

A GOSPEL PRIMER *FOR CHRISTIANS*

Gospel. n. (*god*, good + *spel*, news) good news of salvation for hell-deserving sinners through the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

Primer. n. a book that covers the basic elements of a subject.

Milton Vincent

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“...the gospel,...
...of first importance...”

(1 Corinthians 15:1,3)

“If there’s anything in life that we should be passionate about, it’s the gospel. And I don’t mean passionate only about sharing it with others. I mean passionate about thinking about it, dwelling on it, rejoicing in it, allowing it to color the way we look at the world. Only one thing can be of first importance to each of us. And only the gospel ought to be.”

(C.J. Mahaney, The Cross Centered Life, 20-21)

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Introduction

This booklet is offered as a handy guide to help Christians experience the gospel more fully by preaching it to themselves each day. It is also offered as a correction to a costly mistake made by Christians who view the gospel as something that has fully served out its purpose the moment they believed in Jesus for salvation. Not knowing what to do with the gospel once they are saved, they lay it aside soon after conversion so they can move on to “bigger and better” things (even Scriptural things). Of course, none of us thinks this is what we are doing at the time, yet after many years of floundering in defeat we can look back and see that this is exactly what we have done.

God did not give us His gospel just so we could embrace it and be converted. Actually, He offers it to us every day as a gift that keeps on giving to us everything we need for life and godliness. The wise believer learns this truth early and becomes proficient in extracting available benefits from the gospel each day. We extract these benefits by being absorbed in the gospel, speaking it to ourselves when necessary, and by daring to reckon it true in all we do.

God’s gifts are all of grace, and there is nothing we can do to earn them. However, the wise believer will make sure he is positioning himself in the spot where God’s gracious gifts are located. And the Scripture teaches that all such gifts are located inside the gospel. Hence, the Bible tells Christians to be continuously established and steadfast in the gospel and to refuse to be moved from there (Colossians 1:23).

As for myself, after years of frustration, fits and

starts, and exhausted collapses in my Christian walk, I have come back to a focus on the gospel and have found its sufficiency for daily living to be truly overwhelming. After years of church attendance, university and seminary training, and countless hours of Bible study in preparation for preaching many hundreds of sermons, I have found nothing more powerful and life-transforming than the gospel truths affirmed on the following pages. Rehearsing these truths each day has become a pleasurable discipline by which I enjoy God’s love and maintain fresh contact with His provision and power for daily living.

Over the course of time, preaching the gospel to myself every day has made more of a difference in my life than any other discipline I have ever practiced. I find myself sinning less, but just as importantly, I find myself recovering my footing more quickly after sinning, due to the immediate comfort found in the gospel. I have also found that when I am absorbed in the gospel, everything else I am supposed to be toward God and others seems to flow out of me more naturally and passionately. Doing right is not always easy, but it is never more easy than when one is breathing deeply the atmosphere of the gospel. I am confident that you will find the same to be true in your life as well.

This booklet is written partly as a result of the influence of Jerry Bridges’ excellent book entitled The Discipline of Grace (NavPress, 1994), for it was through this book that I first heard the challenge to preach the gospel to myself every day. Since that time, my method of rehearsing the gospel has evolved from a short list of gospel truths on a 3 x 5 card into the

formats presented on the following pages. It is my hope that the formats below will be basic enough for the average reader, yet sufficiently thorough to cover the main categories of gospel thought.

The first part of this booklet contains *Reasons to Rehearse the Gospel Daily*. The reasons given are designed to remind you, the reader, of some valuable blessings which the gospel can render in the life of the believer who rehearses the gospel in faith each day. The second and third parts of the booklet contain A *Gospel Narrative* in both a prose and poetic format respectively. Both formats are written in a way that facilitates memorization and smooth recital of the gospel. At the bottom of every page are relevant Scriptures that affirm the truths expressed. All Scripture quotations are from The New American Standard Bible (1995 Edition) unless otherwise noted.

Much of what follows is written in the first person singular (*I, my, me*), for everything said on the following pages is your testimony if you are a believer in Jesus. Therefore, read these words, or better, speak them aloud as a way of testifying daily to your own heart the truth of what God has done for you and made available for you in the gospel. You'd be amazed at the difference such a practice can make in your life.

Please view this booklet as a primer of sorts, as a tool designed merely to get you launched in preaching the gospel to yourself and rehearsing its benefits. The precise wording on the following pages need not be recited slavishly. In fact, over time you will likely develop your own wording and emphases as your proficiency in the gospel grows. Consequently, you may eventually reach a point where you no longer have

need of this tool. If such a day comes, then the purpose of this booklet will have been fully served.

Finally, it should be noted that the purpose of this booklet is admittedly narrow, given the larger context of Christian practice. Actually, there are numerous "habits of grace" that are essential to the full experience of God's grace in the life of the believer. Some of them are as follows: Bible meditation (Acts 20:32; Colossians 3:16), faith (Hebrews 4:2), prayer (Hebrews 4:16), fellowship with the saints (Ephesians 4:25), humility (James 4:6), generosity (2 Corinthians 9:8-14), obedience (Titus 2:11-12), forgiveness (Ephesians 4:32), worship (Ephesians 1:6), and evangelism (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). My purpose here is merely to spotlight the first of these practices and to provide a specific method by which you can meditate on the gospel in a meaningful way. While preaching the gospel to yourself will powerfully enrich your life in every area, the other habits listed above should also be practiced in order for your experience of the gospel to be truly complete.

Nonetheless, this booklet is based on the premise that all Christians should become expert in their knowledge and use of the gospel, not simply so they can share it faithfully with non-Christians, but also so they can speak it to themselves every day and experience its benefits. In fact, if Christians would do more preaching of the gospel to themselves, non-Christians might have less trouble comprehending its message, for they would see its truth and power exuding from believers in indisputable ways. This booklet is offered as a service to this end.

Milton Vincent

PART I

Reasons to Rehearse the Gospel Daily

“The gospel isn’t one class among many that you’ll attend during your life as a Christian – the gospel is the whole building that all the classes take place in! Rightly approached, all the topics you’ll study and focus on as a believer will be offered to you ‘within the walls’ of the glorious gospel.”

(C.J. Mahaney, *The Cross Centered Life*, 75-76)

The New Testament Model

The New Testament teaches that Christians ought to hear the gospel as much as non-Christians do. In fact, in the first chapter of Romans the Apostle Paul tells the believers in the church that he was anxious “to preach the gospel to you who are at Rome.”¹ Of course he was anxious to preach the gospel to the non-Christians at Rome, yet he specifically states that he was eager to preach it to the believers as well.

To the Corinthian Christians who had already believed and been saved by the gospel, Paul says, “I make known to you the gospel, which you have believed....”² He then restates the historical facts of the gospel before showing them how those gospel facts apply to their beliefs about the afterlife. This is actually Paul’s approach to various other issues throughout the book of 1 Corinthians.

In most of Paul’s letters to churches, sizeable portions of them are given over to rehearsing gospel truths. For example, Ephesians 1-3 is all gospel, Colossians 1-2 is gospel, and Romans 1-11 is gospel. The remainder of such books shows specifically how to bring those gospel truths to bear on life. Re-preaching

¹**Romans 1:15.** “So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are at Rome.”

²**1 Corinthians 15.** “(1) Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, (2) by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. (3) For I delivered to you as of first importance . . . that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, (4) and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.”

the gospel and then showing how it applied to life was Paul’s choice method for ministering to believers, thereby providing a divinely inspired pattern for me to follow when ministering to myself and to other believers.

My Daily Need

The gospel is so foolish³ (according to my natural wisdom), so scandalous⁴ (according to my conscience), and so incredible (according to my timid heart⁵), that it is a daily battle to believe the full scope of it as I should. There is simply no other way to compete with the forebodings of my conscience, the condemnings of my heart, and the lies of the world and the Devil⁶ than to overwhelm such things with daily rehearsings of the gospel.

³**1 Corinthians 1.** “(21) For since . . . the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. . . . (23) . . . we preach Christ crucified, . . . to Gentiles foolishness.”

⁴**1 Corinthians 1: 23.** “. . . we preach Christ crucified, . . . a stumbling block [Gr. *skandalon*]”

⁵**1 John 3.** “(19) We shall know . . . that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him, (20) in whatever our heart condemns us”

⁶**2 Corinthians 4:4.** “. . . the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ”

The Power of God

Outside of heaven, the power of God in its highest density is found inside the gospel. This must be so, for the Bible twice describes the gospel as “the power of God.”⁷ Nothing else in all of Scripture is ever described in this way, except for the Person of Jesus Christ.⁸ Such a description indicates that the gospel is not only powerful, but that it is the ultimate entity in which God’s power resides and does its greatest work.

Indeed, God’s power is seen in erupting volcanos, in the unimaginably hot boil of our massive sun, and in the lightning speed of a recently discovered star seen streaking through the heavens at 1.5 million miles per hour. Yet in Scripture such wonders are never labeled “the power of God.” How powerful, then, must the gospel be that it would merit such a title! And how great is the salvation it could accomplish in my life, if I would only embrace it by faith⁹ and give it a central place in my thoughts each day!

⁷**Romans 1:16.** “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes” **1 Corinthians 1:18.** “For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

⁸**1 Corinthians 1:24.** “...Christ the power of God....”

⁹**Hebrews 4:2.** “For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.” **Ephesians 1.** “(18) I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know . . . (19) . . . what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward you who believe.”

My Daily Protection

As long as I am inside the gospel, I experience all the protection I need from the powers of evil that rage against me. It is for this reason that the Bible tells me to “take up”¹⁰ and “put on”¹¹ continually the whole armor of God; and the pieces of armor it tells me to put on are all merely synonyms for the gospel. Translated literally from the Greek, they are: “. . . the salvation . . . the justification . . . truth . . . the gospel of peace . . . the faith . . . [and the] . . . word of God.”¹² What are all these expressions but various ways of describing the gospel? Therefore, if I wish to stand victorious in Jesus, I must do as the songwriter suggests and “put on the gospel armor, each piece put on with prayer.”¹³

That God would tell me to “take up” and “put on”

¹⁰**Ephesians 6:13.** “Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day”

¹¹**Ephesians 6:10.** “Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. (11) For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

¹²**Ephesians 6.** “(14) Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, (15) and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; (16) in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. (17) And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

¹³“Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus,” written by George Duffield, Jr., (1818-1888).

this gospel armor alerts me to the fact that I do not automatically come into each day protected by the gospel. In fact, these commands imply that I am vulnerable to defeat and injury unless I seize upon the gospel and arm myself with it from head to toe. And what better way is there to do this than to preach the gospel to myself and to make it the obsession of my heart throughout each day?

Transformed by Glory

The glory of God is the most powerful agent of transformation available to mankind. It is so powerful that it transforms those who merely gaze upon it. The Apostle Paul gives personal testimony concerning this stunning fact. “*But we all,*” he says, “*beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory.*”¹⁴ From Paul’s testimony I learn that if I wish to become all that God wants me to be, I must behold His glory each day.

But where do I find God’s glory to behold? Indeed, the glory of God is revealed throughout all of Creation,¹⁵ but the Bible indicates that, outside of heaven, the glory of God in its thickest density dwells inside the gospel. It is for this reason that the gospel is described in Scripture as “*the gospel of the glory of Christ*”

¹⁴**2 Corinthians 3:18.** “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”

¹⁵**Psalm 19:1.** “The heavens are telling the glory of God” **Isaiah 6:3.** “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.”

and “*the gospel of the glory of the blessed God.*”¹⁶ Consequently, as I habitually gaze upon the glory of the Lord revealed in the gospel, I can know that actual deposits of God’s very glory are attaching themselves to my person and transforming me from one level of glory to another.¹⁷ This transformation is deep and abiding, and unfadingly displays the glory of God to others.¹⁸

A Cure for Distrust

Every time I deliberately disobey a command of God, it is because I am in that moment doubtful as to God’s true intentions in giving me that command. Does He really have my best interests at heart? Or is He withholding something from me that I would be better off having?¹⁹ Such questions, whether consciously asked or not, lie underneath every act of

¹⁶**2 Corinthians 4:4.** “. . . the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ” **1 Timothy 1:11.** “. . . the gospel of the glory of the blessed God” (*literal translation*)

¹⁷**2 Corinthians 3:18.** “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”

¹⁸**2 Corinthians 3:13.** “And [we] are not like Moses, who used to put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel would not look intently at the end of that which was fading away.”

¹⁹**Genesis 3.** “(4) The serpent said, ‘. . . (5) . . . God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’ (6) When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate”

disobedience.

However, the gospel changes my view of God's commandments, in that it helps me to see the heart of the Person from whom those commandments come. When I begin my train of thought with the gospel, I realize that if God loved me enough to sacrifice His Son's life for me, then He must be guided by that same love when He speaks His commandments to me. Viewing God's commands and prohibitions in this light, I can see them for what they are: friendly signposts from a heavenly Father who is seeking to love me through each directive, so that I might experience His very fullness forever.²⁰

When controlling my thoughts as described above, the gospel cures me of my suspicion of God, thereby disposing me to walk more trustingly on the path of obedience to His commands.

All I Ever Need

The gospel serves as the means by which God daily constructs me into what He wants me to be and also serves as the channel through which He gives me my inheritance every day of my Christian life.²¹ Hence, it could be said that the gospel contains all that I need for life and godliness. It is for this reason that God

²⁰**Deuteronomy 5:29.** "O that they had such a heart in them, that they would . . . keep My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!"

²¹**Acts 20:32.** ". . . I commend you . . . to the message of His grace [the gospel], which is continually able to build you up and give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified." (*literal translation*)

tells me to be steadfastly entrenched in the gospel at all times and never to allow myself to be moved from there.²² The mere fact that God tells me to stay inside the gospel at all times must mean that He intends to supply all of my needs as long as I am abiding in that glorious location.²³

Freedom from Sin's Power

As long as I am stricken with the guilt of my sins, I will be captive to them, and will keep re-committing the very sins about which I feel most guilty. The Devil is well aware of this fact; he knows that if he can keep me tormented by sin's guilt, he can dominate me with sin's power.

The gospel, however, slays sin at this root point and thereby nullifies sin's power over me. The forgiveness of God, made known to me through the gospel, liberates me from sin's power because it liberates me first from its guilt;²⁴ and preaching such forgiveness to

²²**Colossians 1:23.** ". . . continue in the faith firmly establish and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel . . ."

²³**Colossians 2.** "(8) See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. (9) For in Him all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form, (10) and in Him you have been made complete . . ." **2 Peter 1:3.** ". . . His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence."

²⁴**Romans 6:14.** "For sin shall not be master over you, for you are . . . under grace."

myself is a practical way of putting the gospel into operation as a nullifier of sin's power in my life.

Resting in Christ's Righteousness

The gospel encourages me to rest in my righteous standing with God, a standing which Christ Himself has accomplished and always maintains for me.²⁵ I never have to do a moment's labor to gain or maintain my justified status before God!²⁶ Freed from the burden of such a task, I now can put my energies into enjoying God, pursuing holiness, and ministering God's amazing grace to others.

The gospel also reminds me that my righteous standing with God always holds firm regardless of my performance, because my standing is based solely on the work of Jesus and not mine.²⁷ On my worst days of sin and failure, the gospel encourages me with God's

²⁵**Romans 5.** "(1) Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (2) through whom also we have obtained our inheritance by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God." **1 John 2.** "(1) . . . And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. (2) and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins . . ."

²⁶**Romans 4:3.** "But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness." **Hebrews 4:3.** "For we who have believed enter that rest." **Matthew 11:28.** "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

²⁷**Romans 5.** '(18) So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men . . . (19) . . . through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous."

unrelenting grace toward me.²⁸ On my best days of victory and usefulness, the gospel keeps me relating to God solely on the basis of Jesus' righteousness and not mine.

Obedience Borne of Romance

To love God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength is the greatest commandment in the Law.²⁹ If I could simply fulfill this one commandment, I would gladly fulfill all others as a natural matter of course.

So how can I come to love God with all of my being?³⁰ The Bible teaches that genuine love in my heart for God is generated by an awareness of His love for me,³¹ and nowhere is the love of God more clearly

²⁸**Romans 5.** ". . . where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, (21) so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (6:1) What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace might increase?" **1 John 2.** "(1) . . . And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. (2) and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins . . ."

²⁹**Mark 12.** "(28) . . . 'What commandment is foremost of all?' . . . (30) ' . . . you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'"

³⁰**1 John 5:3.** "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome."

³¹**1 John 4:19.** "We love, because He first loved us."

revealed than in the gospel.³² Therefore, preaching the gospel to myself is a great way to keep God's amazing love before my eyes, so that I might experience its power to produce in me a passionate love for Him in return. Romanced by His love in this way, my increasingly smitten heart will burn to do His will and will feast itself on doing so.³³

Perspective in Trials

More than anything else could ever do, the gospel enables me to embrace my tribulations and thereby position myself to gain full benefit from them. For the gospel is the one great permanent circumstance in which I live and move; and every hardship in my life is allowed by God only because it serves His gospel purposes in me. When I view my circumstances in this light, I realize that the gospel is not just one piece of good news that fits into my life somewhere among all the bad. I realize instead that the gospel makes

³²**Romans 5.** "(7) For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. (8) But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." **John 15:13.** "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." **Ephesians 2.** "(4) But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, (5) even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)."

³³**John 14:31.** "... so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me." **John 4:34.** "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work." **Psalms 40:3.** "I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart."

genuinely good news out of every other aspect of my life, including my severest trials.³⁴ The good news about my trials is that God is forcing them to bow to His gospel purposes and do good unto me by improving my character and making me more conformed to the image of Christ.³⁵

Preaching the gospel to myself each day provides a lens through which I can view my trials in this way and see the true cause for intelligent rejoicing that exists in them. I can then embrace them as friends and allow them to do God's good work in me.

³⁴**Romans 5.** "(1) . . . having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, (2) . . . and we exult in hope of the glory of God. (3) And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; (4) and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; (5) and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

³⁵**Romans 8.** "(28) And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. (29) For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son" **James 1.** "(2) Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, (3) knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. (4) And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." **2 Corinthians 12.** "(7) . . . there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger or Satan to torment me – to keep me from exalting myself. (8) Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. (9) And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. (10) Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong."

Stimulated to Love Others

When my mind is fixed on the gospel, I have ample stimulation to show God's love to other people. For I am always willing to show love to others when I am freshly mindful of the love that God has shown me.³⁶ Also, the gospel gives me the wherewithal to give forgiving grace to those who have wronged me, for it reminds me daily of the forgiving grace that God is showing me.³⁷

Doing good and showing love to those who have wronged me is always the opposite of what my sinful flesh wants me to do. Nonetheless, when I remind myself of my sins against God and of His forgiving and

³⁶**Titus 3.** "(1) Remind them . . . (2) to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men. (3) For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. (4) But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, (5) He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, (6) whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, (7) so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (8) This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men."

³⁷**Ephesians 4:32.** "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you." **Colossians 3.** "(12) So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; (13) bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you."

generous grace toward me, I give the gospel an opportunity to reshape my perspective and to put me in a frame of mind wherein I actually desire to give this same grace to those who have wronged me.

Loving My Brothers and Sisters

The more I experience the gospel, the more there develops within me a yearning affection for my fellow-Christians who are also participating in the glories of the gospel. This affection for them comes loaded with confidence in their continued spiritual growth and ultimate glorification, and it becomes my pleasure to express to them this loving confidence regarding the ongoing work of God in their lives.³⁸

Additionally, with the gospel proving itself to be such a boon in my own life, I realize that the greatest gift I can give to my fellow-Christians is the gospel itself. Indeed, I love my fellow-Christians not simply because of the gospel, but I love them best when I am loving them with the gospel!³⁹ And I do this not

³⁸**Philippians 1.** "(3) I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, (4) always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, (5) in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. (6) For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. (7) For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you are all partakers of grace with me."

³⁹**1 Thessalonians 2:8.** "Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us."

merely by speaking gospel words to them, but also by living before them and generously relating to them in a gospel manner. Imparting my life to them in this way, I thereby contribute to their experience of the power, the Spirit, and the full assurance of the gospel.⁴⁰

By preaching the gospel to myself each day, I nurture the bond that unites me with my brothers and sisters for whom Christ died, and I also keep myself well-versed in the raw materials with which I may actively love them in Christ.

My Inheritance in the Saints

The gospel is not just a message of reconciliation with God, but it also heralds the reconciliation of all believers to one another in Christ. Through the death of Christ, God has brought peace where there was once hostility, and He has broken down the barriers that once divided us outside of Christ.⁴¹

⁴⁰**1 Thessalonians 1:5.** "For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake." (*New King James Version*)

⁴¹**Ephesians 2.** "(14) For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, (15) by abolishing in His flesh the enmity . . . so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, (16) and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity." **Colossians 3:11.** "a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all." **Galatians 3:28.** "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Also, when God saved us, He made us members of His household⁴² and He gave us as gifts to one another.⁴³ Each brother and sister is a portion of my gospel inheritance from God, and I am a portion of their inheritance as well. We are significant players in each other's gospel narrative, and it is in relationship with one another that we experience the fullness of God in Christ.⁴⁴

Hence, the more I comprehend the full scope of the gospel, the more I value the church for which Christ died,⁴⁵ the more I value the role that I play in the lives of my fellow-Christians, and the more I appreciate the role that they must be allowed to play in mine.

⁴²**Ephesians 2:19.** "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and are of God's household."

⁴³**Ephesians 1:18.** "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know . . . what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints."

⁴⁴**Ephesians 3.** "(17) . . . you, being rooted and grounded in love, (18) may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, (19) and to know the love of Christ . . . that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God." **2 Timothy 2:22.** ". . . pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart." **1 Peter 4:10.** "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." **Ephesians 1.** ". . . the church, (23) which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."

⁴⁵**Ephesians 5:25.** ". . . Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her,"

A Heart for the Lost

The more I rehearse and exult in gospel truths, the more there develops within me a corresponding burden for non-Christians to enter into such blessings. This is also what seems to happen to the Apostle Paul while writing the book of Romans.

In Romans 5 Paul exults in his righteous standing before God.⁴⁶ In chapter 6 he speaks of the freedom from sin which Christ has accomplished in the lives of believers,⁴⁷ a freedom which Paul later confesses had not yet become fully realized in his own daily practice (chapter 7).⁴⁸ Nonetheless, coming into chapter 8, he recounts the fact that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.⁴⁹ With increasing flourish, he rehearses numerous gospel themes throughout the length of chapter 8, and he climaxes the chapter with a triumphant exclamation regarding the endless love of God which enables Christians to

⁴⁶**Romans 5.** "(1) Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . (2) . . . we exult (3) . . . we . . . exult (11) . . . we exult"

⁴⁷**Romans 6.** "(1) What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? (2) May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" **Romans 6:6.** "knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that would no longer be slaves to sin."

⁴⁸**Romans 7:19.** "For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want."

⁴⁹**Romans 8:1.** "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

conquer overwhelmingly in all things.⁵⁰

What effect do such gospel meditations have upon Paul? What emotions do they produce in him besides the obvious joy he feels while reciting them? Paul bares his soul at the very beginning of chapter 9: "*I have great sorrow,*" he says, "*and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ, for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.*"⁵¹

Coming down from the heights of gospel meditation, Paul's heart was devastated by a burden for his fellow-Jews to experience the saving power of the gospel. His burden existed long before he started writing, but it was undoubtedly intensified by his rehearsal of gospel truths in Romans 5-8, a rehearsal which inevitably led his thoughts toward the plight of those outside of Christ.

Hence, if I wish to have a 'Romans 9' kind of burden for non-Christians, I should become practiced at celebrating the gospel as Paul does in Romans 5-8. Over time, my joy in the gospel will become

⁵⁰**Romans 8.** "(35) Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . (37) But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. (38) For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, (39) nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

⁵¹**Romans 9.** "(1) I am telling the truth in Christ, . . . (2) that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. (3) For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, (4) who are Israelites"

increasingly tinged with grief, and this grief-stained joy will lend a God-inspired passion to my ministry of evangelizing the lost.

Cultivating Humility

According to Scripture, God deliberately designed the gospel in such a way so as to strip me of pride and leave me without any grounds for boasting in myself whatsoever.⁵² This is actually a wonderful mercy from God, for pride is at the root of all my sin. Pride produced the first sin the Garden,⁵³ and pride always precedes every sinful stumbling in my life.⁵⁴ Therefore, if I am to experience deliverance from sin, then I must be delivered from the pride that produces it. Thankfully, the gospel is engineered to accomplish this deliverance.

Preaching the gospel to myself each day mounts a

⁵²**Ephesians 2.** “(8) For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; (9) not as a result of works, so that no one should boast.” **1 Corinthians 1.** “(27) but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, (28) and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He might nullify the things that are, (29) so that no man may boast before God.”

⁵³**Genesis 3.** “(4) The serpent said, ‘ . . . (5) . . . God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’ (6) When the woman saw that the tree . . . was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate.”

⁵⁴**Proverbs 16:18.** “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling.” (*New King James Version*)

powerful assault against my pride and serves to establish humility in its place. Nothing suffocates my pride more than daily reminders regarding the glory of my God, the gravity of my sins, and the crucifixion of God’s own Son in my place. Also, the gracious love of God, lavished on me because of Christ’s death, is always humbling to remember, especially when viewed against the backdrop of the Hell I deserve.

Pride wilts in the atmosphere of the gospel; and the more pride is mortified within me, the less frequent are my moments of sinful contention with God and with others.⁵⁵ Conversely, humility grows lushly in the atmosphere of the gospel, and the more humility flourishes within me, the more I experience God’s grace⁵⁶ along with the strengthening His grace provides.⁵⁷ Additionally, such humility intensifies my passion for God and causes my heart increasingly to thrill whenever He is praised.⁵⁸

Liberation from Self-Love

Compared to greater endeavors, self-love is mundane and tiresome. Consequently, the more

⁵⁵**Proverbs 13:10.** “By pride comes nothing but strife” (*New King James Version*)

⁵⁶**James 4:6.** “. . . God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

⁵⁷**Hebrews 13:9.** “. . . it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace”

⁵⁸**Psalms 34:2.** “My soul shall make its boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear it and rejoice.”

thoroughly I can be done with such tedium, the freer my soul will be to soar at its God-intended heights.

One of the leading causes of my natural tendency to self-love is fear. I fear that if I do not love myself there would be no one left to love me quite so well as I do. An even more significant cause of self-love is a lack of persuasion that there is someone out there who is worthy to be loved more than I. Arrogance lies underneath both of these causes: I love myself supremely because I am the most worthy person I know to be loved and also because I think I can do a better job at it than anyone else. Such arrogance is dangerous,⁵⁹ yet deeply ingrained in my sinful flesh.

Thankfully, the gospel frees me from the shackles of self-love by addressing both of these causes. First, the gospel assures me that the love of God is infinitely superior to any love that I could ever give to myself. “Greater love has no one than this,” says Jesus while speaking of His love.⁶⁰ And the deeper I go into the gospel, the more I experience the truth of His claim and thereby know how far His love for me surpasses even my own.⁶¹ His astonishing love for me renders self-absorption moot and frees me up to move on to

⁵⁹ **2 Timothy 3.** “(1) But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: (2) For men will be lovers of themselves” (*New King James Version*)

⁶⁰ **John 15:13.** “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.”

⁶¹ **Romans 8:32.** “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?”

causes and interests far greater than myself.⁶²

Second, the gospel reveals to me the breathtaking glory and loveliness of God,⁶³ and in so doing, it lures my heart away from love of self and leaves me enthralled by Him instead. The more I behold God’s glory in the gospel, the more lovely He appears to me. And the more lovely He appears, the more self fades into the background like a former love interest who can no longer compete for my affections.

Preaching the gospel to myself every day reminds me of God’s astounding love for me and also of His infinite worthiness to be loved by me above all else. These reminders deliver a one-two punch to my innate self-absorption and leave me increasingly absorbed with Christ⁶⁴ and with God’s ultimate plan to gather together all heavenly and earthly things in Him.⁶⁵

⁶² **2 Corinthians 5.** “(14) For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; (15) and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.”

⁶³ **2 Corinthians 4:4.** “. . . the gospel of the glory of Christ” **1 Timothy 1:11.** “. . . the gospel of the glory of the blessed God” (*literal translation*)

⁶⁴ **Philippians 3.** “(7) But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. (8) More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ.”

⁶⁵ **Ephesians 1.** “(9) He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him (10) with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all

Hope of Heaven

The more I experience the riches of Christ in the gospel, the more there develops within me a yearning to be with Christ in heaven where I will experience His grace in unhindered fullness.⁶⁶ The reason for this yearning is simple: however great may be the present blessings of salvation, they are but the “*first fruits of the Spirit*,” the first installments of an unimaginably great harvest of glory which I will reap forever in heaven.⁶⁷

The Apostle Paul could not rehearse gospel blessings in Romans 5-8 without being reminded of his anxious longing for the future glories awaiting believers in heaven.⁶⁸ Likewise, the Apostle John could not speak of his and his readers’ status as children of God without also relishing the beautification they will

things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.” **1 Corinthians 15:28.** “When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.”

⁶⁶**Philippians 1.** “I . . . having a desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better . . .” **1 Peter 1:13.** “. . . fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

⁶⁷**Romans 8:23.** “. . . we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit . . .”

⁶⁸**Romans 8.** “(18) For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. (19) For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. . . . (23) . . . we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.”

experience at the revelation of Jesus Christ.⁶⁹ Neither will I be able to think long upon gospel blessings without thinking also of the infinite glories which will be mine to enjoy in heaven.

Such a gospel-generated heavenward focus yields enormous benefits to me while on earth. The mere hope of seeing Christ in glory releases the purifying influence of heaven upon my life from day to day.⁷⁰ Also, knowing of the future love which God will show me in glory enables me to love my fellow-saints with a heaven-inspired love even now.⁷¹ I love others out of the fullness already given to me in Christ, and also out of the greater fullness that will be given to me in glory!

Hope of eternity with Christ in heaven also enables my heart to thrive during the most difficult and lengthy of trials here on earth. When looking at the sheer weight of unseen glories to come, my troubles seem light by comparison, and when looking at the staggering length of eternity, my troubles seem fleeting

⁶⁹**1 John 3.** “(1) See how a great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. . . . (2) Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.”

⁷⁰**1 John 3:3.** “And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him, purifies himself, even as He is pure.”

⁷¹**Colossians 1.** “(4) . . . we heard of . . . the love which you have for all the saints; (5) because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel . . .”

by comparison.⁷² It is only against the backdrop of a glorious eternity that my circumstances can be seen in such a manner; and the promise of this glorious eternity is part and parcel of the gospel itself.⁷³

Preaching the gospel to myself every day is a great way to keep myself established in “*the hope of the gospel*,”⁷⁴ so that I might experience the practical benefits that such hope is intended to bring me here on earth.

The Ultimate Prize

In the New Testament, the gospel is several times referred to as “*the gospel of God*.”⁷⁵ Such an expression should be understood in the fullest sense possible. The gospel is called “*the gospel of God*,” not simply because it is from God, nor merely because it is accomplished through God, but also because ultimately

⁷²**2 Corinthians 4.** “(16) Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. (17) For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, (18) while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

⁷³**Colossians 1:5.** “. . . the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel”

⁷⁴**Colossians 1:23.** “. . . continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel”

⁷⁵**Romans 1:1; Romans 15:16; 2 Corinthians 11:7; 1 Thessalonians 2:2,8,9; 1 Peter 4:17.**

it leads me to God, who is Himself its greatest Prize. Indeed, what makes the gospel such great news is God, who brings me to Himself⁷⁶ and then gives Himself so freely to me through Jesus Christ.⁷⁷

The essence of eternal life is not found in having my sins forgiven, in possessing a mansion in heaven, or in having streets of gold on which to walk forever. Rather, the essence of eternal life is intimately knowing God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.⁷⁸ Everything else that God gives to me in the gospel serves merely to bring me to Himself so that this great end might be achieved. Christ died for the forgiveness of my sins so that I might be brought “*to God*.”⁷⁹ Christ is preparing a place for me in heaven so that He might receive me “*to [Him]self*” and have me forever with Him where He is.⁸⁰ And yes, there is a great street

⁷⁶**Ephesians 1.** “(4) . . . He chose us in Him . . . that we should be . . . before Him (5) He predestined us to adoption as sons . . . to Himself”

⁷⁷**Romans 5:5.** “. . . the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” **John 14:21.** “. . . he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.”

⁷⁸**John 17:3.** “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”

⁷⁹**1 Peter 3:18.** “For Christ also died for sins once for all . . . in order that He might bring us to God”

⁸⁰**John 14.** “(2) In My Father’s house are many dwelling places I go to prepare a place for you. (3) If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.”

of gold in heaven, but is there any doubt where the street leads? Unquestionably, it leads straight to the throne of God Himself,⁸¹ as do all of God's gifts to me in the gospel.

As I meditate on the gospel each day, I find my thoughts inevitably traveling from the gifts I've received to the Giver of those gifts; and the more my thoughts are directed to Him, the more I experience the essence of eternal life. The "*gospel of God*" is from God, comes through God, and leads me to God;⁸² and it is in Him that my soul finds its truest joy and rest.⁸³

To Him be the Glory

"To the praise of the glory of His grace . . . to the praise of His glory . . . to the praise of His glory." These refrains fly as banners over the gospel truths

⁸¹**Revelation.** "(21:21) And the street of the city was pure gold . . . (22:1) Then he showed me a river of the water of life . . . coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, (2) in the middle of the street of it."

⁸²**Romans 11:36.** "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory. Amen."

⁸³**Psalm 16:11.** "You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In your right hand there are pleasures forever." **Psalm 42.** "(1) As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. (2) My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God?" **Psalm 37:4.** "Delight yourself in the Lord; and he will give you the desires of your heart." **Psalm 73.** "(25) Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth. (26) . . . God is my portion forever. (28) . . . as for me, the nearness of my God is my good . . ."

parading through the early verses of Ephesians.⁸⁴ They herald the ultimate motive of God in all His gospel acts on behalf of those whom He has saved. They also announce the effect which the gospel will most certainly wield upon those who experience its fullness. It is no surprise, then, that the Apostle ends his gospel review in Ephesians 3 by bowing his knees in worship and ascribing all glory to God.⁸⁵ "*Unto Him be the glory,*" Paul exclaims at the end of Ephesians 3. "*To . . . Him be the glory,*" he cries after his gospel meditations through Romans.⁸⁶ "*To the King . . . be glory,*" he urges in 1 Timothy after speaking of God's merciful

⁸⁴**Ephesians 1.** "(5) He predestined us to adoption as sons . . . (6) to the praise of the glory of His grace . . . (11) also we have obtained an inheritance . . . (12) to the end that we . . . would be to the praise of His glory. (13) In Him you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation – having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit . . . (14) who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory."

⁸⁵**Ephesians 3.** "(14) For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, . . . (20) Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, (21) to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen."

⁸⁶**Romans 11.** "(33) Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! (34) For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? (35) Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? (36) For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen."

saving of him.⁸⁷ Clearly, the gospel generated in Paul an enormous passion for God's glory; and the gospel does the same in me as I make it the meditation of my heart each day.

Understanding that I am not the ultimate end of the gospel, but rather that God's glory is, actually enables me to embrace my salvation more boldly than I would otherwise dare to do. For example, when my timid heart questions why God would want to love one so sinful as I, I read the answer, "*to the praise of the glory of His grace.*" I figure, then, that my unworthiness must actually be useful to God, because it magnifies the degree to which His grace might be glorified as He lavishes His saving kindness upon me. This line of reasoning makes perfect sense to me and convinces me to embrace the gospel with greater passion so that God might glorify Himself through me, an unworthy sinner.

Indeed, the more I embrace and experience the gospel, the more I delight in the worship of God, the more expressive my joy in Him becomes, and the more I yearn to glorify Him in all I say and do.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ **1 Timothy 1.** "(15) . . . Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. (16) Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life. (17) Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."

⁸⁸ **1 Peter 1.** "(6) In this [salvation] you greatly rejoice . . . (8) . . . you greatly rejoice with a joy inexpressible and full of glory, (9) obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls." **1 Corinthians 10:31.** "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

PART II

A Gospel Narrative

Prose Version

“To use an expression . . . , we must ‘preach the gospel to ourselves every day.’ For me that means I keep going back to Scriptures such as Isaiah 53:6, Galatians 2:20, and Romans 8:1. It means I frequently repeat the words from an old hymn, ‘My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.’”

(Jerry Bridges in “Gospel-Driven Sanctification”)

The Glory of God

1 My God is immense beyond imagination. He measured the entire universe with merely the span of His hand.¹

2 He is unimaginably awesome in all of His perfections, absolutely righteous, holy, and just in all of His ways.²

3 He has also been unbelievably good and merciful to me as the Creator and Sustainer of my life.

4 Every breath, every heartbeat, every function of every organ in my body is a gift from Him.

5 Every legitimate pleasure I experience is a gift from His loving hand to me.³

6 All that I am and all that I have I owe to Him and to His goodness.⁴

7 My life in every way is, and will continue to be, utterly dependent upon Him in whom I live and move

¹**Isaiah 40:12.** "Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and marked off the heavens by the span?" [*a 'span' is a hand breadth*]

²**Deuteronomy 32.** "(3) For I proclaim the name of the Lord; Ascribe greatness to our God! (4) The Rock! His work is perfect, for all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He."

³**1 Timothy 6:17.** "God . . . richly supplies us with all things to enjoy." **Acts 14:17.** "And yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness."

⁴**James 1:17.** "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow."

and have my being.⁵

8 This wonderful God is the most supremely worthy Object of admiration,⁶ honor,⁷ and delight⁸ in all of the universe;

9 And He has created me with the intention that I might glorify Him⁹ by finding my soul's delight in Him and by living in joyful obedience to Him in all of my ways.¹⁰

⁵**Acts 17:28.** "For in Him we live and move and exist"

⁶**Psalm 96.** "(3) Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among the people. (4) For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods. (5) For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the Lord made the heavens. (6) Splendor and majesty are before Him, strength and beauty are in His sanctuary. (7) . . . Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. (8) Ascribe to the Lord the glory of His name"

⁷**Revelation 4:11.** "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed and were created."

⁸**Psalm 16:11.** ". . . . In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever."

Psalm 37:4. "Delight yourself in the Lord"

⁹**Romans 11:36.** "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things [*including me*]. To Him be the glory forever. Amen." **1 Corinthians 10:31.** "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

¹⁰**Psalm 37:4.** "Delight yourself in the Lord"
Deuteronomy 5:29. ". . . the Lord said . . . , 'Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!'"

My Sin Against God

10 Yet I could not have failed this great God more miserably than I have.¹¹

11 Instead of giving thanks to Him and humbly submitting to His rule over my life, I have rebelled against Him and have actually sought to exalt myself above Him.

12 Going my own way and living according to my own wisdom, I have broken countless times either the letter or the spirit of every one of God's Ten Commandments.¹²

13 Thinking myself to be wise, I have shown myself

¹¹**Romans 1:21.** "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. (22) Professing to be wise, they became fools, (23) and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man . . . (25) . . . they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator . . ." **Romans 3:23.** "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

¹²**Exodus 20.** "(3) You shall have no other gods before Me, (4) You shall not make for yourself an idol . . . (5) You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain . . . (6) Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy, (7) Honor your father and your mother . . . (8) You shall not commit murder. (14) You shall not commit adultery. (15) You shall not steal. (16) You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. (17) You shall not covet . . . anything that belongs to your neighbor." **Colossians 3:5.** ". . . greed . . . is idolatry." **Matthew 5.** "(27) You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery'; (28) but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." **1 John 3:15.** "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."

to be a fool; and because of my arrogance, God has every right to damn me to the everlasting experience of His terrifying wrath in the Lake of Fire.¹³

14 So as for myself, apart from Christ I am bound by the guilt of my sins¹⁴ and also bound by the power of sin, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures.¹⁵

15 Apart from Christ, I am also utterly deserving of and destined for eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire, completely unable to save myself or even to make one iota of a contribution to my own salvation.¹⁶

¹³**Romans 6:23.** "For the wages of sin is death." **Revelation 21:8.** "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." **Ephesians 2:3.** ". . . we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."

¹⁴**Romans 3:19.** "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." (*New King James Version*) **James 2:10.** "For whoever keeps the whole law, and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all."

¹⁵**Titus 3:3.** "For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another." **Ephesians 2:3.** ". . . we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind . . ."

¹⁶**Romans 5:6.** ". . . we were . . . helpless . . ."

God's Work on My Behalf

16 However, what I could not do, God did¹⁷ – and in doing it, He did it all, sending His own Son into the world to die on the cross for my sins,¹⁸ thereby showing me unfathomable love.¹⁹

17 God loved me so much that He was willing to suffer the loss of His Son,²⁰ and even more amazingly, He was willing to allow His Son to suffer the loss of Him at the cross.²¹

18 Jesus loved me so much that He was willing to lay down His life for me. No one could ever love me more

¹⁷**Romans 5:6.** "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly."

¹⁸**Romans 8:3.** "For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did; sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh." **1 Peter 3:18.** "For Christ also died for our sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God"

¹⁹**Romans 5.** "(7) For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. (8) But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

²⁰**John 3:16.** "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son" **Romans 8:32.** "He . . . did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all"

²¹**Mark 15:34.** "And at the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, . . . 'My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?'"

or better than Jesus.²²

19 On the third day after Jesus' death, God raised Him from the dead, thereby announcing that His death was completely sufficient to atone for every sin that I have or will commit throughout my lifetime.²³

20 God then exalted Christ to His own right hand,²⁴ where Christ now reigns from on high, granting salvation and forgiveness to all who call on Him by faith.²⁵

²²**John 15:13.** "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends."

²³**Acts 13.** "(30) But God raised Him from the dead . . . (38) Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, (39) and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses."

²⁴**Ephesians 1.** "(20) He [God] raised Him [Jesus] from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, (21) far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come."

²⁵**Acts 5:31.** "He [Jesus] is the One whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance . . . and forgiveness of sins."

My Salvation

21 Now when my time came and I placed my faith in Jesus, God instantly granted me a great salvation.

22 He forgave me of all of my sins, past, present, and future.²⁶

23 He made me His child, adopting me into His family.²⁷

24 He gave me the gift of the Holy Spirit, who gives me God's power,²⁸ who pours out God's love within my heart,²⁹ and who tenderly communicates to my spirit that I am a child of God and an heir of eternal glory in heaven.³⁰

²⁶**Colossians 2:13.** "He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions."

Psalms 103:12. "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."

²⁷**Ephesians 1:5.** "He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself . . ." **John 1:12.** "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe on His name."

²⁸**Acts 1:8.** ". . . you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." **Ephesians 3:16.** "that He would grant you . . . to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man."

²⁹**Ephesians 1.** "(13) . . . you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, (14) who is given as a pledge of our inheritance. . . ." **Romans 5:5.** ". . . the love of God is poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who is given to us."

³⁰**Romans 8.** "(16) The Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, (17) and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ . . ."

25 In saving me, God also freed me from slavery to any and all sins.³¹

26 I no longer have to sin again, for sin's mastery over me has been broken!

27 In saving me, God also justified me,³² and being justified through Christ, I have a peace with God that will endure forever.

28 In justifying me, God declared me innocent of my sins and pronounced me righteous with the very righteousness of Jesus.³³

29 God also allowed His future and present wrath against me to be completely propitiated by Jesus, who bore it upon Himself while on the cross.³⁴

30 Consequently, God now has only love, compassion, and deepest affection for me, and this love is without any admixture of wrath whatsoever.

31 God always looks upon me and treats me with gracious favor, always working all things together for

³¹**Romans 6.** "(6) knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; (7) for he who has died is freed from sin. . . (14) For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace."

³²**Romans 5:1.** "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

³³**Romans 5:18.** "So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men."

³⁴**1 John 2:2.** ". . . He [Christ] Himself is the propitiation for our sins . . ." (*'propitiation' = satisfaction, appeasement of wrath*)

my ultimate and eternal good.³⁵

32 God's grace abounds to me even through trials.

33 Because I am a justified one, He subjugates every trial and forces it to do good unto me.³⁶

34 When I sin, God's grace abounds to me all the more as He graciously maintains my justified status as described above.³⁷

35 When I sin, God feels no wrath in His heart against me.³⁸

36 His heart is filled with nothing but love for me, and He longs for me to repent and confess my sins to Him, so that He might show me the gracious and

³⁵**Romans 8:28.** "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

³⁶**Romans 5.** "(1) Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, (2) through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. (3) And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; (4) and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; (5) and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

³⁷**Romans 5.** "(20) . . . where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, (21) so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

³⁸**1 Thessalonians 5:9.** "For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, (10) who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him." **1 John 2:2.** ". . . He [Christ] Himself is the propitiation for our sins" (*'propitiation' = satisfaction, appeasement of wrath*)

forgiving love that has been in His heart all along.³⁹

37 God does not require my confession before He desires to forgive me.

38 In His heart He already has forgiven me; and when I come to Him to confess my sins to Him, He runs to me (as it were) and is repeatedly embracing and kissing me even before I get the words of my confession out of my mouth!⁴⁰

39 God does see my sins, and He is grieved by my sins.⁴¹ His grief comes partly from the fact that in my moments of sin, I am not receiving the fullness of His love for me.

³⁹**1 John 1:9.** "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

⁴⁰**Luke 15.** "(20) So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. (21) And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' (22) But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; (23) and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; (24) for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate."

⁴¹**Ephesians 4:30.** "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God . . ."

40 He even sends chastisement into my life;⁴² but He does so because He is for me,⁴³ and He loves me;⁴⁴ and He disciplines me for my ultimate good.⁴⁵

41 I don't deserve any of this, even on my best day; but this is my salvation, and herein I stand.⁴⁶ Thank You, Jesus.

⁴²**Hebrews 12.** "(7) It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? (8) But if you are without discipline, of which we all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. (9) Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?"

⁴³**Romans 8:31.** ". . . God is for us"

⁴⁴**Hebrews 12:6.** "For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives."

⁴⁵**Hebrews 12:10.** "For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness."

⁴⁶**1 Peter 5:12.** ". . . this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!" **1 Corinthians 16:13.** ". . . stand firm in the faith" **Colossians 1:23.** ". . . continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel"

PART III

A Gospel Narrative

Poetic Version

“Never be content with your current grasp of the gospel. The gospel is life-permeating, world-altering, universe-changing truth. It has more facets than a diamond. Its depths man will never exhaust.”

(C.J. Mahaney, *The Cross Centered Life*, 67)

Beholding the heavens,
 I now understand
 God measured them all
 with the breadth of His hand.¹
 He fashioned the trillions
 of stars in the sky,²
 The sun and the moon
 He established on high.³
 All heaven and earth,
 which He made in six days,⁴
 Show daily and nightly
 His merit of praise.⁵

¹**Isaiah 40:12.** "Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and marked off the heavens by the span?" [*a 'span' is a hand breadth*]

²**Isaiah 40:26.** "Lift up your eyes on high and see who created these stars, the One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; Because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power, not one of them is missing."

³**Psalm 8.** "(3) When I consider the heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars which You have ordained, (4) what is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him?"

⁴**Exodus 20:11.** "For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth . . ."

⁵**Psalm 19.** "(1) The heavens are telling the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. (2) Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge."

So wondrously caring⁶
 is God ev'ry day,
 Creating,⁷ sustaining
 my life ev'ry way.⁸
 Each breath I intake,
 ev'ry beat of my heart,
 All pleasures well-tasted
 are His to impart.⁹
 Indeed, for such blessings
 He should be adored
 And honored supremely
 as eminent Lord.¹⁰

⁶**1 Peter 5:7.** ". . . He cares for you."

⁷**Psalm 139.** "(13) For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. (14) I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well. (15) My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, *and* skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth. (16) Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Your book they were all written, the days that were ordained *for me*, when as yet there was not one of them."

⁸**Acts 17.** "(27) . . . He is not far from each one of us; (28) for in Him we live and move and exist . . ."

⁹**1 Timothy 6:17.** "God . . . richly supplies us with all things to enjoy." **Acts 14:17.** "And yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness."

¹⁰**Revelation 4:11.** "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed and were created."

In fact, for this purpose
He brought me to be,
That I might His glory
and kindness see¹¹
And cherish Him fully
in all of my days,¹²
Obeying with pleasure
whatever He says,¹³
Fulfilling the calling
He's laid upon me
To show forth His glory
deliberately.¹⁴

¹¹**Romans 2:4.** "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?"

¹²**Luke 10:27.** "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind."

¹³**John 14.** "(15) If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. . . . (21) He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me." **1 John 5:3.** "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome."

¹⁴**Romans 11:36.** "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things [*including me*]. To Him be the glory forever. Amen." **1 Corinthians 10:31.** "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

Yet I could not fail God
much worse than I've done.
Ignoring His glory,
for mine I have run.
I've spurned a life
under His wisdom and care,
Begrudged Him the throne
and pretended me there.¹⁵
A prideful and lust-laden
path I have trod,
Transgressing all Ten great
Commandments of God.¹⁶

¹⁵**Romans 1:21.** "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. (22) Professing to be wise, they became fools, (23) and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man . . . (25) . . . they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen." **Romans 3:23.** "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

¹⁶**Exodus 20.** "(3) You shall have no other gods before Me, (4) You shall not make for yourself an idol . . . (5) You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain . . . (6) Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy, (7) Honor your father and your mother . . . (8) You shall not commit murder. (14) You shall not commit adultery. (15) You shall not steal. (16) You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. (17) You shall not covet . . . anything that belongs to your neighbor." **Colossians 3:5.** ". . . greed . . . is idolatry." **Matthew 5.** "(27) You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery'; (28) but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." **1 John 3:15.** "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."

My foolish rebellion
gives God ev'ry right
To damn me with haste
to the mis'erable plight
Of terrible judgments
in His Lake of Fire,¹⁷
Where wrath is most fierce
and will never expire.¹⁸
With wickedest sinners
I truly should know
The worst of Hell's furies
for failing God so.

¹⁷**Romans 6:23.** "For the wages of sin is death."
Revelation 21:8. "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." **Ephesians 2:3.** "... we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."

¹⁸**Matthew 25:46.** "These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." **Mark 9.** "(47) If your eye causes you to stumble, throw it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell, (48) where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched."

So this is my status
and these are my flaws
Apart from Christ Jesus
and His saving cause:
I carry sin's guilt
and am gripped by sin's pow'r,¹⁹
Held fast to its
various lusts ev'ry hour,²⁰
Deserving of flames,
both within and without,²¹
And sliding t'ward Hell
as I toss all about,²²

¹⁹**Romans 6.** "(16) Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? (17) ... you were slaves of sins ... (20) ... you were slaves of sin."

²⁰**Titus 3:3.** "For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another."

²¹**Revelation 21:8.** "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

²²**Isaiah 57.** "(20) But the wicked are like the tossing sea, for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up refuse and mud. (21) 'There is no peace,' says my God, 'for the wicked.'"

Too reprobate²³ even
to play a small part
In clearing my record
or changing my heart²⁴
To pacify wrath
and be worthy of grace,
To make myself lovely²⁵
and win God's embrace.
Completely condemned by
God's Law in its whole,²⁶
I've nothing to offer
to ransom my soul.²⁷

²³**reprobate.** *adj.* under God's judgment, extremely sinful, lost in sin.

²⁴**Jeremiah 17:9.** "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?"
Mark 7. "(21) For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, (22) deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. (23) All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

²⁵**Isaiah 64:6.** "For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment."

²⁶**James 2:10.** "For whoever keeps the whole law, and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all."

²⁷**Romans 5:6.** "... we were ... helpless ..."

But wonder of wonders,
so great to behold,²⁸
My God chose to save me²⁹
with method so bold.
What I could not render,
God fully has done,
And doing, He rendered it
all through His Son.³⁰
He sent Christ to die
on the cross for my sin
To suffer my anguish,
my pardon to win.³¹

²⁸**1 Peter 1.** "(10) As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, (11) seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. (12) It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven – things into which angels long to look."

²⁹**Ephesians 1.** "(4) . . . He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love (5) He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself . . ."

³⁰**Acts 4:12.** "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved." **John 14:6.** "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.'"

³¹**1 Peter 3:18.** "For Christ also died for our sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God" **1 Corinthians 15:3.** "... Christ died for our sins"

Amazing it is, when I
 stop to regard,
 That God would consent
 to an anguish so hard,
 Surrend'ring His Son³²
 unto mayhem and death,³³
 To torturous writhing
 'til His final breath.
 'Why does God forsake Me?'
 alone Jesus cried;³⁴
 Yet God left Him hanging
 until He had died.

³²**Romans 8:32.** "... He did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all" **John 3:16.** "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

³³**Isaiah 53.** "(3) He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief . . . (4) . . . our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried . . . (5) . . . He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him . . . (6) . . . the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him. (7) He was oppressed and He was afflicted . . . (8) By oppression and judgment He was taken away . . . He was cut off out of the land of the living . . . (10) . . . the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief."
Acts 2:23. "This Man [Jesus], delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death."

³⁴**Mark 15:34.** "And at the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, . . . 'My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?'"

That Jesus was willing
 His life to lay down,³⁵
 Be scourged³⁶ and insulted
 and wear thorny crown³⁷
 For one such as I
 who had spited God so,
 Amazes and blesses
 and makes me to know
 That greater a lover
 is no man than He,
 Who laid down His life
 for a sinner like me.³⁸

³⁵**John 10.** "(17) For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life . . . (18) No one has taken it from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative"

³⁶**John 19:1.** "The Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged Him."

³⁷**Mark 15.** "(17) They dressed Him up in purple, and after twisting a crown of thorns, they put it on Him; (18) and they began to acclaim Him, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' (19) They kept beating His head with a reed, and spitting at Him, and kneeling down before Him. (20) After they had mocked Him, they took the purple robe off Him, and put His own garments on Him. And they led Him out to crucify Him." (*See also Luke 23:35-37*)

³⁸**John 15:13.** "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." **Romans 5.** "(7) For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. (8) But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Now after Christ died
He was placed in a tomb,³⁹
Which first was a grave,
but then served as a womb,
Travailing and quaking⁴⁰
the day He was raised⁴¹
And brought forth by God
to be handled and praised.⁴²
The Firstborn from death⁴³
on that day emerged He
With power to save
to the utmost degree.⁴⁴

³⁹**Mark 15:46.** "Joseph bought a linen cloth, took Him down, wrapped Him in the linen cloth and laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb."

⁴⁰**Matthew 28:2.** "And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it."

⁴¹**1 Corinthians 15:4.** ". . . He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,"

⁴²**Luke 24:39.** ". . . touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."
John 20. "(27) Then He said to Thomas, 'Reach here with your finger and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side' (28) Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God.'"

⁴³**Colossians 1:18.** "He is . . . the first-born from the dead"

⁴⁴**Hebrews 7:25.** "Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." (*New King James Version*)

At God's own right hand
Christ now reigns from on high,⁴⁵
A Friend in high places
to sinners⁴⁶ who cry⁴⁷
To Him for forgiveness,
their evils confessed.
He gives them a pardon
and then makes them blessed.⁴⁸
As Prince He is Savior⁴⁹
to all who believe,⁵⁰
Who come to Him humbly
His grace to receive.

⁴⁵**Ephesians 1.** "(20) He [God] raised Him [Jesus] from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, (21) far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come."

⁴⁶**1 Timothy 1:15.** ". . . Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners"

⁴⁷**Romans 10:13.** "For whosoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved."

⁴⁸**Romans 10:12.** ". . . the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him."

⁴⁹**Acts 5:31.** "He [Jesus] is the One whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance . . . and forgiveness of sins."

⁵⁰**Ephesians 2.** "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; (9) not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."

Now when my time came
 and to Jesus I cried,
 He gave me the pardon⁵¹
 for which I had sighed,
 He cleansed me completely
 from wrongs I had done,⁵²
 Released me from bondage
 to sins, ev'ry one.
 He shattered sin's chains
 which had held me before,
 And thus made me free
 not to sin any more.⁵³

⁵¹**Ephesians 1:7.** "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace."

⁵²**1 Corinthians 6.** "(9) Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, (10) nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. (11) And such were some of you; but you were washed"

⁵³**Romans 6.** "(6) knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; (7) for he who has died is freed from sin. . . . (14) For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace."

A child of the Father
 He made me to be⁵⁴
 And gave me the Spirit
 as His guarantee⁵⁵
 That, being God's child,
 I will one day obtain
 A heavenly treasure
 that never will wane.⁵⁶
 While in me, the Spirit
 gives power⁵⁷ and love⁵⁸
 And sweet premonitions
 of glory above.⁵⁹

⁵⁴**Ephesians 1:5.** "He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself"

⁵⁵**Ephesians 1.** " . . . you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, (14) who is given as a pledge of our inheritance. . . ."

⁵⁶**1 Peter 1.** "(3) Blessed be . . . God . . . who . . . has caused us to be born again to a living hope . . . (4) to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you."

⁵⁷**Acts 1:8.** " . . . you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." **Ephesians 3:16.** "that He would grant you . . . to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man."

⁵⁸**Romans 5:5.** " . . . the love of God is poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who is given to us."

⁵⁹**Romans 8.** "(16) The Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, (17) and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. . . . (23) . . . we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body."

In saving, God also
 did justify me,⁶⁰
 Accounting me righteous
 by His own decree,⁶¹
 Declaring me guiltless
 of all of my sin,
 And bringing His wrath
 against me to an end.⁶²
 This wrath Christ appeased⁶³
 in full brunt on the Tree,
 When, bearing my sin,
 He endured it for me.⁶⁴

⁶⁰**Romans 5:1.** "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

⁶¹**Romans 4:3.** "But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness."

⁶²**1 Thessalonians 5:9.** "For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."

⁶³**1 John 2:2.** "... He [Christ] Himself is the propitiation for our sins" (*'propitiation' = satisfaction, appeasement of wrath*)

⁶⁴**1 Peter 2:24.** "... He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree" (*literal translation*)

So now God relates
 to me only with grace⁶⁵ –
 The former wrath banished
 without any trace!⁶⁶
 And each day I'm made
 a bit more as I should,
 His grace using all things
 to render me good.⁶⁷
 Yes, even in trials
 God's grace abounds too
 And does me the good
 He assigns it to do.⁶⁸

⁶⁵**Romans 5:21.** "... as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness [justification]...."

⁶⁶**Romans 5:9.** "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him."

⁶⁷**Romans 8:28.** "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

⁶⁸**Romans 5.** "(1) Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, (2) through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. (3) And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; (4) and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; (5) and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

And when I am sinning,
God's grace does abound,⁶⁹
Insuring my justified
status is sound.
No wrath is awakened
in God at my sin,
Because Christ appeased it⁷⁰ –
to say so again.
God's heart pulses only
with passionate grace,
Which jealously wants me
back in His embrace.⁷¹

⁶⁹**Romans.** "(5:20) . . . where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, (21) so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (6:1) What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace might increase?"

⁷⁰**1 John 2:2.** ". . . He [Christ] Himself is the propitiation for our sins . . ." (*'propitiation' = satisfaction, appeasement of wrath*)

⁷¹**James 4:5.** "Or do you suppose that the Scripture is speaking to no purpose that says, The Spirit Whom He has caused to dwell in us yearns over us – and He yearns for the Spirit [to be welcome] – with a jealous love." (*The Amplified Bible*)

God does not require
even that I confess,
Before He desires
His forgiveness to press.
Forgiveness has been
in His heart all along;
And when I approach Him
to make right my wrong,
He runs up to greet me
and draws to me near,⁷²
Embracing and kissing⁷³
and ready to clear.⁷⁴

⁷²**James 4:8.** "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you."

⁷³**Luke 15.** "(20) So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. (21) And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' (22) But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; (23) and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; (24) for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate."

⁷⁴**1 John 1:9.** "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

God does see my sins
 and He grieves at them so,⁷⁵
 For when I am sinning,
 His love I don't know.⁷⁶
 He even will send me
 some heart-rending pain,
 So I'll learn new ways
 and His holiness gain.
 His disciplines always
 are with love imbued,⁷⁷
 A love that seeks ever
 my ultimate good.

⁷⁵**Ephesians 4:30.** "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God"

⁷⁶**John 15:10.** "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love" (*Jesus' words imply that if I don't keep God's commandments, then I am not fully abiding in His love while sinning.*)

⁷⁷**Hebrews 12.** "(7) It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? (8) But if you are without discipline, of which we all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. (9) Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? (10) For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness."

So this is my story;
 ongoing it is.
 How shall I thank God
 for this gospel of His?
 A gift that keeps giving,⁷⁸
 the gospel confers
 The bounty of heaven
 each time I rehearse.
 Deserve it? I don't
 on my holiest day;
 But this is salvation,
 and herein I'll stay.⁷⁹

⁷⁸**Colossians 1.** "(5) . . . the gospel, (6) which has come to you . . . is constantly bearing fruit and increasing . . . since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth." **Acts 20:32.** ". . . the message of His grace [the gospel] . . . is continually able to build you up and give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified." (*literal translation*)

⁷⁹**1 Peter 5:12.** ". . . this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!" **1 Corinthians 16:13.** ". . . stand firm in the faith" **Colossians 1.** "(22) . . . He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach – (23) if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel...."

About the Author

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