

GLENNA SALSURY

# Heavenly Treasures

*Grace*



*Discovering the  
Sovereign Grace  
of God Hidden  
in the Richness of  
His Word*

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GLENN A SALS BURY



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## *Dedication*

To the great saints of old who loved the Word of God with all their hearts.

To Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834–1892), England’s “Prince of Preachers” whose *Morning and Evening* devotionals have fed my spirit for more than four decades.

To the apostle Paul, whose writings reveal the mystery of grace and whose grasp on the sovereignty of God is unparalleled.

To the Holy Spirit, the One Who leads us into all truth and anoints our minds and hearts with understanding.

To the Lord Jesus Christ, Who called me out of darkness into His glorious light and gave me a hunger for His Word.

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## *Grace*

*And if by grace, then it is no more of works;  
otherwise grace is no more grace.*

*—Romans 11:6a*



# *Masterpiece of God's Grace*

*Not by works of righteousness which we have done,  
but according to His mercy He saved us,  
by the washing of regeneration,  
and renewing of the Holy Ghost,  
which He shed on us abundantly,  
through Jesus Christ our Savior.*

—*Titus 3:5-6*



Oh, the mystery of the grace that God the Father poured out on those whom He has called unto Himself. Again and again in Scripture we see that the miraculous experience of life in Christ is based on His work alone. We, as recipients of His grace, have not contributed one element to our salvation. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done.”

Even our faith in Him, our believing, is a gift. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). No human being seeks after God. No, not one (Romans 3:11). He is the One Who has come to seek and to save us (Luke 19:10).

Consider again the words Paul wrote to Titus, “He has saved us according to His mercy.” How did the Father save us? By the

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cleansing, renewing work of His Spirit, which He shed on us abundantly through the work of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Oh, how the saints of old treasured the truths of the grace and mercy of our sovereign God. It was John Newton, a slave ship captain who came to know Christ as an adult, (on March 10, 1748, in a brutal storm) who penned the words: “Amazing grace! How sweet the sound! That saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found; was blind, but now I see.”

Charles Wesley, on Tuesday, May 23, 1738, wrote the words of the hymn, “And Can It Be That I Should Gain?” The last verse says, “Long my imprisoned spirit lay, Fast bound in sin and nature’s night; Thine eye diffused a quickening ray, I woke, the dungeon flamed with light; My chains fell off, my heart was free; I rose, went forth and followed thee.”

The apostle Paul continually wrote of the grace of God. He reminded the saints in Ephesus, “Once you were dead, doomed forever because of your many sins... But God is so rich in mercy, and He loved us so very much, that even while we were dead He gave us life... (It is only by God’s special favor that you have been saved)” (Ephesians 2:1, 4, 5 NLT).

One of the great realities about the grace of God in bringing us to Himself is that He has a purpose for us. We have been saved and will live forever as trophies of His grace and His kindness. “For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus so that we can do the good things He planned for us long ago” (Ephesians 2:10 NLT) “And so God can always point to us as examples of the incredible wealth of His favor and kindness toward us...” (Ephesians 2:7 NLT).



*Masterpiece of God's Grace*

And so, our lives are in His hands. And, it is all about Him... not about us. Praise His name!

*Father, we continually praise You for Your mercy. Grant us the ability to give You all the glory.*

# *The Righteousness of Christ*

*...not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law,  
but that which is through the faith of Christ...*

*—Philippians 3:9*



The apostle Paul had a pedigree that qualified him for human accolades. He was a Roman citizen, a circumcised Jew from the tribe of Benjamin, a Bible scholar, a law-keeping Pharisee, and a zealous religious leader in Israel. Yet Paul discovered that nothing in his humanity contributed to his standing in God's eyes. "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ" (Philippians 3:7).

Paul had been given the revelation of God's amazing grace, the only instrument by which we are born again. It was Paul who wrote, "There is none righteous, no not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God" (Romans 3:10-11). (And Paul was quoting Old Testament truths from Psalm 14, Psalm 53, and passages in Isaiah.)

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Let's think about this together. No human being (who is not alive in Christ) ever seeks God. In the flesh, in the natural human condition, no one ever seeks God. And all of man's human attempts to "shape up" or earn God's favor are useless because God will not look upon sin. In fact, the apostle John told us that God does not even hear the prayers of sinners—those who do not know Him (John 9:31). And all human beings are sinners. Isn't it strange that as evangelicals we refer to "the sinner's prayer"? No one can pray the prayer for salvation who isn't already alive in the Spirit! "No man can come to me except the Father who hath sent me, draw him..." (John 6:44).

This scenario is a hopeless dilemma, humanly speaking. God is righteous; God is perfect; God will only have a relationship with righteous, perfect people. And there are no perfect people to be found. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

How, then, is it possible for us to enter into the Lord's presence to have a relationship with Him? In Hebrews we read, "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6). The key is that the miracle of entering the presence of God is based on faith: the belief that Christ is God in the flesh, and the belief that Christ's righteousness, His sinlessness, counts for me. But whose faith is it that opens up this way into God's presence?

The apostle Paul answered the question in the Philippians 3:9 quote. Through the faith of Jesus Christ, I am counted as righteous. It is Christ's faith, given to me as a gift, which transforms me from a hopeless sinner to a child of the King. "God saved you by his special favor.... You can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God" (Ephesians 2:8 NLT).

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Paul stated this truth again in Galatians 2:20. "...and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." The source for faith is never found in human beings. It is never our self-generated "faith" that is at work in our lives, even after we have been given the gift of faith and have been born again.

In Hebrews we learn that Jesus Christ is both the Author (source) and Finisher (continual supplier) of faith (Hebrews 12:2). And faith (Christ's gift of faith to us) comes to us by hearing the Word of God. And unless He gives us ears to hear, faith remains inaccessible to us, even as believers.

The apostle Paul was continually in awe of the miraculous reality of his own salvation. He knew there was no good thing in him that qualified him to be called of God. Rather, he understood that his salvation and his daily walk with the Lord were a result of God's unconditional mercy and grace.

"But God commended His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more...being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Romans 5:8-10). The Lord's righteous life, in addition to His death, counts for us. We are counted as righteous before the Father because Christ lived a perfect life, and we are counting on His work, not ours, day after day. We can then say, with Paul, "Let us give praise to the glory of His grace wherein He (the Father) hath made us accepted in the Beloved (the Son)" (Ephesians 1:6).

*And Lord, please give us the grace and the faith to "look unto you" for our fresh supply of faith to face today's circumstances.*

# *Christ and the Holy Spirit... Always Praying for Us*

*He ever liveth to make intercession for them.  
—Hebrews 7:25*



Have you ever wondered what the Son discusses with the Father when He talks to Him about you? The Scripture clearly teaches that Jesus Christ “ever lives” to be our Advocate, our Attorney, at the throne of God. That is His purpose as our High Priest, forever and always interceding in our behalf before the Father. He is always discussing with the Father the details that are being worked together for our highest good, individually!

In addition, the Holy Spirit “helps us in our distress. For we don’t even know what we should pray for or how we should pray...and the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God’s will” (Romans 8:26-27 NLT).

Now here is a question for us to ponder, especially when we are discouraged, distraught, confused, and bewildered: Do we

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believe that God's perfect will is being worked out in our lives every single minute? The fact that Christ Himself and the Holy Spirit are both continually requesting that the Father's will be done in our lives provides us with the truth of that reality! Their prayers will be answered!

In Hebrews 9:24 we read, "For Christ has entered into heaven itself to appear *now* before God as our Advocate" (emphasis added). The Lord is continually pleading His righteousness in our behalf before the throne of God.

When Satan, our accuser, points out our sins and failures to the Father, Christ, our personal Attorney, speaks to the Father in our defense. Christ is the living proof that He has obtained our eternal redemption. "Once for all time he took blood into that Most Holy Place, but not the blood of goats and calves. He took his own blood, and with it he secured our salvation forever" (Hebrews 9:12 NLT). And again we read, "He came once for all time, at the end of the age, to remove the power of sin forever by his sacrificial death for us" (Hebrews 9:26 NLT).

Do we agree with Satan when he accuses us and itemizes our weakness, sin, and lack of faith, etc., etc.? Or do we agree with the Word of God that we are righteous, forgiven saints, headed for heaven, not because of any good thing in us, but because of Christ's sacrifice and intercession in our behalf? To agree with Satan is to doubt the truth of the Word of God. The accuser of the brethren has one goal and that is to get us to believe lies, just as he did with Eve in the garden. If you and I believe that we are in Christ by His call of grace, we can stand on His Word and dare to rejoice in the truth of the Word about our current condition before the Father.

*Christ and the Holy Spirit... Always Praying for Us*

Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for His own? Will God? No! He is the one who has given us right standing with himself?... Who then will condemn us? Will Christ Jesus? No, for he is the one who died for us.... Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? ...and I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from his love...Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, and even the powers of hell can't keep God's love away.

—Romans 8:33-38 NLT

*Oh Lord, help us to not only believe Your Word, but to rest in Your constant love and intercession. Give us eyes to see into the invisible realm of truth rather than looking at this visible realm of deception about who we are. Remind us, by Thy Spirit, how loved and how safe we really are in You.*

# *Sought Out*

*Thou shall be called, Sought out.*  
—Isaiah 62:12



The Lord Himself gives the prophet Isaiah the name for His people, those He has redeemed from His wrath. They are to be called “Sought out.” Oh, what a huge truth is ours in this passage. And it is a truth that, sadly, we do not often hear from today’s teachers and preachers.

God’s people are those individuals He Himself sought out among all the billions of human beings on the planet over thousands of years. The Lord told us that He came into the world for one purpose, to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). And if He did not seek us and find us, we would never find Him. We, in our humanity, are at enmity with God. No human being on the planet ever seeks after God unless God reaches out to him or her first (Romans 3:10-11).



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But our earthly wisdom argues against this fact. Many even quote the Scriptures which say, “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:8). “Seek the Lord while He may be found” (Isaiah 55:6). “Whosoever comes unto me I will never cast out” (John 6:31).

So what is the answer to these seemingly incompatible truths? The answer comes from the Word itself. In John 6:44 Jesus says, “No man can come to me, except the Father who has sent me draws him.” Again Jesus says, “All that the Father gives me shall come to Me and he that comes to Me I will not cast out” (John 6:37).

Clearly, if any person is truly seeking after God, it is because the Holy Spirit has sought him or her out and that person is being drawn by the Spirit, not initially by his or her own human desires.

The next question often raised is “Why does the Bible tell us to seek the Lord or draw near to Him if we can’t?” The answer lies in the incredible power inherent in the Word of God. “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17). In other words, when an exhortation is given to seek the Lord, the Holy Spirit anoints the ears of those Christ came to save, and we follow Him! The Word of God, the actual written Word, anointed by the Holy Spirit, transforms us. All right behavior or responses that ever flow out of our lives are a result of the Spirit’s work in us.

Many of the parables confirm this amazing grace—that the Lord has sought us out. The Shepherd came to seek and to save all of His sheep. He is not willing that any of His sheep perish (Read Matthew 18:11-14). The woman who had ten coins and lost one did the seeking. She brought the light to the coin. The coin did not seek her. Nor do lost sheep seek their shepherd.

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The Lord tells us in John 10, “I am the Good Shepherd. I lay down my life for the sheep. My sheep will hear my voice. My sheep will follow me. They will not follow a stranger.”

Charles Spurgeon commented on these words of Isaiah, “Thou shalt be called Sought out.” He wrote, “The surpassing grace of God is seen very clearly in that we were not only sought, but sought out...we were mingled with the mire... we as lost sheep were desperately lost.... Blessed be His name, He never relinquishes the search until the chosen are sought out effectually...we can find no reason for it but God’s own sovereign love....”

This is one of the most life-changing truths in the entire Bible. As Jesus said, “You didn’t choose me, I chose you” (John 15:16 NLT).

How recently have we praised Him anew for this incredible display of amazing grace? And this same Shepherd has promised to keep us from all the wild animals of the wilderness and present us faultless and blameless before His throne of grace (Jude 24).

*Hallelujah! What a Savior You are, oh Lord!*

# *Seated in Heavenly Realms*

*For he raised us from the dead along with Christ,  
and we are seated with him in the heavenly realms....*

*—Ephesians 2:6 NLT*



How will we ever grasp what the apostle Paul is telling us here? Only by Spirit revelation! In 1 Corinthians 15:22 we read, “For as in Adam all die....” Because we are related to Adam, the first human being, we are born sinners and are condemned to die. That is a historical, visible, and experiential fact. We don’t necessarily understand the how or the why of what happened in the garden of Eden. Yet we are aware that death is a certainty because we are related to Adam. “For the wages of sin is death...” (Romans 6:23). The result of this inheritance is eternal separation from God, Who reigns in heaven.

As mysteriously as condemnation became ours as relatives of Adam, God’s amazing grace has provided us with a new inheritance, which was revealed in a different garden. Christ died

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to pay for the wages of sin and conquered death's power. The empty tomb revealed His identity as God in the flesh. When the Spirit of God opens our eyes to see this truth, we discover that a miracle has occurred. We have been transplanted, out of Adam's heritage and into Christ's heavenly heritage. "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9 NLT).

Not only did God the Father raise Christ from the dead, but we who believe were resurrected with Him! We are already alive eternally, counted as in Christ. We are heavenly beings in the here and now!

What happened to believers at the cross is undeniable. "We were crucified with Him...we died...we were buried with Him" (Romans 6:4-7). What happened to us in His resurrection is equally undeniable, though humanly incomprehensible. "If we died together with Him we...live also with Him" (Romans 6:8). "He raised us up together with Him and made us to sit down together with Him in the heavenly spheres" (Ephesians 2:6).

The apostle Paul continually underscored the miraculous life of those in Christ. "I have been crucified with Christ, yet I live. Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20). The One who lives in me is reigning in heaven, and I am in Him. "Therefore if any one is in Christ, there is a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17). "He rescued us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son" (Colossians 1:13).

*Lord, give us eyes to see and grace to believe who we are in You. Grant us the privilege, by Your mercy, of embracing our heavenly citizenship. Let us live the "above" life here below.*

# *We Have Been Un-Sinned!*

*Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean.  
—Psalm 51:7*



King David wrote Psalm 51 after his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba and after plotting the murder of her husband, Uriah. The entire psalm is a reflection of David's agony over his own sin and failure. And because of that, most of us have a deep appreciation for his agonies and for the comfort he seems to receive from bringing his failures before the Lord.

The New Living Translation reads, "Purify me from my sins and I will be clean." However, the King James Version refers to being purified by the use of "hyssop." Hyssop was a sponge-like plant that the priests of Israel used to spatter the blood of the sacrificial lamb over the entire altar area. This depicted an individual being cleansed from sin, head to toe.

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But perhaps even more graphic is the Hebrew meaning behind the word for *purge*. The passage literally reads, “Thou wilt un-sin me and I shall be clean.” Think of that! The blood of our Lamb has “un-sinned” us. We are washed clean; we are completely “un-sinned!”

In Isaiah 53:6a we read, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.” As Charles Spurgeon so aptly pointed out, each one of us has his or her own unique set of sins and failures.

David had his; we each have ours—personal failures that are ours alone, proving clearly that we are guilty of specific acts of sin in addition to our basic sin nature. Spurgeon wrote, “There is a peculiar sinfulness about every one of us. . . all are sinful, but each one with some special aggravation not found in his fellow.”

In Isaiah 53:6b we read, “And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” Every one of our “peculiar aggravations” has been laid upon our Lord Jesus. He has un-sinned us from our very own personal acts of sinfulness. All of our sins were future sins when Christ died 2,000 years ago. Yet He knew exactly how each of us would fail over the course of our entire lives. These are the specific past, present, and future individual sins, from which we have been “un-sinned.” We have been made as righteous as the Lord Himself, totally un-sinned because of His incredible act of mercy and grace (2 Corinthians 5:29).

The Israelites experienced a visual foreshadowing of this great truth even in the wilderness. On the Day of Atonement, Aaron, the high priest, sacrificed a goat on the altar as a picture of the sin covering of blood. He then took an additional goat—a live goat—and he “lay both of his hands on the goat’s head and confessed over it all the sins and rebellion of the Israelites”

*We Have Been Un-Sinned!*

(Leviticus 16:21 NLT). Then this scapegoat was led out into the wilderness and released, carrying away all the sins of the people.

*Lord, help us clearly see that You are our Scapegoat. We are eternally grateful.*

# *Trust the Lord— Confide in Him*

*He that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.  
—Psalm 32:10*



Sometimes, it seems to me that we wonder if we really are “trusting” the Lord. We often feel that “trusting” requires exercising some spiritual muscle we don’t feel like we have.

Interestingly, the Hebrew word translated as “trust” in this psalm is *batah*. It occurs in 107 passages in the Old Testament. The root meaning of *batah* is “to confide in.” So we could read, “He that confides in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.”

King David was a man after God’s own heart. He was deeply loved by the Lord. And David understood what it meant to confide in the Lord. Earlier in Psalm 32 he wrote, “I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said ‘I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord’”



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(Psalm 32:5). Notice that David revealed the result of confiding or confessing his sins to the Lord. Mercy and God’s unfailing love encompass one who confides in Him.

Amazingly, mercy and truth are consistently linked in the Scriptures. In Psalm 51, as David agonized over his relationship with Bathsheba, he wrote, “Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts.... Thou desirest not sacrifice” (Psalm 51:6, 16). And David understood the character of the Lord with whom he had a relationship. “According unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions” (Psalm 51:1).

The apostle John is described in the New Testament as the disciple “whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23). He wrote, “If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8-9). In other words, it is in telling the truth (confessing) about our sin and failure that our relationship with Christ is both revealed and confirmed. Only His children, those who are alive in Christ, are aware of who they are—sinners who need the Savior every moment.

Walking day by day in Christ is not about exercising our spiritual muscle. Amos, a shepherd and Old Testament prophet, asks this rhetorical question, “Can two walk together except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3). As believers we agree with the Lord about ourselves and our situation. Even our ability to agree—to confess—is a result of His work in us. He shines the light of His Spirit upon our inward parts, and the truth is revealed to us.

This is the good news. There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ (Romans 8:1). Rather, He speaks peace to His

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saints, “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other” (Psalm 85:8-10).

*Lord, we rejoice at this miracle of Your love. We confide in You boldly and receive Your tender mercies.*

# *Predestined to be Conformed*

*For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate  
to be conformed to the image of His Son.*

—Romans 8:29



Do you sometimes wish you were more loving, generous, patient, or thoughtful? We often chastise ourselves for failing to display the fruit of the Spirit...love, joy, peace, gentleness, patience, etc. And it sometimes seems there is no hope we will ever shape up.

But here is the good news. We will eventually be conformed to the very image of Jesus Christ. We will be as kind, patient, loving, and merciful as He is!

In the New Living Translation we read, “For God knew His people in advance and He chose them to become like His Son...” (Romans 8:29 NLT). Imagine that! He knew how unloving, unkind, and impatient we would be in our humanity. Yet He chose us anyway. He, in His mercy and grace, has promised

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to make us trophies of His character, on display for the entire universe to behold (Ephesians 2:7).

The apostle Paul promised this same reality to the Philippians. He wrote, “And I am sure that God, who began the good work within you, will continue His work until it is finally finished on that day when Christ Jesus comes back again” (Philippians 1:6 NLT). What a promise! What a future! There is hope—a sure hope—for our becoming as He is.

The prophet Isaiah said what we often feel, “We are not godly. We are constant sinners. How can people like us be saved? We are all infected and impure with sin. When we proudly display our righteous deeds, we find they are but filthy rags.... And yet, Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay and You are the potter. We are all formed by Your hand” (Isaiah 64:5-9 NLT). Isaiah counted on the Lord’s mercy and grace. As the Potter and our Father, He will form us into “vessels of honor.”

The apostle Paul repeated this same hope. He wrote, “When a potter makes jars of clay...he has the right to pour out the riches of His glory upon those He prepared to be the objects of His mercy—even upon us whom He selected, both from the Jews and from the Gentiles” (Romans 9:21-24 NLT).

The Lord Himself has prayed to God the Father and requested that we might be changed into individuals whose lives will reflect the exact same glory as the life of Christ Himself. “I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in Me.... I have given them the glory You gave Me, Father...I in them and You in Me, all being perfected into one” (John 17:20-23 NLT).

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Perhaps our greatest joy might come from praising the Lord daily that He is faithfully changing us “from glory to glory,” transforming us into His own image.

*Thank You, Lord, for the faithful work of Your Spirit in us.*

# *Restored from Ruin*

*He saved us, by the washing of regeneration  
and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.*

—*Titus 3:5*



This is one of those verses in the Scripture that can be intimidating with the theological words it contains. Yet the Lord is teaching us some life-changing, transformational realities here. Paul tells us how we were saved. He writes, “by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”

What is “the washing of regeneration”? The Greek word for regeneration is *paliggenesis*. It refers to a spiritual rebirth and, literally, means a “spiritual renovation.” It relates to another Greek word, *apokatastasis* or restitution, a reestablishment from a state of ruin! In other words, God has created a complete renovation work in us. We have been taken from “ruin” to righteousness, miraculously.

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Christ spoke of this process when He told Nicodemus, “Unless you are born again, you can never see the kingdom of God...no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit...the Holy Spirit gives new life from heaven” (John 3:3, 5, 7 NLT).

Notice that Paul refers to the “washing” of regeneration and Jesus refers to being born of “water.” This is one of the great mysteries in God’s working in us. In Ephesians 5:26 we read that the Lord sanctifies and cleanses us by “the washing of water by the word.” The Word of God is the agent that regenerates us. It washes and cleanses. It has miraculous power.

In Romans 10:17 we read, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” Our regeneration, being restored from ruin, happened when we heard and believed the Word of God. Paul says that he is “not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation....” Our ability to even hear and believe is a result of the Lord opening our ears. Not everyone who simply hears the gospel becomes regenerated. But when He gives us faith to believe the Word, we are washed by it, regenerated. This process, this work, is miraculous. Jesus said, “You can’t explain how people are born of the Spirit” (John 3:8 NLT). The process itself is beyond our understanding ultimately.

In the Titus passage, we also read that we are saved by “the renewing of the Holy Ghost.” The Greek word for renewing is *anakainosis*, which refers to the ongoing restorative work which occurs in us as believers. We are regenerated by the Word—we are brought back from ruin. Then the Holy Spirit continues that ongoing work by renewing our mind (Romans 12:2) and

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increasing our knowledge and understanding of what this miraculous life in Christ really is (Colossians 3:10).

*There is miraculous, restorative power in Your Word, Lord. Open our ears and our hearts that we might be renewed in You. Thank You for restoring us from the ruin we once were.*



# Kindness

*Our lives were full of evil and envy...  
but then God our Savior showed us His kindness and love.*

—Titus 3:3-4 NLT



It seems like kindness is an almost forgotten word in our world today. What images come to your mind when you think of the word *kindness*? Isn't it true that we long to have others show kindness to us, to be tender and forgiving toward us? Isn't it a blessing in our lives when others don't condemn us for our failures, our inadequacies, and our weaknesses?

In the Scripture the word *kindness* is almost always connected with the word *show*. For example, consider the following verses:

Show kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh.

—Genesis 40:14

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Now therefore, I pray you...since I have showed you kindness,  
that ye will also show kindness unto my father's house.

—Joshua 2:12

Blessed be thou of the Lord...for thou hast showed more  
kindness.

—Ruth 3:10

The people of the island were very kind to us. It was cold  
and rainy, so they built a fire on the shore to welcome us  
and warm us.

—Acts 28:2 NLT

Aren't those great words, to be “welcomed” and “warmed”?  
That is what the Lord is to us. He is always welcoming us into His  
presence, showering us with the warmth of His love, displaying  
kindness. No condemnation. Never even remembering our sins  
(Isaiah 43:25).

In the Hebrew language the word for kindness is *chesed*. This  
is the same word, *chesed*, that is translated as *mercy* in the Old  
Testament. In Psalm 103:17 we read, “The mercy of the Lord  
is from everlasting to everlasting.” In Isaiah 54:8 the prophet  
writes, “With everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee  
saith the Lord thy Redeemer.” The Lord's kindness toward us  
is unchanging, stretching from eternity past into the eternal  
future.

In the New Testament one of the Greek words for kindness  
is *chrestotes*. Paul wrote, “God...has raised us up...in Christ Jesus  
that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches  
of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus”

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(Ephesians 2:4-7 NLT). The Lord will forever be displaying His kindness toward us!

Perhaps one of the greatest gifts we can give others is to show kindness to them...day after day. When the Holy Spirit reveals to us the kindness God the Savior has shown us, we are given the grace to shower that kindness on others. The apostle Peter wrote, “Continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins...” (1 Peter 4:8 NLT). What a wonderful reminder that we should love one another with a kindness that overlooks sin and failure, even as He has “overlooked” our own sins and failures.

David, the psalmist, prayed, “Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy...” (Psalm 119:124). The word for mercy, again, is *chesed*. “Deal with me according to thy loving kindness...” David was saying, “Please, Lord, don’t deal with me according to what I deserve!”

*Lord, may we pour out the warm, welcoming kindness of Your heart on others.*

# *The Celebration of Freedom*

*Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.*  
—*John 8:32*



As Americans, we celebrate our independence—our freedom as a country. We became free from foreign rulership. And our freedom is something we treasure. In fact, we attempt to bring freedom to countries enslaved by wicked, corrupt rulers. We do so because we have experienced the incredible blessings inherent in our freedom as citizens of the United States of America.

The Bible describes the entire human race as being enslaved, ruled by the ravages of sin. The apostle Paul described those who are not in Christ as “slaves to sin,” the end result being death eternally (Romans 6:17, 22). He then explained that the gift of God to believers is having been set free from this enslavement through faith in Jesus Christ.

## *The Celebration of Freedom*

The Lord Himself describes for us how this happens. “Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.” The Greek word for truth is *alethia* and it actually means reality. You will know the reality and in knowing that reality, you will be set free from the ravages of sin.

What is “the reality?” The Lord tells us clearly. “I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes unto the Father except by Me” (John 14:6). Jesus says, “I am reality.” Isn’t it interesting that truth is counted as relative in most philosophical discussions today? Yet the Lord says He is the truth, the only absolute reality.

And Christ says we are set free when we know the truth—when we know Him—for He is the truth. The Greek word for knowing in John 8:32 is *ginosko*, which means “to become thoroughly acquainted with,” to recognize Christ for Who He is. Thomas still had his doubts after the crucifixion. But once he touched the Lord’s scars and spoke to Him in His resurrected body, Thomas recognized Who He was. “My Lord and My God” (John 20:28). Philip was expressing confusion about his own grasp of Who Christ really was and Jesus explained to him, “He that has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

Sometimes we fail to recognize or appreciate the hopeless condition we were in before Christ became known to us. Paul said we were held in captivity by sin (Romans 7:23). The word *captivity* actually means to have been taken prisoner at the point of a spear or held in chains. Paul then said that Christ rose from the dead and led “a group of captives out of their captivity” and into the safety and freedom of Himself (Ephesians 4:8).

Individuals who live in a nation controlled by wicked rulers often live in fear for their very lives. There is a constant sense

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of unrest, not knowing what terrible event might unfold next. Usually there are restrictions of every kind in terms of personal activities or freedom of expression. There is very little, if any, peace and joy for those who live in those conditions. To be set free from that kind of a situation must be an incredible gift.

The Scripture says that Satan is the ruler, the “god of this world” in which we live (2 Corinthians 4:4). We are held captive by him until the Savior becomes known to us. And when He comes and sets us free from our hopeless condition, we enter into an entirely new realm. We have a new Ruler Who overflows with love, mercy, and grace. He is the great Giver of gifts. We can now dare to live in peace, knowing we are safe and secure, free from anxiety and worry about our future. And this Savior has promised to supply all our present needs as well. “Ask and it shall be given unto you” (Matthew 7:7). No wonder we want to share this freedom with others!

The apostle Paul experienced being taken prisoner many times. Yet he rejoiced even while in jail because he knew the truth. He wrote, “God has not given us a spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7).

*Oh Lord, give us the grace to appreciate what it really means to have been “set free” by Your death and resurrection that conquered Satan’s hold on us. May we live in that freedom, without fear or anxiety, no matter what our circumstances may be. You are a gracious King.*

# *The Gift of Repentance*

*Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repents.*

—*Luke 15:7*



Repentance does not seem to be a popular word. We often think that “to repent” means to grovel on our knees and beg for forgiveness of sin. Well, that could well be the result of some serious repentance. But the Greek word for repentance is *metanoia*, and it means “a change of mind.” To repent is to completely change your mind or your viewpoint about a person, a situation, or yourself—to see things differently.

The parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15 is an example of repentance in action. We read that this young man took his inheritance, left his father, and went “into a far country, and there wasted his substance on riotous living” (Luke 15:13). A series of circumstances then unfolded in his life. No money, no food, and a famine set in. No one was willing to help him.

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Suddenly this young man decided to return to his father and ask for forgiveness. The prodigal son experienced a radical change of mind. That is precisely how conversion is experienced—a radical change of mind occurs.

The question is this: When a person repents and becomes a believer in Jesus Christ as God in the flesh, as Savior, what causes the mind to change?

Initially we might say that getting better information, getting new knowledge, discovering the facts about Christ will produce repentance. That may happen, but the cause for true change is not the result of the thinking process. Paul told us that the person who is not a believer can't understand thoughts about the Lord (1 Corinthians 2:14). An unbeliever cannot “think” himself or herself into believing. Again, what produces a change of mind?

In writing to young Timothy, Paul encouraged him to study the Word and avoid foolish arguments over theology. Then he told Timothy to patiently, gently instruct people in the Word of God, “in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 2:25 NIV). Repentance is a gift from God. And when He gives us this change of mind, we are led to a knowledge of the truth!

The disciples understood clearly that repentance (coming to believe that Christ is Savior) is totally the work of God's Holy Spirit in a life. In the case of Cornelius, the Gentile Roman soldier to whom Jewish Peter was called to preach the gospel, we see this fact clearly. As Peter preached to the Gentiles, the Holy Spirit “fell on all of them which heard the word” (Acts 10:44). When Peter recounted this event to the Jewish disciples in Jerusalem, they responded with, “Then has God also to the



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Gentiles granted repentance” which leads to eternal life (Acts 11:18).

Paul wrote in Romans 2:4 that it is God’s goodness and kindness that lead us to repentance. Peter, preaching in the book of Acts, said Christ has been exalted as Savior “to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31).

It is also fascinating to note that in the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost (prodigal) son, “being found” is identified as repentance. When the shepherd finds his lost sheep, this produces “joy in heaven over one sinner that repents” (Luke 15:7). When the woman finds her lost coin, there is “joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents” (Luke 15:10). And the father says of his repentant son, “This thy brother...was lost and is found” (Luke 15:32). Repentance is the result of the good Shepherd seeking us out. Repentance is the result of having been found and saved by the Savior. It is the evidence of our salvation. Repentance, therefore, is not something we do that gets God to respond. Repentance is what we do as a result of His shedding light in our hearts.

If the angels are that thrilled over one sinner repenting, perhaps we need to rejoice anew over the gift of repentance. The Lord did not come to save good people; He came to find lost sinners and lead them to Himself. Rejoice if you know you have been found! And those of us who have been found have at least one thing in common: We know we are sinners because His light shone into our hearts and we saw our “lostness” apart from Him.

*Oh Lord, send us each day into the world to gather Your lost sheep through the drawing power of Your Spirit.*

# *The One and Only Faith*

*Contend for the faith which was once  
delivered unto the saints.*

—*Jude 3*



The Greek word for faith, when used as a noun, is *pistis*. And often in the Scripture the article *the* appears before the noun. “Contend for the faith.” Paul talks about “the faith of Abraham” (Romans 4:16); He wants us to be “established in the faith” (Colossians 2:7). He says, “Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith” (2 Corinthians 13:5); and some have “erred from the faith” (1 Timothy 6:10). So what exactly is the faith that has been delivered to the saints?

The apostle Paul used some specific language about the faith in Galatians 2:16. In the King James Version we read, “A man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ.” And in Galatians 2:20 we read,

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“Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

Notice how many references highlight “the faith of Jesus Christ.” Most newer translations change the “of” to “in” faith in Jesus Christ. Yet, let’s examine the true Source of faith. In Hebrews 12:2 we are told to live the Christian life by “...looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of faith.” Jesus Christ is the sole Source of the faith described by all the biblical writers.

In the Jude 3 passage we read that “the faith has been delivered” to us. Who delivered the faith to the saints? The Greek word for delivered is *paradidomi*. In 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 Paul describes what he delivered (*paradidomi*) to the saints. Notice that Paul said he delivered that which he received. Who delivered the life-changing truth to Paul? Christ Himself brought the faith to Paul on the road to Damascus. He revealed Himself as Lord, the One Who has conquered sin and death.

Paul went on to tell us what was delivered to him. “How that Christ died for our sins...that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day” (1 Corinthians 15:4). This, the gospel, is the faith that saves us. And in Ephesians we learn that it is God’s grace that saves us through the means of faith, which is a gift (Ephesians 2:8-9). The faith has been delivered to the saints as a gift.

Paul said he was sent as an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth (Titus 1:1).

Why is this issue of the faith so important? First, today’s culture abounds in “spirituality” talk. Many people talk about having faith. They tell others to have faith and write books

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encouraging the exercising of faith. Individuals say, “I have faith in the outworking of the universe.” None of this reflects the biblical definition of faith. The faith described in the Bible is the belief, the reality, the truth that Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead to prove He alone is Lord over all.

Second, we need to understand that the faith we have has been delivered to us; it is a gift. It is the faith of Jesus Christ, our Deliverer, Who takes away our sins (Romans 11:26-27). The life of Christ in every believer is a result of His giving us the faith. And in our daily lives we are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:5). His power sustains us by the gift of faith.

Finally, it is sobering to read that “without faith it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6). No amount of good behavior or believing in the mysterious work of “the universe” will count with God. “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Romans 14:23). In other words, every action that springs from any other source than the Faith-Source, Jesus Christ, is counted as sin—even if the world views an action as “good.”

*May we be “found in Him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God, by faith” (Philippians 3:9).*

# *The God of All Grace*

*But the God of all grace who hath called us unto  
His eternal glory by Christ Jesus,  
after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect,  
establish, strengthen, settle you!*

—1 Peter 5:10



If anyone was qualified to talk about the grace of God it would be Peter. Imagine the personal agony he carried his entire life when he remembered his denial of the Lord on the very eve of Christ's greatest suffering. In Christ's greatest hour of need, Peter was not there for Him, the One with Whom Peter had spent virtually every day and night for three full years.

Have you ever looked back on past failures in your life and agonized over them? There is no place to go with that pain—except to “the God of all grace.” He isn't the God of “a little” grace. His entire being is the God of grace. He is all grace! In his darkest hour, the prophet Jonah knew the character of God. “I know that Thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness...” (Jonah 4:2).

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David knew God as the God of all grace in his darkest hour. “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving kindness (Hebrew word for grace) (Psalm 51:1).

Through his own failure, the apostle Paul had experienced God’s character. He described the Lord as “the God of patience and consolation (comfort)” (Romans 15:5). Paul went on to describe Him as “the God of hope” Who fills us with joy and peace so that we can “abound in hope” (Romans 15:13).

Stephen, the martyr who was stoned to death, described the Lord as “the God of glory” (Acts 7:2). Peter said that the God of all grace has “called us unto His eternal glory.” Peter, like Stephen, knew Him as the God of glory. Peter had actually seen the Lord in His glory at the Mount of Transfiguration.

In 1 Peter 5:1 we learn that, even though this earthly life includes suffering, we will ultimately be “made perfect.” (The Greek word for perfect is *katartizo* and means to “be arranged or set in order.”) In addition, Peter said that the God of all grace will “establish, strengthen, and settle” us. We will be secure, on a firm foundation.

And the apostle Paul described the Lord as “the God of love and peace” (2 Corinthians 13:11). Surely Peter must have only found inner peace *after* he experienced the Lord’s love, *after* the resurrection. Following His resurrection, Christ spoke with Peter one on one, calling him by name. He encouraged Peter to confess his love for Him three times, and then Christ commissioned Peter to be a leader among the saints. Our peace in the Lord follows after our knowledge of being fully loved and forgiven by Him.

What a Savior, the God of all grace, Who never abandons us, even in our failures! He is, for each of us, the God of glory,

*The God of All Grace*

the God of hope, the God of patience, the God of comfort, the God of love, and the God of peace. May He be to you whichever one of those you most need right now.

*Father, thank You for Your very essence! Thank You for being full of infinite grace.*

# *Sufficient Grace*

*My grace is sufficient for thee.*  
—2 Corinthians 12:9



The marvelous old hymn written in the early 1900s, “Wonderful Grace of Jesus,” is rich with biblical truth.

Wonderful grace of Jesus, Greater than all my sin. How shall my tongue describe it? Where shall its praise begin? Taking away my burden, setting my spirit free. For the wonderful grace of Jesus reaches me.

—Haldor Lillenas

The first time the word *grace* appears in the Bible is in Genesis 6:8. “Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” The Hebrew word is *chen* which means favor. God looked upon Noah with favor. Repeatedly in the Old Testament, the grace of God is connected with God’s look, His eyes, what He sees.



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“And the Lord said unto Moses, ‘I will do this thing that thou hast spoken; for thou has found grace in My sight, and I know thee by name’” (Exodus 33:17).

Do you ever question whether or not God looks upon you with favor? Do you wonder if, when His eyes rest upon you, those eyes are full of grace toward you? The apostle Paul wrestled with this issue when he was under satanic attack. He begged the Lord to deliver him from his circumstances. The Lord’s response was, “My gracious favor is all you need. My power works best in your weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9 NLT).

In the book of Romans Paul reminds us of the basis upon which we can be participants in God’s grace, His favor. “We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand...” (Romans 5:1-2). The only basis for us to be looked upon by grace is “through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Through Christ’s death on the cross, we experience cleansing from all sin as we place our faith in this reality...that Christ shed His blood for you, for me, personally.

In Romans 5 Paul goes on to say, “When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners.... And since we have been made right in God’s sight by the blood of Christ, we have been restored to friendship with God” (Romans 5:6-10 NLT).

Think of those words, “utterly helpless.” Aren’t there times (maybe even at this moment) that we feel “utterly helpless” to get our lives together spiritually? We are “without strength;” we may be full of self-condemnation, self-loathing. Or we may simply feel empty, with no sense of the Lord’s purpose or grace in our lives.

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It is in these very circumstances that the Word of God comes to us, His Word—the only living truth in the universe. And He says to you, to me, as He said to Moses, “I will do this thing... for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name” (Exodus 33:17).

The Lord called us to Himself. He called us by name. “He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out” (John 10:3). While we were still sinners, unconscious of the Person of Jesus Christ, He died for us. He paid for our sins, all of them. “While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). And now He is looking upon us with favor, working all things (everything in our current circumstances) together for our highest good. “Oh, the wonderful grace of Jesus, greater than all my sin.”

Charles Spurgeon wrote, “God’s grace is illustrated and magnified in the poverty and trials of believers. Saints bear up under every discouragement, believing that all things work together for their good, and out of apparent evils a real blessing shall ultimately spring....”

*Lord, give us grace to believe that Your “wonderful grace reaches even me.”*

# *Grace is Being Brought to You*

*Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober,  
and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought  
unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

—1 Peter 1:13



Imagine that! Grace is being brought to us. When the Lord returns, when the unveiling of Jesus Christ occurs, some amazing gifts will be brought to us. And Peter suggested that we set our hope in this life squarely on what is coming to us.

In Romans 8:18 Paul wrote “that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” Not only is grace being brought to us, glory is also being brought to us when Christ is unveiled!

Peter elaborated on additional blessings coming to us when Christ is revealed to the world. He said “there is a wonderful joy” coming as well and we are to be glad about that even now. (1 Peter 1:6 NLT). And he said we are going to receive the fullness, the completeness, of our salvation. We will be, experientially,

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eternally alive (1 Peter 1:5). The apostle Paul also described that experience. He wrote that when Christ comes we will have “strong hearts,” we will be fully “blameless” and completely “holy” (1 Thessalonians 2:13 NLT). What a future is promised, ordained, and designed for us as believers!

Another awesome aspect of our future is this: Christ is bringing us a new body. “For when the trumpet sounds, the Christians who have died will be raised with transformed bodies. And then we who are living will be transformed so that we will never die” (1 Corinthians 15:52 NLT).

The apostle John talked about additional incredible gifts that will be brought to believers at the unveiling of Christ before the world. The Lord will bring us each “a new name that no one knows except the one who receives it” (Revelation 2:17 NLT). And we will discover a “new song,” which we will sing in unison with “every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea” (Revelation 5:9, 13 NLT).

Finally, we “will see his face, and his name will be written” on our foreheads. And we will “reign” with Him forever and ever (Revelation 22:4 NLT). May we “gird up the loins of our mind” and set our hope on the future that is ours, given to us already, and being personally delivered to us by the King Who is coming!

*Lord, what an incredible reality! You will bring us grace and unending abundance. What love, Lord!*

# *Manifold Mercies*

*By his great mercy, we have been born anew to a living hope  
through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*

—1 Peter 1:3 RSV



In both the Old and New Testaments the very nature of our Lord is described as being full of mercy. Both the Hebrew word and the Greek word for mercy mean loving-kindness. The saints of old knew the very heart of the Creator. The prophet Jonah said, “For I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness...” (Jonah 4:2).

The apostle Peter personally experienced the “great mercy” of the Lord as Christ called Peter to carry the gospel even after Peter had denied the Lord three times. Peter was a recipient of the Lord’s lovingkindness. He writes, “All honor to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for it is by his boundless mercy that God has given us the privilege of being born again” (1 Peter 1:3 NLT).

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In the King James Version this verse reads “abundant mercy.” The Greek word for abundant or boundless is derived from the word *polus*, which is often translated *manifold*. The definition of manifold includes multiplied by many thousands.

Have we even begun to comprehend that, if we know Jesus Christ personally, having been born again, it is because of His boundless, manifold mercy toward us? Think of what that says about us before the Lord revealed Himself to us. What condition were we in that required “mercy multiplied by the myriad of ten thousand?”

The apostle Paul answered that question for us again and again. He said, “You were a slave to sin,” held captive by the “mighty powers of darkness,” a sinner on the path to destruction (Romans 6:17; Ephesians 6:12; Romans 6:23).

Somehow most of us have never really viewed ourselves in that serious a condition. Would you agree? Yet the Lord describes us as in that condition because that is how far removed we were (as human beings outside of Christ) from the glorious perfection of God Himself.

Paul went on to say that the Lord Himself has to rescue us from our condition because we are blind to our own condition. “Once you were dead, doomed forever. . . . But God is so rich in mercy, and He loved us so very much that. . . He gave us life when He raised Christ from the dead. It is only by God’s special favor that you have been saved” (Ephesians 2:1, 4-5 NLT).

It might be good to pause here and lift up our hearts to praise Him for His “manifold mercy” to us personally. Perhaps it would be good to agree with Him afresh that we need all the mercy He pours out on us—every moment of every day.

The prophet Jeremiah experienced insurmountable pain and suffering as he saw the waywardness of his people, the

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Israelites. He was persecuted and mistreated. In the midst of this condition he penned the truth of Who he knew the Lord to be. “The unfailing love of the Lord never ends! By His mercies we have been kept from complete destruction. Great is His faithfulness; His mercies begin afresh each day” (Lamentations 3:22-23 NLT).

Are we counting on His “unfailing love” and His “manifold mercies” in our specific circumstances today? Do we actually believe that everything unfolding in our lives is flowing from His lovingkindness toward us? How would our mindset change today if we embraced this reality?

What if we consciously placed our every concern, from our tiniest disturbance in life to our major worry or unhappiness, in His hands? Suppose we were to embrace the omnipotence of the One Whose love never fails and Whose endless mercy is being poured unto our hearts and lives this very moment. Perhaps we could then sing again the words of the famous old hymn written by William Newell in 1895, entitled “At Calvary.”

Years I spent in vanity and pride.  
Caring not my Lord was crucified.  
Knowing not it was for me He died on Calvary.  
Mercy there was great and grace was free.  
Pardon there was multiplied to me.  
There my burdened soul found liberty, at Calvary.

*Lord, may we rest in Your mercy today. May we embrace the liberating reality that Your mercy in salvation extends to us right where we are, here and now.*

# *Peculiar Reasons*

*Therefore will the Lord wait that  
He may be gracious unto you.  
—Isaiah 30:18*



Charles Spurgeon commented on this verse, “Our Father has reasons peculiar to Himself for thus keeping us waiting.” In our world of “instant everything,” waiting is one of our most difficult assignments as believers.

We want to know now if our teenager has been admitted to the college we prefer; we want to know now if we should quit our job and move or if we should go back to college or if we should sell our house. In this material world we are mostly preoccupied with the visible, tangible, concrete issues of living. And these issues are of prime importance to us. Our emotions rise and fall based on the outcomes. We get discouraged and depressed if no answer is in sight.

Yet the prophet Isaiah told us that what is unfolding in the invisible world of the Spirit is what is truly important. The Lord



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is actively at work, waiting. Why is He waiting to answer our requests or change our circumstances? He is waiting so “that He may be gracious” to us. He wants to “show you favor” or “grace” to us. Spurgeon said He tarries so that “He may the more fully display the riches of His grace” to us.

Don’t you wonder what John the Baptist thought about the Lord’s “waiting” to rescue him? John never saw “the riches of His grace” in this world. Instead he was beheaded. Here was the man about whom the Lord said, “Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist” (Matthew 11:11).

Yet John the Baptist experienced confusion and loss of hope. He sent two of his own disciples to ask if Jesus really was the Messiah (Luke 7:18-23). Remember also that John the Baptist and Jesus were second cousins and had grown up together as family. Today as John the Baptist lives in the presence of the Lord, he understands the grace and glory of why the Lord waited.

Like John the Baptist, we may not see the visible answers to some of our agonies this side of heaven. Yet with Job we learn to say, “Though He slay me, I will trust Him” (Job 13:15). Job was sustained by his faith in the invisible work of God. Job had his heart and life set on the heavenlies. “For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God” (Job 19:25- 26).

One of the most magnificent displays of the wisdom of God in waiting is seen in Lazarus’ life. In John chapter eleven we are told that Jesus’ good friend Lazarus was sick. His sisters, Mary and Martha, whom Jesus also dearly loved (John 11:5), sent a message to Jesus letting Him know of this serious situation.

## *Heavenly Treasures*

When Jesus heard this, He explained to His disciples that Lazarus would not die and that his illness was designed to glorify the Son of God and bring glory to God the Father. And He stayed where He was for two more days!

Meanwhile, Mary and Martha were frantic and Lazarus died. Jesus knew Lazarus had died, and He said to the disciples, “I am glad for your sakes I was not there.” Jesus was glad He wasn’t there to cure Lazarus’ sickness!

By the time Jesus and the disciples arrived in Bethany, Lazarus’ hometown, Lazarus had been dead four days. And both Martha and Mary cried, saying, “If You had been here Lazarus wouldn’t have died.” They were essentially blaming the Lord for waiting too long before coming. They had asked Him to come while there was still hope. They were all good friends. They knew Jesus loved them. Why didn’t He come? Haven’t we had some of those questions when a loved one dies or a newborn dies or an “accident” happens?

We know the rest of the story with Lazarus. The Lord raised Lazarus from the dead and “then many of the Jews which came to Mary and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him” (John 11:45).

Because Lazarus died, there are many in heaven. They believed because they witnessed his resurrection. And imagine the personal testimony Lazarus had. He had visited heaven and returned to earth. What glory God must have received as Lazarus described from firsthand experience the wonders of heaven!

*Lord, may we not despair in the waiting, but rather rest in Your coming glory and grace. May we trust Your “peculiar reasons” for all You are doing or not doing in our lives.*

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