:12). You dwell in the secret place of the Most High. You abide under the shadow of the Almighty (Psalm 91:1).

God gives His angels charge over you. He keeps you in all His ways (Psalm 91:11). You shall live to declare the works of the Lord— (Psalm 118:17). God will never leave you nor forsake you— (Deuteronomy 31:6). God works all things for your good (Romans 8:28). You have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10). Cast all your care onto Him, for He cares for you (1 Peter 5:7). You have righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 4:17). You walk by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). The life you live, you live by faith (Galatians 2:20). God supplies all your needs (Philippians 4:19). Therefore, hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering, for He is faithful who promised (Hebrews 10:23).

EPILOGUE

Thank you for enduring to the end of this study.

The Cross is a recurring theme throughout this ebook. Highlighting how we must read scripture in the light of the finished work of Jesus on the Cross. A pivotal Scripture in the New Testament is from Paul to Titus.

“Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled and became slaves to many lusts and pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy, and we hated each other. But—When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit. He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior. Because of his grace he made us right in his sight and gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life” (Titus 3:3-7).

This is a picture of how we were before we came to know Jesus. It is essential to understand that becoming a Christian doesn't mean just turning over a new leaf—you will find yourself writing on the new leaf the same things that you wrote on the old leaf. God saved us because of his mercy. Not because of the righteous things we have done, He washed away all our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit. Then He generously poured out the Spirit upon us.

God saved us from the guilt and penalty of all our sins—past, present, and future. They were all in the future when Jesus died, and His death covered them all. But one of the simplest, most evident truths of the gospel is the most difficult for us to receive.

One of the great “buts” in Scripture comes from these verses. “But—When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love,” (Verse 4). The kindness and the love of God rescued us. God reached out to us long before we reached out to Him and paid the debt we owed without any repayment. Then He generously poured out the Spirit upon us. Oh, what a Saviour! Amen!

Much love

Colleen