

The Lord Your God Is In Your Midst



The Grace Book vol 1

***The LORD your God is in your midst,
a mighty one who will save;
he will rejoice over you with gladness;
he will quiet you by his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing.***

(Zephaniah 3:17)

This book is a collection of articles from saints the Father has given the privilege of having a profound revelation about His grace and the mystery – Christ in us.

May you be richly blessed while you explore your new identity in Christ and God's heart for you on these pages.

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The New Creation¹

Norman P Grubb

“Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3)

God forever gives, man forever receives. In the glory of His grace, that is what God never ceased to do. “He giveth, and giveth and giveth again.” Therefore salvation, just as much as creation, is every iota a gift. And man, of whom it is said concerning his creation, What hast thou that thou hast not received?, can never experience the abc of his recreation in Christ until he is brought back to the act of simple reception. As Jesus said, “Except ye become converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.” Every iota of works, of self-effort, has to disappear. Faith, so far from being works, is really only the flash of recognition of what is: in this case, already redeemed, if we only knew it. I hope I have made this clear, because it is the first infant experience of the lost secret of humanity, a secret we shall never outgrow and never replace, for it is humanity’s sole basic capacity.

The Creator gives all by giving Himself, the creature receives all; and the faculty of receiving is so simple, obvious, natural and automatic that it can hardly be called an action at all. It is the first activity of a newborn babe, receiving air, receiving nourishment. It is the continued activity which sustains all life. And that is faith. The repentance side of faith is in essence the breaking down and giving up false faith which we received from Adam, a faith in our self-righteousness, our own religion, our own philosophy; the receiving of false self-reliance as a basis of living. Thus it is the negative side of faith, the saying no to an illusory faith.

¹ Norman P Grubb: *The Spontaneous You*, Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade. © 1966.

Can We Go Too Far With Grace?

Steve McVey

Those who are afraid of the message of the grace walk have sometimes suggested that you can go too far with grace. It is from out of that unfounded fear that this lie finds expression. It is important to remember that grace involves God expressing His unconditional love and favor toward us; independent of anything we ever do or don't do. Grace is personified in Jesus. So to say that you can go too far with grace is like saying that you can go too far with Jesus. It simply isn't possible.

Some people are afraid that if you teach the pure grace of God, people might be encouraged to go out and commit sins. That kind of fear shows a lack of clear understanding about what grace does in a person's life. It certainly doesn't encourage sin!

The idea that you can go too far with grace is an irrational fear. When a believer sins, he is acting in a disgraceful way by contradicting the very essence of the grace of God which is in him. Grace empowers us to honor our Father through our actions, not dishonor Him. It is possible to pervert grace so that it stops being grace, but it isn't possible to go too far with it.

Paul explained it this way in Romans 5:17: "Much more, those who received the abundance of grace, and the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the one Jesus Christ. He said that if we're going to reign in life, there needs to be an abundance of grace, which provides the gift of righteousness. The result will be that we reign in life.

The word "abundance" in that verse suggests an overflow. It doesn't mean filling something to the top. It means filling it beyond the top, so that it spills over. Paul said that is what has happened to the Christian. We have received an overflow of grace.

Go too far with grace? There's no way. The fact is that most Christians haven't gone far enough in their understanding of it. We need an overflow of grace, especially in the modern church. Especially in the lives of Christians today who've been ambushed by legalism. As much as we say we don't want to live under the law, we're scared to death of the grace of

God.

We need to boldly proclaim God's grace to the church world -- not only to the unredeemed, unsaved world, but to the church world. We need to proclaim the grace of God because the fact is that, even if you could go too far with grace, which you can't, I've not been in a church yet where there was even a remote possibility of going too far with the grace of God.

Go too far with grace? Not a chance. We need an abundance of grace in the legalistic barrenness of the modern church. It's only when we jump in over our heads, into the river of God's grace, and we experience that abundance, that we know the victory that is ours in Jesus Christ.

Ten Specific Examples of What Was Against Us And Contrary to Us

Joel Brueseke

First, a summary:

Scripture tells us that something was against us and contrary to us. It tells us that we were in bondage to something. It tells us that in Christ, this has now been taken out of the way, nailed to the cross and made obsolete. Isn't it quite astounding for God to go to such great lengths to take something out of the way, nail it to the cross and make it obsolete! So what is it that was against us, and contrary to us, and put us into bondage... and God then took out of the way, nailed to the cross and made obsolete?

Gal 4:24 "For these are the two covenants: the one from *Mount Sinai* which gives birth to *bondage*..."

Col 2:13-14 "And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having *wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.*"

Heb 8:13 In that He says, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first *obsolete*. Now what is obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away."

What came from *Mount Sinai*? God's LAW. What is the *handwriting of requirements* that was against us, which was contrary to us? God's LAW. What has been taken out of the way, nailed to the cross? God's LAW. What has been made obsolete? The Old Covenant, which was based upon man keeping God's LAW.

Brace yourself, I'm here to lay it down:

The following was against us, contrary to us, a source of bondage to us, and is now taken out of our way, nailed to the cross and made obsolete:

"You shall have no other gods before Me."

The following was against us, contrary to us, a source of bondage to us, and is now taken out of our way, nailed to the cross and made obsolete:

"You shall not make for yourself a carved image — any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments."

The following was against us, contrary to us, a source of bondage to us, and is now taken out of our way, nailed to the cross and made obsolete:

"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain."

The following was against us, contrary to us, a source of bondage to us, and is now taken out of our way, nailed to the cross and made obsolete:

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it."

The following was against us, contrary to us, a source of bondage to us, and is now taken out of our way, nailed to the cross and made obsolete:

"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you."

The following was against us, contrary to us, a source of bondage to us, and is now taken out of our way, nailed to the cross and made obsolete:

"You shall not murder."

The following was against us, contrary to us, a source of bondage to us, and is now taken out of our way, nailed to the cross and made obsolete:

"You shall not commit adultery."

The following was against us, contrary to us, a source of bondage to us, and is now taken out of our way, nailed to the cross and made obsolete:

"You shall not steal."

The following was against us, contrary to us, a source of bondage to us, and is now taken out of our way, nailed to the cross and made obsolete:

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."

The following was against us, contrary to us, a source of bondage to us, and is now taken out of our way, nailed to the cross and made obsolete:

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's."

(All of the above: "The Ten Commandments," taken from Exodus 20:3-17)

We now have something so much better than all of this! All of the above is good and holy, but it was weak in that it could never do a thing to make *us* good and holy. All it did was to make *us guilty* before God. It was against us, contrary to us, and put us into nothing but bondage. But what the Law could not do, God did by sending His Son. We have now died to the above so that we could be joined with Christ, whose life in us will always lead us into what is good, holy and righteous. We are now free to serve righteousness, which is something we could never, ever find in the Law!

Our Obsession with Confession²

Paul Anderson-Walsh

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

At the risk of being overly simplistic, are we to understand that if we do not confess our sins, He will neither forgive nor cleanse us, even though we are already forgiven and cleansed? It is worth reminding ourselves that divine forgiveness does not require human assent for it to be operative. Divine forgiveness is not like a credit card where upon receiving it, you have to call the issuing company to activate the card. When Jesus cried from the cross, “Father, forgive them,” nobody was recorded as saying, “Yes, Father, forgive me.” They were already forgiven, plain and simple.

It is the function of the cross to cleanse us of all unrighteousness and it is the consequence of receiving His life which made us righteous. Confession has no place here. Furthermore, if the Apostle John is talking to believers, why, then, after having given us 1 John 1:9, would he pause and turn to another group (the group which is his primary audience) and say, *“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have One who speaks to the Father in our defence – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One”* (1 John 2:1 NIV). I simply cannot see how 1 John 1:9 can ever apply to a believer in the way it is currently (mis)applied. However, the verse clearly does have an application and so, who is the Apostle John talking to?

One of the most common mistakes we can make when reading the Bible is to presume that everything written pertains to him or her. The entire Bible is true, but the *entire* Bible does not apply to you.

It may surprise some of you to learn that there are only seven letters in the Bible which are written exclusively to Christians. These are the so-called Prison Epistles (Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon and Philippians) and the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, which were all written to the Apostle Paul’s church-planters). Note that the Apostle Paul prefaced his Prison Epistles with greetings to the saints and faithful brothers. All the other letters were written to

² Paul Anderson-Walsh: Until Christ is Formed: Book 1, Safe and Sound

the church which was made up of the lost and the saved just as it is today. Moreover, none of the epistles were written in a vacuum but were, invariably, written in response to matters arising in the churches.

It is pretty well agreed that the letters 1, 2 and 3 John were written by the Apostle John, the author of John's Gospel, and it is interesting to note the similarities between the opening verses of John's Gospel and those of 1 John. The reason for the Apostle John's first epistle is stated in 1 John 5:13: "*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.*" It is a message of assurance. Note that the purpose of John's Gospel is stated in John 20:31: "*But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.*" Thus, John's Gospel was written to *arouse faith*. The epistle was written to *establish certainty* (so that having believed, one might go on believing and deepen one's belief).

Dating 1 John is a little unclear. However, scholars generally agree that it would have been written between the middle of to the last third of the First Century. By that time a number of things had happened – the separation of the Church and the synagogue was complete; the controversy over the issue of justification by faith had been resolved; the influx into the church of the gentile converts, with their heritage and philosophical thought, was beginning to inform the doctrines in the Church. The Gentile converts arrived with questions. They wanted to understand who Christ really was and thus were especially burdened by soteriological (what Jesus did) and Christological (who Jesus was) issues, e.g., "If Jesus was God, how could He die?" and "If Jesus did die, how could He have been God?"

Among the throngs of people drawn to the honey pot of grace, there was a particularly divisive group known as the Gnostics. The church in Ephesus, which the Apostle John was addressing in his first epistle, had been greatly disturbed by the teachings of the Gnostics. In the Gnostic construct, salvation consisted of an escape from physical matter into the realm of the spirit. The chief means of effecting such an escape was to gain knowledge by which Man could, allegedly, rise above earth-bound limitations into a heavenly apprehension of truth. In a perverse twist, rather than being seen as the deceived and the sinner, Adam and Eve are perceived as being seekers of knowledge. I suspect that you can see where I am going with this, right? So, in that upsidedown Gnostic world, the serpent is the good guy in the Garden of Eden and the Lord is

cast as the bad guy. This is because the key to liberating Man from the bondage of God is to eat from the Tree of Knowledge.

However, of immediate significance and one which informs the Apostle John's first epistle is the central tenet of the Gnostic teaching – the doctrine of dualism. Dualism is the division of matter and spirit. The Gnostics consider all matter as evil and all spirit as good. Consequently, what one does with one's body is of no occasion. The Gnostics consider the human spirit as being trapped in the physical body, much like a pearl is trapped in an oyster. Yet, the spirit is part of the ultimate spiritual reality. This entrapment is thought of as being either "sleep" or "ignorance", but not sin, and for the human spirit to find salvation, it must be awakened and delivered from its ignorance by the recovering of knowledge of its true self as part of God. For the spirit to be saved, God has sent a redeemer to bring knowledge to the entrapped human spirit, thereby bringing illumination and salvation.

Intriguingly, the majority of Christian Gnostics identified their redeemer as Jesus Christ. However, the Gnostics were generally docetic (i.e., "to seem to be") and thus they had resolved the dilemma by the ingenious suggestion that He only seemed to be human, but in reality He was not flesh and blood, because if He was He would be disqualified from being God. In the second book of the *Until Christ Is Formed* trilogy entitled *The Apprentice*, there is a chapter called *The Silencing of Satan* which explains why Jesus had to be a Perfect Man. Jesus, the Last Adam, had to succeed where His predecessor, First Adam, had failed.

Self-evidently, if matter was evil and God was pure and if Jesus was really deity, He could not have anything to do with evil matter and therefore, the Gnostics reasoned that either 1. Christ was not really human and He only seemed to be so, or 2. the Christ Spirit did not actually inhabit the human Jesus until the baptism and left Him before His death on the Cross. The acceding to either option would have been fatal. The Gnostics advanced a view called Cerinthian which painted Jesus as being a sort of Jekyll and Hyde. Enter the Johannine epistles which were written to a pastor struggling against the tide of these heresies which were threatening to sweep the church away. Note the concerned tone in which the Apostle John wrote ...

- "Children, it is the last hour [for the community]" (1 John 2:18)
- He refers to "deceivers" and "liars" who twist the truth (1 John 2:19-26)
- These deceivers boast that they are "free from sin" (1 John 1:8-10)

- They boast that they “have fellowship” with God but walk in darkness (1 John 1:6)
- They boast that they “know God” but, nevertheless, are disobedient (1 John 2:4)
- They boast that they are in the light but hate their fellow brothers and sisters (1 John 4:20)

Against this backdrop, and also reading this passage through the lens of what the New Covenant as a whole says about forgiveness cf., John 19:30; Acts 10:43; Ephesians 1:7; Romans 4:7; Colossians 1:14; Colossians 2:13; Colossians 3:3; Hebrews 9:22; Hebrews 10:4; Hebrews 10:17-18:1; John 2:1-2, it ought to at least raise a flag in our minds and ask the question: “Now that I am Christian, does this statement (1 John 1:9) still apply to me?”

Quite apart from the fact that we know that we are forgiven surely any exegesis (an explanation or critical interpretation of a Bible passage) would benefit from the commentator being aware of the Gnostic problem that had surfaced in the church at that time.

As I have already suggested, the general epistles were written to an eclectic group comprising of insiders, outsiders, off-siders and off-the-wall-ers, and often included corrective content. It seems likely to me that rather than instructing the believers in these opening ten verses, John is clearing the doctrinal decks by rebuking the Gnostic group who were polluting the community with their lawless heresy; I choose the word ‘lawless’ carefully, as I want to draw the distinction in your mind between ‘lawless’ and ‘law-free’.

That, it seems to me is the context into which we can find the original (and intended) significance of the apostle John’s opening remarks. Ironically, the significance has been buried under the rubble of several hundred years of evangelical tradition in the soil of which has grown this mixture of lore and grace. The lore(s) has taken root in us. This particular folklore has been granted especial hospitality amongst Christians who feel that they need to ask for God to forgive them whenever they feel the consciousness of their sins.

Of course some will argue that whilst we don’t need to be forgiven per se, 1 John 1:9 nonetheless helps us in our walk with God. Now I understand (and respect) why one might think that but, I want us to tread carefully here. If, we follow this logic then what we are saying is that whilst ‘invoking’ 1 John 1:9 doesn’t affect our state of forgiveness but it does make us feel

better, then are we not dangerously close to saying that 1 John 1:9 is in fact a placebo (a sugar pill)?

If that is correct then the question becomes: is it an innocuous form of spiritual medication? My feeling is that far from being inert, this may be a gos-pill with side-effects. I fear that long-term use can impair our spiritual insight, afflicting us with a myopia that renders us incapable of seeing the victory of the cross when we are distant.

If, as I am proposing, the way that we typically apply 1 John 1:9 is as a lore, and that is for you to decide, then it is to the New Covenant what the oral traditions were to the Old Covenant – an obstacle to intimacy. In Jesus' day these oral traditions (or fence laws as they were also known) were afforded the same status as the Torah. Much of the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees occurs because Jesus seems to play so fast-and-loose with these traditions. The Sabbath disputes are the text book example of this. The fence-laws were introduced to 'protect' the Torah (the commandments), however this insurance became so obsessive and burdensome that by the time Jesus arrived on the scene there were some 1500 oral laws surrounding the one law about the Sabbath cf., Luke 6.

Jesus had little if no respect for these traditions of men and his apparent contempt for them proved to be a useful device for drawing the fire of the Pharisees. Upon the canvass of their ire he would write large the mystery of the New Covenant that He had come to inaugurate.

God's New Deal

(Excerpt from Chapter 4 of *The Naked Gospel: The Truth You May Never Hear in Church* by Andrew Farley, Zondervan 2009)

Introduction

Put yourself in the place of your favorite Old Testament character for a moment. Imagine what it would be like to be them. Perhaps you'd like to be David or Esther or Daniel.

What closeness they had with God! How they walked with him and were used by him! Wouldn't it be great to be one of them? Perhaps you'd be willing to trade your own relationship with God for theirs instead? If so, I couldn't agree with you less.

Less?

That's right, less.

Not in a million years would I want David's relationship with God over my own. Nor Esther's. Nor Daniel's. Nor any Old Testament figure's. I much prefer what I have right now.

How arrogant!

How bold!

I hope I've startled you and perhaps even ruffled your feathers a bit, because I intend to. I believe it's time for the church to wake up and realize how good we have it today on this side of the cross.

You may know about the famous heroes of the faith mentioned in Hebrews 11—people such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses. Through the author of Hebrews, God tells of their commitment, their sacrifice, and their surrender to his ways. These heroes were mocked, imprisoned, and even stoned to death because of their faith.

Have you been tested to such lengths? Have you proven to be equally committed? Likely, the answer is *no*. Then how could you possibly obtain a better relationship with God than they had?

Before we answer the *how*, let's make sure that this is indeed the case. Referring to Old Testament believers, the author of Hebrews writes, "These were all commended for their faith, yet *none of them received* what had been promised. God had planned *something better for us* so that only together with us would they be made perfect" (Hebrews 11:39–40, italics added).

Such dedication, such commitment—yet what do we learn about these witnesses? They did *not* receive what was promised. And on this side of the cross, we possess something better than they ever enjoyed.

What is it that makes our situation better than theirs? Has God changed? Certainly not. God is the same as he has always been. Then what is it exactly that makes today so different from 2000 or so years ago?

It has everything to do with the New.

Papers, Please!

Imagine being a fly on the wall during a hypothetical dialogue between Moses and Jesus of Nazareth. “Papers, please,” Moses exclaims. But Jesus of Nazareth would have no papers, at least none that would meet the requirements. The law required that a person be from the tribe of Levi to qualify as high priest, but Jesus was from the tribe of Judah. No one from Judah’s line had ever served as priest. The law forbade such a selection.

Today, Christians regard Jesus Christ as their high priest. According to the law, Jesus as high priest makes no sense at all. How then can we rightfully look to Jesus as our priest today? If the priestly line has changed, then the whole system for relating to God has to be replaced. And that’s exactly what has happened—the *whole* system has changed!

It’s crucial to realize that the law and Jesus just don’t mix. “[Jesus] ... belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests” (Hebrews 7:13–14). Christians talk about Jesus as their Savior, their Lord, and the author (priest) of their forgiveness. Some of these same believers then claim that the law is still for us today. In so doing, they adhere to a major contradiction.

The issue of law and grace (Old and New) is certainly still hotly debated today: Do we live by law? Do we live by grace? Do we live by a combination of the two? Doesn’t God write the law on our hearts? Despite the countless pages in Christian books devoted to these questions, it surprises me that Jesus’ lineage fails to take center stage. We can propose all kinds of theories, compromises, and answers concerning law and grace, but one fact remains: the law discredits Jesus as priest. For this reason, the writer of Hebrews writes, “When the priesthood is changed, the law must be changed also” (Hebrews 7:12).

The bottom line is that if you appeal to Jesus as your priest, there’s no place for the law in your life. You call on a man from Nazareth, from the tribe of Judah, who shares no family lineage with Aaron, or Levi, or any other qualified priest of the law. You call on an outsider, a renegade, a table turner.

God’s New Deal

Christians readily accept the idea that Jesus is their priest. But it’s not clear to some that, through their adoption of Jesus as priest, they enter into a contract with God. A contract? Yes, a contract, an agreement, a covenant. In contrast to the old contract that God penned through Moses, this new one will never be replaced. It’s the final word concerning a human’s relationship with God. Jesus Christ is the author and guarantee of something totally new and revolutionary:

For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance.

Hebrews 9:15

“The Lord has sworn

and will not change his mind:

‘You are a priest forever.’”

Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant.

Hebrews 7:21–22

A new covenant? What does that mean? I attended churches for more than a decade before hearing even a single teaching about the New. The New means everything changes. If we want to understand how God relates to us, we should look to the New. The New and the Old are certainly not the same. In many ways, they’re polar opposites.

Here’s a quote from God himself on the matter:

The days are coming, declares the Lord,
when I will make a new covenant
with the house of Israel
and with the house of Judah.
It will not be like the covenant
I made with their ancestors
when I took them by the hand
to lead them out of Egypt,
because they did not remain faithful to my covenant,
and I turned away from them,
declares the Lord.

Hebrews 8:8–9, italics added

Something new was coming all along. God always intended to usher in something radically different. This passage indicates that the New is unlike anything before, and that it solves a serious problem—our failure to remain faithful. Whatever the New is, it somehow *causes* people to remain faithful, even when their own strength fails them.

Today we debate eternal security, but security (or faithfulness) was an Old issue. Apparently, one reason the New came on the scene was to cure that problem: “For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. But God found fault with the people” (Hebrews 8:7–8).

There was really nothing wrong with the Old in itself. It should still be esteemed as holy and good. The issue with the Old was that no one could operate successfully under it. For that reason, God orchestrated a different way.

The New involves God’s desires being written inside us, so that we have the guarantee of being his people no matter what:

“This is the covenant I will establish with the house of Israel

after that time, declares the Lord.

I will put my laws in their minds

and write them on their hearts.

I will be their God,

and they will be my people.”

Hebrews 8:10

We glean some important insights from God’s own description of the New. God inscribes his laws (not the law of Moses) on our minds and hearts. We become his people and have the privilege of knowing him personally. But the author of Hebrews actually *misquotes* the Old Testament passage here. How could he be so bold? And for what reason? He purposely changes the Old Testament rendition “my law” to “my laws” to clarify an important truth.

Contrary to popular teaching, it’s not the law of Moses that is written on our hearts. It’s God’s laws. These are expounded on by Jesus and the New Testament writers. These laws are called “the royal law” (James 2:8), “the law that gives freedom” (James 1:25; 2:12), and “[Jesus’] commands” (1 John 3:24). God’s commandments are to love him and to love each other (Mark 12:30–31). These aren’t burdensome. In fact, Jesus himself says that those who love him *will* obey his commands (John 14:15). Under the New, God has it rigged.

If the Mosaic law were written on our hearts and minds, imagine the consequences! The dietary restrictions, the wardrobe regulations, and hundreds of other rules would overwhelm our consciences, just as they did the Israelites’.

Thank God that the New isn’t just a dressed-up version of the Old!

The New is different, and simple.

The Question.....and The Answer

DeeDee Winter

I never knew how **one** question could *so totally* change my life. As I sat in the lecture at the end of my fourth year of Bible Study Fellowship I cried out in honest desperation to God, ***“I don’t even know if I have salvation or not, but if this isn’t it, You are going to have to show me what is!”***

I was raised in the Catholic faith. When I was 30 I came to know the Lord through the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Immediately, I turned and began to pursue God as passionately as I had tennis, social activities and my interior design business. I began to attend church at a non-denominational Charismatic church that majored on inner healing (healing of the memories) and on deliverance (fighting and casting out the devil). God taught me well for six years through that ministry, a prayer group, several bible studies and any other place I could find Christians coming together to learn about God. I was tap dancing for God in triple time!

It was a wonderful time in many ways. I found in inner healing that I could look at myself, my past, and talk about a number of things that I was not proud of from my past. I found new freedom in being delivered from the clutches of the devil in many areas of my life. I pushed myself in every direction to **excel** at this Christian life. Yet on **that** day I felt like such a failure as a Christian that I cried out to God in despair. I even surprised and puzzled myself.

Nothing immediately happened and one day turned into the next until about six weeks later when God brought four scriptures to me that I had read a thousand times. This time I “knew” them in a way I had never before experienced...*revelation*. The scriptures were Romans 6:6... “knowing this that our *old self was crucified* with Him that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin”, 6:4...“Therefore we have been *buried* with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was *raised* from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life”; Ephesians 2:6...“and *raised us up with Him in the heavenly places* in Christ Jesus” and Psalms 37:4...“Delight yourself in the Lord, and *He will give you the desires of your heart*”.

In an instant I **knew** I was dead and a *dead man did not need healing*. ALL my inner healing went “out the window”. In the next instant I **knew** that *I* sat at the right hand of the Father

in Christ and that *Satan was not there!* The need for deliverance or to ever fear or fight the devil was gone. And finally, I knew that if God gave me the desires of my heart I could *trust myself* and *my* desires...for the first time in my life! I had always been taught that our hearts were wicked and God's way was the opposite of anything *I* wanted or thought. ALL that had held me *until now* was like putting a band-aid on a gaping wound. ***That day I knew complete healing!***

The *answer to my question* had come in the most unexpected way! I knew that what I had known and believed was no longer true. I did not know what was; I just knew what was not. I did not know what lay ahead, but I knew I could never go back. My head was spinning as I realized that God had a totally different way of seeing things than I did **and** than I had been taught. I also knew that His way of truth had to span from Genesis 1:1 through Revelation 22:21.

One by one I began to ask God about my long-held „Christian beliefs. I asked God how He saw submission and He immediately said to me, “It is *being, not doing.*” Somehow I knew that **all** of life was meant to be that...*being, not doing.* Then I pondered prayer and „saw I that if I was one with God that everything I did was prayer...a constant oneness-communication with Him! Sometimes it took verbal form...other times just thoughts...and other times it was in a simple daily task like vacuuming or picking up my daughter at school...ALL one with my Creator! Tithing? Ten percent...total rubbish and totally Old Testament...now ALL I had was His to dispose of as He pleased! And the big issue of „humility I! It hit me like a ton of bricks...far from the old way of trying to be humble like Jesus was... **“This IS humility...to be dead in Christ and He my **all!****”

I tried for a year to find a church that understood and taught the truths that God had given me, but to no avail. It was then that I discovered a magazine called Union Life whose articles seemed to be on the same wavelength and I decided to go to a weeklong conference for women in Wisconsin, which they sponsored.

I was a little leery due to my experiences during the prior year of trying to find someone who understood what God had revealed. The main speaker was a man named Norman Grubb. As the week progressed I discovered that everything that he taught confirmed what God had

given me. And along with those basic truths he presented from years of walking in/as Christ came an expanded understanding of God, *myself*...spirit, soul and body (my personhood) and how they *perfectly* fit together. He spoke of God and Christ as our life in three broad strokes...God being the only Person in the universe and all life being derivatives of that One; of us being perfectly created in our **humanity** (soul & body) as containers of His life; and that our lives are now intercessors for our world.

Getting my soul (feelings, emotions) in its proper perspective was God's next „lesson“ for me. This began one day with feelings of extreme jealousy toward a very close friend. Up to that time I had seen my emotions as *some right; some wrong*. That day I spoke to my feelings with all I knew, saying... “I am not jealous of her; I am Christ in my form.” The Lord immediately replied to me... “You are not jealous **of** her, you are jealous **for** her; it is **My jealousy** in you *for* her to know me as you do”.

I reeled at the thought that something that *felt* so ugly could be so right! I began to search the scriptures for further understanding and saw that God says He is a jealous God; He says He hates; He expresses anger, and admonishes us to “Be angry and sin not”. He is also all of the fruits of the Spirit...love, joy, peace, patience, etc. I realized that everything HE **is** in scripture **He will be in and as us!** It was a new day in being able to be all I would need to be...and express all that **He intended to express as me** in order that I might be His life as an intercessor for others.

God soon took me on to that third level of losing *my* life to find it. This came about as the result of a harrowing two years of conflict. It was then that I heard as clearly as I have ever heard anything, “You are whole complete and needing nothing. No one can add to you by their approval, nor take away from you by their disapproval. You have seen who *you are as Christ*; now you will see who **I am as you.**”

I have come to know that **knowing** our *wholeness* and *rightness* in every part of our being is a *vital revelation* of the Holy Spirit, because **UNTIL** we know this about ourselves „life“ and the frustrations and hurts and angers and negatives it brings our way are still about „ME“... “What's wrong with ME?” “They hurt ME.”

But when we are **settled and fixed about ourselves** our question becomes “Lord, what do You mean from this? What shall You and I believe and call into being in this situation or for this person?” LIFE...LIFE...**all** His LIFE!!!

Dead...safe...whole...free...one...new...kept...freed from sin...holy...saint...intercessor...as He is...have become my permanent reality.

I understood the scriptures in a new way, no longer as something to attain or do, but as the **present truth and reality** for myself and for **every believer in Christ Jesus**.

Dead...Gal 2:20...“*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me...*”

Safe... Jude 1:24... “*Now to Him who is able to keep you from falling.*”

Whole...James 1:2-4... “*...that you may be whole, complete and needing nothing.*”

One...John 17:22... “*...that they may be one even as we are one.*”

New...II Cor 5:17...“*If any man be in Christ he is a new creation, old things are passed away all things become new.*”

Free...John 8:32, 36... “*And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free...if the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.*”

Intercessors...II Cor 4:10... “*Always bearing about in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus might be made manifest.*”

Romans 12:1 “*Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service.*”

"Man Utd" - An introduction into the believer's union with Christ.

Paul Anderson-Walsh

"Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of His body, that is the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to His saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches and the glory of this mystery which is Christ in you the hope of glory." [Col 1:24-27]

It's a Mystery

By way of introduction to this article, it seemed appropriate to include a brief comment on the nature of Paul's mystery gospel. To this end, some preliminary comments might provide a framework for what follows. In the Pauline corpus the word *mysterion*, mystery appears twenty-one times. Scholars have defined the word mystery as follows:

"The word mystery in modern speech means a sublime or unclear truth that is marvelled at but only partly understood. The Greek word *mysterion*, however, describes any divine or heavenly reality which is regarded as hidden or secret and can only be known when revealed by the gods."

Paul asserts that the nature of this mystery has to do with a decisive action that has affected the Gentiles [and all believers] namely on that, they are now indwelt by Christ. Thus, he sees his commission in terms of proclaiming "Him" and bringing everyone to maturity - to the full measure and stature of Christ [Eph 4:13]. With almost maddening economy, Paul defines the mystery in three words "Christ in you."

Paul's revelation is the most profound truth imaginable without it the Christian life is unliveable and unbearable. However, if recognised and entered into it is the pathway way to a life beyond our wildest imaginings.

This article seeks to explain the mystery and explore its purpose. However, interested readers should also refer other Grace Project article pertaining to this subject most notably "Deceived" and "False Self Syndrome" see www.thegraceproject.com click on interactive.

Many titles have been used to express the Pauline mystery "Christ in You" some have called it "The Deeper Life", others have used the term "The Higher Life, still others have used the term

"Interior Life." Hudson Taylor's son called it "The Exchanged Life" still others preferred the title "Oneness." All of these definitions are extremely helpful, however, I think on balance I prefer Norma Grubb's definition of the mystery as being "Union Life". It is this definition that I have relied upon and sought to capture in my title "Man Utd." Jesus alludes to the believer's union with Himself in His great prayer recorded in John's mystery gospel when He says:

"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word, that they may all be one just as You Father are in Me and I in You that they maybe in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. The glory that You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one. I in them and You in Me that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you have sent Me and loved them even ads You loved me.
" [Jn 17:20:23]

Life is a Mystery

Have you ever found yourself wondering - "Who is the real you? Most of us have. Moreover, many Christians have to live with the added guilt that comes from a numbing sense that who we are is not who we should be. Consequently, we live our lives trapped in a cycle of performance rotating between commitment, failure condemnation, confession, and re-dedication. Evangelical homiletics has left all but a few caught on the barbed wire of apparent contradiction between "image" and "identity", the person that I appear to be and the person that I actually am.

Socrates said, that, "greatness is to be in reality what we appear to be," and this laid down gauntlet has been picked up by the unrighteous and the self-righteous alike. However, to the Christ-righteous this is the antithesis of union, where greatness [which, in this paradigm must also be redefined, as "other centred living"] is to accept as reality that we ARE precisely who we appear NOT to be.

Speaking personally the apparent paradox of union has been a great struggle to accept. To become settled and live out of the reality that I am who God says that I am regardless of how I feel is a matter beyond intellect, it is in the final analysis a matter of revelation. Before we can face the question, "Do we believe that we are who He says we are?" Perhaps we should first ask, "Who does He say that we are?" Before we answer that let me just restate my simple conclusion, the real good, bad, for better or for worse, or us for richer or for poorer, CANNOT be anyone other than who God says we are.

Who does God say we are?

Before I understood union it was easier for me to believe that I was not who, and could never this side of heaven be, the person that God wanted me to be - perfect [Mtt 5:48].

Nonetheless, becoming who I knew I could not be was the goal of the Christian life.

Sanctification, A.K.A. "Mission Impossible" was the goal that I was determined to reach. Whilst I knew my efforts were doomed to failure, I would still be going to heaven because believing in Jesus, not "sinless perfection" was the salvation criteria. My favourite verse was 1 Jn 3: 2

" Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we know is this; when He is revealed, we will be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

I had understood this to be a reference to the second coming, but, then, I saw that John was addressing the "little children" [1 Jn 3:7] a group he had identified earlier [1 Jn 2:12-14]. These were the spiritual babies; those who knew no more than their sins had been forgiven, however, in the case of what he called the young men and the fathers, the mature or more aware, knew, that "Just as He is so are we in this world" [1 Jn 4:17]. Then, suddenly as a cloud burst union made sense to me, I could see it "when He is revealed, we will be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" and He is in me, expressing Himself as me. 1 Jn 3:2 was not speaking of His return it was speaking about my coming of age.

Imagine my surprise then when I began to see that I already was the person that I was trying to become. Being the product of a Jesuit education I had become accustomed to reading reports about myself that always said something like "Paul is a bright child but could do much better, must try harder." What was I to make of God's claim that I am the following things, not that I will be, or might be, or could be if only I would try harder but AM:

Perfect Hebs 10:14

The righteousness of God in Christ 2 Cor 5:21

Holy Eph 1:4; Col 1:22

A partaker in the divine nature 2 Pet 1:4

A new creation 2 Cor 5:17

Complete in Him Col 2:10

Just as He is so are we in this world 1 Jn 4:17

Beyond reproach Col 1:22

Blameless Eph 1:4

Seated with him in heavenly places Eph 2:6

Container of the fullness of Christ Col 2:9

Life Choices - To believe or not to believe

The foregoing list is far from exhaustive and in the light of its claims, we are confronted with two choices, [a] belief or [b] unbelief. It is the role of the Holy Spirit to convict both believers and unbelievers alike of unbelief. In the case of the lost man, their unbelief concerns Christ becoming sin for them [Jn 16:8-10] and in the case of the saved man concerning his becoming Christ righteousness. [2 Cor 5:21 If the first work of the Spirit is to convict the unbeliever of his unbelief in Christ then the second work of the Spirit is to convict the believer of his unbelief in his Christ righteousness.

There can be no progress in the Christian life without the most basic and fundamental revelation. In the same way that we accept by faith [and unquestioningly so] that He [Jesus] became as we were, that is in the likeness of sinful man - flesh we must accept by faith that the purpose of His condescension was that we might become as He is divine. At one level, whether we believe that this is true or not, does not alter the fact that it is true. If the Great I AM says I AM, then, I AM. To doubt that is to call God a liar. Well now Christian, do you believe that you are who God says you are?

Through the prism of union, rather than the prison of performance, I can see that sanctification is simply recognition. That it is not a progressive rectification of one's behaviour but rather a progressive recognition of your new identity. What in my formative years was the cornerstone of Christian discipleship that sanctification was a process of becoming holy has been replaced by the axiom of union, which is to know that I AM holy.

Can I be sure that I really am righteous?

The Bible tells me that as a believer, I am One spirit with Him [1 Cor 6:17] that I' am indwelt by Christ [Col 1:27] that it is no longer I that live but it is Christ that not only lives IN me [Gal 2:20] but also AS me and BY me [Acts 17:28; Col 3:4]. The real me, the essential me, is JesUS

There is a line from the film Matrix Reloaded, where Morpheus, in response to the protest "Not everyone believes what you believe" replies "The beauty of what I believe is that it doesn't require you to believe it in order for it to be true." This is just as true of union, whether you as a

believer, believe that these things are true about you or not they are still true. Now whilst it does not require you to believe it to be true, it does require you to believe it to live in the power of it.

As a believer, [and if you do not believe this what do you believe] you like unbelievers have a choice. Either:

1. We choose to believe that we are who He says we are and already possess and simply BE
- Or
2. We see these as things that I COULD be or SHOULD and aim to BECOME.

The respective outcomes could not be more starkly contrasted. On the one hand righteous works that spring from rest - Fruit that the product of allowing Him to be the reproducer of his own nature in us whilst in return we enjoy the benefits of our branch/vine relationship with the Him [Jn15: 5] On the other hand a works righteousness that results in a harvest of "fruit unto death" [Roms 7:5] disillusionment and spiritual burnout.

If we should choose the latter then inevitably we will be left to languish in the misery of a life dedicated to trying to cultivate the appearance of godliness, but denying the power thereof. Each one of us lives within the power and limits of our choices. Either the limitless and liberating vistas of allowing God to reproduce His nature & likeness in you or be limited to trying to reproduce His nature and likeness through your flesh.

It is impossible to imagine that given the choice anyone would choose imitation over participation. However, for the vast majority of believers what they have come to understand and accept, as being the "Christian life" is some other than the life of Christ. I am bold enough to say that is a counterfeit Christianity or as Paul put it " a different Gospel which is no gospel at all " [Gal 1:6]

For most believers the mystery of the New Covenant remains a secret. Consequently, without it millions of precious, sincere believers find themselves week after week re-committing and re-dedicating their lives in the futile pursuit of trying to become who they already are. How distressing it is to know that the vast majority of us are squandering the opportunity to enter into His rest. How tragic that most of us never discover that between the historical Jesus who was and the futuristic Jesus who will be is the indwelling Jesus who IS. Fulfilling in, through and as us his eternal purpose that He might have a corporate body made in His likeness, that would bear his image, and invested with His authority would have dominion over His earth. [Eph 3:11]

This purpose He first revealed in Genesis and this purpose forfeited by First Adam He restored through Jesus Christ, Last Adam [1 Cor 15:45] God made in the appearance of flesh [Phil 2:6-7] He remains that man, though now in resurrected, and ascended, no longer incarnate with us, but indwelling, in us, as us [Col 1:27].

The Consequence of the Union

Therefore, we now through the mystery of union have become the visible image of the invisible God. We have been re-made in the IMAGE and likeness of God and as real persons, rather than as the false persons, we once were, when we were by nature children of wrath [Eph 2:3] but now as partakers in the divine nature [2 Pet 1:4] we are containers and conduits of Him. No longer separate from Him or one another as before [Eph 2:14] but one [Jn 17:23].

The nature, His nature, which you and I now express, is fixed by His eternal choice as an other-centred-lover [God cannot be a self-lover because self-love is self-getting, the satanic nature. God is self-giving. He exists for the benefit of others] that is the essence of agape [1 Jn 4:8] now radiates from us to others. [Jn 13:35]

The extent to which we become aware of our oneness or union with Him we can safely say that we are the express IMAGE and LIKENESS of the PERSON of Christ expressing HIS love purposes through us towards others. In other words, we are the means by which the IMAGE of the INVISIBLE GOD manifests, expresses and ministers Himself to His world.

Each one of us is empowered to live by faith in who we perceive ourselves to be and consequently we will bear the fruit of that belief, either fruit unto death [Roms 7:5] or the fruit of the Spirit [Gal 5:22-23] a harvest of either self-righteousness or Christ-righteousness.

Most of us have been raised on a staple diet of Jesus died for our sins, but that is only half the Gospel - whatever happened to the other half, that Christ is my life? Without a revelation of the mystery "Christ in You"- that it is no longer I that live but Christ that lives in me and the life that I do live I live by the faith of the Son of God [Gal 2:20], I will never know union. I will never be able to live the "abundant life" of Christ [Jn 10:10] I will never be free from condemnation [Roms 8:1] I will never be free to be me. Instead, I will be consigned to an impoverished sub-Christian life unaware that all the time I was Him in human form.

We are courtesy of Last Adam, Adam at Last, not just Adam again, but an Adam that will last. We have become the Adam that exceeds our progenitor, because we are Adam the creation united with the Creator - Man United, united with God allowing that unity, that oneness to express itself to one another, gladly suffering for the Gospel, for one another and simply suffering one another, and in so-doing counting it all joy [Jas1: 2]. Knowing that producing righteousness, love, joy, goodness, kindness gentleness, peace, patience, self-control is not a work of the flesh, but the fruit of the Spirit, the consequence of Him giving his life for you in order that He could give His life to you so that His could live His life through you. Enabling you to say, "Ah, have we been with you so long, and you still don't know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Son " [Jn 14:9]

The Genetic Code of God³³

Andre Rabe

It does not move; it does not grow; It does not breath - yet it is alive. It certainly looks dead, this small object I hold within my hand, but deep within it is hidden a mysterious life. Yes, it might seem small and lifeless now, but when it is awakened it produces creatures much greater than what is visible now.

A seed does not move, breath, grow or do anything else that we associate with being alive. Yet within this seeming lifeless container lies one of the greatest wonders of life - the genetic code, the logic, that is capable of unleashing a burst of life. There might be a forest in that single seed. As someone once said: "You can count the seeds in an apple, but can you count the apples in a seed?" All it needs is to be awakened. Different seeds have different types of dormancy and different triggers that break this dormancy. In some seeds, germination is triggered by moisture, in others by light, yet in others by a combination of stimuli. I read an amazing story about seed once: it was about a discovery made in an ancient Egyptian tomb. Grain was deposited into a Pharaoh's tomb together with his remains. Thousands of years later men discovered that grain. When they planted some of those seeds, they germinated. The death concealed within the tomb could not overcome the life preserved within those seeds!

Man originated in God. Although dormant, the seed of God, His genetic code, remains within man. Peter wrote about the fact that we were born not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible - the word of God that lives and abides forever. (1Pet 1:23) Incorruptible seed - think about that. This seed might have been separated from the tree of its origin, it might have been trampled under foot ... but it is incorruptible! The logic of its origin remains intact. There is an environment that can cause this seed to germinate. There are words that contain the spirit environment that causes this spirit seed within man to germinate and produce resurrection life. A person might have no interest in God, and could have been in this state of spiritual death for many years. Oh, but when words of life enter, the very death or tomb in which he lives, becomes a womb; a womb that incubates the very life of God.

Often people speak about 'children of the Devil' and 'children of God' as if God and the Devil

³³ Andre Rabe: Adventures in Christ

are on the same level as creators. Ridiculous! There is only one Creator, one God and one Father of us all (Eph 4:6). And in the previous chapter Paul writes: "I bow my knees before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from Whom every family in heaven and on earth is named." The only thing Satan ever gave birth to is lies. Throughout the centuries man has adopted this foreign 'father' by submitting to his way of thinking, thereby adopting a foreign identity. Yet submitting to this lie did not change the truth of mankind's origin, nor did it make the Devil an actual creator or father. It is in this context that Jesus said: 'You are of your father the Devil', referring to their way of thinking and consequent actions, immediately qualifying it in the next sentence by saying: 'he is the father of lies'.

I love the way in which the Message translates John 1:12:

But whoever did want him,
who believed he was who he claimed
and would do what he said,
**He made to be their true selves,
their child-of-God selves.**

In Christ, God preserved the live-code, the original thought and design of man. He never had a plan B for a lesser man or an inferior relationship. Christ remained the reference and measure of man. "that [we might arrive] at really mature manhood (the completeness of personality which is nothing less than the standard height of Christ's own perfection), the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ and the completeness found in Him." (Eph 4:13 AMP.) When the Logos became flesh, the word that was in the beginning - plan A - was once again displayed in all its fullness and the great awakening began. The ignorance induced dormancy was broken. The fullness of Gods purpose was made visible.

Scripture in Context

Francois Du Toit

Many popular doctrines are based on isolated scripture references outside of the context of God's work of redemption as it is revealed in Christ. Any concept that excludes the good news of what God achieved on humanity's behalf in Christ is irrelevant, no matter how many scriptures can be quoted. Redemption is the context of scripture, not even its historic or traditional setting. Many translations through the years have been manipulated to reflect human opinion and traditional interpretation, rather than the truth of man's complete deliverance from sin and restoration to the image of God. Man's sense of guilt and shortcoming has been most severely exploited through religious institutions over the years. Many of the magnificent ancient Catholic cathedrals bear witness to this fact. The selling of millions of indulgences often funded such building projects. An indulgence was a piece of paper issued on behalf of the Pope or a local Bishop with the authority of the church offering written promises of shortening time in purgatory! This lie gave the man with money freedom to continue to indulge in any sinful appetite without the plaguing sense of guilt, since he bought some relief for himself and his deceased relatives. Promoting and selling fear became the major emphasis of the church, especially while the masses had no access to a Bible that was written in languages which none but the church leaders could understand. When it comes to guilt and the uncertainty and fear of the future, man has always been a sucker for punishment, no wonder the biggest and tallest buildings in the old days were the churches or cathedrals and in any modern city today they are usually the insurance companies; they are still selling the same product, fear. Man will pay any price and buy any lie to imagine that he feels relieved of his sense of guilt or fear. Amongst the Protestant churches, the message of sin, hell and eternal judgment has been a popular mode of convincing people into making decisions for Christ. It always amazes me how intelligent people can imagine a relationship of intimate divine romance between God and man, built on a foundation of a constant sense of fear, failure, inferiority and guilt. Somehow the emphasis on Adam's transgression and humanity's utter sinfulness seemed to be the main ingredient of the 'good' (!?) news. While the true gospel reveals that God's free gift of grace in Christ cancelled the impact and implication of sin. Yes "the thief came to steal, kill and destroy, but I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly!" John 10:10. In Christ God reveals man's true value. "He has shown me to call no man common or unclean!" Acts 10:15,28, 1Joh.5:9-11,

2Cor.5:16. The entire Bible is about Jesus, and all of Jesus is about us! Unbelief feeds on ignorance or wrong knowledge and keeps man trapped in an inferior mindset and opinion of himself. The ignorance of man does not change the fact that all of mankind stands equally acquitted and forgiven in God's sight; yet the individual's resistance to the word of truth, whether it be due to ignorance or his own hardness of head and heart, robs him of enjoying the benefit of God's love, a life flooded in light. "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him; whoever lacks these things are short-sighted and blind." 2Pet.1:3,9. Not seeing something does not make it non-existing! Awareness awakened equals appreciation. The image and inscription remains intact on the lost coin, it can never lose its true identity or value. Mark 12:15-17, Acts 17:27-29. Just like in the coin, the image and name of God is engraved in every man; in Christ the true identity of man was preserved, in spite of the fall of Adam. The negative of a film preserves the original moment of the photograph; thus Jesus remains the blueprint of man's true origin. The good news now proclaims the integrity of man's redemption.

Blind, But Now Seeing

Ole Henrik Skjelstad

“And they came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, "Do you see anything?" And he looked up and said, "I see men, but they look like trees, walking." Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.” (Mark 8:22-25)

When you have a desire to see dear ones saved you pray to your heavenly Father and He will send Jesus to them. Jesus will take the hand of the blind person and lead him to a place where He can manifest Himself and endow the gift of regeneration unto him.

In the beginning the new creation will behold the newness of his being with childish eyes. He will have an understanding that his sins are forgiven, and that something has happened within. His spiritual sight will, however, be blurred, and this will be manifested through his aptness to follow the habits of the old man attempting to make himself presentable to God by his own works.

But it is Jesus who does everything, and who will ask the new man when his resources are exhausted; “Do you see anything?”, that is, do you appreciate that you are a new creation whose old man died on the cross with me? When I say died, I mean both those parts of you that you found repulsive and those parts in which you were proud. Do you know that both your “evil” and your “good” are nothing? Do you know that I am here to live in you through you as you? Do you know that I am the only One who can live the Christian life? Do you know that you also are resurrected with me to take part in my resurrection life?

It is now that Jesus put the final touch on His work in that person’s life. He opens his eyes so that he can behold clearly the beauty of the union life with Christ and enjoy his life as a perfect manifestation of the invisible God.

We have all gone from spiritual blindness to an intermediate position where things are a bit

blurred, and from here we are firmly steered to the final revelation where we with increasingly clarity behold the magnificence of God's plan. We are perfectly saved also in our state of childishness when we strive in our ignorance, but as our consciences are renewed to the image of Christ we are transformed from glory to glory.

Notice that it is Jesus who is the doer. The man merely follows along, puts his trust in Jesus and answers a simple question. Obviously, the blind man could have refused Jesus' offer to lead him out of the village, that is, his old self and old life. He could have lied to Jesus and retorted that his present sight was adequate, or perfectly suitable for his kind of life; that he was satisfied with his condition.

The spit symbolizes Jesus' life now imparted to the man. In John 9:6 we find that Jesus spat on the ground and made mud that he smeared on the eyes of a man who was born blind, which is a common human condition, spiritually speaking. God formed man from dust of the ground (Gen 2:7), so when Jesus mixes His saliva with the dust this is a powerful image of the union life.

Dead Men Are Free From Sin

Steve McVey

Imagine Leo overdosing on cocaine and dying. They take his body to the funeral home and prepare it for burial. A few hours before the funeral starts, one of his drug buddies comes into the parlor where they have Leo's corpse laid out. Nobody else is in the room, so his buddy walks over to the casket and leans over. "Hey, Leo," he says. "We're alone right now, man. I've got some good stuff here in my pocket." He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a small bag with cocaine in it. "Look man, it's pure. Take a snort," he says, while putting the bag under Leo's nose. "What's your problem, man? Here, I'll put a little on my finger for you to taste. You'll see, it's good stuff."

Do you know what Leo is doing all the time this is going on? Just lying there. If Leo could speak at that moment, do you know what he would say? "Hey, stupid! I'm dead! Can't you see that?" Dead men don't want cocaine, even if they loved it before.

The Bible clearly teaches that a part of our inheritance is that we have died to sin. You can sin if you choose, but when you understand your new identity you will discover that you don't want to live in sin anymore. You died to all that. Now you are alive unto God. He motivates your desires and interests. You finally have power over sin!

Before Jesus died and dealt with your old sin nature, you had no power to overcome sin. You sinned because you had no choice. It was your nature to do so. Now things have changed. You have a new nature — His! Because His life is within you, He will enable you to overcome sin as you depend on Him. Remember that the person you used to be, who loved to sin, has died (Romans 6:1-6). You were placed on the cross in Jesus Christ and crucified there with Him. Not only did he die, but you died too so that your life now consists of Christ in you (Galatians 2:20). "For he who has died is freed from sin" (Romans 6:7).

To experience power over sin, simply rest in the sufficiency of Jesus Christ at every moment and continually affirm that you are dead to sin. Whether you feel it or not, "consider yourself to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Romans 6:11). Just act like it's true, because it is! When you depend on Jesus and act in faith, you will see for yourself that you

are dead to sin. "Sin shall no longer have dominion over you for you are not under law but under grace!"

That Place in Us

John Lynch

Today I've been thinking about that place in us that doesn't change by will power, diligence or good intention. It's our perception of ourselves. My self-perception, historically, has seemed to fluctuate like the stock market, between an inflated sense of greatness and irrational inferiority. Case in point:

Not long ago, I was in Auckland, New Zealand. (geez I like saying that) Anyway, Bill, Bruce and I are just about done with our speaking tour of Australia and New Zealand. And this particular morning I am sitting alone in the hotel restaurant, reading the local paper. I look up to notice a young couple sitting down, two tables away. This is not just any young couple. They are right out of an international fashion magazine, dressed hip and trendy-incredibly fit and beautiful. Their clothes are sprayed on, I think. I try not to stare, positioning myself behind the paper, in such a manner as to be able to stare. He stands up to get some coffee while she stays at the table, just looking incredibly attractive and fashionable.

At some point, she notices me, not staring, and she smiles kindly at me before turning away to look out the window. And in an instant this incredibly bizarre scene takes over in my mind:

"See, I'm not stupid. I've seen that smile before. John, you old dog, you've still got it! She likes you. No, she's captivated with you. That smile says 'Please sir, take me away with you. I'll dump this guy in a heartbeat. Take me with you.' How sad. She doesn't know that I'm married and have a life of my own-that it's too late for her. I can't help her.

Just about then the incredibly handsome man returns to the table. Its obvious he senses that something is very wrong. He can feel the tension, the electricity. He looks quickly over at me and then back to her. It's clear he's thinking, "Oops, I've got some competition here."

I so much want to jump up and take him aside and say, "Hey buddy, listen, you don't worry about a thing here. I'm a Christian. I love my wife dearly. We've been married 25 years. I'm not going to steal this woman from you." Instead, I come to the conclusion that it would be better for all of us, if I just get up and leave the room...

In fairness, the illusion didn't really last that long. But for a few seconds I actually was aware of my concern and awkward embarrassment for the guy's obvious awareness of her infatuation with me.

How absolutely crazy is that? I'm 56. I'm pudgy, I've got hair that looks like wheat glued to my head with carpenter's glue. And I've got a space between my teeth you could drive a pinion nut through. My feet turn out, I've got hair growing out of my ears and I can't remember our last three presidents names without hints.

The truth is, when I got up from the table and turned to walk out of the room, one of them probably said to the other, "That sweet old man is amazing. He's down here at breakfast all by himself and he found the food and everything! His grandchildren must be still asleep. He probably dressed himself. And look at him shuffling out without a walker. I hope I'm as spry as him when I get to be that age."

When does that self-deception, that inflated view of self leave us? I'm not sure, but I'm pretty certain it's after 56.

That inaccurate self-story we can tell ourselves, can show up at any time, in any area of our lives. It comes from the effects of shame, of wanting to re-create ourselves to be someone worthy of love. Because life can try to teach us that we are not. The only antidote strong enough to invade my dishonest self story is to trust God's assessment of me, His assessment of my lovableness. His choice to love me and His choice to call me His beloved, His choice to fuse His identity with mine-is my only hope of breaking the spell of shame.

God knows that even if this "inflated" self- image were true, that if indeed that women – strangely attracted to tooth gaps and woodenly thatched hair- did want to run away with me; that this would not be a validation of my worth or value. In fact, this would represent an opportunity to deconstruct the life of cherished love with my wife and family that God has been weaving all these years.

In the last twenty years I have increasingly believed these truths. And receiving His love, His delight, His unchanging assessment has curbed my madness, my self-deceived charade. Most of the time I see myself pretty accurately: Christ in John Lynch! And it has made sense of this person He has made me.

...But I still do have my moments, don't I

Enjoy Being Yourself

Dan Stone

The religion I preached for twelve or thirteen years told people what they ought to become. Everybody else told me I "gotta become," so that's what I taught others.

Do you know what that kind of religion is like? It's like a bunch of us who all bought new shoes which were too tight for us. We paid so much for them, we thought we had to smile. But all the time we were smiling, our feet were killing us.

A group of six or seven of us who know "Christ in us" as our hope of glory were together recently, and it was wonderful to have this dimension of truth in common. I find in my own life that I don't *need to* be with people who really know this mystery, whereas once it was very necessary for me; but I enjoy that kind of sharing and look forward to more of it.

You see, I'm tired of people telling me what I "ought" to do. I want to be with people who already know who they are, so that we can just rejoice in God and know that we are complete in Christ - that we are already holy, already unprovable, already blameless. When we know this, we can have fellowship in the "I Am" and drop the "I gotta become."

During the years of my ministry when Christianity was a matter of trying to "become," I really did try to smile, because Jesus was supposed to be so good. But it was painful. I came to the place where I began to think that God wasn't a God of love. He was a tyrant. Do you know why I thought He was a tyrant? Because every time I got a little close to Him, He seemed to pull. Back a little bit. I'd get near, and He'd draw back and say, "Now you've got to work a little harder to get this next step." And about the time I'd get there, He'd point to the next step and say, "Now you gotta work a little harder if you want to get there." And I could never get to Him. I could never reach Him.

I'd scratch my head sometimes and say, "Well my goodness, we're worshiping a God of love, so why can't you ever get to Him?" I always longed to hear that "Well done, good and faithful servant"; but I never did hear it. While I sat in the pew at church I heard: "You're no good. You ought to confess your sins. You ought to try harder." Oh, I sure did want to hear that "Well done, good and faithful servant." But it looked as though the cheese was always just out of my grasp.

If there's a theme verse in my life, I guess it's Galatians 2:20. Recently my first experience with this verse came back to my mind. I remembered that when I got saved as a young man, this was one of the first verses to hit me. I was a pagan in those days. I had no biblical background - didn't know anything about the Bible. I walked into church one Sunday morning, not caring one thing about God, and walked out in love with Him.

The first thing I did was to buy a new Bible. My mother gave me a Bible when I was about eleven because I joined the church, but this was the first one I bought. Buying new Bibles became a habit in my years as a struggling Christian. Every time I had a new experience with God, I bought a new Bible. I've got about thirty of them! But when I got saved I thought I ought to have a new Bible because I had made a new start.

I was working for my father at that time and it was a boring job. He had what we called a "job printing shop." We did hand bills, letterheads, envelopes, and all kinds of jobs of that nature; and I was supposed to be learning the business. But all I did was stand in the back and watch a press go "clickety click, clickety click, clickety click." As long as it went "clickety click," I didn't have a thing to do but be bored. But if it threw a piece of paper out, or something else went wrong, Then I had to do five minutes work. But I'd start it up again and watch it go "clickety click." So I read the Bible, and I came across Galatians 2:20. This was just after I became a Christian. In those days I didn't know anything about the Spirit of God within a person being the Teacher. I may have read it, but I didn't know it. So the only thing I knew was to depend on outside sources, mainly people in whom I had confidence. Well, I really loved this man who had become my pastor, and he always had time for me. So I went to see him because I had read Paul's statement that "I don't live, but Christ lives in me." I didn't understand that, so I decided to ask my pastor about it. Whatever his answer was, it didn't quicken me.

The next time I came across the verse was when I had been called to preach. I was at one of the Baptist colleges, because in those days I was a Baptist. (I'm nothing now - just a Christian.) The one who had a real influence on me at that time was the Bible professor. Somehow or another Galatians 2:20 came up and I went to him. But again, his answer didn't quicken within me. Later I was at Louisville Baptist Theological Seminary, and while studying New Testament Galatians 2:20 once again struck me. I went to another

person whom I loved and trusted, and I asked, "Is that real?" But still there was nothing quickening in his answer.

In 1973 I was outwardly and inwardly "bothered." I praise God for that time. That's the way He got my attention. I didn't have my life together either outwardly or inwardly, and He used that to reach me. It was during this period that I met a man who knew Galatians 2:20 as a living reality. What he had to say had a quickening effect. It became real to me. I saw it for the first time as a possibility, now Paul isn't talking about an ideal situation," I said to myself. "He isn't talking about something I'm going to get when I die.

There are so many things that popular teaching, such as I gave for all those years, pushes on into the future. People talk about, "Oh when I get to that place in the sky, I'll have peace!" What are you going to need it for? "When I get to that place in the sky, I'll have faith!" Again, what are you going to need it for? When you need it is *now*. I found that it was now I was in a desperate situation, didn't you? This is when we need faith, peace, and all of the other fruit of the Spirit.

As I listened to this man unfolding the mystery of "Christ in You, the hope of glory," it was so clear that it was real to him. "That's what the gospel is all about," he said. As a Baptist minister, all that had really grabbed me up to this point was the fact that Christ died for me, and I could trust Jesus for the forgiveness of my sins. That was all I could preach. I had to have three sermons a week, and this was my whole message. I don't mean that I couldn't construct a special sermon for Mother's Day, or a sermon on tithing, or on other topics; but regardless of what my subject was, I'd always get around to the only thing that had so far really grabbed me, which was the blood side of the cross. I really only knew the first five chapters of the book of Romans, and my message was capsulated in Romans 3:25 -justification as a gift of His grace, which is redemption.

Of course, this message left me in a quandary. I was still as self-centered now that I was a saved person as I was when I was a lost person. I was terribly sin-conscious. "Is that the right thing to do, or is this the right thing to do?" "Should I have said this, or should I have said that?" "Lord, forgive me for this, and forgive me for that." And I would repeat the process over and over again, trying to make the right decision, making the wrong one, and then asking forgiveness for my sins.

Every morning I would say something like: "Now, Lord, I want to be a good Christian today, and I don't want to miss a chance to witness if it comes along. I want my language to be clean, my thoughts to be pure, and to live a good life" Then when night came I'd say, "Lord, forgive me for not doing it." If I could get today into the past, I could get it forgiven because the blood had cleansed my sins. But this kept me on a treadmill, and the attention was always on me. How am I doing? Am I succeeding? Am I failing? Am I really imitating Christ? Is He really my Lord? Am I in His will?

Then I discovered that we don't really get on in the Lord until we can just forget ourselves. Because as long as we are pre occupied with ourselves we really see ourselves as a liability to God. As long as you still have the attention on yourself, imagining that there's still something that needs to be done for your soul, you see yourself as God's liability. "Oh, I can't really do that, because I haven't conquered this yet." "I can't do this because I don't have enough love." "I can't do this because I don't have enough faith." The attention isn't on God in all of this, it's on you! And I think we would all agree that this kind of living doesn't measure up to the biographies of the great believers of God in the Bible. It isn't until I got hold of the reality of Galatians 2:20 that I could take old Dan, put him on the shelf, and forget him. Only then could I begin to say, "I'm not God's liability - I'm God's asset."

I'm not bragging, but the truth is God has got to have Dan! Why? To reach Dan's world. You can't reach my world, and I can't reach your world. God has to have me to reach the world that I come in contact with. So I'm His asset. He has to have a vessel, and He needs the kind of vessel that sees himself as O.K.

I'm fifty-three, and I finally decided when I was fifty years old that if it had taken fifty years for God to get me this way I was going to quit trying to change myself. So I went to my shelves and threw all of those "how to" books away. Because if I don't end up like me, how is God going to reach my world?

If I end up acting like you, then I've lost contact with the world God wants me to reach. He wants my warts - the things that look like my failures -so that His strength can come through. He doesn't want me to try to copy you, and He doesn't want you to try to copy me. He wants you to be you, and He wants you to be satisfied with yourself. Because through you as His asset, His vessel, He is going to touch the world you are in contact with.

Now you don't have to be a missionary for God to do that. My wife Barbara and I thought that we might be called to be missionaries, because Baptists think that way. I was so glad when I passed thirty-five years of age, because I knew that you can't be called as a missionary then! But we are all ministers, in all our different walks of life, and that's the way God means it to be.

Why do I stress that we need to get the attention off ourselves? Because there is so much emphasis on the self in our churches. Crucifying the self, for instance. I don't try to crucify the self; I just try to enjoy the uniqueness of myself! I'm through with crucifying myself. Do you know why? Because I've already died. I died in Christ, didn't you? I've already been buried, haven't you? I've already been raised. And I get excited like Paul and say as he did in Ephesians 2:6 that I've already ascended! Haven't you? We're living the ascended life. So we are acceptable to God.

We are all like fruit trees. All fruit trees aren't apple trees. Some are orange trees, some grapefruit, even lemons and limes. Now I've noticed that everyone doesn't run up and grab an apple when fruit is served to a group. Some like oranges, and some like' grapefruit. But if all of the apple trees were trying to be like grapefruit trees, what would people do with all those apples? We are all meant to be just what we are. God isn't trying to change

The key is recognizing that God has actually put His nature into us. I think one of the difficulties people have in believing that Christ already lives in them as a present reality lies in the difficulty they had believing that Satan ever lived in them. Most of us at one time thought of Satan as "out there," so that he just had an influence on us. We really thought we were independent people, but that Satan could have an influence on us and God could also have an influence on us. But we never really knew that from the time of our birth - from the dawn of the human race, when our first parents took the wrong fruit -we were born with Satan in us. You don't find many people who believe that Mr. Sin, Mr. Phony God, Mr. False Way, Mr. Self indwelt them before their conversion. No, we weren't merely under the influence of evil: Jesus rightly said that we were of our father the devil and fulfilled his lusts from within (Jn. 8:44).

I didn't like to hear that at first, because there were some days of my misspent youth when I wasn't quite so bad. But then it dawned on me that whether I was good or bad,

everything I did was from unbelief. Everything was based on self. Finally I saw the folly of the "good and evil" game. You can be just as good as you want to be, but if you're indwelt by the wrong god you are lost! The "good and evil" game still amounts to evil.

In I Corinthians 10:16-17 Paul says that we share in not only the blood of Christ, but also the body. We received the benefits of the blood as the necessary sacrifice for sins. But it is the participation in the body that takes care of Mr. Sin - Satan - within us. Paul witnesses to the effect of the body of Christ in his own life, in Galatians 2:20. He teaches it plainly in Romans 6. Paul saw in the death of Christ a spiritual truth that transcends time. He saw that though he wasn't there bodily, he was in Christ on the cross. Whatever Jesus experienced on that cross, he experienced it as Paul (indeed, II Corinthians 5 makes it for the whole human race). So he said in I Corinthians 5:21 that God made Jesus to be sin. He looked at Him and said, "He is really the sinful human race. I make Him the embodiment of all who are in sin." As a sinner, I was in that body; and what that body experienced, I experienced. So I have already died.

If you are not a Christian, then you are a spirit in prison. If you are a Christian, you are the spirit of a just man made perfect. Spirit is who we really are; it is where we live. Now if I died in Christ, I was also buried, because He was buried. Jesus' opponents went to Pontius Pilate and said, "He's dead, but we hear a rumor that they plan to steal His body and claim He was raised from the dead. Put a seal on that tomb if you will, and guard the tomb, because we're absolutely convinced that He's dead and we want to be sure He stays in there."

But just as surely as Jesus was dead, and I in Him, God raised Him from the dead the third day and I rose with Him. That's why Paul says to walk in newness of life. But this isn't Christ *and* me, or Christ with me. A lot of people get excited about what I preach about "Christ in you, the hope of glory," and they run up to me after a meeting and say, "I've heard that before - I know what you are talking about. I've read Andrew Murray," or something similar. No, no, no! We're not talking about Christ and me, and we're not talking about Christ with me.

We're talking about Christ having replaced Mr. Sin in us so that He now lives His holy, blameless, unprovable, perfect life through us. This is a replaced life. It's not Christ and

me, or Christ with me, but Christ is me. Not that Christ is Dan, you understand, because I'm just the vessel to contain Him. But He is evidencing His love life, His concerned life, His jealousy for the world - my world - through me. How? As me. What I'm interested in, He's interested in. Where I go to speak, He speaks. Where He takes me, He's there. What I'm doing, He's doing. And the only way He has of doing that in my world is as me.

This is what Paul saw. He said that he filled up the suffering of Christ in his body. He was an extension of Christ. It wasn't Paul living. It looked like Paul - people called him Paul. But it was Christ, the hidden One, living out His concerned life for the world as Paul.

When this dawned on me, I saw the reality of spirit. When God told me I had died, I stopped disagreeing with Him. When God said that He had buried me, I agreed with Him. And when He said that He raised me, I said, "Yep, You raised me." I saw that I was already walking in the heavenlies. I was already participating in the kingdom life.

You have been born again, haven't you? Well then, you can understand the kingdom. The kingdom is spirit, and the realm of the kingdom is within. Christ is the head of that kingdom, and we are the means by which that kingly person manifests Hi self. Paul described us as ambassadors for the King.

I see myself in so many biblical characters. Take the harlot at the well. She asked where to worship - in Samaria, or in Jerusalem. Which is the right outer place? Which is the right religion? What is the right thing to do? "Well, I'll tell you," Jesus said to her. "The day is coming when you won't worship here, and you won't worship down there. You'll worship *in here*. Because God is not in this place and He's not in that place. He is spirit." This account in John 4 really helped me to get the spot light off the outer me.

I began to see that God is a world lover. If the God of the new covenant really dwells in me, He will love the world through me. But until that light breaks in on us through the Holy Spirit we still want Him to be a "me" lover. So we run to services looking for blessings. We still say, "Bless me, bless me." But when you see the truth of Christ as your life, the bless-me days are over. You are no longer a body-fusser, trying to save your outer skin. They'll say, "Heal Thyself, Physician," to you too. But your glory will be in seeing your life poured out, if necessary to the last drop. Poured out for others. Because that's the world-lover in you. He's

not a "me" lover. He loves you because He's got you; He loved you through some other human instrument. But now He's got you, and as He lives in you, you forget about yourself.

From this point on you don't live from need, from shortage, trying to get a blessing. You have total sufficiency in you. There's no shortage in Him. You don't have any more spiritual needs. You've drunk the water and you've eaten the bread. If you have the living water and the living bread within you, you don't get hungry or thirsty anymore. You quit saying, "Lord, give me, give me, give me." It's unbelief! God is your sufficiency, and He lives in you to pour out His life through you for others. This is John 7:37-39. Out of your innermost being flow rivers of living water. To you? No. No wonder some of your prayers aren't answered! God is tired of body-fussers. He's interested in the world - your world, which only you can touch. Now you are broken bread and poured out wine, to be eaten and drunk by others.

When it dawns on you that you truly are the temple of the Holy Spirit, and that He lives and walks in you, you begin to see all life from God's point of view. You are no longer hung up on good and evil as absolutes. You begin to see that the human situation, or what some call the "facts" of life, is nothing but God's necessary prerequisite for His Self-revelation. So you are always looking for God in every situation. As Jesus said, if your eye is single your whole body is full of light. You are full of light because you see only One person operating in all of life's situations. But as long as you are asking, "Is this good? Is this bad?" you are in darkness. To call it God if it looks good, and to say it isn't God if it looks bad, is darkness.

God has met me three times in my life with great truths, and I was in hell all three times! He had to get me into hell before He could show me something about Himself. It's the aggravating situations in life that get our attention. But they are not absolutes. They are merely God's calling-card.

I don't know of one single occasion when Jesus got up off His straw pallet in the morning, stretched, and said, "Oh, I feel so good today, I think I'll do a dozen miracles." But sometimes that's the way we act. We're going to get up today to do something for someone. He may not ask us to do it, but we're going out to do good deeds. Jesus never did that. He never went out to do a single good deed. The situation of need drew forth the action. If there had never been a need, there would never have been a miracle. There had to be a negative to draw forth the positive. There has to be evil so that we can see God's love for us.

We live in a world full of opposites. But we don't see it like that anymore. We see this world with a single eye. We see only the One person operating in it, the sovereign God. And all situations - particularly the stress ones, the negative ones, the horrible ones - are God's calling-card. "It looks like this," we say, "but wait a minute, because God is coming." And we become people of faith by saying that God is here. He is going to bring forth the supply.

That's what Jesus did, just brought forth the supply. And thank God He isn't here in bodily form today, because He'd have to go to a twenty-four-hour prayer meeting to be able to do it! No, He just said to the sick person, "Let him be well." Or when the crowd was hungry, "Let's sit them down. We're going to feed them." Someone came one day begging, "Oh, Master my servant is sick." Jesus' answer was simply that He'd be glad to come. No sweat. I think He'd be most uncomfortable in most of the prayer meetings we have. If He were the first to leave, I'd be right behind Him! Because He just knew that when the need came forth, the supply was there. It wasn't His supply. "Oh, Me, I can't do anything. I do what I see the Father do." And He was very casual: "Let there be." The same words used by the Word to create the universe.

John in his first letter, the second chapter, called this the "father" level in the Christian life. It's the ascended life. In this level we live as troops in the outer trenches. We are the people who can see what God is doing in the world, and we are privileged to be faith people.

Now I want to say a few words about faith, because I hear a whole lot about having to work up faith. I don't ever try to work up faith. Faith jumps out of me. When God wants me to see something He brings it to my attention. I don't go around trying to take somebody else's burden. Don't come and tell me that so- and-so is sick. If God wanted me to know, He'd tell me Himself. If He told you, it's a pretty good sign He wants you to do something about it. He shows me my mountains, and He'll show you your mountains. And you take a stand on what He shows you. You are not going to hope it's done. It is done. His life jumps out from you. You don't work up faith. It might take you some time to get hold of His thoughts so that you can speak His thoughts, into being, but you don't have to work up faith. God is the One who exists to meet that need, and He is going to explode out of you. "Rivers of living water!"

This means that you will say, "I just don't see that problem there. Yes, it's there - but I see God. God is healing that situation. He is bringing that thing together. He has a job there, and it's already done."

Several years ago when we were first beginning to learn this truth, our son was about twenty-two and he wasn't walking with the Lord. He had a lot of problems, so we just said, "Lord, get on with what You are going to do in His life." Do you know the next thing He did? He put him in jail. Now in the old days I would have said, "Lord, we didn't pray right, because if we had prayed right You would have him down here in the sawdust on his knees." We had told God to get on with His business, but now he was in jail!

Well, women are so wonderful because they get direct messages from God. Sometimes I think God has forgotten my address. I have to walk in blind faith! That night my wife was in bed and God said to her, "Don't call my sanctuary a jail" So we said that what was happening was perfect, and that our son was right where he had to be. We affirmed that God had already got him. Now, about five years have gone by.

But a few months ago my wife called him on the telephone because we had sold our house and bought another. The house needed painting. This time he stayed on the phone, and he asked questions about us. "I want to paint the house for you," he said. He's been down two times already - almost a 450-mile round trip - to paint the house. Before, he lived within three miles of us and didn't come but three times in the whole year. He doesn't yet know that God has got him, and there really are no religious overtones to his visiting. But we were excited for five years when we didn't have one single shred of evidence visible, and now God has given us this little touch of confirmation. We didn't have five years of hand-wringing; we had five years of praising God, watching Him do what He said He had already done.

We need to rediscover the authority of the word. "Thus saith the Lord!" "It is finished!" We tend to be action people, but the Scriptures point us to the authority of the word, and the action comes along at God's good pleasure. So many of us have said that God hasn't done anything until we see the action. But when we see spiritual reality, that puts us on top of situations, and it's an exciting life. So God in me rises up and says, "You say

about your son, It is finished!" And that is reality, because spirit is reality, even if he dies never having come home.

We operate as He does in this world. We tell the mountains God has put in our life to be moved. We read in Mark 11:22-24 that faith in God means we do not doubt in our heart. Our emotions may give us a little trouble at times, as can appearances. But at our center is God, and when He in us says it is finished, *it's done*.

This is the life of the intercessor. There are times when God commissions us, as His agents. He puts a mountain before us - a need. Mordecai came to Esther and spoke the word of faith: "We're going to be saved." He asked Esther if she was going to be the intercessor in the situation. When she had God's thoughts, she said she would do it. So she went in and approached a king who hadn't called for her in thirty days. If she walked into his presence without his extending his scepter, she would lose her life, even though she was a queen. But God had commissioned her, and she became an intercessor for her people. It wasn't a religious situation; it was a real-life crisis.

Jesus said that unless a corn of wheat falls into the ground and dies, life cannot come forth. When God commissions you as an intercessor, there is a cost. But when you have counted the cost, you move into the joy of the Lord, the joy set before you in doing it. You see that He is wanting a change in a home, in a community, in a particular situation. Everything else now becomes secondary. Your family, your home, your lands - everything goes into this commission. You pour out your life in the death that has to occur, but you gain what God is after.

The second chapter of Hebrews tells us that Jesus gave His life that He might bring many sons to glory. God wants sons who know what life is all about and who know that the real joy of living is seeing His life being poured through them to reach the world - their world. And that becomes the consuming passion. "The zeal of Your house has eaten me up."

I enjoy my commission of traveling on the road to share this message. People wonder how I can travel as much as I do, but I can't do anything else. This is the joy of the Lord for me. And it's a complete life; there's nothing missing in it. I no longer pitch problems to God. I can give His all to those problems. "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Yes, glory now, just as they saw

the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. God intends for others to see the glory of Christ in us. Don't you look for it. It isn't yours to see. It's for someone else to see, and those God means to see it as they cross your path will see it. Those who are hurting are going to see Him - the sinners, the harlots, and the publicans. To the rest, He looked like Beelzebub. But to those who were desperate, the light of God was on His face. You know Christ is pouring His life through you, so take it by faith that it's so and others will see Him. And they'll be drawn to the One who is in you, thinking they have been drawn to you. But you know it isn't you, it's Him.

Don't change yourself, or they couldn't be drawn to you. Don't call yourself a liability, because you are God's beautiful asset. And don't be so concerned about sin-consciousness; instead be consumed with godliness. "Set your mind on the things above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God; for you are dead, and your life is hidden with God in Christ." Get on with the glory of life, because Paul said that He has not only justified you, He has glorified you.

Grace...My Great Awakening

Cayce Talbott

I first started preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ in the streets of Virginia Beach, Virginia in 1998. Once I realized my call as an Evangelist I immediately started telling everyone I knew about Jesus Christ. Though I had been saved since 1978 when I was 7 years old, I didn't begin to seriously walk with Jesus and preach until I was about 27 years old.

I was turned on to a lot of books by hard core Prophets and Evangelist of times past who preached hard core Repentance of Sin and who were very hard on people. I wanted to be like these men of God who stomped on the toes of unbelievers and backsliders to get their attention so that I could somehow generate repentance within their hearts in an attempt to win them to Christ. So as I preached in the streets, hospitals and jails I began to scream at people to "Repent"... to "Turn or Burn You Filthy Sinners!"

I thought that I was producing a godly sorrow which led to repentance because I brought several people to tears for several years. I rejoiced in my badgering people with the guilt of their sins whenever I saw them cry and feel ashamed as I exposed their sin... not realizing that I wasn't really producing godly sorrow, but actually just laying a guilt trip on them until they felt condemned, ashamed, unworthy and unloved by God. I continued in this style of preaching for many more years... I even took pride in myself as I taught this style of preaching to various evangelism groups that I was put in charge of in my local church in Virginia, and later at bible school in Dallas, Texas.

While at Christ For the Nations Institute (CFNI) bible school in Dallas I was eventually put in charge of various evangelism ministries that would preach in the downtown area and club districts of Dallas. I would go out to the streets and yell at people who were lost without Christ, telling them to Repent of their Sins or prepare to Burn. Sure I won some people over, but most people were running from me to avoid my message of condemnation. I began to notice that even my classmates at school started avoiding me because I was so hard on them to do more works to please God. If they didn't go out to the streets with me every week to preach I would accuse them of being lazy Christians who didn't care that people were going to Hell. My whole attitude was downright mean as I was consumed with pronouncing Judgment on everyone. I was considered by those around me to be a very angry man. It really didn't help that while in bible

school that I was sitting under teachers who were just as hard and mean... at least the ones that I sat under were.

THE AWAKENING...

Now while in school, even though I preached Judgment, I had enough sense to know that I didn't really have a true understanding of God's Grace, so I began to ask God for a revelation of it. I noticed after a while that I began to feel a conflict within my heart over the issue as I grew tired of constantly trying to Repent or Turn from my little every day sins. I felt that my attempts to do so were not bearing any fruit, and never really did. Like many Christians, I had repented so often that it felt like my "Repenter" was broken! It was something that would keep occurring for a long time. By 2005 I wasn't doing much preaching anymore because of turmoil going on within my heart... maybe God just put my preaching on hold until my eyes could be opened. I still had much to say, so while under the advice of a good friend and my pastor, I decided to write a book dealing with the reason why people backslide and how to prevent it. For about a year I worked on the book, putting on paper all that was inside of me. The only problem was that much of what was inside of me was not of God's Word... but more of the opinions of other angry men whose words of Judgment and works that I allowed to shape my mind.

It was while writing the final chapters of the book, specifically a chapter on True Repentance, that the Holy Spirit began to reveal to me the truth... that Repentance was Not about Turning from Sin, but about Changing your Mind about doing Dead Works to obtain righteousness with God. (Heb 6:1) At first I ran from the idea because it went against Everything that I was taught over the years. Then I tried to accept the idea that it was both repenting from sin, and from dead works. I thought that that would end the conflict inside my heart, but it didn't. By this time, in 2006, my father passed away and then I lost a very good job with a Christian company. My life was now in more chaos than I could handle... I didn't find much comfort in what I believed anymore, so I started to embrace the idea of living by Grace to get through it. I noticed that when I stopped trying to earn my peace from God, and just started believing that I already had it that the conflict in my heart began to go away. For the first time in a while I started to feel alive again!

Over the next two years I developed a desire to grab hold of God's Grace as if it were a stream in the midst of a dry desert. My whole personality began to change as I learned to rely more and

more on God's Grace instead of my own works and my futile ability to turn from my own sins. My wife shared the same desire, and we recognized that it was God. By 2008 my world had completely changed, my new beliefs concerning Grace brought more freedom than I had ever had before. Of course the devil was constantly talking to me and saying that I am going to Hell now because I no longer believed that I had to Repent of Sin to be saved, and that I was completely alone in what I now believed. Then God did the greatest thing for me again... He turned me on to other men of God who were already well established in the Gospel of Grace like Joseph Prince, Andrew Wommack and others. These men gave me the confirmation that I needed to know that what I now preached was the truth. Since then God has flooded my life with other Grace preachers and teachers... I now feel like I have a family of Grace.

Perhaps the greatest testimony of it all is to see that whenever I talk with old friends from my bible school days how they recognize the change in me. They no longer run from me to avoid condemnation, but now they flock to me to receive edification. My words have changed as a direct result of my heart being changed. I have more love for people now than I have ever had before, and more of a desire to see people saved. My relationship with Jesus is now better than ever... and for the first time in my life I am able to really see my God in heaven for who He really is... My FATHER.

Though I am now persecuted for no longer teaching the lie that a person has to Repent of Sin to be Saved, I have truly learned to Embrace the Grace of God... I hope that you can too. Amen!

"For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive Abundance of Grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ." (Rom 5:17)

Being Not Ashamed

Joel Brueseke

Over the years I've heard the phrase "I'm not ashamed of the gospel" (the first part of Romans 1:16) many times. Generally speaking, when people have used that phrase what they've meant is, "I'm not ashamed to make a stand for my moral convictions." They quote this phrase and use it in their proclamation that we Christians need to "stand up for what is right!" You've perhaps heard this phrase used as a mantra in political and social rallies in support of various moral causes and agendas.

My question is, is that what the gospel is about? Is that what "not being ashamed" of the gospel is all about? Is that anywhere close to what Paul was trying to communicate?

The gospel was never meant to be used as a means of protesting the sins that are committed in the world. That's not what the gospel is about. The gospel is a declaration of God's love and grace toward people and it's the power that *defeated* sin - not protested it! As Paul says in the second half of the sentence, the gospel is the power of God for *salvation*! The *law's* job was to protest sin, so to speak, but it never had any power whatsoever to help with the problem of sin. In comes the gospel of Jesus Christ - the good news - and what the law could never do, *God* did by sending His own Son! (Rom 8:3-4).

What gets even more interesting for me is what Paul says in the sentence that *follows* "I am not ashamed of the gospel." In Rom 1:17 he writes, "For in it (the gospel), the *righteousness of God* is revealed..." Contrary to being about *man's* morality and righteous deeds, the gospel is a revelation of *God's* righteousness, which can only be received by man as a *gift*. It's not something man *does*. It's something he receives and walks in freely. To be ashamed of the gospel is to be ashamed of the gift that God gives and instead to try to attain it by your own deeds.

But Paul's only getting started in Rom 1:17 with his talk about the gospel being a revelation of God's righteousness. Now, Paul does do some important backtracking, and takes some time to make sure his readers really get a grip on the *unrighteousness* of ALL of mankind, to set a foundation before digging into the meat of what "the gospel" and "God's

righteousness" is all about. You have to skip all the way ahead to Rom 3:21 before Paul gets back to his original point, but he *does* get back to it, and he then builds on it for several chapters. Rom 3:21 - "But now, the *righteousness of God* is revealed... through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe... being justified freely by His grace..."

If we look and see what "the gospel" really is, we'll see that it's all about the free gift of salvation, by grace through faith, and the receiving of God's very own righteousness as we *chuck aside* any and all of our own sense of morality and righteousness. I love how Paul, in Philippians 3, showed how this all had played out in his own life. He first gives seven reasons why he *originally* trusted in his own sense of morality and righteousness - including having considered himself *blameless* in his law-keeping! He essentially says, "Man, I was the stuff! No one could hold a candle to me!"

But just as soon as anyone might begin to be impressed with his superior moral credentials, he takes a complete 180° turn and says, "But what things *were* gain to me, these I have counted *loss* for Christ... and count them as **dung** that I may gain Christ." (Phil 3:7-8). My own paraphrase: "*Forget* my own morality and righteousness! I might as well shovel the floor of a cow barn and offer up my findings to God if it's going to be about that!"

Unfortunately, dung is often what is being presented as "the gospel" today. Paul's words, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ," and all his words that followed, were very **bold** words that flew in the face of the *religious, morality-conscious* people, as he defended his stance that the gospel was not about man's morality. Let's keep on being bold like that as we count our own righteousness as dung and lay hold of the free gift of Life!

The Chair

Stephanie McEntire

The first time I saw David I didn't see what everyone else in the clinic was discussing. We get records and discuss a plan of care before a new patient is admitted. I love to hear the "professionals" talk the "professional" talk about someone they do not even know.

The chatter was about David's age which is mid 30's. The conversation centered around his being a double amputee in a nursing home with no family to speak of. Already..before ever even meeting David opinions were formed and he was in a box I like to call "the forgotten." Knowing what I feel about what Jesus said "For God soooooo...looooved...(there is never enough passion in this when quoted) the WORLD...I knew that there would be more than meets the eye than this "forgotten man in a wheelchair to be babied and pitied or shunned and tolerated" which is usually the real "plan of action."

So..the first time I saw David in the lobby I did not see a wheelchair...I was blown away by the smile and the glow around this young man. Big, bright blue eyes with a hint of mischief..I knew he was going to be fun. I never rush or hurry anyone in "the chair" waiting to see exactly what they can and cannot do for themselves. You do not want to diminish anyone's freedom by "forcing your own" on them..they have a right to as "much" freedom as they can handle on their own. I figure that if he needed my help..he would let me know...he didn't need a darn thing. Having no legs had not stopped him from living..and he cracked a joke before our first conversation. David was gifted at putting people at ease with his condition, already thinking more of others than himself. Knowing this I had to smile..this was an extraordinary person. A patient must weigh on our scales before they enter the treatment floor. On our scales are two footprints and he said..."guess I won't be using those!".. The way he said it you couldn't help but crack up. I loved him immediately.

I have never met anyone who smiles when they are asleep. David sleeps a lot during treatment and I began to notice he actually slept with a smile. It fascinated me. I checked his chart to see if he was on "meds" that would incite such a happiness...and he was not. Not on a thing. That intrigued me even more. No psych meds..no pain killers..(I would have been milking the hell out of my condition.) So every day I got to know him a little better and I have

learned something about being 'handicapped' and that is..aren't we all?

I began to know David enough to begin to ask questions about his life..what his likes are..his past..his present..his future. David was a diver and kind of a "beach bum." He traveled around the world to many beaches and bodies of water just to be in the ocean. He said if he could have been a fish..that is what he would have been. He never married...never settled down. His love of the ocean kept him traveling. He talked of the beach bum lifestyle and how in the end it landed him in the "chair." He has diabetes and he ignored it until it got him..but he says " it didn't get the 'best" of me as some people would say". He explained that he burned the candle at both ends and not in a good way, so when the consequences came he wasn't surprised. "I just began to see life as an ocean and I am still a diver." "This ole world is like an ocean" he says. I have learned that God is my oxygen tank and there are still beautiful things to see if you really want to see them." I was so touched by this..coming from a man who many only see "the chair." David loves the world and everything about it. He sees it from a divers perspective and as an explorer. I realize that I could use a little of that perspective. We seem to only focus on the 'handicaps" this world has..and we miss the forest for the trees. David doesn't..this is why he sleeps with a smile. "It's never over...until it's over" he says.

David has a peace that passes understanding..at least mine anyway. A peace that comes from knowing the one that provides that oxygen that used to be in the tank...but is now breathed freely from "the chair." David knows the beauty of this world better than I do and I have two feet to get me everywhere I need to go and I told David this..with tears in my eyes. David says..."Slow down" ...pretend you are in a chair with no feet...look at the world and all the tiny little details..."be still" ...he understands you and loves you...and all your handicaps..seen or unseen." I left the floor in tears.

I have a new perspective on a wheelchair. David makes me almost wish I was in one so that I could slow down a little...be an explorer and embrace the love that is all around me in the smallest of details. Jesus says Daddy knows every hair on our head...when even a sparrow drops to the ground he knows..and when someone touches the hem of his garment..as David has..so he says...the healing comes exactly as it should for all...are significant...every one of us. It is people like David that give me hope..and hope has powerful magic...and

always leads to love whether on two feet or two wheels. Thank you David...for changing my perspective of my "handicaps."

Phantom Limb

David Borum

The mother of all cramps comes upon the wounded soldier as he lies on his infirmary bed. Unable to sit up he calls out for a nurse to help alleviate his excruciating pain. A blond pony-tailed nurse runs up to the bed of the ailing young civil war captain. She asks what is wrong. He complains about the horrible cramp he is feeling in his left leg. He pleads for her to massage out the cramp so he can get some relief. Her eyes grow wide and not believing what she is hearing stands there stunned. The young man is obviously in quite a bit of pain but the nurse doesn't know what to do. He looks up at the nurse and asks what's wrong. She slowly lifts up his sheet to reveal to him that both legs have been amputated.

The story above was a fictional account of a scientific phenomena known as phantom limb. One study suggests that 80% of all people who have suffered an amputation experience this condition. Most of these sensations are quite painful to the amputee and can occur for several months. A doctor by the name of Ramachandran was working with an amputee patient by the name of John McGrath. The doctor set a cup of hot tea in front of his patient and asked him to reach for it with his phantom arm. As he leaned over the table the doctor quickly grabbed the cup and snatched it away. The patient cried out in alarm and told the doctor not to do that. He explained that he actually felt his phantom limb grasp the cup when Dr. Ramachandran ripped it out of his hand.

Many believers are suffering from the condition of spiritual phantom limb. They believe that they are still dealing with the old man and that he is still as much a part of them as their new man. In the book of Colossians Paul reminds us that the old, unregenerate being that we once were has undergone spiritual circumcision. It has been cut away. He goes on to tell us that we died and that our life is hidden with God in Christ Jesus. It may feel at times that the old man is still very much alive, but the truth is that he isn't there anymore and he is not coming back. In the 7th chapter of Romans Paul says that if he does the thing that he no longer wants to do, it's not him that does it, but sin that dwells within.

We have all developed ways to milk love, acceptance, and significance out of the world independent of Christ. These are our flesh patterns. They masquerade as the old man. Satan

is the master of post-amputatory sensory deception. He wants you to believe that you are a spiritual siamese twin. Equally good, equally bad, fighting against yourself. If this is speaking to you, it's time to finally face the reality of the new you. A new you that exists without an old you. Embrace the spiritual amputation that you have undergone and receive the truth of what Christ has done for you. Believer, are you ready to pull back the sheet and see what lies beneath? If you do, this is what you will now see:

"When you came to Christ you were circumcised but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision-the cutting away of your sinful nature. 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, He forgave all our sins. He cancelled 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"
Colossians 2:11-15 (NLT)

The Last Adam and the Second Man⁴

Watchman Nee

The death of the Lord Jesus is inclusive. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is alike inclusive. We have looked at the first chapter of I Corinthians to establish the fact that we are "in Christ Jesus". Now we will go to the end of the same letter to see something more of what this means. In I Corinthians 15:45,47 two remarkable names or titles are used of the Lord Jesus. He is spoken of there as "the last Adam" and He is spoken of too as "the second man". Scripture does not refer to Him as the second Adam but as "the last Adam"; nor does it refer to Him as the last Man, but as "the second man". The distinction is to be noted, for it enshrines a truth of great value.

As the last Adam, Christ is the sum total of humanity; as the second Man He is the Head of a new race. So we have here two unions, the one relating to His death and the other to His resurrection. In the first place His union with the race as "the last Adam" began historically at Bethlehem and ended at the cross and the tomb. In it He gathered up into Himself all that was in Adam and took it to judgment and death. In the second place our union with Him as "the second man" begins in resurrection and ends in eternity -- which is to say, it never ends -- for, having in His death done away with the first man in whom God's purpose was frustrated, He rose again as Head of a new race of men, in whom that purpose shall be fully realized.

When therefore the Lord Jesus was crucified on the cross, He was crucified as the last Adam. All that was in the first Adam was gathered up and done away in Him. We were included there. As the last Adam He wiped out the old race; as the second Man He brings in the new race. It is in His resurrection that He stands forth as the second Man, and there too we are included. "For if we have become united with him by the likeness of his death, we shall be also by the likeness of his resurrection" (Romans 6:5). We died in Him as the last Adam; we live in Him as the second Man. The Cross is thus the power of God which translates us from Adam to Christ.

⁴ Watchman Nee: The Normal Christian Life; <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/nee/normal.titlepage.html>

The Glory of the Unlikely

Glenn Davis

Perhaps the great glory of Christmas is that in the birth of His only Begotten, the Lord revealed to us that He is the god of the "unlikely" ...

For how unlikely it is that the king of the universe should be born in a stable normally reserved for the animals. How unlikely that the nation which had so long awaited her Messiah should completely miss the fulfillment of her dreams and reject her only salvation. How unlikely that this Messiah should live the great majority of his life in obscurity without the pomp and circumstance befitting Royalty, and indeed without "form nor comeliness that we should desire him." How unlikely that such a One should die in shame and degradation, apparently discarded upon the trash heap of history as just another well-intentioned zealot without the means to accomplish His desired end.

This is the glory of Christmas, a glory which fills the present as well as the past. For how unlikely that the humiliated is now the Glorified. How unlikely that the Satan who apparently destroyed him was and is the unwitting servant of the God who "works all things after the counsel of His own will." How unlikely indeed that tragedy should eternally breed triumph in the purposes of that One in whom all wisdom resides. And perhaps most of all, how incredibly unlikely that wisdom Himself should deign to fill the seemingly marred, broken and useless vessels that we appear to be that He might live His perfect, complete and loving Life in and as us. How unlikely and how unspeakably wonderful that in our weakness, His strength is made perfect, and that He actually NEEDS us to be AS WE ARE that the glory of His Person alone might be revealed by us.

He is the God of the unlikely, the God who requires stables in which to birth His Beloved rather than the pristine palaces we might anticipate. So let us expect to find Him there, in the stables of our lives and worlds - the circumstances, situations and people where we least expect Him to be. Indeed, Let us see that the glory of His presence is most often in direct proportion to the appearance of His absence, and let us rejoice that Christmas above all proclaims that we have found the King of the Universe in the most unlikely place of all...

"It pleased God ... to reveal His Son in ME."

Calling Into Being That Which Does Not Exist

Harriet Wearren

I grew up in a loving family with a younger sister, a strong spiritual mother, and a father who was a good man: an intelligent, interesting person, but an alcoholic. I loved my family, but I was very angry and disappointed with my father.

We went every Sunday to the Presbyterian Church, and I prayed that God would change my dad so that our lives would be normal--like everyone else's. I suppose I always had great and high expectations for my family members and for myself, and was always looking for something to change so I could be totally happy! Right after high school I met a handsome, fun loving young man and fell in love. We dated for two years and married after my sophomore year of college. In my mind I thought, "Cinderella has met the handsome prince, and they will live happily ever after." I stayed in school to get my degree, but my main ambition was to be a good wife and become a mother.

Failure was almost immediate. Who could live up to my expectations? I couldn't and neither could Wade. What a heavy burden to put on another person! I was extremely frustrated. There was a void in my life that only God could fill, but at that time, I thought if I tried harder, and Wade would try harder, everything would be fine.

Things did not get any easier. We graduated from college and our daughter Beth was born in September. We loved being parents, but it added to my frustration, because now, I not only was demanding time for myself with Wade, but also with the baby. I wanted us to have the "perfect family life." Four years after Beth, our son Scott was born, and then a few years later we had Andrew. It became increasingly difficult to do all the things that needed to be done to keep the family running smoothly. Wade had a job that kept him out of town five days a week and he would come home on the week-ends. I would look forward all week to his homecoming, but would meet him at the door with all my frustrations, and rail at him! He was a great father and did lots with the kids, but it was never quite enough for me.

Wade, of course, was not feeling any more fulfilled than I was. He began to withdraw in little

ways, and then he began to search for his fulfillment everywhere except at our house. It was driving me crazy, but we couldn't talk about it because Wade could never discuss personal problems and try to work them out. We were ready to divorce!

One night when I could not sleep because I was so desperate, I knew I was one step away from Our Lady of Peace (the mental hospital in Louisville). I opened my bible and put my finger on the page to see if God could or would show me anything. Really, I hardly believed it would work, but when I looked to see where my finger was, it was Matthew 11:27, "All things come to me from my Father's hand." Somehow I knew this was directly to me from God and I believed it.

I was attending a small bible study at that time, trying to fit all the pieces of my life together, and one day I read, "In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (I Thess. 5:18). I realized that everything that happened in my life came from God, the good and the bad. The Bible says, "God is love" (I John 4:16), so everything that comes in life, comes from His loving hand. Although I may not always see it, there is a reason and constructive purpose in everything.

Our situation did not change as I began to learn these things, but the way I looked at the situation did change. It was a miracle! As bad as things were between Wade and me, I felt God was pressing me to say that everything in my life came from Him and that I was to be thankful for everything. I felt that God was pressing me to believe that Wade would find his fulfillment in God and that our marriage was whole and complete, although this really seemed to be far from the truth. But I had to believe that God would "find" Wade, even though he was not knowingly looking for God. God is a big God, so much bigger than our finite minds can imagine. Is anything too big or too hard for Him?

Romans 4:17 became imprinted on my heart as the Holy Spirit revealed His truth to me. "We call the things that are not, as though they are." This is the story of Abraham, who simply believed God, and is called the "father of our faith" because of it. God told Abraham when he was an old man that he would be the father of many nations, that his descendants would

be numbered as many as the stars in the heavens and as the sands of the sea. Sarah, his wife, was much too old to conceive, so it was laughable to think this could really happen. But in due time, Isaac was born, because Abraham had believed and trusted God. God impressed upon my heart to do the same with my situation.

While all of this was taking place, our three children were growing up. Our middle child, Scott, was in first grade when we found that our bright precious child could not learn to read. We found out that he had a severe learning problem called dyslexia, and I became very protective of him. He was so happy on week-ends, but all hell would break loose on Monday morning when he had to go back to school. I nearly went crazy! One time, I thought I'd like to gather all of us in the house and put dynamite to it and just blow us all up. I was at the end of my rope. I had a degree in elementary education and couldn't even help my own child!

Finally, when Scott was in the second grade, I found The dePaul School, a school for children with dyslexia, and went to look at it. It was so structured and disciplined that it looked awful to me. I argued with God all the way home. I said that I loved Scott too much to subject him to that harsh school, it would be the end of him. Since I had searched everywhere and this was the only place I was able to find, I knew that God was asking if I loved him enough to give him this chance. I was learning about the love of God. It is not a protective love that keeps you totally tucked away, in a box, but it is a love that pushes you out into the unknown. Well, shock of all shocks, the place that I thought would be the end of Scott, was the very place he blossomed.

About this time, a missionary came to visit the lady who taught our bible study and a group of us went to hear him speak. He told us there is only One person in the universe. In the beginning that was such a puzzle to me, but slowly I came to realize what he meant. Everything in this world is a form of God. He is love poured out for His created universe. He spoke of Galatians 2:20 which says, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, but it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." What consolation this was to me when I finally understood it.

The good news to me was--"It is not me living here, but Christ living my life." If I am washing

the dishes, driving the carpool, etc. it is Christ who is living in me, who is doing all the things I do.

While I was learning this, I felt schizophrenic half the time. The things I did that looked good were easy to call God, but with my fiery temper, the things I did that didn't look so nice kept me very confused. Finally one day, when I was giving my kids a bath, Beth did something that shoved me over the edge. I jerked her out of the tub by her hair and immediately felt such awful remorse. I thought it despicable that I would dare to say that Christ was in me, living my life, and act in such an awful way. As I walked into the hall I said to myself, "What I am believing is either true all the time or none of the time." I had to say, "I'm daring to believe that you are here living my life no matter how I look." It was a turning point for me to keep my eyes on God and not on how I appeared.

I came to realize that the seed of Christ is in every man. We are born with it, but it has to come to birth in us. Because it had been birthed in me, I could look at all the loved ones who needed to know this for themselves. I began with the verse in I Cor. 7:14, "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband." Then from there to Jude 24, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."

I did the same for Wade that I had done for myself. I stopped looking at his appearance and just kept affirming what God had already done in him. Most of the time it looked hopeless, and when I would say this to God, He would let me know that He was tending to His business and that I should tend to mine. My part was to simply believe by faith, and His part was to change Wade from the inside out.

After years of battle, we came to know that everything that happens in our lives, happens for a reason. All of Wade's past was perfect for him to come to know that his life is not his own. He finally saw that he was a "0" (zero), but that God was the "all" inside of him. What a relief that was for Wade, who thought he had to make himself be better and turn himself around—when all he had to do was trust that God was working it all out. He was waiting for Wade to come to the end of his trying. God has given Wade such insight, wisdom, and

empathy for people who are caught in the most severe problems and He has a way of bringing those people into Wade's life.

Everything that happened in my life before July 27, 1982 was the perfect preparation of my spirit for what happened that day.

I woke up early, as usual, and got Wade and Scott, now 17 years old, off to work. Scott came back home about an hour later looking for a radio for the truck he was trading in that day on a "new" used car. He was so excited. Shortly after he left, Linda Bunting, my good friend and next door neighbor, came bursting in to tell me there had been a terrible accident and Scott was being taken to the hospital. I went upstairs and put some clothes on, because I was still in my robe. As I went into my room, I thought to myself, "I know I'm a strong person of faith, but will my faith be big enough for this?" I was gripped by fear! Into my mind came the verse in II Timothy 2:13, "Even if we believe not, He abideth faithful, for He will not deny Himself." What a relief. It wasn't even my faith, it was His faith. It wasn't up to me. I knew God would get us through whatever lay ahead, and He would do it His way.

Linda stopped to pick up Sylvia Pearce, our other friend and neighbor, on the way to the hospital. I was shocked that I was so calm. I thought about a friend of ours who had a severe heart condition which required open heart surgery. It looked as though he would not survive, but God gave me a verse for him, Romans 4:18, "Against hope, they believed in hope," and I knew in my heart he was going to make it, and he did. On the way to the hospital to see about Scott, I presented the same verse for him, but I knew it didn't fit. The verse that came to me was, "It pleased God to bruise His Son" (Isa. 53:10). I only asked one thing of God--not to leave Scott a vegetable. I felt he had had struggle enough all those years with dyslexia and he would hate not being able to take care of himself. So I told God that I was willing to give him up, but I expected--no, I demanded to see life come from his death. Then my mind turned to organ donation and all the things I had thought through the years about how that would be the thing to do, if he wasn't going to make it.

When we got to the hospital, Scott was still alive, but barely. I told them immediately that I did not want him kept alive on life support, but they told me he was holding his own. Linda's

husband, John Bunting, is a surgeon. He had met us there and was with Scott. How sweet of God to have someone who loved him as much as we did, be there with him. I called our other two children, Beth and Andrew, to tell them that Scott was still alive. Beth had gotten on the phone and called some of our Christian friends around the country to let them know what had happened. I call it rallying the faithful, because what we needed right that moment was prayer--we had it from everywhere!

We had not been in the emergency room long when John came to tell me Scott had taken a turn for the worse. His head injuries were severe. I told the doctor that I would like to donate any organs, but that needed consent from both parents. When we asked Wade, who had never thought of it before, he was so grief stricken he didn't want to do it. Shortly thereafter, he changed his mind, but it was too late for everything except Scott's corneas. That was the beginning of the life that came from Scott's death. It's a principle of God. Someone else would have sight because Scott lost his. I called the children back and told them Scott had died. I told them we could feel really sad for ourselves, but we had to feel happy for Scott because it was his birthday into heaven!

When our children are born, we think they belong to us, but the truth is, they are a gift from God. "He holds the keys to life and death" and we look at death differently than God. Death is merely moving into the next phase of eternal life--a new beginning, not an end. We are more familiar with the physical part of us than with the spiritual, but it's the spirit that does not die.

We left the hospital and went home to make funeral preparations and to cope with a life that would never ever be the same again. It was unbelievable. Like magic--one minute Scott was here and life was normal, the next minute he was gone! And our lives were forever changed.

It began to come to me that there is a time, appointed of God, that each of us will die. God knows better than I do, what is best for each of us. I was thankful that my dad, who loved Scott very much, had died two years before. He was there in heaven waiting for Scott, as

well as all the other loved ones who had died.

Our friends and relatives came to our house to offer their love and support. It meant so much to us to have them there. Some of the people who came had walked this road before us. They were especially helpful. I marveled that these people who had lost a child, were still functioning and their lives were going on. Bless their hearts for being there for us!

I was at perfect peace, and decided I must be in shock. When I said this to my sister-in-law, she looked at me so funny and said, "Is it shock or is it your faith?" I knew she was right-- God's faith had risen in me!

I had been in a bible study for a couple of years with some women who had lost children. They had founded a group in Louisville called Compassionate Friends for parents who have lost a child. Through the years I had said some very hard things to them, such as, "In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (I Thess. 5:18). When I would leave these women I'd feel terrible and say to myself, "What if this happened to you? How would you like to hear that?" I could only believe that was exactly what I would want to hear, and I found this was true. My heart leapt to the spirit's truths.

Our wonderful friends, Barbara and Dan Stone, came to be with us. Dan did the funeral service. It was beautiful, and he said everything I would have wanted to say.

At the funeral home a friend handed me a poem she had found in the paper. It was wonderful and remains a joy to me every time I read it:

"I am standing on the seashore. A ship spreads her sails to the morning breeze and starts for the ocean. I stand watching, until she fades from the horizon, and someone at my side says, "She's gone." Gone? Where?

The loss of sight is in me, not in her. Just at the moment when someone says she is gone, there are others who are watching her coming. Other voices take up the glad shout, 'Here She Comes!'

And that is dying."

The reason I love it so much is that it affirms that life doesn't end with death, it is merely changed! But, we are in the physical dimension, so we are unable to see the Spirit dimension.

Little did I know, the day of the funeral, that harder days were to come. After everything settled down and people began to live their normal lives again, we were left alone to find a new kind of normal for us, because our lives would never be the same again. I was shocked to find how hard everyday tasks were: waking up every morning to be hit again with the words in my head, "Scott is dead"; going to the grocery and being overwhelmed with loss as I pass the apple cider that I always bought by the gallon because Scott loved it; even sitting at the kitchen table to have a meal was so hard, because one person was obviously missing. I knew the holidays would be hard, but I didn't know how hard everyday life would be.

Immediately following Scott's accident, which was about a mile and a half from our house, I decided I would never drive past the accident sight again. I didn't know how I could stand it. This was going to present a hardship because that was the most convenient way to and from our house. I finally decided that there is a time appointed of God that we all will die and the place and circumstance is beside the point. The point is that it is God's appointed time for the person! I knew that I need not be held in bondage to that spot in the road, so I had a friend drive me past it while I closed my eyes. Then I drove myself, averting my eyes, and finally I could drive by and even take a look. It was such a beautiful, benign looking place that it was hard to believe such a life-changing event had happened there.

We had good days and bad days, and I realized that this was normal. One particularly hard day, I was so depressed I could hardly move. I had to go to the mall and happened to get there before the stores opened. As I sat there watching people go by, I felt so sorry for myself. Everyone looked so peaceful and happy, and I resented the fact that their lives were wonderful and ours was in shambles. The doors to the store opened, and as I got up to enter the store, I caught my reflection in the plate glass window and was shocked to see that I looked just like them. I could not believe that I looked so normal. The way I felt, I should have had scars all over my face, but I didn't. I then took another look at the people all around me who looked so "normal" and wondered what kind of scars must they have that

did not show. It certainly took my attention off of me!

It took awhile, but we finally ordered a stone to mark Scott's grave. I guess it was hard to face the finality of seeing his name in stone with birth and death dates. I had thought and thought about a verse to put on the stone and finally it came to me. It was perfect: II Corinthians 4:18: "The things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Eternal--without beginning or end. The spirit of Scott Hampton Wearren was and ever will be. "He is not a past memory, but a living presence!"

Involuntary Spirituality

Darin Hufford

I have hundreds of sincere friends who are dealing with issues from their past that they are desperately trying to get healing from. Some of them are going the "self-help" route, some are taking classes on spiritual healing. Some are in full time counseling, while others are following the traditional formulas by attending every church service they can with notebook in hand and a journal under their arm. I think everyone has a different method of dealing with painful memories in the past. To some degree, each and every one of us have been abused or hurt in one way or another.

Many Christians feel like they're waiting in line for an emotional healing that they probably won't ever find. They become like the chronic overweight person who has tried everything from low-carb diets to overnight miracle pills, and after being let down half a million times, they finally collapse into a world of utter hopelessness. The mere mention of emotional healing catapults them into a world of self-loathing depression. They forgave every person they could remember being mad at. They've visited their inner child more times than they care to remember. They've quoted all the formula prayers, stood on all the right scriptures, and even had the in-house deliverance expert walk them towards the light, but come Monday morning they found themselves right back where they started.

Over the last twenty years of my life I have watched a growing trend in Christianity. If you attend some churches you would think that Christ came for the sole purpose of fixing us all and helping us all get over the pain of our past. He's presented as the supernatural Dr. Phil and the ultimate life changer rather than the life GIVER. I honestly think that American Christianity has re-marketed Christ to appeal to the masses of emotionally wounded people in the world. We have used people's issues and spiritual ailments as hooks to draw them into our churches and ministries, by making statements that simply are not true and promises that we can't possibly fulfill. We market Jesus as the "inner healer," whose healing formula is given only to the leaders or the super spiritual people above us. We create a mob of emotionally broken people who hobble from one service to the next hoping to finally persuade Jesus to give them the emotional healing they so desperately need. When it doesn't happen, they've been trained and programmed to blame themselves. Over time,

that self-blame eventually drives people even deeper into emotional brokenness and dysfunction than they were to begin with.

One of my close friends has read every spiritual healing book on the market. She's attended conferences, listened to teaching series and she's even written the world's most famous healing evangelists in an effort to *get her healing* from the past. The day she and I met I could immediately tell that in her mind the purpose of our meeting was to hopefully find that healing. That had become the purpose of her life, the only thing she ever talked about when it came to spirituality. She thought that perhaps if she met with me, I could give her the exact formula that would finally detonate the power of God and give her the healing she had sought her entire adult life.

I told this young lady what I want to say to every person like her who is reading this article.

When you cut your finger, you wash it out and put a band-aid on it. Once that simple act is completed do you sit around and try to figure out ways to get it to heal? Of course not. Nothing you do beyond those initial first few steps will make any difference in the healing process. You won't speed it up or slow it down. You can read books on *cut-healing* and go to *cut-healing conferences*, but in the end, all that energy is a waste of time because your cut will heal itself with or without your help.

God created this healing capacity within each and every one of us. We don't do silly things like read books and call experts when we scrape or cut ourselves. We don't squint our eyes and grit our teeth trying as hard as we can for a healing because we know that healing was created within us and it happens on its own.

Christianity is known for taking the things that happen naturally in the course of life and claiming authority over them. Then, when what would have happened on its own, happens; we claim responsibility and call ourselves *powerful*. If we would just learn to keep our noses out of the areas in life where we are not needed, we might find that Christianity is amazingly easy. I have come to believe that 90% of the stress and difficulty in the modern day Christian life, is self induced. We are praying about things that don't need prayer. We're claiming authority over things that don't need our authority and leadership. We spend our time asking God for things that aren't even on the menu and we spend all our faith on things that happen naturally.

Several years ago I found myself awake at about 2:00am, and I couldn't get back to sleep. As I laid in bed listening to my wife snore away, I began to listen to my breathing patterns. Something didn't sound right when I would inhale. I began to get worried that I wasn't getting enough oxygen, so I started to nervously monitor my intake of air for the next several hours. By 5:00am I was convinced that I needed to be taken to the hospital. My lips were numb and I was having chest pains. I felt dizzy and fear was literally pulsing through my body to the point where I could hear my heart beating out loud. I went to wake Angie up and just before I did, I got this revelation. It was probably just a thought, but looking back on it today I definitely think it was revelation.

"Don't monitor your breathing. That's something that happens on its own."

I am not kidding you. In less than five minutes I was completely back to normal and snoring in unison next to my lovely wife. Breathing is an involuntary action that the body does completely on its own. The decision to monitor it and take authority over it, only led to panic and disaster.

This is precisely what Christians have been taught to do with most of the AUTOMATIC functions in life.

We think it's precious and adorable when a four-year-old child clinches her fists and scrunches her face because she is "trying to grow." It's funny because adults know that you can't "try" to grow. Growing happens naturally over time and completely on its own. Ironically, I can visit almost every Christian church in Arizona and find full grown adults doing the exact same thing concerning their spiritual growth. Like naive little children, we scrunch our faces and clench our fists during prayer, "trying" with every spiritual muscle we have to grow. We talk obsessively about *growing in the Lord*. We ask each other what they're doing to *grow in the Lord*. We tell people that if they aren't *growing* they need to be doing this and thus. We pride ourselves in saying that spiritual growth is the number one thing our church or ministry cares about. Silly, silly, silly, and it's not nearly as cute when we do it as it is when a four-year-old child does it.

As Christians we have a responsibility to LIVE LIFE. Our life is set up by God Himself in a way that naturally brings forth things like inner healing, growth and maturity. These things are the responsibility of God; NOT US. I honestly believe that we've driven ourselves crazy

because in our own arrogance and unwillingness to *enter into life*, we've hijacked God's responsibilities and have foolishly depended upon ourselves to carry them through.

I had a pastor tell me once that he was *committed to my spiritual growth*. I told him thanks but that makes about as much sense as me committing myself to his fingernail growth. I just think there are better things in life to commit ourselves to, especially when growth happens by itself. We neglect things where we actually can make a difference, and then pay special attention to the very things that don't need our attention at all.

I think the average Christian needs to take a course in "*involuntary spirituality*." We need to get reacquainted with what happens on its own and what actually requires our assistance. I think most people would be surprised and relieved if they knew the truth. We could finally leave things like salvation to God rather than take it upon ourselves to "*get people saved*." If you need an inner healing, just know in your heart that it's happening. You can't make it happen any faster than you can heal your finger if you cut it. YOU WILL HEAL! Know that and live life. YOU WILL GROW! Nothing you do will make yourself grow any faster. *Growing isn't up to us*; it's up to God.

I honestly have come to believe that the reason why Christianity has focused so much on this ridiculous stuff is because it's a subconscious way of avoiding life and intimacy with God. I think our religion has made Him so unattractive and detestable, that we'll stand outside and count blades of grass in the lawn just to get out of being alone with Him. I think it's a combination of us not wanting to be close to him, and us feeling like He's going to abandon us. Part of the grace and love message is about getting a proper view of who He really is. Once you get that, you look back at your life and laugh at yourself for all the silly stuff you did. I think I've dropped more stuff off of my *to-do list* since I've become a Free Believer than I ever thought possible. The last time I looked at that list I think there was only two things; Love God and love people.

Outside the Box

Alan Hiu

The new covenant of grace had opened up an ultimate gateway for the gentiles to approach God without having to observe Jewish Law. The Gospel was designed to bring good news to the poor in spirit, to proclaim freedom for the prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind, bring freedom to the oppressed and to claim the year of the Lord's favour.

Luke 4:18 ~ 19 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Ironically, despite of its harshness, the law offers the proud religious people the opportunity to sing their praises to their self-righteousness. To these law observers, the notion of free grace is far too cheap and is "outside the box". The Pharisees in Jesus' day were a good example of this scenario. Bold souls who think "outside the box" have often been dismissed as eccentric, burned as heretics or even "stoned to death". Even in our time, those sincere and good intent Christians appear to have little tolerance for those who stray too far from their denomination traditions - no matter how biblically sound their arguments are...

To many, the offer of grace seems far too confronting to their logical mindset. They are reluctant to be reminded of their own spiritual nakedness and poverty. Like Adam, they look for fig leaves to hide themselves from God and creating religions to make convenient fig leaf.

In fact, it is observable throughout Church history and even it is observable in our day. Time and time again when God's grace has visited the Church, the church institution has often either neglected it or sought to nullify it. They have paid too much attention on signs and wonders; their self-righteousness blinded them from seeing that these signs and wonders are the pointers to His grace!

The Gospel of grace has not been fully realized widely by many Christian. Though shafts of light have periodically cut through history, the Church has remained in the shackles of mixture of law and grace, plus unhelpful traditions and denomination rulings. As such, the

Gospel of grace which make up of two third of our New Testament Bible, remain classified as “outside the box” in many churches.

On Vineskins And Beauty

Jamie Weeks

Jesus and I have been talking about wine. HA! You know my alcoholic tendencies, guys. Nah, seriously, we've been discussing wine and naturally, wineskins. Because something holds the wine and dispenses it, right? And it's impossible, generally, to not notice the vessel holding the wine. But here is the DEAL: we get too caught up in what the wineskin looks like! Religion INSISTS we focus on that wineskin.

If we believe the Bible, then all Christians are NEW WINESKINS and yet, you know it's true, most of us are taught to live from an old wineskin mentality. We live our life trying to sew patches on all the weak areas we perceive in our "skin" or FLESH! And the really weird thing is, we buy those patches from all over the place! A book here, a tape there, so and so's ministry, etc, become the fixes we use to correct what we see as flaws in our life. And Christians end up as some kind of bizarre, crazy-quilt collection of patches sewn on their GOD-GIVEN NEW LIFE! Huh. That's a rather arrogant assumption on our part, isn't it? That we can improve on what God has already done. Ahhhh, the fallacy of religion...that we can change God's mind about us by WHAT WE DO! What unadulterated BS.

Wineskins were historically made from animal skins, usually goat. If you know anything about leather or livestock or YOUR OWN SKIN, you should know that SKIN is unique to the wearer of it. It has lines and swirls and even scars because skin is the map of an individual's journey. It is ONE OF A KIND! No one else in the world is walking around in a match to your skin. Why? Because no one else has lived your life. But here is the beauty of my metaphor: when God took away our old wineskin, a life that was permanently scarred by SIN and DEATH, the new skin He gave us is not DEFINED BY IT'S APPEARANCE BUT BY WHAT IT CONTAINS!!! We don't have to worry about busily sewing on patches, or asking God to. GOD IS NOT A DIVINE TAILOR WHO SPENDS HIS TIME SEWING PATCHES ON YOU! GOD IS THE DIVINE CREATOR WHO MADE YOU NEW!!! Dang, that's good, ain't it?!?

So, here is what Jesus tells me about MY wineskin.

It is soft and supple, kept that way because He oils it regularly.

It is always full to bursting, no matter how much I pour out of it. I CANNOT OUT GIVE the storehouses of heaven and I'm foolish to even CONSIDER the thought! I do not give out of MY RESOURCES but out of THAT WHICH I HOLD and in RESPONSE TO OTHERS' NEEDS WITHOUT THOUGHT TO MY CIRCUMSTANCE ACCORDING TO THE PROMPTING OF THE SPIRIT! Giving is not about me. Giving is not about the recipient. Giving is God's nature. Period.

It is a roadmap of my intimate journey with my Husband. My wineskin bears HIS FINGERPRINTS all over it. The oil from His hands has penetrated and permanently stained my living, breathing container. My complete appearance is defined by how He carries me, cares for me, and uses me. I AM TO BE COMPLETELY SUBMISSIVE AND YIELDING TO HIS HAND.

My wineskin is ALL TOGETHER LOVELY because He called it so. No power carries more authority than what God has spoken into being. "IT IS FINISHED," birthed a complete, whole, spotless Bride into the world. Now, we are just asked to simply believe that TRUTH and live as what we are, not what others say we should be!

My wineskin is my Lover's most precious possession, worth His life. In fact, He poured out His life so that WE MIGHT HAVE UNION, no longer He and I but WE. HE IS THE LIFE WITHIN ME. I AM THE VESSEL HE INHABITS. WE ARE INSEPARABLE.

Does the world, especially religion, attempt to keep our focus on our wineskin? Most assuredly. That is a deception. We are to KNOW who we are to our Beloved. We are to realize the worth of what we hold and in doing so realize our own worth. We are to respond to only one hand and it's NOT the iron grip of LEGALISM, but the soft, firm caress of a Lover.

My wineskin may not look like what the world thinks it should, but guess what? When God Himself walked the earth, men knew Him not. Maybe God looked more like love than "keeping the rules". I want to look like love, too. My life and identity aren't defined by others' expectations, ONLY BY WHAT MY WINESKIN HOLDS. I'm trusting God to live out of me just as I live from Him.

The Vantage Point

Ole Henrik Skjelstad

To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. (Tit 1:15)

The meaning of this verse can only be fully appreciated from a union perspective with the cross as the focal point. The regeneration involves a change of spirits. The old man died at the cross, and in the resurrection with Christ the new creation is mystically formed. The old master, that is, sin is cast out. Man is now a temple for God, a sacred place where the Spirit dwells.

From the moment of rebirth man is in God and God is in the flesh of man. In God there is no law. He is His own law, which is love. In Him everything is pure, in Him there is no variation or shadow due to change. In Him the believer's mind and consciousness is renewed in accordance to the glory of God's image.

The unbeliever's focal point will always be himself. Whether he is good or he is evil, he is a container of sin following the prince of power of the air. For this person nothing is pure, and besides there is only one who is good – the Father – the instigator of our faith.

What a joy there is in the Father's heart when one of His precious sons is led to the vantage point and the son in joyful awe gaze at the purity he now is joined together in and has been since the point of origin – the regeneration. In struggle, in temptation, in suffering and enduring mockery the consciousness has been brought from glory to glory until it reconciles its human condition with divinity.

Future Sins Are Already Forgiven

Steve McVey

“It can’t be true that my future sins are already forgiven!” This was the protest I heard one day after somebody heard me teach that all of our sins are forgiven. I read her the passage from Colossians 2:13-14. Then I asked her these questions, which I encourage you to answer as you read them.

1. How many of your sins did God know about before you were born? (All of them.)
2. How many of them did He record on your certificate of debt mentioned in the passage in Colossians referenced above? (All of them.)
3. How many of your sins did Jesus pay for on the cross? (All of them.)
4. How many of them were future at that time? (All of them.)
5. How many sins was He referring to when He said, “It is finished”? (All of them.)
6. At the time you were saved, how many of your sins did God forgive?

If you didn’t answer number six by saying, “All of them,” I encourage you to ask yourself if you’re being intellectually honest. Would it make sense that God would see and note all of our sins; that Jesus Christ would bear all of them upon Himself; that He would declare from the cross that payment had been made for all of them and then, after all that, God would only forgive you for some of your sins — namely the ones you had committed up to the point in time at which you were saved? Don’t make the mistake of trying to put God in the “time box.” He won’t fit. He has forgiven you for every sin you will ever commit, past, present and future. The verse clearly says that He has “forgiven us all our transgressions,” not just our past ones.

For many years I believed that in order to stay in a state of forgiveness before God, it was necessary that I ask Him to forgive me for each sin which I committed. This kind of faulty theology raises some serious questions. What happens if I don’t ask Him to forgive me for a specific sin? Does it remain unforgiven until the day I die? What happens then, when I go into eternity with an unforgiven sin? Nobody can go into heaven with unforgiven sin (Imagine being eternally separated from God for calling somebody an idiot in another car on the interstate and forgetting to ask God for forgiveness.).

On the other side of the issue, consider this question: Is there anything that you know is the right thing to do that you aren't doing? James said, "Therefore, to the one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, it is sin" (James 4:17). Do you see the dilemma? If all our sins aren't forgiven, then we had better make sure we are living a perfect life because not only do we have to deal with sins which occur when we do wrong things, but we also have to be worried about the right things we haven't done. This would be enough to give the Christian a nervous breakdown!

"Then, are you saying that since His grace has covered our sin, we can go out and do anything we want?" I hope somebody is asking that because, if so, it shows I've made grace clear here. You're not the first one to ask that question. Read Romans 6:1-4 to see how Paul answered the question when it was asked of him.

This Good Day

Jamie Weeks

The day dawned slightly overcast but the clouds burned off quickly as the sun rose, a normal occurrence at the beach. The forecast was for rough seas but we had gathered for an event that was more important than the weather. We had chosen this breezy day to commemorate, as a family, the beginning of our beloved dad's and husband's step into his spiritual reality. Fernando Ortega's song "This Good Day" swirled through my mind as we made the preparations for our short ocean voyage. While Ryan prepared our boat, we checked to be sure we had our CD's, prepared especially for that day, our CD player, jackets, etc. My mom, sister, two nieces, Ryan and I, our three children, and a close family friend, who was captaining us, were the only ones present.

Pop-Pop had wanted us to celebrate his life with a party and we had. On the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday, we held a large dinner for family and friends and he was able to be there and receive their good wishes and love. That was on a Monday night; he passed away the following Saturday. Although my sister was unable to be there, I sat with my mom while she held his hands as Pop-Pop's body realized his soul was already gone. Our young children came and went in the room throughout the long day, actually climbing up on the bed with him after he began his journey. We were home; he had never been hospitalized. In fact, until Thursday, he was still able to get up and brush his teeth, etc. My dad was tenacious in his love of life. But on Friday, we knew we should tell him it was OK to just rest. There is never a good time to say good-bye, but realizing it was really just "until next time" helped a little. A very little, actually. Good-byes suck in general.

If you've never sat at the bed of someone as they breathe their last exhalation, you will not understand my next words. To hear an exhalation of breath, no matter how soft, and not have it followed by the expected inhalation is the most final absence of sound that you can imagine. Death is foreign to the living. There is suddenly a vacuum where a second before there WAS. Why doesn't the world stop with the last beat of our beloved's heart? No wonder the Victorians covered the mirrors and stopped the clocks in a home when someone died. Life as we knew it is forever altered. Not necessarily forever bad, just different.

I can only imagine when Adam and Eve's eyes were opened to "self" in the garden, and independence replaced dependence, that the finality of his choice resounded through Adam's soul. Separation was a heretofore unknown experience. Life stopped; death entered. The clocks of heaven must have stopped.

And so our family entered into a new era. And we had gathered to celebrate our hero in the way he had requested. Perpetual grief is impossible. Life wins out. You laugh again and the sun continues to rise and set. How cruel that the world continues on when you feel broken inside and yet gaping wounds close. Even in our hearts. Life leaves us scarred but loves' scars are to be worn proudly like badges of honor. Loving makes us better people.

The ocean was rough that day. One of my nieces and I were desperately fighting *mal de mer*. The CD player refused to function. As I watched a dolphin cruise by, I thought, "Just throw me in, I'll ride the Gulfstream with Pop-Pop." We each took our turn releasing the ashes that my mom had prepared for us. How can six foot plus and seventy-five years of knowledge and experience be reduced to small velvet bags? How can that be???

My mom took her turn last. She moved to the bow and released her heart to the wind and waves. He promptly blew back onto us: coating our faces, filling our lungs, and working his way into every article of our clothing, our belongings, and every crevice of the boat. As my eldest daughter sobbed, my sister and I burst into laughter at the sublime ridiculousness of the moment. Pop-Pop wasn't gone; we were sparkling with the evidence of his life! And would be for the rest of our lives, we realized. Literally, it seemed, as well as figuratively! Life is uncontainable, unpredictable, and horribly wonderful. Life is a paradox.

So it is with God. The cross started the clocks of heaven once again as Creator reconciled creation. "But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ." Romans 5:15-17.

In the loss of self, we gain life. Christ's LIFE. Life is not an erudite, intellectual grasp of words on a page, although His life can be found in that way. Life is not the keeping of a set of rules and rituals that bring us closer to a distant, condemnatory God, although our rituals may allow our hearts to find God. Through the act of abandoning our best attempts to confine God and define Him, we willfully choose to EXPERIENCE HIM WITHIN US. THAT IS LIFE! The death of our need to do, to know, and to control is the birth of faith, hope, and love. *God seeps out of our brokenness, out of our realization that this temporal existence is not the final boundary of our reality. God-life is infinitely larger than our ability to grasp it.*

Like Paul we realize, "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: *for when I am weak, then am I strong.*" 2 Corinthians 12:8-10.

Life is what happens when we allow ourselves to die. To accept the death of our right to believe we're in control. Life is discovering that Grace waits at the end of our own personal resources, knowledge, and performance. Grace isn't the safety net God places beneath us as we attempt to master the high-wire trapeze of life. Grace is the ability to live as creatures that soar, no wires or nets required. Grace can't be earned or bartered for, nor do we eventually grow beyond it. We accept it. We grow in it! Our union with Christ clothes us in His Grace and what is true of us spiritually becomes more and more evident experientially. He lives in us and through us as we abandon our attempts to mimic authentic life.

Through a death we gained a life. Not a doing but a being. We don't love; we realize we are in the One who is Love then we can love. We don't do righteous acts; we realize we are righteous then we live righteous lives. We don't become holy; we are holy. Do you know who you are because of the cross? Are you wearing your new life in Christ by acknowledging your death in Him and His life in you?

The more we are able to trust in God's bigger than our imagination love, the more we abandon our attempts to maintain our flesh, the more we recognize our identity as NEW CREATIONS born of Christ, the more He'll appear in us. Life: real, authentic LIFE, is Christ. It's

that simple and that wonderful. It is the Wonderful Mystery. We live it every day. The Christ-life. Christ in you: the hope of glory. Every day is a good day when you know who you are.

Why We Say "As Us"

Fred Pruitt

Recently I read an article by a well-known writer about the indwelling Christ, who spoke of Christ "living through us." It surprised me that the writer stopped there, at the word "through." Perhaps the writer had a purpose in stopping his exposition at that point, but for me, the truth is not complete at that point.

Obviously, Christ living "through me," is truth, no doubt, but I submit it is only a partial truth, and does not come to the total as we are meaning it. For more than 25 years I have been teaching, "Christ as me (us)," and "through me" does not have the same ring to me. Bear with me for a little explanation.

One way to demonstrate that the meanings are not the same, is the effect the words have on people in general. "Christ lives through us," will hardly raise an eyebrow in most Christians who have some understanding that Christ lives in us. In fact, the "Christ in you" truth has become a rising theme in many Christian circles in recent years. As we have traveled through the U.S. over the past few years, everywhere we go we run into others who are familiar with the "Christ in you" truth, some from this source and some from that source. "Have you read so-and-so's book?" we are often asked. "He talks about what you are talking about." And many do approach it.

But most stop at this "through us" place, and that seems for most a very acceptable truth. Most people can get behind that. It offends only a few. Because everyone who names the name of Christ will echo John the Baptist's words, "He must increase, and I must decrease," at least as a goal, whether or not they consider it attainable. Because with "through us," that's what we end up with. We end up with a full Christ and some sort of "transparent" person (me) who contains Him. We see ourselves as persons who have to "get out of the way," so that Christ can be seen. In this sense, the person really has no part in anything, except to get himself out of the way.

And of course we never really can seem to get ourselves fully out of the way -- we always

turn up here and there, sometimes in a mighty big way, too! And so while we're "trying" to get ourselves out of God's way, ("let go and let God"), so that He might have a clear unobstructed path into the world through some supposed transparency on our part, it is my observation that most people remain in consciousness and understanding in a "not quite there" situation. Sin consciousness prevails, incompleteness reigns, and "Christ lives through me" is sometimes a hit and sometimes a miss. I hear the words, "I sin every day," and, "I'm not there yet," as much from people who say, "Christ in me," as from those who have no understanding whatsoever of this truth. What's the difference?

And all of this is still separation. God is over there, or up there, or even in me, but in me as if apart from me -- maybe He lives on the right side of me, while my human me takes up the left side of me. Or however we perceive it. Anyway you cut the mustard, He and I are not one person, if the final result of His indwelling is that He lives only "through me." "I" am not involved, or at least the goal is that "I" am not involved. "Get me out of the way, Lord," we pray. We confess that we ourselves are God's obstacle. Poor God.

But that is not what we are here for, to "get out of the way." Jesus prayed in John 17, verses 11, and 21-23, that we would be "one" in the same way He and His Father are one. The exact same oneness. That's what He said, not me. And He was not just praying for the 11 apostles who were left at the supper table, but for all those who "will come through their word" -- He was praying the same thing for US!!!! Do we dare believe Jesus' prayer is not answered, or that He meant anything less than He asked for? THE SAME ONENESS and THE SAME GLORY -- in US!!!! That's what Jesus Christ prayed for.

Here is how He described His oneness with the Father:

Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. (John 5:19)

Someone might say, "Well, isn't that Jesus 'letting' the Father live 'through' Him?"

Let's read on before we answer that.

For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;
(John 5:26)

What this is saying is that, even though the Son does nothing of Himself, He is not uninvolved. Everything the Father is, the Son is.

He offended the Pharisees to the uttermost when He said, "I and my Father are one."

"You are a man," they said, "but by that saying you blaspheme, because you make yourself God."

If you say, "Christ lives through me," they will applaud you because we can take that, especially if we keep it in the hypothetical or occasional realm. If we say, "He lives as me," they will accuse you of blasphemy and making yourself God just as they accused Jesus. Because you have involved yourself, deified yourself they will say, and have not properly gotten "yourself" out of the way.

"Show us the Father," Philip asked later. "Have I been so long with you?" replied Jesus, "that you don't know that when you see Me, you see the Father?"

Jesus doesn't get Himself out of the way. No, He is instead at the forefront, the focal point of the discussion. I AM the WAY, THE TRUTH, and THE LIFE," He says. He does not say, "God expressed through me is the way." Jesus and the Father are one. Jesus even goes so far as to say that no one comes to the Father but through Him. HE is the conduit to the Father. When you get Him, you get the Father. He is anything but "out of the way." He is anything but "transparent."

There is a Father ("My father is greater than I") and there is a Jesus and they are distinctly different in office and manifestation, but they are ONE.

And He prayed that we might be ONE in the same way. "When you see me, you see the Father," said Jesus.

"When you see me, you see the Father," I say. As offensive to fleshly ears as that sounds, just as it was so offensive to the religious authorities that they wanted to KILL HIM for it, what other confession can we make but that Jesus' prayer has been fulfilled in our human lives? We MUST say, if we believe Jesus, and if we are to enter into the total, "When you see me you see the Father," or, "He lives as me," or, "My human existence, my words and deeds, are Christ's existence in human form. My words and deeds are His words and deeds." Offensive? Yes, very much so, to some. Truth? Yes, it is the TOTAL TRUTH of who we really are, when Christ has come to live in and be the very Life of our lives.

"Well," many will say, "after all, He was Jesus. He was the only begotten Son of God, so He could say those things." I would agree, except for what He prayed in John 17. He prayed that we might live in the SAME ONENESS. Read the verses.

What about brother Paul? Does he not say the same?

Paul identifies very clearly exactly Who we are in Galatians. Paul is talking about God's promise to Abraham, given in Genesis 12:7: "Unto thy seed will I give this land," the Lord promises Abraham. Later, in Genesis 13:16, God says Abraham's seed will be such a multitude as if we could count the dust of the earth, and in 22:17,18, God promises Abraham's seed will be as the stars in the sky in number, and in Abraham's seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. Paul brings out in Galatians chapter 3 that the "seed" God is talking about with Abraham is not plural, as in seeds, but singular in meaning. Abraham's "seed" is Christ, THE CHRIST, in whom all the nations of the earth are blessed -- but -- it becomes plural in the sense that the one seed is as the dust of the ground and the stars in the sky in number, because that one "seed," which is Christ in us, is the same seed in each of us, the same Christ, and therefore the same PERSON, who blesses all the nations of the earth, in each and every one of us, and AS each and every one of us. Paul says we are Abraham's SEED, that is, we are Christ. The Father has only ONE seed, Christ, and that seed, the most powerful seed in the universe, produces Christ. When you plant squash seeds, you

get squash. When you plant apple seeds, you get apples. When you plant the Christ seed, CHRIST IS WHO GROWS UP! In us, as us.

And to reinforce the same concept Paul says that he labors and travails until Christ is formed in us. Christ -- in our form (Gal 4:19).

Paul again says in 1 Cor 6:17 that when we are joined to the Lord we are one spirit. One spirit, not two. That's what he says. Jesus told the woman at the well in John 4 that "God is Spirit," and since we know God has said He is "I AM," and Jesus also said, "Before Abraham was, I AM," meaning He is the same as the Father, "I AM." The scriptures very plainly bring out the fact that the human self is also spirit, and then Paul completes the picture when he says our joining to the Lord causes us to be "one spirit." One divine identity, one person, one Life. There is a human and there is a divine, and they are one. When you see the human you see the divine. The Divine lives as the human. The Divine expresses its divinity in humanity.

That is the purpose of our being born again. Not to become independent gods who become Christlike, but to be One with the True God, branches organically united with and offshoots of the TRUE VINE, out of which the fruit of God comes. No abiding in our organic union, as branches growing out of a Vine, no fruit, "For without Me you can do nothing." But abiding in Him, HIS fruit comes out of our lives out of our restful abiding, or remaining, in Him.

We find our true selves only as expressions of Him Who is the True Vine. "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." (Col 3:3,4) Do we think that Paul is meaning this as something for the bye and bye over in glory, or does not Paul's life testify to the truth of what he says as a NOW event? When does Christ appear in our lives? Right now He appears to the eyes of faith. Right now we discover our true selves, hidden only in Him, and only available to us, when we know the final death of the old "me," through the Cross. When we know that death, know our own emptiness, then His fulness comes in and we become OURSELVES, which is HE IN OURSELVES LIVING AND EXPRESSING HIMSELF AS US.

We come back in totality. We die, only to rise again and LIVE as fully functional, fully

operational, fully affirmed RIGHT SELVES. We are no longer afraid of ourselves. We no longer have to "get ourselves out of the way." God doesn't manifest Himself by means of our lives as we in false humility say, "despite us," but BECAUSE of us, because He delights in us, because in us He sees the Son, and He is always delighted in the Son. And we are THAT SON. WE are THAT SEED!

Having once for all died to the old and all that the old was, we rise as only the new, trusting Him in us to be us, therefore trusting our will as His for we seek no separate will. We desire the desires of God, which He has placed in our hearts. We work the works of God, for it is He working in us, not around us, not despite us, but AS YOU AND AS ME!

If I want to do it, I do it. Because what I do is what I see the Father doing, since the the Father delights in the Son, and is continually in every moment showing the Son what He is doing, so that the Son is likewise doing the Father's works. The Father that dwells in us does the works, and we relax in His working by being simply ourselves.

As we have said over and over, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes!"

King of My World

John Lynch

All my childhood I can't remember trusting anyone with me. My best guess is I wasn't sure anyone could or would adequately protect me. My response to hurt was not to find protection, but to resolve I wouldn't allow others close enough to hurt me. I'm the classic child who thought he could protect himself, protect his heart, control his pain. It took many years after I knew Jesus was real before I could risk believing in Him. I knew what it would cost me. It was all or nothing. It terrified me.

I'm left still today with scars. If you know me well, you have seen insecurity, jealousy, self-protection, lashing out when something appears to threaten me, intense over-reactive to hurt, slight, or disrespect. And there's shame, a tendency to hide, and a knee jerk reaction to run away from those who hurt me. Oh, and Stacey says I still can "freak out" on occasion. 1 word is bringing me to health, maturity, healing-beautiful relationships-in these last 20 years.

We grow in trust. But trust is nearly everything. Love follows it. Peace, health, freedom, beauty, joy, purpose, fulfillment, delight, worship, contentment, grace, relationships, safety, love and the ability to be loved. So this may be the most important question most believers can ask: "God, do I trust you w/my daily life?"

This trust is not-"do I believe in You, do I believe in heaven, do I believe John 3:16, do I think you exist, do I think Jesus died on the cross. Not am I forgiven?" But based upon all of that truth, "Do I trust You with my world?"

I hear many us say, "I trust God, I just don't trust Him in this particular area." Hmmm. (interpretation) "I only don't trust Him in the things that are important to me." I trust He can keep the pit inside the cherry and that fish will not come onto land to sing show tunes. "But the things that matter deeply to me, I'm not sure He understands correctly, that He has enough power, that He cares enough, that He won't manipulate me under the banner of "teaching me something", that He really loves me enough, that I haven't done something

too wrong, or that I haven't asked correctly, or that this will turn out in a way that won't devastate me...or that He is really there."

Now, we're starting to be honest. So, while we're at it, why don't we admit why we don't trust Him?

- I don't like some of the things He's done in the past
- I don't, quite often, like His timing
- I've asked for so many things He didn't give me
- He's given me things I don't like that I didn't ask for
- I seem to often be able to pull things off without Him
- I feel vulnerable and not in control. I hate that feeling
- I don't know if He's really for me
- I don't know if He really does stuff like the old days
- I don't know what trust looks like-do I just sit in a chair?

So, what's your alternative? Like the friend of our family who said when she was little: "I want Him to be in charge while I'm sleeping and I'll be in charge when I'm awake."

But in the Psalms King David cries out to us...there is a quality of life when we trust Him. Ps. 31:14/15

"But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, "You are my God." My times are in your hand;"

He's saying, "I've made a choice to place every single event, every moment of my life into your hands, trusting you with all that is most important to me. I choose to face every single event that threatens to undo me by confessing, "When I am afraid, I will remember again who you are, and I will in that moment choose to trust You."

What I must remember:

- What He's already done on my behalf even with my limited trust.
- What He will do with every hard, sad, bad thing. Ro. 8:28
- How wise and good He looks the further I get from the event
- The alternative: A self-willed, self-absorbed, self-protective, self-attentive, self-loved, selfish, insecure, lonely life.
- He's better, loves more, has more power, understands better, has better perspective, isn't unhealthy, cares more than you about you, will not make a mistake, will not fail,

sees everything, never causes tragedy just to get your attention, loves you more than every created thing end to end.

Go Go Boots Will Change Your Life

Stephanie McEntire

If I were to describe the little girl as I looked at her picture, what would I say? She was around 12 years old and a scrawny thing at best. Long unkempt stringy hair with the beginnings of teenage abundance of oil. Face scattered with pimples. The clothes she was wearing were conservative at best for the time. While other girls were parading around in miniskirts and hip huggers..she had to measure the amount of flesh exposed on a daily basis. The little girl in all the pictures in the box looked forlorn and a little lost. Odd comes to mind.....

The little girl was from a family that was very poor. She lived in a half built house that was in the very middle of the small town she lived in. Everyone knew where she lived and where she came from. She was smart enough to know by that age that people's perceptions of her were formed by what the adults thought of her parents and they didn't think much of them.

In her family Christmas was a depressing time. Her father got angrier and abused more often. Her mother worked more and was seen less. Her only saving grace through that time was what little T.V. she could watch, the transistor radio tuned in to rock and roll (that she secretly stayed up all night and listened to) and the Sears Christmas catalog. She could hardly wait for it to arrive. She snuck away with the book filled with pictures of happy families and children laughing who had received everything they ever wanted... She loved everything n that catalog from the 1 dollar gifts to the 1000 dollar gifts. Gifts ...were what is was all about and while looking at it one day she came across a picture of a young girl about her age in the most beautiful thing she had ever seen....red go go boots.

The picture showed the model surrounded by friends and cute young boys. Head thrown back in a laugh while everyone stared at her adoringly. The young girl looking at the picture and wanted those go-go boots more than life itself. She just knew that they were so cool...that they would change her life. She didn't know how she was going to get them but she was going to try. Her family would be opposed because boots like that were "worldly" ...She didn't care...the boots were going to change her life. She just knew it. She approached her Mom with the book, pointed them out and asked the unthinkable...can I

have these for Christmas? Her Dad immediately went into a rage about "whore boots" and such. She closed the book and walked away.

On Christmas morning at the little girl's house most times it wasn't much to speak of. She had learned not to be excited about too much at that point in her life. It seemed excitement was "worldly" also..so she stuffed those things way down. She sat down with her brothers and sisters to open the few boxes they did receive. She began to tear the wrapping paper off the box and she couldn't believe her eyes...it was a shoe box...could it be? She took off the lid and it was as if the skies opened up and heavens angels began to sing...red go go boots. She could smell that new shoe smell and it was like the finest perfume ever made... Finally...her life was going to change.

On the first day back at school she was dressed and ready..waiting for the bus. She was giddy with joy and anticipation of her first day back at school in those boots. She ran to the swing set in her yard and began to swing...higher and higher...excitement coursing through her. She saw the bus coming up the road and with one move...the disappointment of all disappointments happened...she planted those boots on the ground top of the boots flat to the gravel to stop the swinging...and felt the boot on her left foot tear. She stood there for a minute..and looked at the nickel size hole in the top of the boot. Disappointment and fear coursed through her. She had no choice but to get on the bus with that torn boot. The rest of the day goes down in history as the most disappointing of all of her life.

As it turns out red go go boots can change your life...it just may not be at that moment...that little girl was me...and as I look back at my life of many disappointments I can pinpoint that source of disappointment as being a major influence of my Psyche...Those red go go boots almost 40 years later....are changing my life....

The definition of disappointment is the feeling of being let down: a feeling of sadness or frustration because something was not as good, attractive, or satisfactory as expected, or because something hoped for did not happen. To say that is how I felt is an understatement. I realize now that this is really what I have felt about myself..and others because of my perceptions of God. God is a God who is disappointed with me...he sent his son ...who like

those red go go boots was suppose to change my life..everything was suppose to get better...be perfect...heaven was suppose to play out like the Sears catalog with the family of God gathered around the tree with all of the gifts they have ever wanted Because of those gifts and being satisfied and happy and" because" we all got everything we ever hoped for...there would be no more disappointments. Boy have I been in need of a heart change on this one.

Jesus said "In this life you SHALL HAVE tribulations (disappointments) Be of good cheer...I have overcome the world"...odd statement isn't it. Especially when we live in a world that gears us and our children to measure our worth based on our "contentment" with all the stuff we have. We even measure our success sometimes on things like how many friends we have or how eloquent we are. Some folks even measure their success at how to prove love doesn't work at all... We all have our Christmas morning go go boots where things were suppose to be "changed"..to only find more disappointment.

So...what does Jesus mean when he says the statement that in this world you shall have "trouble"..or disappointments? Jesus was explaining to the disciples the coming events of leaving them alone in "this"...world to return to the Father. What a disappointment that must have been to realize that there was not going to be some perfect earthly kingdom...that as a matter of fact because you have accepted the love of God through Jesus things had a high probability of it getting worse for them. How does one "be of good cheer" because Jesus has "overcome the world."

Jesus talks of them being scattered and alone during this time. He talks of the necessity of it relying on the Father without him in the flesh to be right there alongside them in this world. This world and all it's disappointments were not the issue...it was the Kingdom of God in YOU..that was beginning to be developed in those poor guys...and in us poor guys..as we make the transition from external...to internal...Jesus was not concerned with a Sears catalogue kind of life. He was overjoyed that one would follow the Father and was ecstatic when they realized in that moment that things were not going to be so much about "this world"...more so about the peace the Father was giving them for believing on him as they walked through this "cause and effect" world that will only be overcome by our deaths...one

soul at a time...

This is good news to me...and Good tidings..great joy...Makes me want to spread "peace on earth and good will toward men"...he didn't come to relieve me from disappointments...but through love to overtake my heart and get me through them...What an important thing he was talking about that day to the disciples as the baton was beginning to be passed from the external to the internal dwelling place of the Father which was US. This is truly good news for me to know...that in this life I will have disappointment...but be of Good Cheer...Jesus has given me my go go boots...where nothing can tear them or take them. Today...Gods heart looks like a pair of go go boots...and 40 years later...they have truly changed my life.

Crossing the River

Ole Henrik Skjelstad

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

(Romans 12:2)

From the day we are born we are conditioned to think, sense and judge in accordance with appearances, that is, the natural world and how it presents itself. When we are born again it is vital that we learn how to perceive the kingdom of God which is contrary to everything we formerly know. Even if we have been involved in other religious systems which claim to know the spiritual world we need this renewal of the mind, because what characterize every religious system is self effort; what you must do to change, what you must do to satisfy the gods, how you must perform to make yourself acceptable to the deity.

The Old Testament conveys the most astounding and precious spiritual truths when the Spirit enlightens and renews our minds. Without this paradigm shift in our understanding this part of the Bible will remain nothing but pictures of lives lived and occurrences in ancient times. It will not render any deeper meaning than being a receipt for shoulds and oughts.

There came a day after forty years of wandering in the desert when the Israelites finally were in a position to cross the Jordan River (Joshua 1). But, Moses, representing the law, was not allowed to cross the river and had to die in the wilderness (Deut 32:48-52). The law's presence was banned from the Promised Land, which is Christ. So, when the people entered Canaan they entered Christ who has fulfilled the law in us.

The promised land was abounding with milk and honey and flourished with fruit the Israelites had not cultivated. This is a magnificent picture of the fruit of the Spirit which is manifested when we are in Christ. The fruit of the Spirit characterizes God and his being. When you read Gal 5:22-23 you can meditate at God's perfection which is portrayed in those two verses, and which through faith is a mirror of you. In the same manner as the Israelites received the abundance of Canaan we receive the fruit of the Spirit when we are in Him.

In the desert there was only bareness and hard work – there is no abundance of fruit when we are subject to the law. In the wilderness every man did what he thought was right in his own eyes (Deut 12:8), which denotes a Christian life of self effort and self reliance. In this religious system you are as holy as your best deeds. In Canaan holiness is imparted to you because of Christ (Hebr 10:14). We now clearly see that no fruit can grow and blossom under the law. In this system every self-effort will be devastated when tested by fire.

God led the Israelites to the threshold, but Joshua was the one who led the people across the river. They could dimly behold the realities of the new life ahead of them on the other side of the river, but they had to walk over themselves. The similarities to how we enter God's rest are stunning. This entering in is a conjunction of revelation and faith. We are given to see the shadows across the river (Deut 32:49), and we then take a leap of faith to possess what is our inheritance. Unbelief will cause us to continue our tedious march in the wilderness where the only thing which will sustain life is manna from above. But, when the diet has been manna for too long a period it grows bitter in the mouth , and this will be reflected in a person's whole being.

When you are in the desert you cannot return to Egypt and your unregenerate life, even though you long for those days when the law didn't condemn you. You long back to the evil taskmaster and the food he served you. But, the Red Sea is closed again. Your salvation is perpetually secured, but the desert doesn't offer much comfort or promise. You are saved, but you do not carry any fruit in the wilderness. In the Red Sea all the enemies who were against you, and who asserted ownership over you were obliterated. The Holy Spirit urges you to take the leap of faith into the unknown, but as the Israelites you are scared of what lies ahead. Those of us who have crossed the river can promise you one thing: Canaan really is overflowing with life and freedom in Christ.

Notice again that Moses had to die before anyone could enter the Promised Land. We cannot bring the law into Canaan, because there a different law operates; the law of life. It is only by the renewal of the mind that we can understand the spiritual realities which all are contrary to what we have always beheld in this natural, temporal world. We are unable to see grace and the union life – Christ in us – us in Christ, and our new identity in Him when

we are in the desert. All these wonderful truths are obscured under the law, that is, in the wilderness.

Time and Eternity

Andre Rabe

Time is often experienced as an inescapable vehicle that carries us from birth to death; a relentless force that propels us from the present to the future. But what is 'time'? We've become so familiar with our measure of time - seconds, hours, days, years - that it is easy to confuse our measures of time with time itself. Our experience of time and our measures of time might be far too narrow because they are limited by our specific point of view.

There are many interesting philosophies about time and even more interesting speculations about what the possibilities might be, if such philosophies were true.

I won't explore all these philosophies in depth in this writing - only enough to help us appreciate what the Word has to say about time. For that purpose I'll adopt one of the most basic and helpful definitions of time, namely: a sequence of events.

How we relate to this sequence of events and how God relates to it is very different. Some of the statements in scripture seem at first to contain some grammatical errors: the tenses are all wrong! For instance: "Before Abraham was, I am". In other instances the Word speaks about future events as if they had happened in the past. Hundreds of years before the birth and death of Jesus, Isaiah speaks of His suffering on the cross as a past event: "...but He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed." Is 53:5

I was bemused by an article I read about Tachyons. This is a scientific name for a theoretical particle that travels faster or at the speed of light. The nature of such a particle is truly astounding. For instance, let's imagine one could build a fax machine based on the laws covering tachyons and we call it our tachyons fax machine. If one was to send a fax at 3pm it would arrive at 2pm! The effect precedes the cause. I immediately thought of Mat 8:16, 17 in which Jesus heals the sick who were brought to him.

Verse 17 states that this was in fulfillment of what was prophesied by Isaiah. It's again the passage in Isaiah 53 that we looked at earlier. We know that this passage refers to the

suffering & death of Christ, but here again the effect (healing) of what He accomplished on the cross is experienced by people long before the cause. Another example of this inversion of time is found in Isaiah 65:24 "Before they call I answer".

These statements draw us into a dimension beyond our normal experience of time. A dimension in which time is a radically different entity from our normal experience of it. The use of the words: "before Abraham was, I am" seems to indicate two different dimensions. One in which there is a past, present and future, and one in which there is simply a present. However, it might say more about the nature of God than about the nature of time.

Let's start by looking at the Hebrew understanding of time as found in the Old Testament. We don't find philosophical or abstract debates about the nature of time, as we do in the Greek philosophies of that period. Time is not described as a separate force or an extra dimension, but in rather more concrete terms.

Events occurred and these events stood in relation to other events and this was in effect, time. Time has no substance apart from these events. Whereas the Greeks saw time as a separate dimension in which events happened, the Hebrews simply saw events happening and these 'happenings' were time. As such, eternity is never described as timeless, for there could be no events, no experience, no life without time. To be timeless would be lifeless.

The quality of events are given great significance than the order in which they happened or the duration it took. In some instances events and persons were arranged according to the impact of their occurrence, rather than their chronological sequence. The weightiness and significance of people and events were regarded more important than the exact date of the occurrence. People did things. God did things. Time is the story of these events and has no existence beyond these events.

One of the reasons why eternity is often thought of as timeless is because of our understanding of time. Time is seen as temporal, subject to change whereas eternity is seen as changeless. However, it is the nature of change that is different in the eternal realm. There is 'change' that decays and there is 'change' that renews.

2 Cor 4:16: Therefore we do not become discouraged. Though our outer man is [progressively] decaying and wasting away, yet our inner self is being [progressively] renewed day after day. A blooming flower undergoes change, but every change just further establishes its beauty and essential reality. Proverbs speaks of the life of the righteous being like the rising sun, shining brighter and brighter. The eternal realm does have events and does have change, but every change further confirms the essential reality of this realm and consequently it is not temporal.

There is an event that took place in eternity of such importance and magnitude that it overflowed into our time! This mystery was hidden for ages and generations ... but then it happened: the infinite filled the finite; the eternal filled the temporal, the unknowable God revealed Himself in a way we can all understand. God became man! His mind was made known; His character unveiled; His opinion of you made clear. Like an ocean emptied into a pond, it filled and changed all time - out of all proportion to the fall of man, is the redemption of man. The Lamb, who was slain from the foundation of the world, was born and walked amongst us.

It is this singular event that gives meaning to all other time. It is only within this one event that all other events can find purpose. This event is God's reference within our time by which all other events are judged. Only in relationship to this event can the temporal, changing, time-bound events find eternal value. Although this single event was concentrated in one individual, Jesus, it included all men. And although it happened before you were born, it has a greater claim on you than your own personal past.

Whether you are aware of it or not, this event affects you ... in fact it is all about you. Paul refers to it as the 'fullness of time' (Eph 1:10). He describes it as a singular event that has consequences for all mankind in all ages; an achievement that occurred once and included all without exception. The fullness of time ... so much can be said about it, where does one begin. The fullness of time means:

No time to come can add to what was given in this event; Our sense of satisfaction, completeness, fullness has everything to do with appreciating the event that filled all of time, and nothing to do with any future event; We can never exhaust the wealth of

understanding and insight that was lavished upon us in this event. Further on in this letter of Paul, he writes that all of eternity will be a further revelation of the exceeding greatness of God's kindness toward us in this event - in Christ.

Jesus said on a number of occasions: " ...the time is coming, and now is ...".

He tapped into eternity in such a way that the present contained everything that the future had to offer! After speaking to the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4) about living water - water that not only satisfies but overflows, He ends off by saying: "I am he," said Jesus. "You don't have to wait any longer or look any further." All that eternity has to offer is in Christ and He is present in this very moment.

The Heavenly Water

Mick Mooney

And God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water." ⁷ So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so. *Genesis 1:6-7*

Have you ever wondered what God was talking about here when he said he wanted to separate *water* from *water*? Before God even introduces the concept of water, he makes it crystal clear that there are two types of water. The first water is found on the earth, but the second water is only found in the heavens!

Now when God talks about the water above, He is obviously not talking about rain, for that only comes from clouds, and they themselves are still under the sky (and water that comes from rain is actually just water from the ocean that has precipitated). So we see God clearly presenting the glorious gospel truth of a heavenly water. It is the same truth that Jesus later made even clearer to us all while speaking to the Samaritan woman by Jacob's well:

"Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?"

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." *John 4:11-14*

Only Jesus can give us the water that is from above. God never separated the water of the world from the water from Heaven because He wanted to keep it from us; rather it was to show us that there is another water available, living water!

Once again, we find God preaching the gospel of His Son right from the start of the Genesis account! Now what is really incredible is that *at the start* of the Bible God talks about the heavenly water, but it is from a perspective of separation. However, when we read the final statements *at the end* of the Bible, we find God still talking about the heavenly water, but this time it is not about separation, but an invitation! It's about inclusion!

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. *Revelation 22:17*

God is no longer keeping the living water separate, the good news of Jesus Christ, and the power of His finished work upon the cross is that He has opened the way for all of mankind to come to God and receive the water that is from above, and never thirst again!

I'm just amazed at how God has been preaching the gospel right from the beginning! *How glorious is our beloved Father and our Saviour Jesus!*

Where Does God Live?

Steve McVey

I heard about two college students whose football team was about to get a goat as their new school mascot. There was much discussion among the students about where the goat would stay. One of the boys said to the other, "Why don't we let the goat stay in our dorm room?" "What about the smell?" the other asked. "The goat will get used to the smell," the first responded.

Goats may get used to living in filth, but God won't live in any place that is unclean. Where does God live today?

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 says, "Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are."

In the Old Testament, God lived in the Holy Place. It was such a sacred place that no one was allowed inside except the High Priest, who only went in one time each year on the Day of Atonement. In order to enter the Holy Place, the Priest was instructed to conform to meticulously detailed instruction about how he was to approach the residence of a Holy God (See Leviticus 16). He was required to submit to a purification process and put on sacred garments before entering the place where God lived. If an unauthorized or unclean person entered God's residence, immediate death was the result.

The New Testament reveals that God has moved from where He used to live. He doesn't live in the old neighborhood anymore. He has built a new house where He now lives. That house is the Christian (See 1 Peter 2:5). He has taken up permanent residence inside the believer. In 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, Paul states indisputably that the Christian is holy by boldly asserting three basic facts: (1) You are the temple of God. (2) The temple of God is holy. (3) You are holy. To deny the truth of the believer's holiness in Christ is to totally reject this passage of Scripture.

Do you believe the Bible? The Bible makes clear that it isn't necessary to pray for God to give

the Christian holiness. The person you were in Adam was unholy, but we learned in chapter four that man is dead. We have been given a new life in Christ and with it came the blessing of holiness. “For if by the transgression of the one (Adam), death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:17). Righteousness is a gift! You can know you are holy right now because the Bible says so (See 2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 4:24; Romans 5:19).

Apprehending God⁵

A.W. Tozer

O taste and see. — Ps 34:8

It was Canon Holmes, of India, who more than twenty-five years ago called attention to the inferential character of the average man's faith in God. To most people God is an inference, not a reality. He is a deduction from evidence which they consider adequate; but He remains personally unknown to the individual. "He must be," they say, "therefore we believe He is." Others do not go even so far as this; they know of Him only by hearsay. They have never bothered to think the matter out for themselves, but have heard about Him from others, and have put belief in Him into the back of their minds along with the various odds and ends that make up their total creed. To many others God is but an ideal, another name for goodness, or beauty, or truth; or He is law, or life, or the creative impulse back of the phenomena of existence.

These notions about God are many and varied, but they who hold them have one thing in common: they do not know God in personal experience. The possibility of intimate acquaintance with Him has not entered their minds. While admitting His existence they do not think of Him as knowable in the sense that we know things or people.

Christians, to be sure, go further than this, at least in theory. Their creed requires them to believe in the personality of God, and they have been taught to pray, "Our Father, which art in heaven." Now personality and fatherhood carry with them the idea of the possibility of personal acquaintance. This is admitted, I say, in theory, but for millions of Christians, nevertheless, God is no more real than He is to the non-Christian. They go through life trying to love an ideal and be loyal to a mere principle.

Over against all this cloudy vagueness stands the clear scriptural doctrine that God can be known in personal experience. A loving Personality dominates the Bible, walking among the trees of the garden and breathing fragrance over every scene. Always a living Person is present, speaking, pleading, loving, working, and manifesting Himself whenever and wherever His people have the receptivity necessary to receive the manifestation.

⁵ A.W. Tozer: Pursuit of God; <http://manybooks.net/titles/tozera2514125141-8.html>

The Bible assumes as a self-evident fact that men can know God with at least the same degree

of immediacy as they know any other person or thing that comes within the field of their experience. The same terms are used to express the knowledge of God as are used to express knowledge of physical things. "O taste and see that the Lord is good." "All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces." "My sheep hear my voice." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." These are but four of countless such passages from the Word of God. And more important than any proof text is the fact that the whole import of the Scripture is toward this belief.

What can all this mean except that we have in our hearts organs by means of which we can know God as certainly as we know material things through our familiar five senses? We apprehend the physical world by exercising the faculties given us for the purpose, and we possess spiritual faculties by means of which we can know God and the spiritual world if we will obey the Spirit's urge and begin to use them.

That a saving work must first be done in the heart is taken for granted here. The spiritual faculties of the unregenerate man lie asleep in his nature, unused and for every purpose dead; that is the stroke which has fallen upon us by sin. They may be quickened to active life again by the operation of the Holy Spirit in regeneration; that is one of the immeasurable benefits which come to us through Christ's atoning work on the cross.

But the very ransomed children of God themselves: why do they know so little of that habitual conscious communion with God which the Scriptures seem to offer? The answer is our chronic unbelief. Faith enables our spiritual sense to function. Where faith is defective the result will be inward insensibility and numbness toward spiritual things. This is the condition of vast numbers of Christians today. No proof is necessary to support that statement. We have but to converse with the first Christian we meet or enter the first church we find open to acquire all the proof we need.

A spiritual kingdom lies all about us, enclosing us, embracing us, altogether within reach of our inner selves, waiting for us to recognize it. God Himself is here waiting our response to

His Presence. This eternal world will come alive to us the moment we begin to reckon upon its reality.

Sonlight

Jessica Robertson

I have no idea why daddy likes to communicate things to me when I have deadlines approaching ;) but, I am not complaining...guess I will trust Him to complete what He started on His time line, not mine. Recently, I have seen a bumper sticker, a t-shirt, and some stationary floating around that had the saying (and I have said this, so don't be thinking I am on the prowl & attacking), "Be the moon, reflect the son (sun)"...depending upon how it is spelled and conveyed, I think you get the gist. As I read (present, past, & future tense) this, I have gotten increasingly uncomfortable with it. I am in Christ, therefore a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). It is no longer I who lives (yes, behavior can often be deceiving or misleading), but, Christ that lives in me (Gal 2:20). I once was dead in Adam, now I am alive in Him (pick a verse out of Romans, Corinthians, Ephesians). To me, the moon is a dead rock. There is nothing about it that is alive. It doesn't produce light, all it does is reflect the sun. It is something beautiful set up in the sky to give us light at night...it is something we can marvel at. It was created with a purpose...void of life on its own yet, created by God who is the source of all life. The moon hangs around and reflects the light of the sun. There are times when the earth passes through the rays and the moon is dark. The light source had been blocked out...the sun was still shining...just hidden behind the earth. Eclipse. Is that how you view your heavenly Father? Are you the moon? I don't like that idea anymore...that is how it used be. In Adam, I was the moon. Separated and devoid of life...loved by the Father nonetheless. His rays (love) were all over me...I felt His warmth. He was working in my life...He created me in my mother's womb. The time drew near where I took His hand in mine, and He took my hand in His. He sent the comforter/counselor/Holy Spirit to take up residence. I experienced being taken into Jesus and was crucified with Him...resting in the heavenly realm (Ephesians 1:2-4). 1 Colossians 1:13 says, "For He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son"...from darkness to light. We are no longer the moon. We are in the Son, and He is in us. The light we have is no mere reflection...it comes from His existence within us. We aren't responsible for it...we can't control it...it burns for eternity and nothing can snuff it out. No sin can blacken it. Nothing you or I can do, can remove it. I am in Him...He is in me...Christ as us...the union.

False Self Syndrome its causes & its cures

Paul Anderson-Walsh

In an article entitled "Deceived" we identified a condition that we called "false self-syndrome." In this article, I propose to define this condition and make some preliminary observations concerning its causes and its cures.

What is False Self Syndrome?

In an article entitled "Deceived" we identified a condition that we called "false self-syndrome." In this article, I propose to define this condition and make some preliminary observations concerning its causes and its cures.

What then is false-self syndrome? Put simply it is a condition that makes sufferers think that they are independent selves. When full-blown, the condition leaves its victims in such a highly deluded state that they actually believe themselves capable of living the Christian life. This condition persists because of what one might call Artificial Independence, that is, the illusion that we are independent self-operating persons. We are not, yet man in his vanity believes that he is a moral free agent. However, the truth is that he is not, nor ever will be, neutral as Romans 6:15-18 clearly demonstrates:

When we were lost we were slaves to sin

Now that we are saved we are slaves to righteousness

What is startling is that well-intentioned ministers inciting their members to live for God are spreading this virus in churches. How ironic that as these men and women earnestly seeks to live a holy life their very ambition is unwittingly causing them to sin. Attempting to live the Christian life is sin for the sum of all sin is self-reliance.

Pseudo-independence is the perennial problem of man, regardless of whether he is lost or saved. In the case of the lost man, the symptoms are obvious; the false self manifests itself in forms of self-reliance and use of others to achieve his own ends. However, in the case of the saved man the symptoms are harder to detect, buried as they are beneath the plausible veneer of works-righteousness. Nonetheless, regardless of outward appearances, he too is reliant upon himself to live his life. However, because he apparently does it all in the name

of God he is greatly admired by the church and is seen as a paragon of selfless living. The religious man has a disagreeable tendency to ascribe to the former the name the lost man the title "unrighteous" however, the formers ready riposte is to brand his accuser as being "self-righteous." These descriptions are of course valid and are descriptive of the false self. What neither of them define is the true or real self which as we have suggested elsewhere is to be found in Christ-righteousness and Christ-righteousness is Jesus through self not "Self" less Jesus. It is this that Jesus alluded to [Mtt 13:34-35] and Paul explained [Col 1:27] - the hidden secret: namely that for the redeemed man separation is an illusion. [J 15:5] We are no longer wrong persons, false flesh people but now we are right persons, true Spirit people.

False-Self Syndrome is a universal problem, bridging the divide between lost and saved. Experientially the lost/saved divide is not anything like as wide as one might suspect. Whilst their destinations and aspirations are different, their modus operandi is the same -"self." The only difference is that one is unashamedly self-living-for-self, where the other unabashed self-righteously, is self-living for God. Both groups put their confidence in the flesh [self] and both groups must see this confidence shipwrecked if they are to make spiritual progress. There is so often a disturbing smugness among those who "have religion" borne of cultivating a righteousness that comes from the law [Phil3: 9]. However, true righteousness is that which comes not from the law but through THE FAITH of Jesus [Phil 3:9]

Christ Righteousness: Faith in God, Phil 3:9; Gal 2:20 [faith of God] = Christ righteousness. His faith in Himself manifested in you Mk 11:24

Self-Righteousness Faith in self and what we can do for God - a false righteousness that comes through the law [Phil 3:9]

What is Righteousness?

So far, we have spoken about three types of "righteousness" but it is worth pausing to ask the question, "What is righteousness?" In essence to be righteous is to have attained right-standing with God or to be justified. Of the New Testament writers, Paul in particular places a tremendous emphasis on how righteousness is attained [and maintained [Col 2:6]. In the negative sense it cannot be attained or maintained through the law [Gal 2:16; Gal: 2:21; Tit 3:4-5] Righteousness comes from Christ alone [1 Cor 1:30; Roms 3:19-28; Roms 10:1-4] We

have received the free gift of righteousness [Roms 5:17]. Thus we may assert a precious truth of our mystical union with the Lord, namely, that by faith we are made righteous not simply right with God but the righteousness of God [2 Cor 5:21]. The Christian life is not something that you cultivate it is something that you contain for the Christ life is the life of Christ expressing itself through human agencies -His living His life in us for each other

In view of this, Paul is only too willing to jettison any notion of self-confidence, counting all that he had accumulated on account of the flesh to be as rubbish" for the surpassing knowledge of knowing Jesus. The same "prize" awaits all those who exchange self-confidence, [that is confidence in the flesh] for Christ-confidence and the new self.

Diagnosing the condition

The only cure for both parties is for both parties to be brought face to face with their utter bankruptcy. Until and unless we are as convinced of our inability to live the Christian life as we are of our inability to save ourselves we will never be free of this delusional condition and able to experientially live in the power of His ability [Col 1:29; Phil 2:11-13]. Therefore, recognition of your inability is the key to experiencing His ability. Man, saved or lost, must become conscious of his total inadequacy. Each one must have his Job moment and recognise his parlous condition.

Perhaps it would be appropriate for us to ask ourselves at this juncture whether we have any of the symptoms of this condition. A few simple diagnostic questions ought to be sufficient:

Do you have a tendency toward self-reliance?

Are you self-consciousness?

Are you sin-consciousness?

Are you law-consciousness?

Are you right and wrong consciousness?

Are you good and bad consciousness?

Is your self worth based on what other people think of you?

Is there a cure?

Most of us, without fear of being branded hypochondriacs can recognise some or even all of the above. The question then is, can anything be done about it? Is there a cure? To that we answer emphatically "Yes there is." However, candidly one must also admit that God's prescription can taste rather unpleasant.

We must first see that the root problem is sin and we must see that the root of sin is independence. Much of the trouble with our modern day discipleship is that it is pre-occupied with sin and sinning, whereas discipleship is concerned with the invasion of life, not the intrusion of sin.

Moreover, if, as we suggest, the core problem is the independent self then the remedy is to know the Christ-dependent-self. The remedy gives rise to the core strategy, which is to convince us of our total need of Him. This He does by exposing us to the futility of self. It is imperative then that we fail and fail spectacularly in our attempts to live the Christian life. Failure and disillusionment create in us "a godly grief that leads to repentance that leads to salvation, without regret." [2 Cor 7:10] Once persuaded of our total inadequacy we are ready to be introduced to The Person who is our adequacy and "infinite supply."

The Divine Antidote

Many Christians have suffered shipwreck believing that the saying " God will not give you more than you can bear" is Biblical, it is not. In fact, it is profoundly unbiblical. In fact, God is committed to giving you more than you can bear. Think back over your own life. Consider for a moment the things that managed to halt the otherwise relentless progress of your self life, are they not:

Disillusionment with the meaninglessness of life

Suffering

Problems that are bigger than our ability to solve them

And of course in the case of the self-righteous an inability to keep God's Law

Peter called it a "strange life" urging us not to be dismayed, as we are refined in the furnace. The Psalmist called it the Valley of Baca [Ps 84] and made it a spring. James counselled us to "Count it all joy" [Jas 1:1] Paul told us to "rejoice in our sufferings" [Roms 5:2]. These were men who saw through .they saw the core problem - self and did not yield to the need for

relief at any cost or self-protection at any price. They embraced it seeing in the midst the author and perfecter and finisher of their faith as he applied the sandpaper of suffering & the Law to their lives to reveal Himself in them - the real self and raise them up to the third dimension where He is seated in heavenly realms.

1. Suffering

"Only fools don't suffer gladly"

The perennial question of the "separationist" is this - "Why do the righteous suffer?" Many have supposed that the book of Job seeks to answer that question. However, that is not the question that is posed by Job's story. The question asked in that extraordinary tale is not "Why do the righteous suffer?" but "Why do the righteous serve God?"

What was Satan, the father of the independent separated self's cynical answer to that question? - "Does Job fear God for nothing?" [Job 1:10] "He fears you," argued Satan "because you bless him." In other words, he serves you because there is something in it for Job. Remove the blessing and Job will curse you and embrace the self-life. What follows is forty-two agonising chapters in which he sees the loss of all things. Moreover, Job has to endure the maddening self-righteousness of his "comforters" which finally incites him to demand an audience with God to question His integrity in His dealing with him. The story finally culminates in his coming to union "I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see you and therefore I despise myself." [Job 42:5-6]

Herein lies the key to God's dealings with us. We must draw back from our tendency to see evil and the devil's purposes advancing against us. The Devil is God's devil; he can only accomplish God's purposes [Gen 50:24]. Seeing God in our circumstances requires an ability to see through our circumstances. We must become fixed in the conviction that all things work together for good for those who love God" [Roms 8:28] and see that the apparently negative "all-things" are the tools of the divine trade useful for conforming us into His image and likeness" [Roms 8:29]

What is suffering? By definition, suffering means to experience something we consider "bad." Typically, we might tend to associate suffering with evil and almost invariably; we regard it as something to be rebuked. In the illusory life, it is to be avoided at all costs. With

delightful economy Norman Grubb defines suffering as "what we don't like." However, as we have seen when men and women come to know union they are able to speak of suffering in radically different and to the "separationists" perverse terms. None more so than Paul, who, if one did not understand union might be forgiven for thinking he was a fanatic:

"For it has been granted to you for the sake of Christ that you should only believe in Him, but also suffer for His sake [Phil 1:29]

However, as we see this is the way of the cross. So why does God allow suffering to come in to our lives, when it appears to be such an unwelcome intruder? Paul explains the conundrum for us in his most intimate of letters to his beloved Corinthian church [2 Cor 2:8-10]. Providing them with a shocking insight he describes his "terrible afflictions" confiding in them that he and his companions were "utterly burdened" so much so that Paul admits that he "despaired of life itself." Why? What possible benefit could there be to Paul, God, or the advance of the Gospel in this suffering? What are we to conclude - is God perverse? Is He capricious? No, he is not, then, what is the point. Paul explains.. But this was to make us not rely on ourselves but on God who raises the dead."

Later in the same correspondence, he reiterates the point when he discloses to the church his "thorn" [2 Cor 12:7] it is to much regret that voluminous amounts have been written on the identity of the "thorn." However, if Paul had wanted us to know what it was he would have told us; instead he wanted to draw our attention to why it was:

"So to keep me from being too elated because of the surpassing revelations, a thorn was given to me in the flesh, a messenger from Satan to harass me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But He said to me "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness."

We could develop this theme but it is sufficient for the scope of this article to make that immutable point - suffering exposes self-reliance.

2. The Law

"Indecent Exposure"

So then we see the core strategy of suffering employed as an antidote to the core problem self-reliance. Now we will see how the same objective is achieved by the imposition of the Law.

To the self-righteous what follows will almost inevitably seem virtually blasphemous. However, we maintain that the Lord God gave us the Law not in order for us to keep it and therefore live and not die, but in order that we would fail miserably to keep it; see ourselves as dead and find life. The purpose of the Law is to help the self-reliant man recognize his need of Christ.

Thus, it has an application in the lives of both the unrighteous and the self-righteous, but never the Christ righteous.

"The law was a tutor to lead us to Christ "Gal 3:24. It is apparent from the writings of Paul that the law is for the self-reliant man whether he is of the unrighteous or self-righteous variety.

Roms 3:19

Roms 4:15

Roms 5:13

1 Tim 1:8-10

It is ironic that the "separationist" views the law [or worse still the Sermon on the Mount] as a "credit-score" in the eyes of God. He believes that adherence to the law will make him a right person - it will not. Moreover, its stated purpose is in fact precisely the opposite; the law was designed to expose us as wrong persons by bringing to our consciousness knowledge of sin.

Roms 3:20

Roms 5:20

Roms 7:7

Gal 3:19

Gal 3:23-24

It is sufficient for the moment to say that God did not give us the law because He thought we could keep it. He neither needed us to nor expected us to. On the contrary, He knew that we would not keep it because He knew that we could not keep it. Moreover, far from preventing man from sinning the law actually incites him to sin [Roms 7:8-9], creating in him a desperation that begs the question, "How can it be that "the good that I want [and have vowed] to do, I cannot do? Worse, the very thing that he disdained the unrighteous man for doing, this he also does. Through a tumultuous struggle, he comes at length to the end of himself. Broken and defeated there is no place else for him to go."Who [not what he has exhausted all the what's and how- to's] wretched man that I am WHO can save me - Then, the great cloud burst of assurance comes.

"Thanks be to God, for there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, for the law of the Spirit of life has set me free from the law of sin and death for what the law could not do weakened as it was by the sinful nature God DID! [Roms 8:1-2]

The purpose of the law was to reveal God's standard of holiness, not ours and to expose to us our total need of Him.

"For through the law I died to the law so that I might live to God"Gal 2:19

The alternative to living to God is, inevitably, living to self. The word to is both directional and indicative of the source, which we live in reference to. So even the pious, religious man who ostensibly seems to be the model Christian citizen is living in sin as long as he has not died to the law.

Paul uses the same formula in Romans 6:10, "The death He died He died TO sin, [as an indwelling principle and governing authority] once, for all; but the life He lives He lives TO God. [As an indwelling principle and governing authority]. So you also must consider yourselves dead TO sin but alive TO God in Christ." We must see that a person cannot live to God and live to the Law simultaneously. In order to no longer be sin conscious you must no longer be law conscious.

Thus, God medicates the condition known as False Self Syndrome by prescribing "Gos-pills [to steal a phrase] of both suffering and the law. We may well ask how long do we need to

remain on this course of medication - To which I must reluctantly answer that that entirely depends on the individual. It takes as long as it takes until we finally see not only whose, but who we are. It takes as long as it takes us to no longer be self-conscious but to become "Christ in me conscious. "Until that which is mortal (soulish) is swallowed up by that which is life (new life, Spirit) 2 Cor 5:4

In summary we can identify three types of righteousness that are exposed by suffering & the Law:

1. The unrighteousness of man
2. The self-righteousness of man
3. The righteousness of God

Or to put it another way:

1. Unrighteousness: Disregarding God's standard of righteousness
2. Self-righteousness: Imitating God's standard of righteousness
3. The righteousness of God: Christ

In coming to union man passes through four often traumatic but indispensable phases of consciousness & unconsciousness.

In the corporate world, these phases are paralleled in a matrix known as "The four Levels of competence". Competence is a most helpful word to describe the goal of discipleship, which is the process of making "safe sons." To be competent is to have the ability and authority to do what is required.

1. Unconsciously incompetent: We don't know what we don't know
2. Consciously incompetent: We know what we don't know
3. Consciously competent: We know what we know
4. Unconsciously competent: We don't know what we do know -we have become ONE with it

In our matrix I have introduced a 5th dimension which I intend to unpack in an article entitled "Convicted". It is here at the 5th dimension that the believer will discover the true extent of his authority in Christ. For the moment, it is sufficient for us to provide a viable definition of union life - our becoming One with Him [Jn17:23]. We have become mixed with and now live a blended life. No longer self, sin or anything else conscious we are Christocentric Love conscious; conscious and sensitised only to NEED, not as before, ours but now the needs of others. As adopted sons we have become adapted sons - true sons of God and have been elevated into the 3rd dimension life; the life of the Royal Priest. Freed from the false-self, perfect love having cast out fear a new self-confidence emerges, not a confidence in self but a confidence in the new self - the joined self. Able at last to accept myself without inhibition or apology standing with Paul and say, "by the grace of God I am what I am" [1 Cor 15:10].

Only the New

Bertie Brits

God is NOT interested to reform our life. It is NOT in His mind to bring us to certain stage of REFINEMENT. He is only interested in a new creation in Christ Jesus, not a modified old sinner - Watchman Nee

Thank God for this truth!

One of the most dangerous and deadly things I have seen in life is when people sit under a WORD that is a LAW/GRACE mixture. The LAW is the ministration of death (2 Cor 3:6-7) and grace is the Glory of God that man desires. WHO CAN RESIST love?

No dog will eat pure poison but when you mix it with food he will even fight for it. What will actually kill the dog is not the poison but the deception it is under.

It is sad to say that this is true in the lives of many people in Church today. They don't understand why the hunger is not satisfied, why the more never manifest and why the goalposts are moved all the time. Condemnation increases and God becomes more and more mystical. They come to a place where the REPENT BUTTON is worn out but in fear for hell more WILL POWER is gather and for another attempt to get the breakthrough to please God.

Let's take the following scriptures to Heart and preach the message of GRACE with boldness unto the freedom of all that can hear us not fearing persecution (the bite of the dog fending for his food) or shame. Let the truth be our motivation unto the LIFE of all people.

1 I charge thee in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom:

2 preach the word (message of grace); be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

3 For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine (message of Grace); but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts (lust = desire

as result of LAW Rom7);

4 and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables.

5 But be thou sober in all things, suffer hardship, do the work of an evangelist (goodnewser),
fulfil thy ministry.

One of Three Options

John Lynch

Several weeks ago, my wife Stacey and I got into a fight. It was over nearly nothing. But that we would get so sideways revealed much deeper sadness and disappointment had been lingering around for awhile. It was one of those ugly fights, flooding far beyond the banks of the stated issue. Blame is eventually cast for who ultimately should be held responsible for the Vietnam War or Africanized bees. Some arguments can be moved past by understanding, humility and good listening. This was not one of them. And in a twist of cruelly ironic humor, the next evening Stacey and I would be driving north to help lead a marriage retreat for our church...

Historically, there always seems to be a speaking commitment soon following our fights. I hate that. There are really only a few options when this happens. 1)-I can try to patch things up so that we can function at the event. 2)-I can suddenly get violently ill and not be able to attend the event. 3)-I can show up to the event and tell everyone we're not doing well and would they mind breaking into groups of three for the weekend while we each go wander alone in the woods.

We went and in general terms I told the couples that we had a rough time the day before and were even now still fragile. It actually probably allowed the weekend to be even more meaningful. All the presenters did a great job and all the couples were vitally engaged and facing their marriage with great intentionality and humble dependence upon God's grace and sovereign protection.

Slowly, upon our return, Stacey and I have been sorting out the sadness we can carry in our marriage. We love each other a lot and have a beautiful marriage. But we will hurt each other again...*It got me to thinking...*

Those of us trying to influence anyone else, trying to teach these truths of grace and trusting our identity in Christ-we want our lives to model what we're sharing. So we can feel like phonies when we discover that our lives are sometimes as messy, broken and unfinished as those we're asked to influence. I used to not know what to do with that reality. It always made me want to run off somewhere and make a living looking for beach glass. I did not want to even bluff like I could possibly own responsibility for teaching these life changing truths that hadn't always changed me fast enough.

Now I'm older. And I'm realizing that such frailty, failure and futility is part of the very message we love so much. It is proclaiming that the magic doesn't reside in John. It resides in Christ in John. And sometimes that is not an exact science. There are moments, many of them, when I can fully feel I am fused with Him, letting Him live through me, trusting Him to do mighty things in me. Then there are other times when I sincerely wonder if I even know God.

I will always display some measure of foolishness, pain and immaturity, because, well because, there is still foolishness, pain and immaturity in me! It will never nullify the veracity of "Christ in John Lynch". I am fully righteous. I am fully fused with God Himself. I am fully a new creature. I am fully God's adored, I have everything in me I need, I am a man unable to be condemned no matter what I get myself into...But I am still a kid. And I am not always yet willing to humbly trust God. There is still something in me that fights this health. And this new life is undoing stuff all the way back from the goofballs in my family line. Some of what I am living out will be better seen in my kids than me.

And if you catch me at any particular moment I may not look much healthier than someone without Christ. I can get just as loud or irrational as about anyone I know. But the magic continues on. God does His beauty. And Stacey, although she might not have admitted it that Thursday evening, is better and more authentically loved by me than 25 years ago. And so is everyone else I know, including my God.

It is imperative that we who carry this message, who dare take grace and identity into a religious culture of performance and self-willed sanctification, that we give ourselves the grace we promise to others. God is not ashamed, embarrassed or surprised by our junk. He just smiles, puts His arm around us and says something like, "Stick around kid. I'm growing you up from the inside out. I know what I'm doing and I'm proud to be doing it in you."

So there.

Energized By Grace⁶

Steve McVey

Nothing is more invigorating to the life of a believer than continuously experiencing the grace of God. Religion drains a person. A religious man is a driven man. Grace doesn't drive us, but directs us in a way that we enjoy serving God from a heart filled with gratitude. One walking in grace becomes increasingly energized as he serves, not spiritually exhausted.

Although he may at times experience the normal fatigue of mind and body which is common to humanity, he discovers that inwardly he is constantly empowered by divine life. His "inner man is being renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:16). He finds himself motivated from within to serve Jesus Christ with enthusiasm and consistency. "I don't have to do anything because I'm under grace," Becky said. She and her husband had disagreed many times about the responsibility of a Christian walking in grace. "I believe that there are certain things we need to do and grace has nothing to do with it," he argued. They had come to me to settle the question for them.

What would you tell them if they asked your opinion on the matter? Does a Christian have a duty to do certain things or is he free to sit down and do nothing for the rest of his life? It's true that grace delivers the believer from the realm of religious duty. Becky wasn't wrong in her assertion that Christians don't have to do anything. However, during the course of my conversation with this couple, I sensed that neither of them clearly understood what it means to walk in grace. He did seek to impose his own religious expectations on her. There was no doubt about that. On the other hand, Becky didn't appear to be on target in her perspective on the matter either. It sounded as if she had indeed become passive in many ways.

The good news of grace doesn't stop by causing one to understand that he is free from the law. Genuine grace not only delivers us from something, but also delivers us to Someone. Grace opens our eyes to the union we share with Jesus Christ. It doesn't give the believer an excuse to become lethargic and lazy. Instead it energizes him with the divine life of Jesus in such a way that he serves God with supernatural power. Grace is the divine enablement for

⁶ Steve McVey: Grace Rules

one to powerfully express the life of Jesus Christ through his lifestyle.

Jesus was a man who was full of grace. (See John 1:14.) In three short years, His activity had impacted the whole known world because His actions were impregnated with divine power. This is hardly a description of a passive person. Concerning the lifestyle of those who follow Him, John said that “of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace” (John 1:16). God has poured the grace of Jesus Christ into us in a manner that causes us to be filled with grace. Our lives are piled high with grace on top of grace! Possessing the power of Jesus Christ, why would any Christian want to become passive?

One who suggests that the message of grace will produce passivity simply doesn't understand what it means to walk in grace. One who has become passive hasn't experienced its reality. A grace filled Christian usually won't meet the expectations of the legalist, but he won't become lazy in his Christian walk either. His lifestyle is a grace walk. Walking is always progressive, not passive. The Spirit of Jesus dwells within the believer.

An understanding of the implications of that truth will mobilize the believer. If the essence of Mozart suddenly came into you, what would you want to do? If the spirit of Picasso possessed you, would it make sense to never pick up a paint brush? If you were possessed by the life force of Mozart, nothing could keep you away from the piano. You would be thrilled by the awareness of the ability you possessed and would want to express it often. If the spirit of Picasso rested within you, a great desire to paint would continually motivate you toward the canvass. The knowledge of who was within you would be all the motivation you needed.

The good news of grace is that Jesus Christ is in you. What an awesome thought! You are privileged to live in a day that Old Testament saints couldn't even imagine. They were thrilled when they met God on a mountain, in a burning bush, through a pillar of fire or a cloud of glory. These occasional encounters with Deity were often enough to change a man's life forever. A fleeting glimpse of His glory and they were transformed.

If the glory of God were deposited in heaven, they were blessed to have pennies pitched

their way. On the day that Jesus was crucified, the front door to the bank of heaven swung open wide and all the glory of God came pouring out all over those who received Him. The glory vault of heaven was opened and emptied out on those who believe! This concept was an unknown mystery in the Old Testament, but you belong to a chosen group "to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

If Old Testament saints could be motivated by a rare glimpse of God, what impact can the resident glory of God in the New Testament believer have on his life and the lives of those around him? When one knows who he is in Jesus Christ, he will be forever transformed. Once the revelation of the indwelling Christ becomes a reality to him it can never be unknown again. He will never get over the impact of seeing Jesus in him; of knowing that Christ is his very life. He will be forever energized by the glory of Christ within him."

Being a Guinea Pig

David Borum

When we hear someone mention guinea pigs we tend to think of something other than cute little furry creatures. We typically think of someone who is a forerunner in trying something new, with no assurance that things will go well once they try this new thing. This story; however, is really about guinea pigs. Yes, I do have a softer side. Everyone can now collectively say..."Awwww". There, I hope you got that out of your system.

Years ago while I was married, my wife came home very excited. One of her co-workers wanted to give her a guinea pig for her birthday which was coming up. Of course, I did what any loving, supportive husband would do in that situation. I said, "NO WAY! I do not like rodents and do not want one in my house!" She did what any loving, supportive wife would do and she batted her eye lashes at me and said "pleeeaaassee". I gave in. But there was a condition. I refused to have anything to do with it and she would have to feed it and clean the cage by herself. She agreed. But that's not what ended up happening.

From the moment our little guinea pig was brought home I fell in love with this little helpless critter. I would play with it, buy it treats, read books on caring for her and I became the primary care giver and cage cleaner. And I loved it! Over time we would have even more little bundles of fur.

About every other day I would have to clean the guinea pig cage. As I would reach inside they would run around the cage as fast as they could to get away. Let's face it, if you see a giant hand the size of your entire body coming at you, you would run as well. After awhile it kind of bothered me that they didn't trust me though. By now I had gotten them out of their cage hundreds of times and nothing bad ever happened to them. Shouldn't they know that I have the purest intentions towards them? Not once have I squeezed them or harmed them in any way. And when I did catch them I cradled them close to me so that they wouldn't fall in their attempts to escape. When I held them they would eventually settle down.

During cage cleaning time I would place the guinea pigs in a large black plastic tote. They hated it. They couldn't see out and didn't know what dangers lurked overhead. They would

squeek and squeek but I couldn't get them out until their cage was sufficiently cleaned. It was amazing to me that when I stooped down to get them out of the tote they would willingly place themselves into my hands. They knew that they would be placed in a environment that was more to their liking.

Here's what Father began to show me: Like my guinea pigs I too would sometimes run from God's hand, not knowing where He was taking me. After all, I am being carried away from a place of comfort and security. I wonder if He sometimes shakes His head and says, "After all this time he still has issues trusting me. I have never harmed him and never will." Like myself toward my guinea pigs, Father holds me close to his chest assuring me that I will not fall from his hand. Though I may squirm for awhile, He holds me firmly and lovingly. Sometimes Father places me in situations that I can't see my way out of. To me I only see darkness and I chafe at that. From His perspective He is preparing me for greater things. The time will come when He reaches down to take me out of the dark uncertainty. That's when I am so willing to jump into His hand.

What if start to finish I really trusted his intentions for me? What if I rested in his unquestionable character? Right now in my life I feel like I am in that large black tote with high walls that I can't see out of. Maybe some of you are there as well. I am not doing a whole lot of squeaking this time around though. A little, but not like before. I think I am finally getting it. **OUR FATHER CAN BE TRUSTED AT ALL TIMES.** If I can have the best of intentions to bless little guinea pigs, how much greater is our Father's care for me? Once again, everybody say... "Awww."

The Tithing Dilemma

Darin Hufford

I recently had someone email me, asking me what scriptures I could produce that would prove that tithing is an Old Testament law that no longer applies to the New Testament. Though there are many scriptures that can prove this point beyond a shadow of doubt, I chose not to give them to this man. In fact, I rarely give scriptural references to back up the things I preach or write about. If I am right about the things I say, it should speak for itself. The truth of my words should stand on their own. This is especially true when it comes to the subject of tithing. I honestly feel that any Christian who has love in their hearts can simply reason their way through the idea of it, and come to the conclusion that it's not New Testament. The reason why so many Christians today need a bible verse to back up something is because they don't have love in their hearts; and hearts that are void of love, are blind.

Imagine, you're standing outside of a beautiful three-story mansion that is owned by God Himself. Way up high on the third story is a window. Behind that window is a room full of all the blessing. Now imagine you have a hundred pebbles in your pocket and it's your job to hit that "blessing window" with ten out of a hundred of those pebbles. Once the tenth pebble hits the window, the owner of the house comes and opens the window and pours out blessing on you.

This is obviously a picture of tithing as we have been taught in Church today.

The difference between the Old Testament and the New, is that now YOU OWN THE HOUSE! Not only that, but your room is the blessing room, and you're the one in charge of opening the window and heaping out blessing. You're still standing in front of the window, but now you're on the inside looking out. People in New Testament times look pretty silly standing on the inside of that window hitting it with ten of their pebbles waiting for it to open.

You might be asking, "Well then how do I get the blessing for myself?"

This is the part that is invisible to the vast majority of Christians today. In the Old Testament, God would bless someone who gave. If they gave a gift to someone, they could go home and wait for a blessing to come to them. God was teaching them that there is a blessing that

comes with giving. He was preparing them for the New Testament times when giving IS the blessing.

Sadly today, because so many Christians don't love, they give, and then wait for a blessing to come back to them just like the Old Testament people did. They don't feel the blessing in giving because they don't love the person they gave to. When I give my wife a new dress or a piece of jewelry, I don't walk around the corner and say to myself, "*I can't wait to see what kind of blessing I'll get for this.*" When I give to Angie, I walk around the corner and thank God that I was able to make her eyes light up like that. I thank Him for giving me the blessing of being able to touch her heart in that way. The moment it leaves my hand, I feel a shower of blessing all over me. When I see her face get excited and tears come to her eyes, I am blessed!

Sadly, today's teachings on giving and tithing are all based on selfishness. It's heartbreaking to hear people exchange the beauty of giving for something so ugly and self serving. It's sad when people today give with the mindset of *planting a seed*. It's no longer giving when there's something in it for you. It's also sad when someone says that they give because God told them to. God shouldn't have to tell you to give. If you love, you'll give no matter what. I have found that all modern-day Christian mindsets concerning giving are based almost one-hundred-percent on a loveless give-for-gain mentality.

The concept of tithing is directly against the spirit of love. It is anti-intimacy. The first time I read in Genesis where Jacob told God that he would give Him ten percent of his income if God did all that He had promised Jacob, I remember getting a sick feeling all over my spirit. It actually made me laugh out loud. I thought to myself, "*This guy is both stingy and stupid.*" First of all, God is telling this guy that He is going to give him all this stuff, and bless him with blessings bigger than anything anyone has ever seen. Then the guy has the audacity to say, "*If you do this, I'll give you ten percent back.*" It just comes across as silly to me.

Could you imagine if my wife and I had separate bank accounts and whenever I got a paycheck, I put ten percent of it in her account and the other ninety percent in *my* account? When we dated, we had separate bank accounts, but when we married we share an account. Everything I have belongs to her! I don't give her ten percent of anything; I give a hundred percent of everything. There simply is no "hers" and "mine" in LOVE.

I think the very concept of paying ten percent to God is an anti-intimacy mentality. It's like having a business relationship with God. All accounts are separate, and at an allotted time, you pay Him for blessing. In my book *"The Misunderstood God"* I basically show that modern-day Christians believe God is a mafia godfather whom they pay for His protection. This is indeed how thousands of Christians view Him today. Nothing could be further from the truth about God's heart.

The entire concept of tithing in today's church is based on our carnal nature. We're taught to do it or bad things will happen to us. Most people I know who participate in tithing, do so out of fear of what might happen if they don't. Many others act all happy and excited about tithing because of all the financial blessings they claim they've received since they started. It's a mine, mine, mine attitude that works ONLY on a loveless generation. To a person who loves however, 10% is offensive. Giving to *get* is insulting. The concept of *"seed faith giving"* or even *"giving in faith"* sounds crude and selfish. Love does not keep track of what's given. This is precisely why Jesus said "don't let your right hand know what your left hand is doing." You can't follow Jesus' words and still be a tither.

I've also found that when a person loves people, they are less likely to take 10% of their income and pour it into an institution that eats up the first 85% of that money on expenses, and ends up having 15% left for helping hurting people. Lovers of people usually see right through this, and they decide to cut out the middle man and give directly to the people who need it.

One of the latest statistics on tithing in America shows that about 8% of Christians pay their tithe. Most pastors will tell you that this is a sign that people don't love. I disagree. I think this is a sign that people DO love. Church is simply not set up for a giver to receive their blessing as they give. There is no feeling of blessing when you drop money in an offering plate that speeds by you and disappears into an office. I've found that when people give to people, they're inspired and blessed right then and there, because the intimacy of such an act is inspiring. That's real difficult to get, when your money is being put into a machine.

You don't need a series of bible verses to prove that tithing is Old Testament and not for today. Just look at someone you love with all your heart and imagine telling them that you will only bless and protect them if they give you 10% of their income. Look at one of your

children and imagine making that deal. The very thought of such a thing is sickening. You don't need biblical proof of something you already know.

Love proves it.

Fasting

Alan Hiu

I was quickened by the Spirit to realize that I have been fasting for the past five years ever since the Lord has enlightened me with His teaching on grace. This revelation shocked me a bit but I was immediately comforted by a fresh insight on fasting.

Please bear with me for awhile and if you feel this is misleading, you are welcome to throw stone at me at the end of this sharing. So be cool...

With this fresh insight for a rather controversial topic in the body of Christ, I went around asking for answers from the average believers with charismatic background, the purpose for fasting. The answers I gathered are as followed:-

- 1) To restrain and weaken our flesh so that our spirit can grow stronger.
- 2) Spiritual discipline.
- 3) To be closer to God and hear His voice.
- 4) To obtain spiritual power.

Hmm... what is your answer?

I don't think fasting is what we used to think as restraining ourselves from eating our meals for certain period of time and achieve the purpose of weakening our flesh to gain spiritual power or to make God obligated to move in the area of our needs. If this is so, any other religion that practices fasting would also achieve the same purposes. In fact, they claimed to have the same result too!

The only thing that sets Christianity apart from the rest of the religions is God's grace. Grace is not natural but supernatural. We need the Holy Spirit to understand grace and most of all, Christianity was born by the grace of the Father through the death of the His beloved Darling Son. If only we can have the revelation knowledge of this truth, we will be led by the Spirit to understand more including the meaning of fasting.

Those of us, who are so much into grace, are very familiar that our flesh is edified by

legalistic and performance oriented doctrine which is self centered and based on law abiding. It is this self righteous doctrine that give strength to our flesh! The preaching of law is the food to our flesh!!! The moment we embark ourselves on Christ centered, grace based doctrine, that is the moment we start our FASTING!!! Because we have restrained ourselves from exposing to legalistic and performance oriented teaching, we have stopped supplying "FOOD" to our flesh. I think this is a more biblical way to define fasting in the light of the New Covenant.

Can you find evidence in the bible to support your claim? (*You may ask...*)

Let's go on...

Matthew 4:1~4 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE, BUT BY EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS FROM THE MOUTH OF GOD.' "

So, after being baptized at the River Jordan and before Jesus started His earthly ministry, He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting for forty days and forty nights, He was hungry...!

Jesus was born under the law and was brought up in a legalistic, law abiding Jewish society. This was the darkest era in the history of Jewish culture. After the baptism, He was immediately led to the wilderness to stay away from the law abiding, legalistic environment. He restrained for forty days and forty nights. John the Baptist was growing up in the wilderness and was isolated from Jewish legalistic society. Paul, the Apostle of Grace to the Gentiles, was led to Arabia to be away from Jerusalem which was their religious center and Judaism's stronghold.

The number 40 here is the representative number for one generation. It was not what we literally think as our forty days and forty nights. The Israelite were wandering in the

wilderness for forty years while Moses was up in Mt. Sinai for forty days and forty nights. The devil was quick to draw Jesus' attention back to the "stone" again right after Jesus' fasting by saying, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus said, "It is written: 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE, BUT BY EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS FROM THE MOUTH OF GOD.'"

Do you think this kind of dialogues are dialogues of our human nature? I don't think so... A spiritual being was talking to a SPIRITUAL BEING; I think these dialogues are spiritual!

The devil was quick to point Jesus in turning the Ten Commandments (*Two tablets of stone*) into His food. The devil was asking Jesus to feed on Law... How did Jesus reply him? Jesus said man does not live on bread only (*the bodily man*), but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (*the spirit-man*). As far as the devil is concerned, if our flesh is strong, our spirit will be weak. As such, Jesus expounded the existence of spirit-man in man that the spirit-man lives on every word that comes from the mouth of God. He was in the wilderness, being far away from the legalistic environment, He was there to receive words direct from the Father.

What kind of word did the Father minister to Jesus? At Mt. Sinai, God was showing Moses the beautiful story of the Tabernacle which is a typology of Jesus. The Father was ministering grace to Jesus in the wilderness just like Jesus Himself ministered grace to Apostle Paul in Arabia.

However, as I continue with this passage, the phrase "He was hungry" caused a bit of doubt in my mind... What about you? Hey, the Bible says He was hungry you know...? Well, I was "asked" to put this phrase aside and continue with the reading... So, let's go on.

Let us look at what Jesus talked about fasting in replying to the Scribes and Pharisee...

Luke 5: 33~38 *Then they said to Him, "Why do the disciples of John fast often and make prayers, and likewise those of the Pharisees, but Yours eat and drink?" And He said to them, "Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? But the*

days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them; then they will fast in those days." Then He spoke a parable to them: "No one puts a piece from a new garment on an old one; otherwise the new makes a tear, and also the piece that was taken out of the new does not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved. And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, 'The old is better.' "

In this passage, Jesus interchanged in referring the man with flesh and spirit-man. Jesus was saying as He (*the Bridegroom*) was with them in flesh, it was time for celebration. How could the Bridegroom make them fast in the time of celebration? When the time had come for Him to be glorified at the Cross, they (*their flesh*) would have to fast because grace dispensation only came into effect when the Holy Spirit was poured out at the Feast of Pentecost. Under the grace dispensation, His disciples were already made righteous by His blood and were justified by His resurrection. They were to live by faith not by law. So by then, they were to fast from partook the Law and to live by the Spirit.

It is funny that Jesus did not continue to expound on fasting but changed the subject from fasting to the famous parables of new and old garment, new wine and old wineskin. Eh..., very interesting!

We all know that the parables of old and new garment together with new wine and old wineskin are talking about the doctrine on grace and law dispensation and is telling us that grace cannot be mixed with law. Jesus is not interested in how we abstain ourselves from eating our meals as a way of fasting. He is interested in the feeding and the health of our spirit-man. Babylonian teaching (*confuse by mixing grace with law*) mixes up our flesh and spirit-man which causes confusion in our Christian walk. While legalistic and law abiding doctrine edify and strengthen our flesh.

Christ centered, grace based doctrine is LIVING and ACTIVE (*because of the witness of the Holy Spirit*). The message of grace is sharper than any double-edged sword, can penetrate even to dividing our souls and spirits, joints and marrow and judge our thoughts and the

attitude of our hearts. Grace divides our souls and spirits so that we can be sharp when Holy Spirit prompts our spirit. Grace divides the joints and marrow so that the life supply to our flesh is cut off. Grace judges our ungodly thoughts and the religious attitude of our hearts!

If the purpose of fasting is to stop feeding our flesh and build up our spirit-man, I think it is wise for us to sit under a Christ centered Ministry. In order to stop feeding our flesh, we are to restrain ourselves from sitting under a Ministry that emphasizes legalism with law abiding preaching and Babylonian teaching that causes confusion in our midst. As born again believers, we are Spirit filled and we need the Gospel of Grace expounded in the light of the New Covenant Spirit, as food for our spirit-man... Amen!

Oh ya... now back to my doubtful phrase: "He was hungry"...

The Lord told me, "You have been sitting under a Christ centered Ministry for so long, do you still feel hungry...?" Ha...ha...ha... If you know what He means...

So, how long have you been fasting? As for me and my household, we are not going to fool around but to steadfast with our FASTING for the rest of the "generation" and continue to sit under an anointed Ministry that preaches Christ centered message and glorifies the Finished Work of Christ.

Who say those who are under grace are not fasting?

Rest

Ole Henrik Skjelstad

"We have a strong city; he sets up salvation as walls and bulwarks. Open the gates that the righteous nation that keeps faith may enter in." (Isaiah 26:1-2)

Isaiah must have been a tad surprised over this, because what he passed on says that those who keep faith will enter the new city of salvation. He might have been a bit dumbfounded as well hearing God utter something contrary to what he had been reared to obey, because the covenant he was subject to demanded perfection under the law to enter God's salvation.

We all know that failing to observe the commandments and the law was called sin under the old covenant. Sin in the new dispensation must thus be not keeping faith. Paul confirms this in Rom 14:23: "For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin."

Our conclusion obviously is that we are not to be concerned with our works, doings, attitudes and so forth, but be preoccupied with faith only - which is Christ, who He is and who we are in Him. The reason why Jesus left us with His peace is found in verse 12 in Isaiah 26: "O LORD, you will ordain peace for us, for you have indeed done for us all our works."

Let us all enter His rest through faith, because it is finished!

The Happiness of God⁷

John Piper

God is absolutely sovereign. “Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases” (Psalm 115:3). Therefore He is not frustrated. He rejoices in all His works when He contemplates them as colors of the magnificent mosaic of redemptive history. He is an unshakably happy God. His happiness is the delight He has in Himself. Before creation, He rejoiced in the image of His glory in the person of His Son. Then the joy of God “went public” in the works of creation and redemption. These works delight the heart of God because they reflect His glory. He does everything He does to preserve and display that glory, for in this His soul rejoices.

All the works of God culminate in the praises of His redeemed people. The climax of His happiness is the delight He takes in the echoes of His excellence in the praises of the saints. This praise is the consummation of our own joy in God. Therefore, God’s pursuit of praise from us and our pursuit of pleasure in Him are the same pursuit. This is the great gospel!

⁷ John Piper: Desiring God; <http://www.desiringgod.org/dg/id1.htm>

Testimony

Linda Bunting

In 1966 my Christian life began to spiral downwards. My earthly marriage to my surgeon husband had suffered the ultimate test and my spiritual marriage was rapidly following suit. At the time it appeared Jesus had left me. I tried everything I knew to regain my first love but the harder I tried the greater it eluded my grasp. Physical death seemed the only way of escape. I eagerly awaited the Lord's return.

The daily diet in my Christian circles was to pray more, witness more and give more. Searching for top-line "deeper life" teachers was a number one priority and although it was before the era of the self-help craze, every sermon or teaching I sat under ended with suggested ways either to become dead to self, to engage in prophecy or to practice the gifts of the Spirit.

As I was trying to do all these things through Christ who strengthened me, the very opposite was taking place. The good that I wished to do, I did not, and what I wished not to do, that I did...until in great despair I cried with Paul: "How to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. Oh wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of this death?"

The sins that so easily beset me were my anger and temper. In the beginning they were the traits that showed me I was hopeless and needed a Savior. Now in this second crisis, they showed me I was helpless. Thus began the spinning wheel of trying and failing to conquer myself. If anything good came from me, I was quick to give Christ the credit. If anything bad....it was back to me. In my flesh dwelt no good thing. I repented and confessed endlessly but the spiritual washcloth of 1John 1:9 was not sufficient to erase my sin-consciousness and restore me to a full joy. Most of my peers seemed satisfied with this menu.

When dear sweet Norman Grubb entered my life I had been perfectly conditioned to receive the 'healing in his wings.' To me he was God coming in a human form; someone with a gentle smile and accepting ways.

After hearing him for the first time I could not have told you a single thing he said; but inside, in my spirit, I was lifted. As I drove home that night I said to myself, "There must be something redeemable about Christianity and this man seems to have keys to unlock truths I have never heard before." I immediately wrote to him pouring out my heart about all the negative unbelieving myths I had spent years building and believing. Here is his reply:

Dearest Linda,

I think this is the first letter I have ever received from you, isn't it? I am so pleased you have written.

Dear, you may not think so, but it is good that you have had these tough times.! I praise Him. There's no other way to find and live in the light except by feeling the reality of the dark. You are not in Romans 7, dear, you only think you are, and what you believe is a fact to you. You are only in Romans 7 when you wrongly believe that you should be better, and I rather think you have this mistaken idea because you bemoan that "the flesh is weak", and of course it is; that's all it is. And "not much faith", and Word and prayer life nil. Excellent! You can have no faith, nor can the Word and prayer be alive to you. Humans just remain negative human have-nots. But that's just what turns your attention away from the wretched "law" of Romans 7 which will tell you "you ought" if you still think you ought. But when you learn and accept that you ought not, because we humans are not meant to be or have anything, then you can say, "Of course I'm weak, of course I have these failures, of course Bible and prayer are dead to me." At that point you say, "Now Lord, You are Yourself in me, and *You Only* are any quickening in me, or any faith or anything; and You are Yourself in me, the real Self, though I may not feel a thing and feel as dead as ever." As you "recognize" Him in faith, though feeling nothing (and don't try to improve yourself or pick yourself up, or feel as if you ought to be something - that's Romans 7) then in God's own way, He will make Himself real to you.

So, I'm just glad you wrote, dear, and glad you have these dark times in order to learn this great lesson that you have "the sentence of death in yourself, that you should not trust yourself but in Him in you (2 Corinthians 1:9).

Norman P. Grubb

Needless to say his words were desperately-needed water spilling on to the very dry desert of my soul, and through him the Holy Spirit brought me within hearing distance of His healing voice. This time it would not be a call to perform one more thing for Jesus or to try anything ever again within my own strength. This time He was calling me to faith! Faith in the absurd.

What was the "absurd?" My answer came in; 1Cor. 6:17 "But he that joins himself to the Lord is one Spirit with Him." This meant;

1. That I had been **made one** with the Father. He was not somewhere far off, but He had come to reside in me; Col.1:27 and that **I had been made perfect in unity**. John 17.
2. First and foremost, I must begin to accept myself; just as I was.....weakness, tempers and all.
3. That **my humanity** was the necessary agent or common human by which God could express and manifest His personhood.
4. That by His body death, **I was made righteous**; a right self, a right son/daughter, heir, vessel, branch, temple and bride.
5. That **I** could enter into the full meaning of Galatians 2:20 -- crucified and risen with Him and fully functioning as a right self.

Can you imagine how frightening it was to hear these life-giving truths and at the same time slowly be excluded from your Christian circles? The temptation to believe it was all heresy flooded me time and again, but each time I considered turning back to the accepted doctrines of self-effort, it was as though I was putting on filthy rags.

As my reputation and righteous robes began to fade and the witness of a perfect Christ living in my **perfect humanity** began to become a reality, what seemed too costly to lose (an

independent life) now became offensive to think of maintaining. Dry ground was now becoming Holy Ground.

The Lord was calling me not only to accept what He had done for me at Calvary by putting me in right standing with God, but to also to accept the revolutionary life that ***He was living in me, as me***. That took the greatest leap of faith of my life.. But what else could I do.....all the bridges of self-effort and self-righteousness were burned and I would either die, turn to stone or enter in. **To see that the Promised Land was a Person and that I was the unique Linda form of that Person was, to me, the gospel in its purest form.** I saw that I had no independent human nature, no life within myself that could produce life. I discovered that my humanity was simply a receiver of good or evil.

So I began to move slowly, by faith, taking no condemnation, accepting myself and walking in the spirit of Romans 8, totally depending on Him to see me through my schooldays of faith.

Thank God, school days ended and graduation day did come. **The person I took, took me and I knew I had come home forever !!**I had come through the agonizing cry of my "**wretched man** "into the **glorious liberty of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus** where there was no more condemnation, trying and failing.....no brick wall of failure and defeat;. I knew I was free forever and could depend on Him, not only to 'keep me from falling,' but also to 'cause' me to walk in His ways.

Life has now become total freedom to be driven by the Spirit in His unceasing love for others through me. I now have one supreme purpose; driven by the Spirit to live as a co-heir....."filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ for his body's sake"
(Colossians 1:24)

"For me to live **is** Christ" Philippians 1:21

When We Meet Grace

Jamie Weeks

Several years ago, when we finally decided to share "the grace message" with our extended family the question was posed (as it always is), "But what about sin?" We, as Christians, are determined to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, it seems. Even though we are living within the Tree of Life, we are still trying to deal from a sin consciousness or sin mentality. The example was given of the woman caught in the act of adultery and Jesus' response of "Go and sin no more." You know, seriously, go and SIN NO MORE.

This response hurt my spirit. I mean, literally, grieved my spirit for the mind-set of self-righteousness from which it originated. Why self-righteousness, you ask? Because if our righteousness is not by birth but by deed, then it is self-produced. No righteousness stands before God except that of Jesus. Therefore, I will only be found righteous because I am in Christ. His righteousness has been both imputed and imparted to me.

But, let's return to this woman and her encounter with Christ.

Disclaimer: I am well aware this takes place before the cross, but Jesus was still illustrating "a finished work" and grace.

Act 1: THE FALL AND THE OLD COVENANT

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. (Let's assume the Pharisees represent the law. The law was given to point out our shortcomings; the law is perfect and holy, "but the very commandment that was intended to bring life brought death." Rom. 7:10. "For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering." Rom. 8:4. The woman is representative of all mankind, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Rom.3:23. All mankind in Adam are condemned because of the condition they are born in: spiritually dead.) The Pharisees then had her stand before the group and publically accused her, pointing out that the law commanded she be stoned. ("For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death." Rom.7:11. The law does not bring life, but condemnation and death. To satisfy the law there had to be a death!)

Act 2: THE INCARNATION

Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with His finger. ("The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us." John 1:14. Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us, came and being born of the Spirit lived the perfect, blameless, holy life that the law required.)

Act 3: THE CROSS

As they continued to question Him, He straightened up and said to them, "Let he that is among you without sin, cast the first stone." (Now, this is tricky so stay with me. We have a law demanding death, we have this "woman" deserving death, and we have He who is without sin. What to do? "Jesus said, 'But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.'" John 12:32. He had told them about the cross and now He is showing them beforehand that at the cross "God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." 2 Cor. 5:21. "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly." Rom. 5:6. "For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be done away with, so that we might no longer be slaves to sin-because anyone who has died has been freed from sin." Rom. 6:6-7. "So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another..." Rom. 7:4a. "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." Rom. 7:6.)

Act 4: THE NEW COVENANT

Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. ("The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First He says: 'This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.' Then He adds: Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.' And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin." Heb. 10:15-18. "By calling this covenant 'new', He has made the first one obsolete..." Heb. 8:13.)

Act 5: THE GRAVE AND HELL

At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first... ("...Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down." Rev. 12:10. "[Jesus] said, 'Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them' (although the law required them to be made). Then He said, 'Here I am, I have come to do your will.' He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Heb. 10:8-10. "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death." Rom. 8:1-2. "... 'When He ascended on high, He led captives in His train and gave gifts to men.' (What does 'He ascended' mean except that He also descended to the lower, earthly regions?)..." Eph. 4:8-9.)

Act 6: THE RESURRECTION

Only Jesus was left with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no man accused you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." (For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again." 2 Cor. 5:14-15. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come." 2 Cor. 5:17. "Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, He cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over Him. The death He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life He lives, He lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus." Rom. 6:8-11. "For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under GRACE." Rom. 6:14.)

If we read further in the book of John, we see Jesus once again standing alone with a woman. Some say it is the same woman we have been discussing; her name is Mary Magdalena. Mistaking Jesus for the gardener (He is the last Adam and we are His garden), she seeks her Lord. Why, supposing this is the same woman, is she here? Why does John give us another glimpse of this woman? Because, now, that which was before Him is behind Him. Because Jesus didn't come to condemn her, but to save her. Because in her first

encounter with Jesus she met Grace. Because what the law could not accomplish, mercy could and love did. Because after He had extended mercy to her in her lost condition, He can now relate to her from a place of grace not as a slave, but as a child, a sister, a bride. The woman caught in the act of adultery could only ever hope to "leave her life of sin" if someone redeemed her from it, and when we see her standing with Him beside an empty tomb, we can rejoice. For we ,too, were caught in the act and we, too, needed a redeemer. Praise God, what we could not do, Jesus did for us. When faced with grace, the law will always point to us and our performance. The proper response is to point to Jesus and His performance before and on the cross. I, like Mary, left my life of sin long ago because I put my faith in the one who graced me.

God Imagined You

Andre Rabe

The 'time' of planning came to an end and the time for action began. Creation was spoken into existence. The colours, the dimensions of space, the sound that sustains the atom, the energy that sustains each element, burst forth from the imagination of God into ... something that has never been before ... a dimension separate from Him, yet intimately upheld by Him. No expense was spared, no space was too vast, no speed was too fast, no detail was too small, when He prepared the environment in which the masterpiece of His imagination – man – would live and move and grow into all that He imagined us to be.

When man opened His eyes for the first time, all was ready, all was prepared. The first words man heard were words that established them as the rulers of this world, and the objects of God's approval ... "God saw all that He had made, and it was very good." (Gen 1:28) All these blessings were given not because of anything man did to deserve it or earn it, but simply because man was designed and created for this purpose. No other creature had the spirit capacity for companionship with God. No other spirit being was given the unique position of stewardship over creation. Man was uniquely positioned in both the spirit realm and the physical realm. And this position was not something man achieved, but had simply received. It is also important to understand that God did not owe man anything – the blessings He gave were out of His own free desire to do so. Never was 'obligation' any part of the relationship God imagined.

Individually Members

Joel Brueseke

The worldwide body of Christ is a body that is made up of many very diverse and unique individuals. Each member of the body is set apart for specific functions within the body. We're not all the same, and we don't all do the same things within the body. This is such a wonderful, beautiful thing to me! No part of Christ's body is unimportant; in fact each part is *equally* important, even if some parts have higher or lower visibility than others. Each part is gifted in its own way - in exactly the way that God wants it to be gifted. He has set **you** apart as a very special and important part of His body.

I think it's very important that you be who **you** are and that you don't try to be who anyone else is! In my earlier days in the church, I would see various people operating in various spiritual gifts and I so much wanted to be able to do the things I saw them doing. But it wasn't until later on, after I had discovered some of the unique things that God has set *me* apart to do within His body that I finally began to understand that it's quite all right that I can't and don't do what certain other people are doing. God has given me plenty to do within His body! I finally began enjoying the ways in which He had gifted me and I quit trying to be what I wasn't.

This lesson also taught me to stop trying to get *others* to be who they're not, but instead to help them find out who they *are* and to *encourage* them in who they are. I think there is a lot of manipulative "ministry" going on in the church because people simply aren't content to do what *they're* called to do and they're also not content when *other people* aren't doing what they think they should be doing!

Knowing who you are and being who you are is very freeing. When I used to wish I could do what others were doing, I really felt as if I was missing out. But I came to find out that what I was really missing out on was *being who I was*! Knowing and being who you are is also very beneficial to *the body as a whole*. God Himself has made you who you are and He has not made you to be someone else. "The body is a unit," says the Apostle Paul (or "the body is *one*"). It's One Body that is made up of many parts that God has strategically placed throughout the Body. The placement of the parts is *God's* doing! The functions that **you** walk

in all come from *God!* He has done well placing you exactly where you are.

You are free to be who you are and not who anyone else thinks you should be. You are free to celebrate what God is doing in your life and in the lives of others, and to not be envious of others or fearful that God has left you out in the cold, even if He's not doing the same thing(s) in your life as He's doing in theirs. You may say, "I'm no Billy Graham..." but on the same token, Billy Graham is no YOU! *Whatever* God does through individuals is good for the Body as a whole.

I think it's worth mentioning as well that all the members of the Body of Christ, while having a super abundance of grace in regards to *all* that God has called them to do individually, are also *limited* in the respect that God hasn't *enabled* them to do what He hasn't *called* them to do! Paul put it this way: "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?" (1 Cor 12:29-30). Of course not! This goes along with what Paul had just finished saying: "God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body" (1 Cor 12:18-20).

So don't be down on yourself, and don't feel like God has jilted you when you find you're not operating in the same gifts that others are operating in! And don't look down on others when they're not operating in the same gifts as you! "We being many, are one body in Christ, and *individually members of one another*" (Rom 12:5). I love that phrase! Individually members of one another. The body doesn't work by having everyone doing the same things! It works when the individual members each do their individual things as part of the *whole body*.

And please don't think that the ways in which individuals are gifted and used by God within the Body are *solely* found listed in the Bible. Just think of all the ways in which God has made you a beneficial part of His body that aren't even listed in the scriptures! Your hobbies, your talents, your abilities, your desires, the things you do that give you and others great joy... are all a part of how God has fitted you into His wonderful worldwide body!

We're all in this together. It's not as if it's a competition. That would be like saying that when

a man is out for a walk, his heart is in competition with his legs. No! The heart and the legs and the lungs and the blood cells and the feet and the sweat glands and... every single part of the body... all work together for the good of the body as a whole, to get it where it's going! Christ, the Head of His Body, knows exactly what signals He's sending to each and every part of the Body for proper functioning, and He Himself makes His body work. So just relax and be who you are, and trust that the Head of the Body knows what He's doing with the rest of the Body!

Rededication: The Most Subtle Form of Idolatry

Steve McVey

For years I rededicated myself to live for Jesus Christ. By rededication, I mean that I promised God that if He would help me, I would try harder to live for Him. In my understanding at the time, living for Him meant that I would behave in a better way. I would read the Bible more consistently, pray more earnestly, witness more boldly, give more generously, avoid sin more vehemently, *ad infinitum*.

My understanding of what it meant to rededicate myself to Christ wasn't uncommon. Many people view it the same way. When I was a local church pastor, I often used sermons to challenge the congregation to rededicate themselves to Jesus. This week it would be a challenge to read the Bible more; next week it might be to pray more. Every week, my challenge to Christians revolved around behaving better. It was all about trying harder. And the people responded — almost every Sunday without fail.

The reason for their response is because when we align ourselves with a legalistic paradigm that we use to judge our behavior, not one of us will get a perfect score. None of us are behaving at all times in all areas of life without room for progress. Judge yourself by law and you'll come up short every time. The result will always be a sense of condemnation and guilt.

Jesus never once calls on us to rededicate ourselves. Instead he says that we should renounce our self efforts to do better and simply follow (enter into union) with Him. (See Matthew 16:24 – it says “deny” yourself, not “dedicate yourself.”) Rededication generally focuses on bringing our behavior up to par.

Consequently, the focus of our lives becomes ourselves and how we behave. Most Christians are consumed with that endeavor. They constantly stare at themselves and their performance. They invest all their attention and energy on improving their actions. They may say they love Jesus, but based on the little attention they give to Him and the enormous attention and energy they spend on themselves and what they are doing or not doing, the truth becomes evident. They come first, not Christ. The evidence indicates that they are a god in their own mind.

Whatever we put before God is an idol. Consequently, when a Christian places his focus on himself and how he is acting more than He focuses on God Himself, he is guilty of idolatry. Remember that idolatry is placing anything before God. So to make our own demand for a higher religious performance the priority of life is a subtle form of idolatry.

Christianity isn't about you and how well you behave. It's about having an intimate love relationship with God through Christ. Where is your focus? Is it on you? On what you're doing or not doing? Or is your attention and devotion squarely focused on Jesus Christ?

There is a real need for repentance in the modern church. It is the need to turn away from ourselves and our never-ending, never-satisfied demand for perfect behavior. It is the need for a turning-to Jesus Christ.

We must stop worshiping the false god of our own behavioral expectations. Stop worshiping our own self-efforts to improve. We must stop permitting our Christian experience to be about my efforts, my sins, my good works, my promises to do better. It's not about me, me, me. Christianity is all Him, Him, Him!

May God grant the gift of repentance to His church so that we will quit worshiping ourselves at the Temple of Rededication. May we turn to Him and acknowledge that we never will be able to live up to our own self-righteous demands, so we are casting ourselves on His grace and love. Then, and only then, will we find that Christ and Christ alone is our Deliverer. He will free us from being held hostage in a prison of self-perfectionism. When we turn away from rededication and turn to Him, we will hear Him lovingly whisper, "I never intended for you to change yourself. I just want you to rest here in my arms. I'll bring about the changes in your life. You just stay here and enjoy me."

The Way I Lived Brought Me to the Brink

Dave Geisler

Every time I turn the TV on it seems there is another commercial for some sort of pill that can take away anxiety, relieve depression, bring some sense of happiness, help you sleep and the list goes on and on. It has even gotten to the point that the first prescribed pills are now minor dosages compared to the newly prescribed ones and even that there is now add on pills that can extend out the desired feeling if the original prescription does not give one the desired outcome. This is the ways of the world in which rest and peace is always fleeting so new methods have to be developed in order to bring some sense of relief to many finding themselves on the hamster wheel of this vicious cycle.

I should know, before I became a Christian, I was diagnosed with as having manic bipolar disorder so true rest was not part of my life. Sure alcohol and other things would medicate it for a short time but it never brought real peace. There was little joy in life and for a while many around me were worried that I was going down the road to suicide. I remember thinking that if this is all there is to life then there becomes a tipping point when the pain and stress of life make it not worth living. My worldview was that of an atheist or jaded agnostic thinking that there is no real purpose to living thus if eating, drinking and partying were not giving me the desired happiness then why continue. Although many would give me advice and list of things I should be happy for it was always ridiculous when filtered through my atheistic worldview in light of my pain and the pain and suffering of billions in the world. Although death and especially suicide were extremely frightening to me it seemed a viable alternative.

Ultimately, I was rescued out of it by the only One who promises rest ([Mat 11:28-30](#)), Jesus Christ. Yet that started me on a different path where I knew God, and the purpose and plan for which he brought me to earth, but the true rest I had hoped to find was still not real in my life. It was definitely not like before, where I was having these enormous ups and downs, but it was always a sense of "I need to do more". I was now on the religious treadmill instead of the worlds and there are many things these have in common. I could never be good enough, read my Bible enough, pray enough, be at church enough...religion (a set of rules) was being used to control my life instead of the Life of Jesus.

I remember the day when I was speaking to a brother overseas and told him of the problems I was having, what he said changed my life, he said:

“The way it works for me is that the more I believe in the reality of what Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross the more substantial the Spirit becomes in my thoughts and desires.

The main aspects of what occurred on the cross that increases my faith is all condemnation has been removed from me and placed on the cross. In the reality of this accomplishment I no longer look at my past.

As for apprehensions for an uncertain future, since I am now born-again, an adopted son of God the provisions that myself and my family needs is no longer for me to be concerned about. Simply receive what is offered or follow holy desires and God provides our needs on the paths that He leads us on.

That allows me to not look at the past or at the future. I am able to live in the present moment. In the present moment without fear of an uncertain future or guilt and shame because of a life of depravity is where we can abide in the Spirit”

I had known Christ as my forgiver even as my Savior, the one bearing my sins, my guilt on the cross yet I did not know Him as my life. My trust of Him was limited in what I understood of Him, in fact I was living a life of Christ plus my own goodness. No wonder I didn't know rest, how could He give me (as a gift) the rest and peace of Him if I thought I could still obtain it by my works of righteousness. In fact the simplicity of living the Christian life was swallowed up by thoughts of...if I could just get more knowledge about Him then I would have peace etc. Isn't that works? Although I believed that justification was by grace alone, I then believed (as the judaizers did) that I needed to do something to attain from God. Isn't that the ways of the world in a nutshell? Plain and simply that is not the ways of God.

God grants us peace, rest and all the fruits of the Spirit not by how hard we work or how much we learn but simply by abiding in Him ([John 15:4-5](#)). In fact the more we try and do on our own and work from our own power the more dead works ([Rom 8:8](#)) we are manifesting, the more religion we propagate ([Col 2:23](#)), the more we look just like the Pharisees of Jesus' time.

The answer is simple; Trust Christ moment by moment, just like my friend stated, and you recognize more and more of His finished work in you ([Col 1:27](#)). The fact is you already have all the Spiritual blessings ([Eph 1:3](#)) now just believe Him and live (obedience) in the faith of Christ. Stop striving to do more and be more but allow Christ to live in you ([Gal 2:20](#)) and through you and you will find all that you could have ever wanted and more ([Eph 3:20-21](#)).

Response to a Reader's Comments on Notes from Norman

DeeDee Winter

I once had a dear friend who argued smoking is not a sin.....she died of cancer.....enough said!

Hi _____,

My mother also died from lung cancer directly from smoking, but I would never call it sin. I rest in the fact and promise for myself and her and every believer of Ez. 36:25-27 combined with the reality of Gal 2:20...He "causes me to walk in His ways" and ..."I live; yet not I, but Christ." The sin of the believer is **trying**...trying not to be 'how' Christ is in and as us **or** trying to be better or do good. Acceptance of our humanity as God-created and now rightly used...with no false ideas/images of 'how' we are to look or act...brings us to the freedom for which Christ Jesus died...Romans 8:1.

I have a dear friend who has smoked for years. She knows the health risks and has asked God many times to free her and has also tried every form of medical help that has come along. Many get freedom in these ways, but she has not. She finally realized that every time she goes out for a smoking break at her job or elsewhere that she ends up in a marvelous time of sharing Christ with another smoker. We are called to "present our bodies a living sacrifice" and Scripture even goes on to say that it is "our reasonable service of worship." What freedom we have when we know that here is Christ "living and moving and having His being" ...as us!

Love in Christ,

DeeDee

The Real Purpose of Law vs. Grace

Fred Pruitt

We must realize that being confronted by the law is part of God's process. It is not something we engineer, i.e., set up an instruction course for new believers, with Course One being "The Law." It does not work like that. It is simply because we are all caught in separation, that is, living as if we are independent, self-relying selves, apart from God, who run our own lives. And in that condition, everything seems to be "outside" us. God is outside us. His law is outside us. The devil is outside us, and his deeds are outside us. That is what it is according to our consciousness. Everything is "over-against us," so to speak. So, for God to speak to us, and to begin to draw us out of our separated, "just-me," mindset, toward a union ("My Father and I are one") mindset, He must seemingly come to us as if out of that separation, and trigger something in us, by that separation, that puts us on the road to our real true lives, which are only found in Him as expressions of Him in union with us.

And that is where the Law comes in. The law is representative, in an outer way, of what God is like and what those who live in Him are like. Because of our separated consciousness, our first reaction to the law is to look at it and then back at ourselves, comparing ourselves with it. And we instantly find we do not measure up. God's standards are high -- impossible, actually -- but at that stage of the game we do not know it yet. We start to approach life in God the same way we barrel in on any project. Just acquire and master the right information, and we become successful. The tried and true formula for the world, and we think that will work in God, too! So we get big notebooks and big Bibles and take copious notes and underline or highlight half the New Testament.

We may believe wholeheartedly in "grace" at that point. But at the same time we read the admonitions of Paul or the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, and we still cannot help but see them as separate from us that need to be added to us. And eventually, we will come to a brick wall. No one comes to Christ but by the schoolmaster -- the law. God ordains it. It is part of His system. His path.

God has a very distinct purpose for the law, and no one comes through to the Promised Land

without going through the wilderness of the law. Everyone goes through it -- even while living unconsciously in grace. For instance, Abram & Sarai. Abram was already "righteous" by his believing the promise of God. But he attempts himself to make the promise happen (work of the law) by taking Sarai's maid, Hagar, in an attempt to obtain the heir through her. Paul even says later that Hagar points to the earthly Jerusalem, the covenant of bondage, i.e. the law. But God does not reject Abram through it. In fact, there is no record in Genesis of the Lord God even reproving Abram for this act of self-effort. Why? Because he is walking in God's righteousness, i.e. grace, even when he ignorantly commits an act of self-effort. He was at least trying to bring forth the promise of God, i.e. the Seed which should bless all nations.

Of course the Seed came through Isaac, when God appeared to Abram and changed his name to Abraham in his 99th year -- 14 years after the Hagar/Ishmael incident. Again, there is no reproof. All indications are that Abram had thought during all that time Ishmael was the promised son and his rightful heir. He was, after all, of his own body. Of his own seed. But he was a child of a bondwoman, not the true wife. In Abram's day even the child of the bondwoman could have been the heir had there never been a son by Sarai, but God said no. Suddenly God appears and renews the Promise, which Abram had believed 25 years earlier, changes his name to Abraham, and tells him he will have a son by Sarai, whose name now changes to Sarah.

But again, no reproof to Abraham. He goes through the experience of self-effort, the law, with God even promising an inheritance to Ishmael, by which he is brought to the Promise -- the birth of Isaac. Ishmael comes of self-effort. Isaac comes by Promise -- the gift of God.

My point is that both were necessary. There must be, for one thing, the contrast. And the contrast is not really about law and grace. Law and grace are really just two word-concepts that point to a greater and deeper issue -- the deepest issue there is: the law and grace issue is really about self-in-separation, or self-in-union.

Self-effort (acting by the flesh, the law) is not the root problem. Self-in-separation is the root problem, from which self-effort proceeds. So we must go beyond the "effort" to the self

which attempts the effort. Nothing wrong with effort. It is just the self that generates it.

The law exposes self-effort, which is not really solved until we see that Christ in the self is the answer. Not the self discovering something, still separate from it, called "grace," but by the discovery/revelation that we are now this unified self, Christ and I as one self, grace being the chief attribute of that relationship, but grace meaning much more than unmerited favor. Grace is just another word for, "I will be a well of water springing up into everlasting life in you." Grace is just another term for, "So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

To be born of the Spirit is ultimately to realize that we in the Lord are not two, but one, and we ourselves in our humanity as outer expressions of the One Who is our inner life. As branches on a vine, but in that vine/branch relationship, the branch is but a branch expression of the Vine. It has no separate life of its own. And the Life, effort, grace, spirit, that proceeds through the vine into the branches to bring forth much fruit, is but One life in all the branches, the Same life, manifesting in many forms and branches. That is the key. We have no separate self-hood, but only find not just the source of "effort" in God, but the source of Self in God also.

That is the ultimate purpose of the law. The law IS separation. It testifies that we are separate, by the "shoulds" and "oughts" it demands of us. The law says, "You are not, and you should be" And when respond to the law by agreeing with it, that we "should" or "should not" do or be something, we are testifying to the lie that we are still separate from God, and not dead to sin, contradicting Romans 6:2 and Romans 7:4, and that Christ's work is still lacking in us. By the law, the devil deceives us that we can ADD TO the work of Christ already done, and gain by our efforts the righteousness of God and do His works. So we make a great effort to become like Christ, finally hitting that impenetrable brick wall, and falling on our faces, saying it is impossible, hopefully, which then enables the true life that we always have been since we came to Christ, really, to come forth. We must grow into a consciousness of this fact, and the law is just what does it. So it is absolutely necessary. Without that confrontation with what we essentially "are not," we cannot come into the solid fixing of who "we are!"

Oneness of self is found in the will. Jesus said, "My meat is to do the will of Him who sent me." He had only one will -- the will of the Father. That is union. No separation. Distinction in office and manifestation, but no separation inwardly. The only time Jesus exhibited a temptation to a separate will was in Gethsemane -- and He rejects having a separate will -- he denies it by saying, "Not my will, but thine be done." So in Jesus there was no separate "my" will. Only a will unified in the Father, One Will, One Life, One Person, expressing and manifesting, by the Son and the Cross of the Son ("Lamb slain from the foundations of the earth"), through everything and everyone in creation.

We cannot make this happen in ourselves except finding by the Spirit a "nothingness" of will in ourselves, and the faith that now God's will is our will, and we have, by faith, no separate will from Him. We join Jesus' word regarding Himself, making it ours as well: "My meat is to do the will of Him Who sent me, and finish His work." Now let us also note this: oneness of will, which is where oneness originally occurs, still cannot produce the outflow of the life of God in us. As Paul said, "For to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not." (Rom 7:18). That is where the Life of the Spirit comes in, Romans 8, which we will save for a later discussion.

So then we appreciate those who are still out there in their wilderness of the law, knowing that by that the Father is working in them to bring them to the end of themselves through self-effort, that they might come to know Him in union. They are still under the grace, because they believe in Him. Yes, they are temporarily diverted, but they have to walk through a huge howling wilderness, in the middle of which is the Mountain of the Law, in order to go across and get to the edge of the Promised Land.

They are being made into who they are by that journey. One way to see the children of Israel and their journey across the wilderness is as a type of our life's journey. The generation that is "cursed," and cannot ever enter the land, we note, is the generation born in Egypt -- in the separated consciousness of independent, self-effort self. It was born under the devil's rule. That is the consciousness of self that cannot approach the mountain, in which mountain Moses, who knows union and grace, can walk up and down and be in the midst of the fire and smoke at the top. They are flesh-self, self-effort self, and of course when they get to the

edge of the Promised Land they cannot go in, and are only conscious of themselves as grasshoppers, rather than living out of the provision and strength of God. That false consciousness of self cannot help itself. It MUST be that, for it cannot really stand in God.

"No flesh shall enter my presence."

So they are rightly sent back into the wilderness for another 38 years. And then at the end of that 38 years, that generation has all perished in the wilderness -- just as Moses' false sense of self perished in his 40 years in the wilderness before the Burning Bush -- now they have been conditioned by the wilderness -- the law -- to finally enter the land. You might say, well, that generation has died. Yes, it has, but a new generation, not born in Egypt, but born in the wilderness, has now taken its place. This new generation never knew the separation and self-effort of Egypt, but as a type of the new self, the self united in Christ as one self with him, that generation walks across the Jordan, under the leadership of Joshua (also a type of Christ -- Moses as the lawgiver who cannot go into the land because he offended in one point), and they walk across the Jordan ON DRY GROUND and begin to take the land, to "possess their possessions."

All of that process must be. We don't engineer it, as I said above. But God sees to it. We cannot help responding to the law in self-effort, because that is who we believe we are. Therefore we must be confronted by the law. We must think we can do it. We must go through the wilderness of failure of trying to do it. We must come to that end of ourselves as separate selves, finally arriving at oneness, union, with the Life within us, so that we are not separate in ourselves trying to be something, but unified in ourselves as "I AM," that Christ might now be expressed by us.

That is the purpose of the law. So we see the Father having His will here. We get people out of it when we can, and leave the others in it for their appointed time.

One more word about this false consciousness of self I have mentioned. One person, considering that "self," wrote me that he was finding in himself all sorts of corruption, self-attention, jealousy, pride, etc. That is not an uncommon approach to our self-life. But ultimately, we must find our way through that myriad of lies through to the truth of who we

really are.

Though we may have thought our whole lives we were imprisoned inside this wall of hopelessly self-centered self, and that if we were ever to get out of it would take years of effort, years of dealing with every little foible, idiosyncrasy, tendency, the real truth is that it is as simple and quick as this: Boom-shakalackala boom-shakalackala, you're released! (I hope you get my humor -- I'm trying to tell you that "POOF!", your captivity is over!)

That stuff is not real. That false consciousness of self is not real. That's the whole deal with it. We think this caricature the devil has sold us as our own identity, which for short we call "independent self," is us, what we've become, who we've been. But that's really the lie of the whole thing. It is a false thing. It has no life. We are not that. Once seen for what it is, it falls away into the nothingness it always has been, quicker than the Wicked Witch of the West melts in The Wizard of Oz!

Listen, this Romans reality is really the truth. We have died with him in baptism, the old everything that we were, and we rose new beings in His resurrection, being raised by the same Spirit that raised Him from the dead. The instrument of my humanity, my whole being, is now an instrument of righteousness (Rom 6:4-11). When Christ died and he became sin for us, we became the righteousness of God in him. (2 Cor 5:21)

It only awaits our saying, "Oh my, Lord, look what you've already done and I've missed it!" You were made righteousness in Him when you came into His kingdom, and from the eternal side of things, you were in Him Who was slain before the foundations of the earth. Your life has always been hid in Christ in God. It has only awaited your arrival to claim it.

All those things you see about yourself -- that's not the new man. That's a confession of an old man. You are not any of those things. It is a lie that you are any of that.

You are complete in Him. That means that spirit, soul and body have been made whole, by virtue of Him Who has come to claim you wholly as His dwelling place. What was wrong with you was your former master, whom you no longer serve.

The key to this whole life is faith. Christ has completed His work. See it whole now! That is faith.

Your life is Christ. Your "self" is not about protecting itself. Your self is not corrupt. Your former self was corrupt, but that self no longer exists -- it died in the death of Jesus. So who is saying you are naked?

Your true self is united to Christ, and he is none of those things. Your true life is even now complete in grace and oneness.

So I encourage you to realize that old self died, and all its attributes to which you are still confessing are yours, died with it, and has been replaced by a new master, indweller, and nature. Before you and I were of the nature of wrath, but now we are partakers of the divine nature, and we have everything there is to have pertaining to it, as the apostle Peter affirmed.

When an accusatory voice tells you you are corrupt, or out for attention, have questionable motives, you don't have to listen to that anymore. The source of Who you are, and your real identity, is in Christ, a new creation, all things new, and therefore you live in the motives of God, the love-for-others-drive of the Father. He is your source, not some non-existent former wisp of a ghost self! Live in the glory and freedom of the LIVING GOD, and not in the lower strata of separated self concerned only for itself, consumed with itself, whether it be its righteousness or its sin.

Begone with that false self. That isn't you and doesn't run you. Christ "runs" you!

You are the light of the world, the salt of the earth! Believe it!

Fatherhood

John Collings

Now I see what it means to be a father.
No longer looking about, seeking acceptance.
Feigning righteousness, needing approval.
All I am is of God.
The spiritual is reality.
Mystical supercedes logic.
God is tangible.
Only when I forget does the world blind me.

But fatherhood is more.
It is seeing the futile struggles of the children,
Struggling against their nature,
Not trusting because they cannot see or hear.
It is loving them through their trials.
And sharing with them His burdens for others.

All is Good.
Each crisis potentially brings on understanding.

The children need a father, or they begin to make their own rules.
And to misunderstand the purpose behind their growing.
Without a father they think themselves mature.
And their growing stagnates.

A father sees the vast limitless power
And resources of God as accessible.
He sees with God's eyes into the needs of his children.
And as they know him, they grow.

God gave us church that His children might have fathers,

and that fathers might know the joy
of loving children to maturity.

Idleness with Jesus

Steve McVey

In Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, there is an intense scene where Captain Ahab's whaling boat presses through a churning sea in pursuit of the great white whale, Moby Dick. One can almost smell the salt air and feel the ocean spray as Melville describes the chase. For the sailors onboard at that moment, nothing else exists apart from the pounding waves, violent winds and the great sea monster beneath the water.

Bulging muscles are taunt and determined minds are irrevocably resolved to do whatever necessary to triumph in this cosmic battle between good and evil. The swells of the ocean waves lift the whaleboat high above the water's surface, only to slam it back down again. But the morally outraged Captain Ahab will not give up. Everything that matters is in the balance at this moment. No energy or determination can be spared. The boat may break apart, but to forfeit the fight is out of the question. The demon beneath must be destroyed. As Eugene Peterson notes:

In this boat, however, there is one man who does nothing. He doesn't hold an oar; he doesn't perspire; he doesn't shout. He is languid in the crash and cursing. This man is the harpooner, quiet and poised, waiting. And then this sentence: "To insure the greatest efficiency in the dart, the harpooners of this world must start to their feet out of idleness, and not out of toil."

Nobody would dispute that a cosmic battle exists today between the forces of good and evil. We see this struggle on the sea of humanity in every culture of the world. Pastors and churches urge us to not give up the ship, but to labor on, to fight at all costs to ensure victory. Recruiters appeal to our sense of what is moral and right to enlist us in the struggle.

Every Sunday in churches across the world, sincere Christians rededicate themselves with a renewed determination to become more involved and consistent in the battle against evil. Their hearts are in the right place. They feel the need to do something, but where can they be most effective in the boat?

The majority are determined to become better oarsmen who will work harder. A few are

sure they sense the calling of Captain Ahab on their lives. They express their intent to attend a religious naval academy where they can learn to be the skipper of their own boat. They want to lead other sailors and together conquer the demon of the depths. . . thus goes contemporary church life in the world today.

The question that begs an answer is, "Where are the harpooners of the 21st century church?" How are we supposed to overcome the demons of the depths? In many instances, we often don't even know how to strike a death blow against the carnality of our own behavior, much less admonish others about theirs or lead others like ourselves into battle. Note Melville's statement again: "To insure the greatest efficiency in the dart, the harpooners of this world must start to their feet out of idleness, and not out of toil."

Idleness? When a violent storm is raging; when our enemy is so close that our very lives are in danger; when everybody else around us is frantic with hyperactivity; idleness is not a natural response. Yet surely it is indeed to an "idleness" of sorts that we are all called. For the person who wants to know triumph in the struggle, this idleness is indispensable. Those who are weary with fatigue are in no position to strike the fatal blow against the enemy. It is in a certain idleness that we find our strength. Idleness with Jesus Christ is the most active, invigorating, energizing experience of life. Don't allow yourself to become so busy with the demands of life that you forget the value of holy idleness with Him. Doing nothing with Jesus is to do all you can do to do all you need to do in life.

Single-Eye Seeing

Fred Pruitt

Norman Grubb used to say, "Don't be a see-atter; be a see-througher!" He was talking about having single sight, or single-eye seeing. So the obvious questions that immediately come up, after perhaps a period of consideration on the truth of his advice, are, "Okay, so what is this single-eye seeing, and how do we do it or how do we get it?"

Single-eye seeing is simply seeing the singular truth of what is before us, instead of the broken, fragmented, partial reality we normally see. That singular truth is, in words, that God is purposely at work in everything, so that every negative is drawing its positive. That is the nature of the negative, to draw the positive to it. It is the nature of the positive to fill up the negative with itself. So every negative is perfectly purposed to bring about the positive which is the original intent of God. The negative is part of the path.

At first we may take that as merely a philosophy, a new "world-view" as some say, a way of thinking that brings everything into a wholeness and within the purview of the intentional love of God, no matter how opposite-appearing those things might be.

But truth be told we find it a difficult perspective to hold onto. The circumstances and difficulties that come in life rattle this cage pretty hard. When those things are overwhelming us, whatever they might be, it is hard to hang onto a way of thought that just seems to sugarcoat everything. Life is tough, and it doesn't help just imagining that God is behind it for His good purposes and this death of whatever kind we are experiencing now is bringing out life. Sometimes the hurt is too great. The wound is too deep. If it was something that only happened occasionally, perhaps we could bear it. But it sometimes is continuous. Endless. Every day.

We find we cannot hold onto fairy tales. People who quote scripture to us and tell us to stand on it are well-meaning, but we want this to STOP, not just more platitudes to keep our upper lips stiff, while misery endlessly continues. God is very clever about this really. What

is actually happening is that, first, He has hold of us.

He drew us to Him and we came by His Spirit, and then He puts us in His school. He may use man's schools and He may not. His school is not to teach us the scriptures, but to teach us HE WHO IS in the scriptures -- and in everything else. The school of the Spirit is to teach the Spirit by living experience. We may or may not know the scriptures. We may or may not be a big studier, seminar attender, Bible marker. Makes no difference to Him. He puts us where He wants us and oversees every detail of everything, so that everything is ordered according to perfection. He knows when a sparrow falls and He knows when our socks are mismatched.

It is Christ Who is growing up in us, and He as us, learns obedience by the things He suffers -- in us. He's not become such a big-shot now that He can't go through this again and again individually and personally AS everyone of us.

The "things we suffer," for this purpose, are the negatives and positives ordered by the Father, perfectly positioned, timed, and certain of accomplishment. These things all consist of the "word" of God, since forever that has been so.

Everything we see, know, experience, whether physically, mentally, psychologically, intellectually, spiritually, in some aspect consist of Him by whom all things consist! This is a universal truth that Colossians says in plain words (1:17). If even for a moment the truth of that breaks through into daylight in our understanding, immediately the light changes. A pall that had been in the atmosphere has been removed. It was only covering up something that was in the moment real, not real in the future. It is no vision of future heaven we see, but heaven in the now in our midst, out of which we are now living our lives. We were translated from darkness to light when Christ came in as our Light and banished the darkness to the outer reaches, so that we are no more of it. We are of light and of heaven. It is our present inner truth -- and by truth I mean something that IS, not words in a book.

This is the reality God is proving to us by the experience of life. That God has ordered all our steps perfectly for everything. In proving it to us daily by experience, after we have taken it

into ourselves as something true, God's purpose is that it becomes our own. Like the people who the woman at the well brought to Jesus. At first they believed when she told them she had met the Messiah. Wonderful! But then, they came and heard Him themselves, and were the more blessed, because they went to the Source! They heard Him themselves! So, hallelujah, this is the Father drawing us further into the Source, to prove the Source IS the Source, for Christ is bound by love to give the water of life to all Who come to Him. His meat is to do the Father's will, and the Father's will is to be in all of us a well of water springing up into everlasting life, drinking from which would slake one's thirst forever. This, again, is TRUTH, not words in a book. If truth, then, it is our living in this current moment reality.

It is a fixed inner knowing, that operates in a continuous recognition by faith of the perfect outworking of God in all things, nothing excepted. And there is then a further recognition, that if what we are seeing and living is the outworking of God in any given situation, person or event, then it MUST BE love, because God is love and only acts in love. Therefore everything, though it may be temporally evil, disjointed or separated, is nevertheless working the perfect working of the love of God by which all things are purposed and redeemed into light and glory.

But we must understand this is an inner sight by faith! And by inner, I do not mean of the realm of thoughts and feelings, but of the invisible and imperceptible. In other words, the outer mind does not attain to it except by hints and flashes. The outer mind can only see what it was created to see -- the things of this world of appearance. By faith I mean that we first enter and then dwell in this sight by our word of agreement with God, that what He has revealed to us and in us, we stand in as living truth, whether or not we see or perceive it with our outer senses or understanding.

In Jesus Christ by faith we enter into a new sight, which is His own seeing by us. Isaiah describes this new sight thus:

(Isa 11:2-4) "And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;

And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears:

But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked."

So, let this sink into our ears. What this means is that this is not a sight we "imagine" somehow, or one we put on by reading what it is in a book and decide we're going to believe that, too. Maybe it might start out that way, but when we actually SEE singly it does not come from anything we do or have done, and does not come in any way that we might imagine. Single eye seeing is the Lord's seeing, and it is His seeing in us. He does it. Quit worrying about "how" or "what" and say, "Lord, this is your sight, so you see this way in me!"

By this single sight the Lord God sees all things. There is a point when we cannot describe it, but just open our eyes and see what is before them. It is seeing with eyes that see. It is hearing with ears that hear. It is the Lord IN US, AS US, who does this in us.

The eyes that see everything see all things vibrant in the Word of God, everything enveloped with light. This is the truth. God's light is shining in everything. Our physical eyes can't see it but it is there. It is surrounding us and makes the substance of what is "us" and is the actual substance of everything that is. Everything is composed of this light of glory -- which is -- Christ. It is not just something poetic or "mystical" that we say. God's light is the substance of everything that is, and we are bathed in it and walk around in it. We breathe it in when we inhale and breathe it out when we exhale. Even our very bodies, souls and spirits -- are made up of this light. We are this light.

There is darkness but it does not overpower the light, but instead the light is in it and shines out of it. In our existence darkness, confusion, shadow, seems to overpower everything. War may be raging on a hundred fronts in the human hell. Hell insists on remembering its misery and misfortune and all who are to blame for it.

The ears that hear, penetrate past the noise and dissonance, to the perfect harmonies underlying everything. They hear the dissonance and noise coming straight out of the harmonies, as if escaping, but then they hear them pulled back into a perfect symphony. They are part of it and without them the symphony would be bland and poor tasting. Here all instruments take greater and lesser parts to little by little build the tension more and higher, until it all cascades into resolutions and climaxes that repeat over and over until finally there is only peace and stillness.

And then it begins again.

Roots

Ole Henrik Skjelstad

A friend of mine recently said something along these lines: The Holy Spirit has a huge job convincing people that they are perfect in Christ. I gave my approval, but I didn't quite understand how profound her statement was before now.

It seems like there exists a common misunderstanding among many believers which says that God has to fix the parts of my personality that I don't like. These personal traits make their presence known when we are facing some kind of affliction. We therefore assume that God leads us through these seasons in order to disclose the parts of us that need a fix.

When we are going through these periods we often experience some sort of condemnation which relates to our reactions and behavior. Wrongly we then think that The Holy Spirit is working in our lives to make us more like Jesus in terms of behavior.

The objective of these kinds of tribulations is, however, the opposite. God is showing us through them how deep the roots of condemnation go. When life is quiet and the world is smiling towards us it requires a simple act of faith to believe that we are perfect in Him. However, when the gale is coming our way our belief system is shaken.

When Jesus promised us liberty and an abundant life it is imperative that the roots of condemnation are exposed so that we can experience this quality of life. Condemnation cripples us, it robs us of our boldness and it makes life generally miserable. God cannot help us to accept the totality of His grace if we are not aware of these concealed roots which have found their way to the innermost places of our being. They can only be revealed when we are going through a tribulation which triggers patterns of reactions we despise and brings forth condemnation and shame. It is in this position of helplessness that the Holy Spirit can whisper His life-giving words to us.

We are in fact imitating Eve in the garden when we say that we are not perfect, and are in need of a fix. We really want to be good, and we often conclude that the new creation isn't perfect to the degree we had expected. We want God to better us so that we can resemble

the image of Jesus we carry in our minds. If Eve hadn't found any faults with her being she wouldn't have been tempted to eat from the wrong tree.

When God says we are perfect He wants us to be secure in this truth. He encourages us to accept every part of us as a perfect image of Him without having any remnants of condemnation. This is a profound mystery, because when we accept ourselves as He accept and love us we find that this is the most efficient behavior modification there exists. When this is said I feel it is important to observe that God is more preoccupied with life than behavior and reactions.

It is on this background that we can be happy when we face an affliction, because its sole purpose is to liberate us from shame which ruin our relationship with God, and it empowers us to clearly hear our Father say: "This is my beloved daughter/son in whom I am well pleased."

Let's Do Less For God

Steve McVey

Let's do less for God. I believe we would be much more content and He would be pleased by our making that decision. Before you call me a heretic, consider this fact: God never asks us to do anything for Him. He doesn't need us to do anything for Him. The Bible says that "He is not served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives life and breath to all things" (Acts 17:25) God doesn't need anything. And even if He did, He wouldn't let us know about it. "If I were hungry, I wouldn't tell you," He says in Psalms 50:12. Our call as believers isn't to do something for God, but rather is a call to God Himself.

The essence of the Christian life isn't doing things for Him. It's all about knowing Him. Jesus defined the meaning of salvation when He prayed to His Father, "This is eternal life, that they may know You and the One whom You have sent" (John 17:3). Christianity is knowing Him. We are called to be the bride of Christ, not His maid.

Does this mean that Christian service is somehow unimportant? Of course not! However, service is to be the overflow of the intimate relationship we enjoy with Him. It comes naturally (or more accurately, supernaturally) for us to serve Christ when we love Him. The early disciples didn't evangelize for God. They said, "We cannot [help] but speak the things we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). Service is to the life of one who is in love with Jesus as planting is to a farmer or sailing is to a sailor. The activity flows from our identity.

We aren't to do things for God. We are to rest in Him and allow Him to do it Himself through us. "Faithful is He who calls you, who will also do it " says the Bible. Dead religion demands that we do more. Grace calls us to rest in His life and love and trust Him to do through us whatever He wants. We are simply the vessel through which He operates. Let's do less for God and watch Him do more through us.

Charlie doesn't toil...and Charlie doesn't spin....

Stephanie McEntire

Consider the lilies they don't toil nor spin
And there's not a king with more splendor than them
Consider the sparrow they don't plant or sow
But they're fed by the Master who watches them grow
Lyrics by Joe Hemphill...inspiration Jesus

I love my new job. In my last job I had the same patients over and over. That was fine and they became my family but there were so many I wanted to get to know that being "frozen" to one area in the clinic, prevented me from floating around to meet new people. In my new job (been there since July) I have the opportunity to float around..(except Sylvia floats with me :) and have met some fascinating people. All the folks on Dialysis are permanent, unless they get a Kidney or ...die. It's the same people, I just get to interact with everyone and the last few weeks I have had one Mr. Charlie B.

Charlie is 88 years old. Has to be one of the most pleasant men I have ever met. He greets everyone, is always positive and he stole my heart while he was watching Lonesome Dove during treatment and I had to get him 2 boxes of tissues due to the amount of tears he was shedding...I love a man who isn't afraid to cry.

Last week while I was hooking Charlie up to the Dialysis machine I could tell he was a little down. When I had a moment I pulled up a stool and said "O.K. Charlie..what is up?" He teared up and said he missed his wife and has days like that. I said "why don't you tell me about her?" He talked of meeting her while on leave from the Army. He said they fell in love at first sight. Charlie was a "rowdy" Texas boy while Maureen (his wife) was a prim and proper "church girl." He said she came with the volunteers that served food to the military men on home from leave. He asked her out and she declined. Not to be 'put off" he pursued her throughout the night and finally got what he wanted about 6 months later..marriage. He said one of her "requirements" was to attend Church. He said he hated it. He only went because of Maureen until one day....

Maureen had gotten pregnant and they were ecstatic but he was just an old farm boy and they didn't have much money..just a lot of property. He said "one day in Church when I wasn't paying

attention..he snickers..." The preacher said "consider the lilies of the field..they neither toil nor spin."

Now Charlie had been struggling with a relationship with God that Maureen so wanted him to develop. He said for some reason at that moment it became completely clear to him that he didn't have to "do" anything...relationship grows on its own...you need not "toil or spin." The flowers don't grunt and groan as they burst out of the ground...relationship ..growing ...is natural. He said he had heard the scripture before but always equated it to "money" or the "lack of." He said he didn't buy it because he was poor as was half the county he lived in. He said he also remembered hearing a scripture about "the poor will always be with you." He figured that was true since he had never met a whole world full of "rich folk"...so he determined to have a relationship with God without "toiling or spinning." Charlie said that revelation at church was the start of a beautiful relationship with God...and he thanks Maureen for that introduction by "dragging" him to Church every Sunday.

I told him a little about my situation with Church and how I don't go anymore and why...I was expecting a blast from Charlie who loved his Church family but he said .."see...you are where you are suppose to be and planted in good ground...you aren't toiling or spinning...it is about relationship and doesn't matter "where"...it is with who...if you got that...nothing else matters really now does it.." Charlie was right. Charlie said there are a lot of things in this world that you cannot change...we can only hope that they change you..into his likeness"...he added " but even then...Charlie does not toil...and Charlie does not spin"...I know when I see him..I in some ways will be like him...." and Charlie really is.

We both went away that day with full hearts. We had "church"...one living stone talking to another. One committed to church and another not...we did not "toil and spin" over the issue...we kept it about the one "building" his church as he said he would.

So..Stephanie is going to try NOT to toil and spin..rest..relax...and let Daddy's love change me from seed to flower...one day at a time...:)

The Human Race Redeemed

Francois Du Toit

The light of the Gospel is the attraction of the attributes of God evidenced in the features of a man; Jesus vindicated the fact that God did not make a mistake when He made you!

In Him every human life is represented

His life is God's message to mankind

A message of favourable content, to the unequalled benefit and advantage of man

Great joy is the inevitable result

A joy that belongs to the redeemed

Great news,

the Human race revealed as redeemed in one Person

Man may now discover the design of his origin detailed in redemption

the success of this act is on exhibition in Christ, not as in a display window, but as in a mirror!

He did not come to present the world with a new product on the religious market;

neither was it His intent to introduce a new option of opinion to the world of philosophy and spirituality, because He did not come to be an example for man but of man!

He is not far from some but near others Acts 17:24-31

now He summons all men everywhere into a radical change of mind

by raising Jesus from the dead he announced man's innocence Romans 4:25

the single grain of wheat did not abide alone

it died and brought forth much fruit!

He is Emmanuel to every individual

because man began in God

man remains the property of God

"He came to His own..."

When a thief steals something, it does not become his property after many months

neither does its original value change, Luke 15

The mirror message makes you the immediate recipient, because in it you see yourself

James 1:24

you may go away and immediately forget what manner of man you are, but you can do nothing against the truth

only for the truth 2 Corinthians 13:5,8

this is what you can do for the truth, you can realise Christ in you!

the truth as it is in Christ is revealed in the good news that you are no longer staring at something you should wish to become or perhaps something that you would want to possess or achieve

you are beholding the face of your birth as in a mirror

“Can an a nation be born in one day? Can a people be brought forth in an instant?”

What man destroyed in generations of conflict and abuse, He restored in only 3 days

John 2:19, Hosea 6:2, Ephesians 2:5, 1 Peter 1:3

If Peter Ndlovo should score a goal for Zimbabwe against Germany, the score board does not read, ‘Zimbabwe 0, Peter Ndlovo 1, Germany 0

No!

The goal belongs to the whole team

the victory belongs to the nation!

Granted there may indeed be some who shows no interest in the result

Their indifference though does not change the result

Truth does not become true once we have rallied enough supporters to believe the truth

If it is an official soccer match subscribed by the official board then the result is not in the

balance if there are perhaps not enough supporters present at the stadium

the result is not affected by what happens in the stadium but by what happens on the field!

This is not a result you can vote for!

Jesus did not come to win votes against Moses, Mohammed or Buddha

He came to reveal and redeem the image of the invisible Creator in human form

why should He do that?

because man is the image and likeness of the God who created him

“What if some are unfaithful, does their unfaithfulness nullify the faithfulness of God?

By no means, not even if the whole human race is unfaithful

God remains faithful!” Romans 3:3

If the power of the Gospel is ‘from faith to faith’ then we must find out what God believes

If His faith matters most then what whoever interprets as their personal belief cannot

matter more

You qualify through what God has done in Christ to participate in every benefit of life as it

was designed to be and now in Christ again redeemed and revealed to be your life
Why would you disqualify yourself?
You are represented
your total wellbeing is God's concern
the thief came to steal, kill and destroy
but Jesus came so that you may have life in its most complete expression
do not deceive yourself
only your unbelief can empower an already defeated lie to blind your understanding
to keep you from seeing the light of the Gospel which is the glory of God revealed in the face
of Jesus Christ
as in a mirror! 2 Corinthians 3:18 and 4:2-5

Resurrected Not Raised⁸

A. B. Simpson

THERE is a great difference between risen and resurrected. One may rise from one level to another; but when one is resurrected he is brought from nothing into existence, from death to life, and the transition is simply infinite. A true Christian is not raised, but resurrected. The great objection to all the teachings of mere natural religion and human ethics is that we are taught to rise to higher planes. The glory of the Gospel is that it does not teach us to rise, but shows our inability to do anything good of ourselves, and lays us at once in the grave in utter helplessness and nothingness, and then raises us up into new life, born entirely from above and sustained alone from heavenly sources.

The Christian life is not self-improving, but it is wholly supernatural and Divine. Now, the resurrection cannot come until there has been the death. This is presupposed, and just as real as the death has been, will be the measure of the resurrection life and power. Let us not fear, therefore, to die and to die to all that we would leave behind us and detach ourselves from, nay, to die to ourselves and really cease to be. We lose nothing by letting go and we cannot enter in 'till we come out. If we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him.

But the passage Col. 3: 1 expresses the fact that we have already died and risen, and that we are now to take the attitude of those for whom this is an accomplished fact. Paul does not tell them here to die with Christ and rise with Him, but rather he calls upon Christians to take their places as having died and risen with Christ and to live accordingly. He tells them later in verse 3, "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." In the sixth chapter of Romans this thought is much more fully worked out. "So many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ," the Apostle says, "were baptized into his death. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the

⁸ A.B. Simpson: The Self Life And the Christ Life, <http://www.swartzentrovers.com/cotor/E-Books/holiness/Authors/A.%20B.%20Simpson.htm>

Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." To emphasize more forcibly the finality of this fact, he says, "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God." Therefore, and in like manner, the Apostle bids us to

"reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ," and to "yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."

Now, much of the teaching of the day would bid us yield ourselves unto God to be crucified and to die afresh, or more fully, but the Apostle says nothing of the kind here. On the contrary, we are to yield ourselves unto God as those who have already died and are alive from the dead, recognizing the cross as behind us; and for this very reason presenting ourselves to God, to be used for His service and glory. Have you never seen soaring in mid-heaven some glorious bird with its mighty pinions spread upon the bosom of the air and floating in the clear sky without a fluttering feather or apparently the movement of a muscle? It is poised in mid-air; floating yonder, far above the earth below; it does not need to rise, it has risen and is resting in its high and glorious altitude. Very different is the movement of the little lark that springs from the ground and, beating its wings in successive efforts, mounts up to the same aerial heights to sing its morning song, and then returning again to earth. One is the attitude of rising and the other is the attitude of risen.

Perhaps, you say, "How can I reckon myself dead when I find so many evidences that I am still alive, and how can I reckon myself risen when I find so many things that pull me back again to my lower plane? It is your failure to reckon and abide that drags you back. It is the recognizing of the old life as still alive that makes it real and keeps you from overcoming it. This is the principle which underlies the whole Gospel system, that we receive according to the reckoning of our faith. The magic wand of faith will lay all the ghosts that can rise in the cemetery of your soul; and the spirit of doubt will bring them up from the grave to haunt you as long as you continue to question. The only way you can ever die, is by surrendering yourself to Christ and then reckoning yourself dead with Him.

Everything Means Everything

Ole Henrik Skjelstad

I hope you are ready to join me on a little faith journey. My idea is to present a string of thoughts which manifested in my mind today. The conclusion encouraged me immensely, and I hope the text will have the same effect on you.

God is love. It isn't something He has, it is something He is. At the outset of our walk as new creations we find it difficult to reconcile life's many facets with His love. As we grow we come to understand that we receive His love through faith, more often than as an experience. Then the Holy Spirit establishes this as a truth in the innermost corners of our being – and His love becomes knowledge. We have all experienced that His love can also be manifested in tribulations and sufferings leading us to a deeper sense of His all encompassing love.

An undisputable fact is that as new creations we are in Christ. If we are in Christ and He is love, then we also are love, simply because His sap flows into the branches. This goes beyond feelings and appearances, because it is a spiritual truth. Let us not in this part of the account begin to contrast evil and good, because there exist no such thing in our being. In Christ we do the truth and we do what is right, which basically is being in Him and let His life flow in us.

The next step is to acknowledge that everything works together for good for those who love God. Regarding our love towards Him; this is not either a question of feelings; it is a plain fact that we love Him because He loved us first. When we strive to please Him we do not easily recognize His love; that is true. However, those who have entered His rest bask and revel in His unconditional love.

He is the one who works everything for good. His highest good is Himself. When we behold our actions, attitudes and behavior and judge them according to our perceptions of good and evil, which is a heritage from the fall, we often feel that we fall short. That is not the truth, however. The truth is that He uses everything – everything plainly means everything – to advance His good.

If we have disappointed someone, which we occasionally do, God employs that to work forth His good in that situation. Disappointments and other things which are not so pleasant have the inherent power to lead people to the end of themselves and thus solely rely on God. In other words God's love in us may cause tribulations for others so they can experience His highest good - Himself.

Seems odd, doesn't it? Not exactly what we have been previously taught. This is of course just a marred and simple illustration, but I hope it gets the point across. I am not saying now that we should dispense tribulations on others as we please, just that those things inadvertently occur, and when they do they are also an opportunity for our Father.

The conclusion is: Rest from your own seemingly failures and rest in Him. When you do the sap flows unstrained and you are everything you are, a perfect mirror of Him.

When We Wonder Why

Steve McVey

“Why is this happening to me?” the young man asked me after describing a crisis he was facing. “I’ve tried to be faithful in serving God. He knows what this means to me. Why would he let this happen?”

Questions that begin with “why” are common when problems come into our lives. Some Christians have suggested that it is wrong to ask “why?” but I don’t think that is necessarily true. Jesus asked the question, “why?” from the cross in His final moments and we know he never said anything that displeases God.

The heart-attitude behind the question is the key. When we question why, is it a sincere question or an accusation against God? There’s a big difference between the two.

The answer to questions about why is multifaceted, but there is one simple answer that often applies when we ask that question. It’s this: God’s ways are not our ways.

We look at things differently than the Sovereign God we serve. For instance, we think the three parts of the day are morning, afternoon and night. Not so with God. In Genesis, the Bible says that “the evening and morning were the first day.” From God’s perspective, new days begin when things start to get darker, not brighter. (Any orthodox Jew knows this, as evidenced by the fact that they begin to observe the Sabbath at sunset on Friday, not Saturday morning.) God’s ways aren’t our ways.

Consider another example: We believe we must be strong to be productive. God says that our need is to be weak, not strong. He doesn’t choose the strong and mighty, but the weak to amaze the world. (See 1 Corinthians 1:27) While we’re trying to become stronger, God wants to make us weaker, more dependent on Him. God’s ways aren’t our ways.

Under God’s rule, first comes darkness, then light. First comes weakness, then strength. The list could go on – first comes death, then life. First comes burst wine skins, then new ones. First comes losing our lives, then we find them. God’s ways aren’t our ways.

Will you choose, by faith, to forfeit the right to understand your circumstances and, instead, trust the One who does all things well? Thank God, His ways aren't our ways. Would you rather have your way? Or would you rather yield to the way of an omnipotent God who loves you so much that He gave His life to ensure that you would receive the best He has to offer?

Rebellion Is Living Under the Law

Bertie Brits

There is a difference between GRACE and rebellion. Rebellion is born out of hate for something where a person got hurt. A person that lives from this perspective cannot claim that the life manifested in him is born of God.

I remember when I heard the message of love for the first time. What made me glad was that I had something where I knew that I was right and they wrong. I went around trying to prove my point to people that I saw as my enemies. Rebelling against the old system was the motivation for everything I did. While I lived like this I thought I was under the GRACE of God but I was not. I was under the influence of the LAW because all my actions was governed by the LAW.

Under LAW we had to pray – so under “grace” I stopped. Under law we had to give so under “grace” I stopped. Under law we had to gather on Sundays so under “grace” I stopped. All this in rebellion against the system. The NEW man in me was not living for all I did was dictated to me by the law, whatever the system commanded, I would wilfully go and do the opposite – I still lived under the influence of the LAW, having the LAW still bearing it’s fruit in me. It is like a person that has been greatly harmed living in bitterness. Such people is still controlled by the wrong that happened to them and what they hate so much live in them every day

The life I live now has nothing to do with the law. We are not to live in rebellion against something, we are living for something – someone else is living inside us. We are not rebelling against an old revelation. A NEW REVELATION OF TRUTH GOT A HOLD OF US. The life I live has no correlation to what the law has done.

I gather with a group of people Sundays – not because of “CHURCH” but we love to fellowship and hear the message of Grace. I pray because I love to speak to God. I give because I understand what effect my giving has on the lives of people that have never heard this Gospel. I preach because of the revelation of what God has done in Jesus for the human

race – because I see people in Christ. My life has nothing to do with the law anymore not even rebelling against it!!!

I have seen people in the name of GRACE but actually in rebellion against the law get drunk, caught up in pornography and live where they want to shock the LAW PEOPLE resulting in great destruction of their lives.

Rebellion always stops when the oppressor falls from his throne. Satan with his system of dominion, manipulation and control has fallen – Stop the rebellion, take your mind of what the law stands for by putting your mind on Christ and experience your new life.

This revelation does not keep us bound but opens our eyes. You can even leave your church where you hear the law, without rebelling. Don't kick up dust, live your free life. We leave because of the new life in us and fellowship where we hear this life all the time.

Test and Trials

Dave Geisler

1Pe 4:12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 1Pe 4:13 But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. (ESV)

It was now about 10:00 am and I knew that after the two-hour wait we should be next on the schedule. I hate waiting at All Children's Hospital...not so much because of the time but because of seeing the different families going through a multitude of trials. It always seems worse when things are happening to a child, no matter the situation. Another half-hour rolls by and they finally call our name and escort us into the examination room.

Before I get to what happened let me explain what has already taken place. Our youngest girl has been having problems with her fontanel closing properly and as such our pediatricians have been keeping a close eye on it. At this point in her development things should have advanced at a normal rate like our other two children but our youngest seems to not be closing properly. The doctors decided to order a number of tests to try and get a grip on what is going on. That takes us to ACH where we are awaiting the lab to take some blood and urine to move forward with the testing.

As we enter the sterile but inviting room I glance over at the supplies the technician has pulled out to get the needed fluids. It is always so heart wrenching to see such small IV's and other medical devices and reminds me of the many pains these wonderful people must endure daily in the course of doing their jobs. My daughter had fallen fast asleep in daddy's arms and I hated to wake her but knew that it was needed. As I lay this beautiful little sleepy girl down on the crackling sterile white paper she isn't too happy, and the test haven't even started. But all I can do is try and comfort her by stroking her hair and speaking softly to her all the while knowing what was coming.

Needless to say the nurse put the IV in her arm and started to draw the blood. All I could do is try and comfort her in the process...the test are needed and this trial for her is part of the test. I couldn't explain to her the reasons why she must get the test nor could I draw the

charts of the anterior and posterior fontanel and show her how they needed to fuse properly for her to continue growing properly...she could have never understood. Yet I comforted her during the process and did all I could to make the needed trauma less uncomfortable than it had to be. If I could have taken the pain upon myself I would have...I think most parents would do the same.

After the testing was over and we could finally make our way out of the hospital I was able to comfort her again and even make her smile. On the way home she fell asleep in the car and now a few hours later she doesn't seem to even remember what has happened.

God cannot and will not explain the "why" we go through trials and test but He gives us His perspective to keep in mind and heart while we are going through them. Not only that He gives us His joy and His peace in the midst of the trials...if we will look to Him and receive what He has for us. Although this life will have trials and test we can rejoice knowing that not only do we have a Saviour that has felt and can understand the trials (Heb 4:15-16) we have a Saviour that transcends time and space to be there with us, stroking our hair and speaking softly to us. We know that trials and test have purpose and that it is to our benefit to go through them, if not God would not allow them in our lives. Trusting in Him for all we need, have and ever will be makes the trials a lot less burdensome to the point where we can thank Him for allowing the trials and test in our own life (1Thes 5:18). My baby girl may not be able to understand the reason she had to be at the hospital today but she can look to me and trust me that I do and that it was for her good.

Consciousness of Christ: the Why of Everything

Fred Pruitt

Someone recently wrote and asked me two questions: 1) By whose power did Adam and Eve decide to listen to Satan in the garden? and 2) Also in your book "Hearts of Flesh" you compare Abraham and Saul in that they were both doing God's work regardless of what it looked like - both were men of God. In other words, some Christians can look like a Saul and keep going down a road towards destruction and still be a Christian. Did I understand you correctly?

Here is the reply:

(This is a little different from what I usually write, and may not appeal to all readers. When I have spoken of these things like this in the past some have commented that I am too complicated. I apologize if some of this comes across that way. I believe the reader who perseveres all the way through will be satisfied -- at least I hope so.)

You have an interesting way of phrasing your first question -- "by whose power did Adam and Eve decide to listen to Satan in the garden? I don't think I've ever heard anyone phrase it that way before -- "by whose power."

So that's an easy answer, since there is no power except the power which is God. Satan is a misuse of the One Power, using in a sense the substance/being/existence of God Himself to create for himself in singularity, or dense concentration of self, or what I might call a vortex of sucking self, like a black hole -- a dark fire that has almost infinite heat but which emits no light or warmth, that exists only to feed itself by the consumption of everything that comes within its reach -- to use it all to feed and build up himself by the death and destruction of all.

God is also Consuming Fire, but only consuming in the sense that everything which He attracts into Himself for consumption is re-emitted as Light, Heat, and Life (Luke 20:18). This is because God has eternally determined to be Love, exhibited eternally by the Son in the form of a Lamb Slain forever in the center of the Eternal Godhead and Throne. Satan seeks

to bring only death and is anti-life, whereas God's principle includes death, first of all in a sense in Himself when in His out-going to express Himself in the Son, He eternally dies to or says "NO" to that sucking self-for-self which seeks to live by feeding on the death of others so that it is supreme and without competition. Then by that death (Cross) or "NO" to self-seeking, He rises as the Son, whose eternal characteristic is to give His Life as a ransom and means of Life to others. Satan's principle is death only; God in Trinity's Principle is death AND resurrection, both death to self-seeking (by the Cross), and resurrection in the Deity out of "NO" to "YES," by which Giving-Life is out-splayed with infinite energy and infinite power to inseminate the Universe with Life unto Life. The motion of the resurrection out of death (from the lowest depths to the highest heights) is what fuels the dynamo that empowers everything that is. It is like an atomic explosion without destruction, but instead an infinitely energetic perpetual effluence of light and life in every direction.

So I would think the question, then, isn't really "whose" power it is, but where does their freedom come from that allows them to choose or follow the wrong path, or to disobey?

And the answer there is again the same. The Bible mentions liberty and freedom often, especially in the New Testament. God is Free and IS Freedom, so therefore freedom, like all things, originates in God and is first of all His principle. Freedom is having the option to choose between alternatives. We may have a limited set of alternatives, but freedom is the divine principle of personhood -- that which makes a person a person. A tree cannot choose anything for itself. Even a dog cannot do this. Because the type of choosing we are speaking of is the choice of what kind of person I'm going to be, and who I will be hooked up with.

What I say "Yes" to determines what I say "No" to, and visa versa. That "choice," as I explained above regarding the Deity, originated in God the Father in the eternal, so that eternally He has chosen or determined to be nothing but Love -- Life which does not seek its own good primarily (a "NO" to self-seeking), but preeminently the good of another (a "YES" to other-love). Satan made the eternal choice to be for himself, which is also an eternal trap because he became a caricature of True Self, by rejecting union with the Light and death to self-seeking, to live in what is really an unreality, a false fantasy, a self-delusion of himself as just himself, all by himself alone, an island of self, a closed-up fortress, having his own

power, his own beauty, his own goodness, out of his own fire. Since like all sentient beings God created, he only exists to be a re-expression in limited or particular form of the Unlimited Universal Deity, but out of the same freedom by which God chose to be love, Lucifer/Satan chose to be only himself and reject Another to be his life, and thereby "fell." So that is the same freedom, and the same power, and the same set of alternatives that confronted Adam and Eve and us all in our infancy and lack of consciousness. With this fundamental and important difference. The temptation of Adam and Eve was in the temporal, given them (with God of course knowing the outcome and MEANING IT) for their ultimate redemption and subsequent consciousness of their identity in God.

Now I haven't mentioned consciousness at this point, but God's desire to be the Son is not limited to the Eternal Trinity which is an infinite circumincession within Themselves of love loving by going out of itself to extend and propagate love. Love in not seeking itself, must instead propagate itself, expand itself, go out of itself. In other words, for love to love, there must be something for love to love and expand into. Therefore the Son must not be just the One Eternal Son, but that the Son might be reproduced and expanded into a family, the whole family being individual unique expressions of that One Son, Who is both the Eternal Object of the Father's Love, and IS the Eternal Father's Love.

Now this is what has created the tremendous tension in the universe, which Paul alludes to in Romans 8:18-22, i.e. the whole universe groaning and travailing, awaiting the final manifestation of the Sons of God. And this is about consciousness -- because for the Sons to be finally and fully manifest, they must know themselves as the Son in the sons, after having freely desired, sought and received the Sonship, raised by the Father/Son/Spirit into the full understanding and comprehension of the heights, depths, and fullness of Christ -- in them! Unto a perfect MAN, as Ephesians says, raised into the Head, which is Christ. MAN raised fully into CHRIST!

And that is WHY there was a fall and WHY there was the giving of the Law and WHY Israel, as God's lamb for the whole world, had to rise and fall, rise and fall, and WHY there had to be a Saul followed by a David, and WHY, ultimately, the Son of God had to come to be the Son of Man, and WHY there had to be a Calvary in space and time as there is an Eternal Lamb Slain

in the heart of eternity, and WHY there had to be the time of the Gentiles and WHY, even though the promises have been given and fulfilled there HAD to be a time when it continues to look like He has forsaken His People and has delayed His Coming, and WHY even though we are even now recipients of the Promises we still, for this time, wander in sheepskins and goatskins and find in this world no continuing city. It is all part of this ultimate tension which will explode into that final manifestation of God as His Fully Formed and Conscious Sons to the glory and unbounded benefit of the entire universal creation!

There is coming a time, and it now is, when God is beginning to peel back the layers, to give understanding, to reveal the mysteries of the kingdom. Jesus said He could not speak plainly the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but must speak them in dark sayings and parables, in order to hide them from the "wise and prudent" and only reveal them unto "babes." All the stories of the Old Testament have this quality to them. While infantile Christians are arguing with "the world" and trying to convince those whose natural minds cannot see the things of God, that these things are literal histories or descriptions of the creation scientifically, in their zeal they are straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel. They miss the tremendous riches of Christ, redemption, and the New Birth revealed in the stories -- which are intended not just for information's sake, knowledge of the sake of knowledge, but for the purpose of CONSCIOUSNESS OF CHRIST, because as we see Him we know Him and these stories are all about HIS LIFE IN US.

Rather than focusing on Saul's behavior and whether he still attained heaven because of the way he turned out, as we all have at one time or another, the far greater riches are found in seeing Saul and David as counterparts of essentially the same man. And it is ALL ABOUT coming to consciousness. Because we are all like Jesus -- we learn obedience through the things we suffer (Heb 5:8), and we come to maturity (raised consciousness) by the exercise of the senses discerning good and evil (Heb 5:14). Not good and evil in the temporal "be good to be accepted" sense that the world knows, but good and evil in the ultimate sense, i.e., that which is God and that which is anti-God, and that the "knowing" of that is really coming to oneness with the truth -- as Adam "knew" Eve, became one flesh with her, so we "know" Christ in truth, and are One Spirit with Him. I've spoken much about what being "one" means elsewhere, so won't repeat that here.

There is a recurring theme in the Old Testament, which Jesus just summed up in, "The first shall be last, the last shall be first." You can see it beginning to be successively plainer in the Genesis stories; in Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, in Jacob and Esau, in Joseph and his brethren, in the generation of Israel born in Egypt which perished in the wilderness, and the generation born in the wilderness which went across the Jordan into the Promise, and so on. It is picked up again in Saul and David.

I can only briefly speak of it, because it is deep mystery but the Lord is unfolding it more and more day by day. This has been percolating in me for several years and I've tried to write and speak about it, but it is still fresh and unformed. So be patient with me.

First a bit about types and shadows. If we realize that the Scriptures were put together by the Holy Spirit for the revelation of Christ, and not thematically by men who were following an outline or plan, then we can also realize that they are not systematic in unfolding these mysteries. The mysteries of God are revealed by the revelation of the Spirit, not a systematic theology which always holds that a certain type remains the same type throughout. For instance, Esau in one sense by the Spirit represents fallen Adam whom God the Father (Old Isaac) would love to bless but cannot because he has spurned his birthright by selling it for a mess of pottage, as Adam traded his divine birthright (rights of the firstborn who gets the lion's share of the father's heritage) for an animal skin, and in other cases Esau represents the flesh which lusts against the things of the Spirit and therefore must be spurned. So the types change even within the life of a the same person. Sometimes Pharaoh represents God the Father, as in the story of Joseph, and sometimes he represents the devil who has stolen man and enslaved him, as the Pharaoh of Moses' time. Only the Spirit can reveal these things.

So then we come to Saul. You begin to see what is going on in the story when the people of Israel tell Samuel that they want a king, just like all the other nations around them have a king. In a way it is like Adam and Eve all over again, because they were under, at the time, the direct kingship of God, through the prophet and judge, Samuel. The prior years they had been the same -- no king, but a series of judges and rescuers in their ongoing battles with the Philistines and their on-again/off-again relationship with the Baals and idolatries. That

might not seem like such a hunky-dory situation, but when they seek a king "like the other nations," God's reaction is pretty negative. He says they are rejecting him as King by wanting a king they can see, feel, touch, etc.

Remember, keep our eyes on the prize -- the goal here, for God and Israel (which God knows but Israel does not), is consciousness. Sons who know who they are by the exercise of their senses. In other words, they must find out by experience; they must know the wrong way in order to know the right way. And even though they were not very steadfast in their dealings with God under the judges -- they were always falling away and worshipping other gods, etc. -- still in essence they were under the kingship of God, Who they could not see -- they had to believe and follow Him in His invisibility, and in their dim and infantile consciousness, it was necessary that they reject this invisibility by which God kept them in their unconsciousness, and find a visible palpable king that would protect them from their enemies and make them great. All of this to the benefit of us all. Their lack of consciousness leads to our consciousness when we see.

So what's the first thing God does? He tells them what's what, but He honors their request. He gives them the kind of king that they, in their immaturity, think they want. He gives them a great-looking guy, who stands a head taller than everybody else. A man impressive to the flesh, and intimidating to their enemies. Someone they can put their hopes and dreams into, who will take care of all their needs, protect the land, and give them peaceful lives in security and prosperity. (Something which mankind is still doing, apparently!)

When we consider this spiritually in our own lives, when we come to God and do not yet know who we are, thinking it's about being good and obeying rules, etc., this "Saul" is who we want to reign over us. It is ourselves, our selves that we have always known ourselves to be, helped and improved by God and made into a fit and proper king. Impressive to our friends for our spirituality, and hopefully intimidating to our enemy, the devil. "Make me, Lord, be this and that. Here is this person that I am, Lord. O make me better, give me more love, more patience, more kindness." We want to stand up and be the one who is a head taller than everyone else. In our unconsciousness and immaturity, still having only a consciousness of flesh or independent self, we cannot help but think and pray this way. We

do not know that we are praying for the kingship of a false hope, a wisp of self that is a persona the devil has created. Oh, our real self is in there somewhere, and there is the anointing of God, but God is a God who grants our desires, even those which are wrong sometimes for us, in order to bring us to the fullness of Himself by our failure. And that self, like Saul, must fail.

Because that self thinks that it is where the holiness resides. It is a presumptuous self, a self that takes upon itself the right to sacrifice, thinking, wrongly, that itself is the life of God, in control, the decider.

Now let's step back a moment and consider Saul. He is first of all, as above, "goodlier" than any other in Israel. He looks the part, and at first is humbled by the fact he has been chosen of God. And God puts His Spirit upon him, and anoints him king. Now, why is this so, if God already knew Saul was not going to work out, which of course He did know?

This is where this purpose of God to bring us into consciousness of our sonship begins to be revealed. Saul, in ourselves, as I said above, is the false image of ourselves that we are born with, that we know as ourselves all our lives even into our new birth into Christ, and God honors it, anoints it, blesses it, leads it, thus granting our desires in order to finally bring that self to its own self-destruction, as Saul at Gilboa fell on his sword before he was overrun by the Philistines. The first generation out of Egypt into the wilderness is the same. They are given the law and they all agree to keep the law, which of course they cannot do. They are presumptuous, rebelling against Moses who they think is no better than they. They complain. Every time they are challenged they revert to their former selves they have always been, but are rescued by God anyway. Even after they refuse to go into the Promised Land the first time, afraid of the giants and great walled cities thereby receiving God's curse on their generation, by which they must all perish in the wilderness and never see the Promise, STILL God leads them by His Spirit in the form of a cloudy pillar by day and a fiery pillar by night. God honors them, cares for them, leads them by His Spirit, feeds them bread from heaven, gives them Christ in the form of water out of a rock, yet they cannot come to the Promise. They were born in Egypt and are perpetually in consciousness only flesh, so that they cannot touch the mountain of God.

And Saul is this same first generation, ourselves in false independence but which we in our wrong consciousness think is what and who God blesses and uses. And for a time God goes along with that. He blesses this false self, loves it, anoints it, even while it presumes upon itself its own deity. Not consciously in the sense that it believes it is God, but unconsciously in a de facto sense, because its lifelong independence is something it cannot part with, it MUST remain the chooser, the doer, the decider, thereby making itself as God. The false self created by reaching out and taking the fruit cannot change. It can only die.

Then David enters the story. Now David is the type of the new man, Christ in us, who first sprouts as a very small seed within us. At first Saul is delighted with David. David will serve him, will do his bidding, will kill his enemies. He is glad to have such a champion. But things change as Saul begins to see the handwriting on the wall. He senses David is going to replace him as king, and he cannot accept this. It is his own posterity he protects and lifts up, and, forgetting that he is a servant of the Lord God, he begins persecuting David who clearly is God's man. His favor toward David turns to anger as his visible presumption of taking the things of God to himself causes him to lose the favor of God, which is transferred to David. Even though David comforts him with his songs when he is overtaken by his melancholia, which happens more and more often (this is the beginning of Romans 7 struggle), still he begins to hate David more and more. And so the struggle begins, with Saul some days loving David and some days trying to kill him. When he is confronted with his ill treatment of David and with David's continuing loyalty to him, even after David has been anointed to be the next king, Saul repents over and over, but he cannot change. He "rededicates," but, he still wants to be king. He still wants the people to follow him, to love him, to recognize that HE is their leader and is greater than David. This is a perfect picture of the wrong self that we have been deceived into believing all our lives IS our self. It is gearing up to know and finally accept its own death, but this struggle between Saul and David, between the mind of the flesh and the mind of the Spirit, is what finally brings him to that final self-destruction on Mt. Gilboa. Because finally it cannot do what it is supposed to do -- defeat the enemies of the Lord. They are finally too much for Saul, and overrun him, so that he becomes the "O wretched man," and falls on his own sword. He takes the death that must be, "I am crucified with Christ," so that "it is no longer I, but Christ" can then take the throne.

Looking at it from David's perspective, this true man, this man who we really are in Christ, which is Christ in us as one with us, as I said above, starts in humble beginnings. He is the man of the Spirit, who we hardly know at first. He is ourselves, but our unified self in Christ, and because we are still carnal in our minds he is as if he is separate from us. At first we delight in him, but like Saul, we become suspicious of him. He is too free. He is dangerous. We are afraid to let him live.

David, unlike Saul, takes nothing to himself or for himself. Though he is continually tempted to reach out and take the kingdom from Saul, he knows he cannot touch Saul, for he is still God's beloved, still the "anointed of the Lord," and he cannot reach out and take for himself. Even though he knows that the kingdom is his, still he must receive it as a gift, and not as something he presumptuously takes. He becomes Saul's secret helper, in that he protects the borders of Israel from marauders, from the Philistines. Little by little the people begin to come to him, though he finds himself hiding in caves and in the desert. Many of his followers urge him to kill Saul and take the kingdom, and though he easily could do this, David continually refuses, knowing that if the kingdom is to be his, and he does know it, it will be given as a promise and a gift of grace, and that he won't gain it by his own hand.

That is akin to Abraham's story with Ishmael and Isaac. God gave the promise which was to be fulfilled in Sarah, but Abraham and Sarah decided to hurry things up a bit and bring a son by Hagar. Like Saul, God does bless Ishmael and has a plan for him, but he is not the son of Promise, but of the presumption of the flesh. All this is for our understanding and consciousness of this same point: the first birth, Adam, Cain, Ishmael, Esau, Reuben, the generation born in Egypt, Saul, etc., all point at the man of the flesh who is deceived into thinking he is the ruler and should reign on earth, while the second birth, Christ (2nd Adam), Abel, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, the generation born in the wilderness, David, etc., all point at the new man, Christ in us as one with us, who as the Stone Cut out without Hands, smashes the image of iron and clay -- our false selves in independence, so that that Stone fills the whole earth (Dan 2:34,35), and we finally recognize Christ in us as All in all, and therefore, as us.

This is the mystery of Christ revealed in simple stories by the Holy Spirit, that we might know that He does the same in us, to accomplish the same, to move us in consciousness from Cain

to Abel (Christ Who died) and Seth (Christ Who rose), from Ishmael to Isaac, from Esau to Jacob, from Saul to David, that we might come in our understanding into the fullness of Him who fills all in all, in and through ourselves. All this is the fulfillment of Galatians 2:20, told over and over and over throughout the scriptures, because it is really all there is.

Once Christ is formed in us in consciousness, then we stand up as David, as Moses, as Paul, as the fathers John spoke of, living out of the eternal water of life that we now recognize flows out of us, not by anything we have done, could do, should do, but by the grace of the One Who favors us, WHO is pleased with us, Who sees us as "the beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ... hear ye Him!"

It is the inner mystery of the whole Scripture. It's all about Christ in us and how he comes to fullness in us. It is not something we instigate, make happen, help along, but solely and purely grace in action by His Spirit Who has come to dwell in us, his human temples, making us fruitful branches on the Vine which is Christ.

A Question on Fasting

Dee Dee Winter

Dear _____,

I have been pondering your question about fasting. Norman did not address it in his writings and as far as I know did not fast . . . at least during the years I knew him. I am currently working on a book of his letters that span the years 1922-1992 and not one of them mentions fasting. He did address tongues and was very inclusive of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit, always encouraging folks not to be divisionary.

For myself ALL of those types of things . . . fasting, quiet time, tithing etc (outer disciplines) fell away when God revealed to me in 1980 that I was free from the law. I have cut an excerpt of my story from the ChristAsUs website to illustrate my point.

I was raised in the Catholic faith. When I was 30 I came to know the Lord through the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Immediately, I turned and began to pursue God as passionately as I had tennis, social activities and my interior design business. I began to attend church at a non-denominational Charismatic church whose focus was inner healing (healing of the memories) and deliverance. God taught me well for six years in that ministry, a prayer group, bible studies and any other place I could find Christians coming together to learn about God.

It was a wonderful time in many ways. I found in inner healing that I could look at myself and talk about the things that I was not proud of that my life had contained. I found new freedom in being delivered from the clutches of the devil in many areas of my life. I pushed myself in every direction to excel at this Christian life. And yet the day came when I felt like such a failure as a Christian that I cried out to God in despair.

A few weeks later God brought four scriptures to me that I had read a thousand times. But this time I “knew” them in a way I had never before experienced...revelation. The scriptures were Romans 6:6... “knowing this that our old self was crucified with Him that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin”, 6:4...“Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised

from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life”; Ephesians 2:6...”and raised us up with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” and Psalms 37:4...”Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart”.

In an instant I knew I was dead and a dead man did not need healing. ALL my inner healing went “out the window”. In the next instant I knew that I sat at the right hand of the Father in Christ and that Satan was not there! The need for deliverance or to ever fear or fight the devil was gone. And finally, I knew that if God gave me the desires of my heart I could trust myself and my desires...for the first time in my life. I had always been taught that our hearts were wicked and God’s way was the opposite of anything I wanted. All that had held me until now was like putting a band-aid on a gaping wound. That day I knew complete healing!

I knew that His way of truth had to span from Genesis 1:1 through Revelation 22:21. The next morning I asked God how He “saw” submission and He immediately said to me, “It is being, not doing.” Somehow I knew that all of life was meant to be that...being, not doing.

I must admit that before 1980 that my attempts at fasting were usually to prove myself to God or to twist His arm, so to speak, to do what I wanted. After God revealed those scriptures I realized that God had a totally different perspective and I set out to discover what His much deeper truths were.

I suppose I would have to say that fasting to me today is more in tuned with that of Jesus’ being driven into the wilderness to be tempted. I think the fasting He did was much, much more than just not eating food. I think it was not hearing from the Father . . . no spiritual sustenance . . . which left Him in an extremely weakened condition, making the temptations even more difficult . . . and the answers all the more powerful. Paul learned this also . . .
”When I am weak, then am I strong.”

In Matt. 9:14-17; Mark 2:18-22 Jesus equated fasting with sorrow, old wineskins and said that as long as the bridegroom was with them there was no need to fast. Is He not with us today as our very life?

These are just my few thoughts. I would love to hear from you and hear why you asked the question.

Love in Christ,

DeeDee

I'm A Recovering Poisonous Preacher

Steve McVey

One day when Elisha instructed one of the sons of the prophets to prepare a meal, he went out into the field and gathered wild gourds from a wild vine and cooked it in the stew. The prophets poured the stew out for all the people to eat when someone discovered, "There is death in the pot!" God's prophets were serving poison and eating out of the same pot. (See 2 Kings 4:38-41)

That's what I did for many years. I took the liberating gospel of God's grace and mixed the wild gourds of religious performance in the same pot with it. The gourds came from a wild vine out in the field. Grace doesn't grow in a wild field. It is cultivated only in the garden of grace planted and nurtured by God Himself. The idea of religious performance is a wild plant which poisons the grace of God and causes it to cease to be edible, although I did eat and serve it to my church for many years. The tragedy of this kind of poison is that it won't kill you, but will be just toxic enough to keep you sick for the rest of your life.

The underlying foundation of all religion is performance, whether it's a tribal dance around a campfire to satisfy the fire god or a dead religious activity performed week after week by an evangelical Christian with the intent of impressing his God. It's all religious performance and God isn't impressed by our performance. What impresses Him is faith. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Hebrews 11:6). He couldn't care less about religious ritual void of life. God is in the business of Life. Nothing else interests Him. He is interested in living relationships, not dead religion.

The announcement of the gospel of grace includes the good news that God wants to deliver us from religion. He has extended His grace for the purpose of rescuing us from a lifestyle of futile, feeble efforts to make ourselves acceptable to Him. The essence of religion is man's attempt to somehow convince himself that he has jumped through enough hoops for God to give him the approving nod. It's the way we try to validate our own self worth through asinine acts of self righteousness which in reality, separate us from the very goal we seek to achieve. It is poison because it kills any opportunity one will ever have to experience genuine intimacy with God. Religion is a prostitute having fifty dollar sex with a man and telling him

it's love when all the while, deep in his heart, the man knows better. Religion offers false hope that somehow there is something we can do to impress God enough to cause Him to accept us on the basis of our actions. Religion is what rushes in to fill the vacuum created by the absence of personal intimacy with God.

Do my words sound too strong? If so I would encourage you to go back and read Paul's treatment of legalism in the book of Galatians. My words pale in comparison to his tirade against those who preached circumcision. I deliberately use hard language here because religion is robbing people of Life! Keep in mind that it was religious people who hated Jesus the most. Our identity isn't in religion, but in our relationship to Him.

I doled out a lot of poisonous preaching for many years, but I was eating out of the same pot. Thankfully, I was healed and now want nothing more than to see others experience the same healing.

Please Pass the Preparation H

Jamie Weeks

I remember when I used to love a song that said, "God wants your best, and not your better than." "...You know better, better than that...!" The sad thing was I didn't know any better and so I kept trying for a long time to give God my best. I was faster than a speeding sin, more powerful than a principality, able to leap over average Christians in a single bound! I was "Super Christian!" Well, most of the time. OK, some of the time. The truth is, not as often as I wished.

But I tried REALLY HARD and that had to count for something, right? After all, God might not have wanted my better than, but He did want my best!

The really awful thing about our best is: we aren't always at our best. I might start out pretty good but inevitably I'd blow it. I would wake up each day determined to do my part and not let God down but I never quite got a handle on the perfect thing. I would ask, "What would Jesus do?" but usually I eventually ended up grumbling to God, "I don't know what Jesus would do; I don't care what Jesus would do; do I look like Jesus to you?" Irreverence, I don't have a problem with, obviously.

What I'm trying to say here is if effort could have accomplished anything, I was smokin'! I worked; I strained; I rededicated; I feel sure I got spiritual hemorrhoids, at the very least, I burst a blood vessel or two!

I was miserable! Because NO MATTER HOW HARD I TRIED I COULDN'T PRODUCE
RIGHTEOUS BEHAVIOR!

Then I heard the TRUTH. Steve McVey says half the truth is a lie and I agree. I had been operating under a half-truth. Truth: God doesn't want our better than. Lie: God wants our best. If God needed my best, then why in the world did He give us His best? Like my best is going to somehow help Jesus? Right...God is in a fix if my best is part of the equation, people. Trust me; I know my best; it ain't so good.

Seriously, someone told me that God was not angry with me, and even better, He was not disappointed in me! Sunday after Sunday, I would sit and cry as I heard the "Good News" for

the first time. Grace didn't demand my efforts because He had already accomplished all that I was striving for. Do you know what it's like to have someone tell you that God loves you so much that Jesus became all that you were so that you could be all that He is? Can you even begin to imagine the relief of knowing that God knew we would blow it, so He didn't save us to then turn around and put the responsibility of righteous living on us? God sees our righteousness as filthy rags, the filthiest, and so He exchanged our self-righteous life for Christ's life.

So that's what that crazy Paul was always talking about! Truthfully, I never really enjoyed the Pauline epistles until I understood Grace. Duh.

Now when I find myself thinking, "What would Jesus do?", I turn to The One Who Does It Through Me and let Him have a shot at it. And He does.

Guess what? He never wanted my best.

HE WANTED ME!!!

What's in a...No Name?

David Borum

As I traveled back from Colorado to Oregon I was treated to some beautiful scenery. I couldn't help but notice, though, some of the unique choices for the names of some of the towns that I passed. One town was called RIFLE. Interesting. A few miles beyond that I came to W. RIFLE. Traveling yet a little further and I came upon perhaps the saddest name for a town I had ever seen. NO NAME. Yep, No Name, Colorado. I guess these folks just gave up. I mean, if names like RIFLE and SHOTGUN were already taken, what's the point? If I had been around back then I would have suggested that they go with COLT .45, COLORADO. But that's just me.

What's worse than having no name is having the wrong name. Growing up, many of us were given names by other people; names that shamed and embarrassed us. Names like; Fatso, retard, toothpick, four eyes, carrot top, brace face, shorty or zit face. The list is so much longer than what I have written, and I haven't even gotten to all the ugly racial names that exist. Sometimes these names or labels that we get from others has a way of sticking with us. Many people adopt these names as their identity well into adulthood and may be stuck with the damage it has caused them until they reach the grave.

Do we truly know who we are, or are we still stuck with the names people have given us? People can only act on what they believe is true. If you see yourself as unlovely and unworthy then your life will reflect that. The good news is that in Christ we do have a new name and a new identity. If we consciously set out to discover our true identity and realize that our old identity is gone it would revolutionize our life. For starters, we have been called God's dearly loved children, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, saints and new creations. We are God's masterpiece and we have been fearfully and wonderfully made. Take hold of these truths and meditate on them.

As you travel along the highway of life, the scenery will look more spectacular if you embrace the road signs that spell out your identity each mile of your journey.

Fruits

Alan Hiu

Religious people are more concerned on bearing fruits than the condition of the root. Their religious minds have been blocked from seeing that the law demands bearing of fruits while grace graces the condition of the root. The famous passage from John 15 is therefore causing a lot of concern among the religious Christians and therefore had been frequently used to demand fruits from their followers.

John 15:5 ~ "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

John 15:6 ~ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

My friends, plants do not strain and struggle to produce fruit. Instead, by planting them on good soil, with adequate exposure to sunlight and water, fruits are produced effortlessly. Same thing happen to us as a born again Christian, with adequate exposure to the SON of Righteousness, with the constant irrigation of the living water from the word of Christ and planting ourselves in the soil of grace (good soil) instead on the law (soil mixes with stone), good fruits are produced naturally in our life without any effort.

Jesus is grace personified. He is the mediator of the New Covenant and He is the vine. If bearing fruits is our concern and our duty, then this branch of us is definitely not abide to the vine and is withering. We, as New Covenant believers are spiritual being and should never try to justify ourselves by law... or else we are alienating ourselves from Jesus and we have fallen from grace. Jesus is then becoming of no effect to us because we are now what John 15 verse 6 says, and no more in the vine....

Galatians 5: 4 ~ You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

My friends, Galatians 5:4 does not say when we sin we are alienated from Christ but when we try to obey the commandments. Abide in Jesus give us victory over every situation. So is

His grace because He had conquered everything for us. Our victories in every situation are fruits, our success in every area of our life is fruits, our well being is fruits, our health is fruits, and family harmony is fruit...

You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace and if anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned...

Traditions

John Collings

Before the world was created, the Father set forth his plan. In eternity past he conceived us. Every encounter with anything in our lives is a manifestation of the Father. Both good and evil came from him. He is sovereign, in control.

We look to Christmas and Easter and can see that many of our traditions evolved out of pagan worship, or seemingly godless customs. We might think ourselves irreverent to celebrate the birth of Christ in the midst of frivolousness and impiety.

Cease your striving and know the truth. Before tradition, before custom, before religiousness, before piety . . . God was. He is. He will be.

The Christmas trees, Father Christmas, the exchanging of gifts, feasts, carols, are only parables. For "while seeing they do not see, and while hearing, they do not hear, nor do they understand." These things do not come from pagan tradition, they were given to the pagan that the Father's "eternal power and nature might be seen and understood". These things were given for us and there cannot be too many ways for God to make himself known.

Christ came that we might have abundant life, but it was not his birth in the stable that was his coming. That was only the heralding of his coming in the flesh. "He was in the beginning with God."

Individually we know Him only as He is born within the manger of our hearts.

MARRIAGE - Loving as Christ Loves His Church

DeeDee Winter

What we want for our mate is always greatly magnified...in our hopes and in our frustrations. I think it is a real picture of God's desire for us as HIS bride. It does seem to take forever and a day, but it is all in God's perfect time. Our mates are really being "held" in their unknowing by God, in order that WE might be taught of Him. These pressures are always His way when He is "fixing" US in His ways and life...and then once again IN us when He is accomplishing truth and freedom FOR ANOTHER (now your wife) for whom we have believed. Ro. 12:1 calls this presentation of our bodies as a sacrifice our "reasonable service".

Your real challenge is not "to live more like Him" (that can only be a counterfeit as Satan tempted Adam with...to be LIKE God) but to say by faith or recognize that your life IS Him. Take by faith that EVERY breath, EVERY action, EVERY bit of you is Christ. The next leap now is to say the SAME about your wife. Your flesh and reason will scream against you, but God is renewing your mind to what is REALLY true. What we KNOW about ourselves, we will know about another.

You say that what you see and hear from your wife weighs you down. You will come to discover that THAT heaviness IS the LIFE of Christ in you accomplishing what you have desired...intercession. There is NOTHING in you separate from Him...nor is there in your wife. Every time you are tempted to see the negative it is your opportunity to say the opposite/positive truth. THIS is the operation of faith. It tends to kink our brain. How can this be! But it is...and our minds are renewed...to the truth.

In John 7:24 Jesus tells us not to judge by the APPEARANCE of a person or situation, but to judge with righteous judgment. THAT is to see only Christ...ALL and IN all. At any given moment any of us can all feel or look like the opposite, but faith says, "I'll see only You, Jesus". As others are confirmed GREAT changes begin to take place in them. They know love and acceptance in way they have never known before...and LOVE NEVER FAILS!

We have been given the "keys (ability to unlock) to the kingdom (Matt.16)...whatsoever YOU

bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatsoever YOU loose on earth will be loosed in heaven". By our word, our thought, our faith we hold people and free them.

You ask why it is only with you that your wife is as she is. I always think we are fully ourselves (positive or negative) with those we trust the most. She trusts you and God is giving YOU the privilege of freeing HIS life within her...and she (Christ in her) is laying down her life for you to KNOW His deeper truths and how to fully walk in them/Him.

Eternal Security: Minority Report

Paul Anderson-Walsh

Minority Report is an article based on the teaching series Safe & Sound it is an initial discussion on the case for Eternal Security also known as Once Saved Always Saved." Belief in the immutable assurance of salvation is in our opinion the first in the series of building blocks that enable the believer to build his or her faith on firm foundations.

"Nothing can separate me from the love of God"

Roms 8:39

Based on a teaching series entitled "Safe & Sound"

Paul Anderson-Walsh

When the Lord first birthed the idea of The Grace Project in me, He gave me the strap line, "Empowerment through assurance". More recently, this has evolved into its present incarnation, "Discover who you REALLY are". Nonetheless, the assurance motif remains the basic tenet upon which the work is founded as it is one of the essential building blocks for a healthy Christian life. However, sadly, the concept of the believer's unconditional and immutable assurance remains very much the Minority Report among evangelicals where the "anti-security" message dominates. By anti-security we mean that there are those (the vast majority of Christians, in fact) who believe that it is possible to lose their salvation. In upholding that view, they see no apparent contradiction with the nature of the agape God of the Bible. Charles Stanley counters this notion deftly when he says:

"If my unfaithfulness has a bearing on my salvation and therefore, my relationship with God, then is it correct to call His love for me unconditional? If God's holiness demands something in return from those it loves, then it is clear that His holiness makes God incapable of unconditional love. If holiness is a condition, then His love is not unconditional. If His nature forces Him to disassociate with certain types of people, His nature stands in the way of him loving unconditionally."

It is our view that peace, assurance and freedom from fear of punishment are among the inalienable rights of all believers. Moreover, the only charitable reason we can find for these rights being withheld is an impoverished view of salvation among many pastors and teachers

of the New Testament. Some time ago, I addressed a meeting of Christian leaders and asked them a single question, "What is a Christian?" The answers that came from the delegates focused almost exclusively on what Christians do as opposed to identifying the fundamental essence of who Christians are. When seen in terms of behaviour and performance, it is not difficult to see why some might feel that non-performance or under-achievement might result in the forfeiture of position.

How righteous are you?

In other articles, we have explored the subject of righteousness and this question is pertinent to the issue of Eternal Security as what needs to be settled in this debate is, "How righteous are you?" If you are reading this and you are a Christian, then you are as righteous as Jesus (2 Cor 5:21). The apostle Paul equates salvation to receiving righteousness. Not "self-achieved" righteousness but Christ righteousness. Salvation is the eternal participation in the replacement life of Jesus as a free unconditional gift (Eph 2:8ff), that is, the transference of the indwelling nature from that of sin to that of Christ (Eph 2:3; 2 Pet 1:2). Viewed from this premise, it is impossible to conclude that salvation is a tenuous or, in anyway, a conditional proposition especially when Paul affirms that "The gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Roms 11:27) and for the avoidance of doubt, Paul tell us in the same letter that the gift of God is eternal life (Roms 6:23).

Yet, Sunday-by-Sunday, believers will sit under teaching that will call this immutable truth into question. "He loves me, He loves me not" is the evangelical mantra. We argue that unless a believer knows that he or she is safe, the believer cannot be sound. "Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God." (Roms 5:1). Peace is the absence of uncertainty. Where there is uncertainty, there is fear and where there is fear, a person cannot be perfected in love. Perfect love casts out fear for fear has to do with punishment (1 Jn 4:18) and this is the most basic truth of the New Covenant - "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, for the law of the Spirit of life has set me free from the law of sin and death" (Roms 8:1-2).

Why then do so many still live under condemnation? The answer lies in one of the most startling satanic confidence tricks. How cunning of the old serpent to have achieved the "impossible trick". He has been able to lull the lost man into a false sense of security and the

saved man into a false sense of insecurity. In both cases, he is able to get a foothold in their "self-righteousness". To the lost man who knows nothing of God's standard of righteousness (Mtt 5:48), his appeal is, "You are not that bad". And to the saved man who is made aware of God's standard of righteousness week after week in church, he says, "You are not that good". So, with varying shades of subtlety, he is able to convince the lost man that God is merciful to the extent that whilst the lost man may not be good enough to go to heaven, the lost man is not bad enough to go to hell. The old serpent's advice is, "No need for you to do anything - after all, He made you as you are".

Then, turning to the Christian, the old serpent's appeal is reversed. To the Christian, he says, "You may not be bad enough to go to hell, but how can you be sure that you are good enough to go to heaven?" His advice is, "Do something - There are things that you need to do to become like God and be liked by God".

That the old "Once Saved Always Saved" debate still rages on remains to me both a mystery and a great sadness. Elsewhere, we have given an extensive treatment to explain why we simply do not believe that the believer can lose his or her salvation, see "Safe & Sound" [www.thegraceproject.com - click on interactive]. The purpose of this article is to simply restate what to us seems the self-evident truth. Perhaps, part of what clouds the issue is the term, "Once Saved Always Saved". The Bible never uses the term and that is something we ought to be mindful of when we do. The insistence on using the term has, I think, been partly responsible for shifting the debate into maverick and esoteric waters rather than letting it sail on the glass calm waters of Biblical logic, namely, the foundational principle of Justification by Faith.

Vying for our sympathies are four main concepts which we can summarize as follows:

Once saved could be lost;

Once saved always saved ... provided that you persevere to the end;

If saved always saved;

Once saved always saved.

At stake is a vitally important question - "Do you believe that after a person has come to a saving knowledge of Jesus, it is possible for such an individual to, one day, end up in the Lake

of Fire?" Our answer is an unequivocal "NO, that is not possible!" In this article, we will introduce some of the reasons why we find any argument to the contrary difficult to sustain.

A few diagnostic questions might help us at this juncture:

1. When you were saved, did you respond to a god that rewards the righteous or The God who justifies the wicked?

2. Is salvation (a) a work of God for man or (b) a work of man for God?

3. Who is responsible for salvation? Three possible answers:

(i) All of God and none of me;

(ii) Some of God and some of me;

(iii) All of me and none of God.

4. Is salvation:

(i) All of man and none of God?

(ii) Some of man and some of God?

(iii) All of God and none of man?

Most of us would not hesitate in picking answer (iii) where salvation is "All of God and none of man". However, the relevant question here is "Whose responsibility is it to maintain salvation?", to wit we say unequivocally, "It is God's". Salvation is the gift that we could not earn and cannot lose.

A common trap that we fall into when confronted with the belief that one cannot lose their salvation is to immediately ask questions along the lines of "What about that person who, after being saved, goes off and becomes a mass murderer, or the backslider who now professes that there is no God?" The core issue with regard to salvation is not the individual's behaviour, but the character of God and the quality of the salvation He gives.

Question: Did you respond to the call of a god who rewards the righteous or The God who justifies the wicked?

Repentance

Ole Henrik Skjelstad

To repent = μετανοέω = think differently or afterwards, that is, reconsider.

The Greek word also carries the meaning of aligning ones thoughts with God's.

My different repentance experiences have been as follows:

From New Age to Jesus. That was a relief because I didn't have to save myself any longer.

From law to grace. That was indeed a tremendous relief.

From the idea that God was stingy, to seeing His generosity. Boy, that was a relief.

When I grasped that even sanctification wasn't a work of mine, I was immensely relieved.

When I understood that God isn't angry I became very, very relieved.

When I discovered the mystery, Christ in me; I was relieved beyond measure.

When I have had glimpses of my inheritance as a son, I have been joyfully relieved.

Each new discovery about the height and the width of God's love has been reassuringly relieving.

Finding out I was dead was a dreadful relief, but being raised up as a new creation was a supernatural relief.

Discovering my new identity was a wonderful relief.

When I was convinced that my salvation was eternally secured, I became relaxingly relieved.

My experience has been that repentance equals experiencing relief. Instances of having repented in the religious sense of the word (i.e. remorse, regret, and etc.) have almost, without exception, been a disaster because it has led to rededication; new promises and more works to satisfy a Person who already is gratified. In retrospect, I can see that those instances did not change me a tad.

He has transformed me, and each transformation has been a consequence of love followed by a sigh of relief on my part.

A License to Sin

Darin Hufford

The number one complaint I get about the grace message from people is that they feel it's giving us a license to sin. I am certain I've heard this accusation no less than a million times in the last five years. It usually goes something like this:

"You mean to tell me that I can do drugs, kill people, rob banks and burn down an orphanage and I'll still go to heaven?"

It amazes me how folks come to that conclusion after hearing that we are forgiven for everything, and He will never leave us or forsake us. You have to wonder what's in the heart of Americans today when betrayal and debauchery are the first thing that comes to their mind when offered security in a relationship.

Could you imagine going to a wedding and listening to the bride and groom recite their vows: "I will never leave you - through sickness and health - for richer or poorer - for better or for worse - till death do us part," and some guy on the front row raises his hand and says, "Woe dude, that means you can cheat on her, do drugs, beat her up and burn her parents' house down." It's interesting that this is the mentality that people worry that others will take when offered a forever covenant with God. The separating factor between those who "get it" and those who don't, is love. People who do not have love in their hearts almost always interpret a forever covenant as an opportunity to sin.

An open hearted human reaction to eternal security is almost never this. Security in a relationship causes the heart to open wide and become transparent and vulnerable. The forever covenant is assurance that every part of a person will be accepted and loved, no matter how ugly or dark. It encourages a person to no longer hide within themselves or live in secret. When they know they are safe forever, they are a thousand times more likely to give all of themselves and hold nothing back. This is the heart behind the marriage covenant of "Till death do us part."

For any relationship to be authentic, it must start with a forever covenant of eternal security. Unfortunately, today, most relationships don't have this one foundational element and they are plagued with secrecy, uncertainty, and shallowness. I think that more than anything,

today's relationships are saturated with control. I have found that control is humanity's antidote to insecurity. This is where the heart of today's Christian thinking exists.

Most Christian teachings today strip us of our security in our relationship with God. They create uncertainty in the hearts of people as to where they stand with Him at any given time. Once uncertainty has been swallowed, control sets in. It sets in because it is needed immediately. There is a vacuum created with unsureness that needs to be filled with something more powerful than itself. Control is not only needed, but it's desired as well.

Teachings about accountability partners, spiritual leaders, submitting to authority and church covering are widely accepted with little or no resistance. When a loving God is made to look unpredictable and not so loving, people submit to someone who they think might know better than them. They lose confidence in themselves and their ability to please an unpleasable God, so they put themselves under the care and control of others in an effort to find security again.

Without security, the Christian life becomes about "NOT sinning." Every single aspect of a person's relationship with God is determined by whether or not they have sinned recently. I have found that just about every Christian term is somehow linked to this pattern of belief. Anytime a Christian today is talking about his spiritual struggles, he is most certainly talking about a personal battle with some sin in his life. If a person is struggling to get closer to God, they are usually struggling to conquer a sin or a pattern of sin. When someone feels especially spiritual and close to God, it's usually because they haven't committed any of their big sins in the last few weeks. Because they feel as though they got the victory of that particular sin, they feel freed up and confident to approach God.

"Growing in the Lord" is defined by how much less a person sins than they did before they met God. Today, we even consider our "witness for Christ" to be our public abstinence from sin. If a person sins in front of unbelievers, they are told that they "blew their witness." Almost all Christian "testimonies" are about how a person was caught in a life of sin before they met Jesus. The bigger the sins a person was committing before they got saved, the more they are asked to give their testimony in front of others.

It doesn't surprise me that when the grace message is preached today, the first thing that comes to mind with the average Christian is sin. The grace message is spoken of as a "license

to sin” and the mere thought of that scares people to death. It goes against everything they think the Christian life is about. Finding out that God loves you whether you sin or not, is a bit scary because people aren’t sure what they’ll do.

One person actually told me that it’s safer to deny the grace message because that way they’d know for sure that they would sin less. “Freedom in Christ” sounds too much like “freedom to sin.” It’s just not worth chancing it.

I have listened to grace preachers all over the world respond to the world famous “license to sin” accusation. We all have our own way of trying to get people to not look at it that way, but to see the heart of relationship and what Christianity is really about. My approach to this has become vastly different from most. In fact, I believe it would downright scare the hell out of most pastors.

Do I think the grace message gives people a license to sin?

YES, I absolutely do.

Part of giving someone freedom, is giving them their choice back. Christianity today has stripped us of our choice to sin. When we are told that sin separates us from God and we will be punished, our choice in the matter is taken away. We have an entire generation of people who quit sinning because of the outer voice of their religion rather than the inner personal voice of their heart. In other words, their quitting didn’t come from their heart; it came from their head. The grace message gives people back their right to sin, and it provides an atmosphere in which they can grow spiritually right and find truth in the center of themselves rather than in a system. A license to sin is not an encouragement to sin, but it’s the right to sin. Take away that right, and you take away relationship altogether.

"Everything is permissible for me"—but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me"—but I will not be mastered by anything." --Paul--

Without a license to sin, I don’t believe people will ever know their own heart, much less the Heart of God. The problem is that in the process of molding themselves to fit religion's requirements, a person learns to deny any and all inner emotions of the heart that might cause them to sin. Things like anger, passion, lust and greed are shut down and the result is that they lose contact with self and eventually forget who they are altogether. Sadly,

Christians today stand adamantly against sin, but they have no idea why. They don't feel a thing in their hearts about sin, other than the memorized knowledge that "it's wrong." They believe it's wrong, not because their heart sings that truth, but because that's what they've been taught. When you shut down some aspects of the heart, you end up shutting down ALL aspects of the heart.

Some people who believe that Christianity is about "not sinning" will inevitably say, "What difference does it make? As long as a person isn't sinning, who cares what's behind it?" This is an anti-intimacy mentality. Would you rather have your spouse not cheat on you because adultery is a sin or because they love you? Giving someone a license to sin is the only way to get to the "because I love you" answer. Most fear that answer will never come, so they opt for the "adultery is a sin" card. It's more controlling and has a better guarantee. They'll say something like, "If you ever cheat on me, I'll divorce you" in a feeble effort to guarantee the other person's faithfulness. Real relationship says, "If you ever cheated on me, I wouldn't leave you." It leaves faithfulness completely up to the heart of their spouse. The thought of that is terrifying.

When my six-year-old daughter informed us that she wanted to run away, we packed a suitcase for her and opened the door. Needless to say, she changed her mind and told us she wants to stay with us. I'm not interested in making prisoners out of my children. The only way to accomplish that is to give them a license to run away. The same is true with the grace message. God wants relationship that is based on a heart's desire for intimacy with Him. He's not interested in keeping prisoners. The only way to have this intimacy with people is to give them a license to sin.

True freedom comes only when the hand of control is removed and a person is given choice to sin or not to sin. If you have a hundred birds in a cage and fifty of those birds belong to you, but the other fifty do not; how many will fly away if you open the cage?

ALL OF THEM.

However, fifty will eventually fly back. Then and only then, is relationship possible.

God's Ways with Man⁹

Norman Grubb

"If I make my bed in the depths, you are there." (Psalm 139:8)

Life in the human must always be a tension, a constant propounding of problems with no adequate solution, a constant oscillation between the pleasureable and the painful. But when we raise our sights from the human to the divine, the whole picture changes. All started with God, all ends with God, and there is only one with whom He has to do: From eternity to eternity all is centered in Christ. Therefore whatever intervenes in history, whether pleasant or unpleasant, must be caught up into the stream of His purposes of Grace in Christ. If the devil appears on the scene, then the devil must be His agent. If the fall of man adds to the chaos, then we learn that He had already foreseen that and the fallen first Adam was to be only a type in reverse (Romans 5:14) of the last redeeming Adam. This same Christ would Himself embrace the consequences of sin, atone for it, conquer it, and then produce out of the wreckage of fallen humanity a new race of sons to occupy the highest position in the universe, to share the throne of Him who is made "higher than the heavens", better than the angels, seated at the right hand of the majesty on high.

Evil, then, would be to Christ an agency for good; not that evil comes from God, or is anything but evil, but faith utilizes it for good, because faith understands that God reigns in the darkness as well as in the light (Psalm 139:12), and that God fulfills His own purpose through adverse circumstances which expose to man his inability and spur him on to the receiving faith which liberates God to work.

⁹ Norman P Grubb: *The Spontaneous You*, Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade. © 1966

God Will Provide¹⁰

Fred Pruitt

*My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering.*¹¹

What has so powerfully overwhelmed me is the word "HIMSELF."

Let's not forget the Lamb IS God. God to the rescue out of the utter weakness, vulnerability and willingness-to-be-killed of a little helpless lamb. And let's not forget that we are not separate from our Father, Who sends us as lambs to the slaughter. Yet not we, but He. When He sends us, He Himself goes. But being sent like a lamb to the slaughter feels like separation. It feels like we are outside of God, or have been abandoned by Him.

We walk on anyway. The word of faith we have heard and spoken inwardly energizes us and propels us onward to an unseen impossible goal. To live.

At the last minute no separate lamb appears. GOD HIMSELF is the Lamb who comes out of nowhere and takes the death unto Himself. In apparent separation (in our minds) we think we are going down to die, and hope is like a wispy dream, but at the last minute another comes to take the death in us.

God will provide HIMSELF -- as a lamb.

And the risen Son who is ourselves (Christ in us) will be the seed that blesses all nations. (And by "all nations," I don't mean something grandiose. I just mean all the life around us as far as we extend ourselves into it.)

God has only provided one "thing" in the universe: Himself. He is the Source out of which everything not only appears, but also is held up as a Living Reality moment by moment.

*Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth I desire beside thee. My heart and my flesh faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever.*¹²

¹⁰ Fred Pruitt: Hearts of Flesh

¹¹ Gen 22:8

¹² Ps 73:25,26

The Glory of a Fully Alive Soul

DeeDee Winter

Few understand the *vital* work God did in the making of our souls and the function they are meant to perform. They are *perfectly created* to be fully active and alive in every direction. To see our actions and reactions as less than the *ideal* we believe to be the life of Christ...something to the effect that when/if we know union then we can ___(fill in the blank with whatever it is that you do not like about yourself)___ and we can *behave* like Jesus...or be *more like* Jesus. How many times have we heard that? We have a false idea of the human person Jesus was and carry that same false idea into our own lives as a standard to be attained...when in fact He wants to live in us in *our* human uniqueness exactly as He created us to be!

From the instant we are born of His Spirit, Christ **IS** living our lives! Before we received Christ we were in co-operation with the god of this world. This 'working relationship' was taken to the Cross (Romans 6:6-8) when we took Him as our Savior. Our God-created humanity...soul and body, which the Bible calls "fearfully and wonderfully made" ...was made new and newly used by Christ, as a vessel of honor. We experience sweeping changes in our lives as we begin to experience Love living by us, but an even deeper change comes in our awareness, or consciousness, as we realize we are joined to Him...one spirit/Spirit (I Cor 6:17) a oneness so secure that we say with Jesus, "I do nothing of Myself..." This regained oneness was the whole purpose of His Cross...that He would bring us back into a oneness relationship man had with God before the Fall. This oneness was soon to be accomplished as Jesus prayed His glorious last prayer of John 17... "That they may be one as We are one" ...but first He must go to His Cross. The only way His word would be fulfilled was through His death, resurrection and ascension. This same process *now takes place in us through our souls*. It is by our "bearing about in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus" that others have life. This is why it is imperative that our souls be fully alive and active!

We learn in Scripture that man is tri-part...spirit, soul and body. (I Thes 5:23) Our spirit is our real self, created in the image of God and is what is joined in union with Him when we say, "Yes" to His call. Our soul and body are expressers of that spirit/Spirit union. Spirit is made up of heart, mind and will...and *fixed* in Him. Our Souls are comprised of feelings and emotions. Our body is the physical part of our being. We have a spirit-mind...where we **know** (I Cor 2:16) as well as a human soul/body mind where we think and reason. (Eph 4:23)

With this groundwork laid let's look at a passage of Scripture where Christ Jesus ties the whole package of **'us'** together. It is Matthew 16:13-26 in which Jesus vividly instructs His disciples what their lives are to be. It begins in 16:13 with Jesus asking WHO they think He is and Peter says He is the Christ. Jesus says that flesh and blood did not tell him that...meaning that we must have a revelation of the Spirit to understand God...and upon this rock of faith/revelation He builds His church.

Now let's skip to the last verse and talk about our souls. I don't know about you, but there were many years that ALL I wanted to do was "forfeit" my soul! I was *way too afraid* of my feelings and thoughts. I just wanted to live in nirvana...in a flat-lined place of peace. Oh, it was nice when I 'felt' good or happy, but let anyone or anything disturb me in any way and I went into a defense mode or one of condemnation because I just couldn't "be like Jesus". Little did I know then that "trying to 'be like' Jesus" was the sin of the Garden of Eden...as Eve was tempted to "be like God." I discovered God had a thing or two to teach me about my soul and the rightness and necessity of it.

God's revealing came one day as I was suddenly filled with jealousy towards a friend I had loved for many years. I knew nothing but to deny it...to affirm that I was not jealous, but was Christ in my form. Just as quickly as the words came out the Lord said right back to me, "You are not jealous **of** her, you are jealous **for** her. It is My jealousy in you for her to know Me as you do." I immediately agreed that she would!

But as I swirled that truth around in my mind I came to realize that every feeling and emotion from love, peace, patience, kindness and long-suffering to anger, hate and jealousy could be either rightly or wrongly used...wrongly before I was born of His Spirit when even my love was really to gain my own ends...to rightly now as in my jealousy is 'for' another accomplishing eternal purposes by my agreement with God for my friend. *Everything* God says about Himself and expresses in Scripture He will be in/as us!

Matt 16:24-26 says...Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whosoever wishes to save **his** life shall lose it, and whosoever wishes to lose **his** life for My sake, shall save it. For what will a man be profited if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Jesus says we are to take up **our** cross and follow Him. Following Him is simply going about our daily lives as He "causes us to walk in His ways." I used to see the emphasis in this passage on

lose and life, but now I saw it was on **his/our**...meaning any idea of an independent or separate life. We must get the FACT settled, that there is not one thing in/as us apart from Him, before we can fulfill our high-calling as intercessors...binding and loosing for those the Lord gives to us.

Jesus says to accomplish all He has spoken to his disciples He must go to His cross and die...to which Peter replies, "NO!" In a very powerful and telling statement Jesus calls him Satan.

And then the icing on the cake! What does it profit a man to lose his soul? NEVER expressing the intensity of emotions that bring about the Cross in us...our dying and rising...when our quest is to live in a phony existence of n essence we do THE VERY SAME THING as Peter did when he told Jesus not to go to the Cross...and THAT is Satan's gospel...even today as he condemns us for any negative feeling!!! "*That's not very Christ-like*" he says and until we are settled, we fall into chasing the false image of Jesus we have been taught.

Do you see how vital it is to have a FULLY FUNCTIONING HUMANITY??? It is the ONLY way the Cross can operate in us and we can be intercessors we were created to be...bearing His life, dying daily...co-saviors with Christ!

Jesus says that WE have the keys...of binding and loosing people and their lives...the keys of bringing others into His life and love...of reversing tragedies...of healing broken hearts...of setting those free whom God brings us...of bringing them to wholeness...all by our word! Our **very valuable SOULS** are the vehicle for His Cross!

Let us do as the Spirit commanded the disciples in Acts..."Go, stand and speak in the temple *all* the words of *this* life." Let us no longer give or believe in a partial Gospel that leaves us always having to get ourselves straight!

Walk by faith in 'this' Life...His Life...fully lived by us...

Accepting Our Humanity¹³

Dan Stone

I have emphasized how God made us new creations at our new birth. That is rock bottom truth. In a sense, though, you have the same humanity now that you had before. Your spirit is new, but you didn't receive a new personality the moment you received Christ. You are still mostly outgoing, or reserved, or spontaneous, or considered. Your humanity is basically the same before and after. But can you glory in it now? If they put a new engine in your car, even though it still has rust spots, can you glory in your car?

That's what God is saying to us. "If I am willing to put a new engine in your car and glory in your car, can you glory in your car? Will you glory with Me?" That's one of the hardest lessons we have to learn: to glory in our humanity. To be satisfied with ourselves as we are. Is there a harder lesson?

Every one of us has something about our humanity-our personality, or for some of us our body-that we wish God would change so that we'd look better for Him, at least from our perspective. We think, "God, if you'd just take that thing away, I'd look better for You." That "thing" may be with us until they plant us six feet under.

We come to a place where we say, "Lord, even though that thing is still in my humanity, I'm going to praise You for it." You know what I discovered? The minute I started praising God for my impatience, I didn't see it anymore. I don't mean it disappeared, but I didn't have a fixation on it. I wasn't anxious about it any longer. That's the way God moves on in us, when we accept ourselves as He does.

I'm not advocating sin, by any means. I am saying that when we shift our focus from ourselves-some neutral aspect of our personality that we don't like, or, yes, even some flesh pattern that keeps recurring - and instead focus on Christ in us, God does His work in us. We are transformed into His image as we behold Him, not as we behold ourselves (2 Corinthians 3: 18).

¹³ Dan Stone: *The Rest of the Gospel: When the partial Gospel has worn you out.* Dallas: One Press. 2000.

God takes those things that are fixations in us when we're flesh-oriented and turns them into blessings when we're spirit-oriented. What I despised became a blessing in somebody else's life. Those things become the years the locusts ate that God restores, the dung that God makes into a compost pile. He lets it sit there until it's done a work in us. Then we can take our humanity back and say, "It's perfect to God right now. If He wants to do any altering of it, He is at work in me to will and do of His good pleasure. If He wants to change it, He who began a good work in me will bring it to pass. He can finish what He started."

I'm not going to take my humanity back on my own terms. I don't want it back that way. It took me long enough to get rid of it-as the source of my life. When you see it's no longer the starting point of your life, but rather the means by which God's life is manifested, you can take it back. You can accept yourself as you are. You can accept yourself as God's asset. Finally we are able to say, "Lord, through my family tree and all of the circumstances I've come through, You've made the outer person that I am. You live in that person, and you set that person in the world in a way that's going to attract some people to You. I'm not going to attract everybody. The ones You don't attract through me, You'll catch through someone else."

That's why we all fit together, isn't it? We fit together into a whole. Nobody can attract everybody. I used to try to attract everybody. But there are all kinds of fruit. There are oranges. There are apples. There are lemons. God uses all kinds. I say to people, "I am a lemon." God attracts some through my lemonness.

We don't have to be anybody else; we don't have to submit to anyone trying to make us like anybody else, either. We are free to be ourselves. God is pleased to manifest His beautiful variety of expression through each of us in our uniqueness.

Christ¹⁴

Major W. Ian Thomas

To be in Christ – that is redemption; but for Christ to be in you – that is sanctification! To be in Christ – that makes you fit for heaven; but for Christ to be in you – that makes you fit for earth! To be in Christ – that changes your destination; but for Christ to be in you – that changes your destiny! The one makes heaven your home – the other makes this world His workshop.

¹⁴ Major W. Ian Thomas: *The Saving Life of Christ*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House. ©1961

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