

GLENNA SALSBUARY

# Heavenly Treasures

*Sovereignty*



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

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of God Hidden  
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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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## *Sovereignty*

*In Whom also we have an inheritance,  
being predestined according to the purpose of Him  
who works all things after the counsel of  
His own will.  
—Ephesians 1:11*



## *Faith in God's Timing*

*But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt saying, Arise, and take the young Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel.*

—Matthew 2:19-20



Timing—God's timing—is wonderful to ponder! It is awe-inspiring to recognize that days and months and years are significant in the Lord's unending work in our lives.

King Solomon penned these familiar words: "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1). This wise man went on to say that God's purpose and timing determines our birth, our death, our work, our weeping, our laughing, and our loving; even war and peace (Ecclesiastes 3:2-10).

"When Herod was dead..." This was the event that triggered the holy family's return to Israel. The Bible doesn't tell us exactly how long they had been in Egypt, but while they were there,

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they did not know what would determine their release from the foreign land.

Political events in Israel determined exactly where in Israel this family was to settle. Another evil king, a son of Herod the Great, was reigning in Judea. Once again Joseph was warned by an angel in a dream. He was told not to settle in Judea but to go to Galilee, to a city called Nazareth.

This was the fourth time Joseph had received direction from the Lord through an angelic visitation in a dream. Joseph never knew between these visits what the entire plan of God was for his life. He only got clear direction at the exact, critical moment he needed direction. Never early. Never too late. This is the nature of the walk of faith, waiting upon Him for the direction we need. And it will come, in His timing.

In his dissertation on the Lord's timing, King Solomon wrote, "God has made everything beautiful in his time...no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end" (Ecclesiastes 3:11). We will never understand how all of the events in our lives fit together until we look back from heaven and see the whole of history. Meanwhile, we have His Word by which to walk in the here and now.

Joseph was led to return to his hometown, Nazareth. There he began (or resumed) his business as a carpenter. Jesus learned the trade as well. As far as we know, the next ten to twelve years were relatively uneventful in this family's life. No more angelic visits are recorded. Life was, perhaps, predictable. Mary and Joseph had at least six children after the birth of Jesus, four boys and at least two girls (Matthew 13:58).

Is it possible that Mary began to doubt what God was doing? Is it possible that she questioned whether or not those early promises were truly going to be fulfilled?

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There is no record of Joseph's presence during Christ's adult ministry, which causes most scholars to believe Joseph died, and Mary was left to raise at least seven children by herself. Is it possible she felt abandoned by the One Who had worked such miracles in her life in the past?

As human beings, we do not find that believing the Word of God or walking by faith comes naturally. Rather, it is a supernatural way of living. In the human realm, walking by faith does not make sense. Yet when the Lord takes up residence in us in the person of the Holy Spirit, we learn to listen for the still small voice that can only be heard by believers.

*Oh Lord, open our hearts, minds, and ears to Your voice. May we rest in Your moment-by-moment direction in our lives.*

## *The Lord is our Teacher*

*I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you,  
who directs you in the way you should go.*

—Isaiah 48:17 NIV



Notice what the Lord says He does for His own. In His mercy and grace He teaches us what is best for us. Only He, the Source of all wisdom, knows what is best for each of us. Yet how often we tell Him what we think would be best! We even pray for outcomes, solutions, and adventures that we have determined would be perfect for us. Then we sometimes hit a brick wall and are often injured in the crash.

Does this sound familiar in terms of your life experience? It is in the crash and the pain of injury we often look up for help. These are sometimes our most “teachable” moments. It is then we finally say, “Okay, Lord, what do you want to teach me?”

Deep in our hearts, as believers, we want what He wants for us. And He is the One Who “directs you in the way you should

## *The Lord is our Teacher*

go.” Our sovereign Lord is directing our steps and protecting us even when we are asleep (Proverbs 6:22). He will accomplish His purpose in us. “He works all things after the counsel of His own will” (Ephesians 1:11).

Amazingly, the Lord has not gone away and left us behind to figure out what is best for us or what we should do. He has chosen to provide us, individually, with a Guide, a Teacher, Who will accomplish the King’s purpose in us. This Counselor will “guide you into all truth.... He will tell you about the future.... He will reveal to you whatever He receives from me” (John 16:13-15 NLT). This Counselor is “my representative.... He will teach you everything...” (John 14:26 NLT).

The best news is that the Lord has ordained our steps, including the crashes! “We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps” (Proverbs 16:9 NLT). He alone knows the end from the beginning. We are His jewels, His treasure. He has created us for His glory and He will accomplish His plan. He is love and He loves us fully, completely, consistently. He is interceding in our behalf every second. And He has given us Himself in the Comforter Who comforts us when we think the crashes are fatal to our life in Him.

*Oh Lord, we praise You because Your ways are perfect. Thank You for being our wise Teacher. We embrace Your love and the future You have designed for us, even when we cannot see what that will be. We, by faith, believe You when You tell us, “For I know the plans I have for you.... They are plans for good and not for disaster...” (Jeremiah 29:11 NLT).*

# *Resting in the Father's Arrangements*

*I have no right to say who will sit on the thrones next to mine.  
God has prepared those places for the ones He has chosen.*

—Mark 10:40 NLT



The Lord is forever underscoring that He has an ordained plan behind every detail of all that unfolds in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. In this passage from the gospel of Mark, the disciples have been quibbling over who will receive the greatest position of authority in the future kingdom. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, asked to sit on either side of the Lord in His kingdom reign. The Lord's answer reveals many truths to us.

First, we recognize our own humanity in the request these brothers made. We sometimes think we might be able to qualify for some reward in the coming age. In fact, we are sometimes led to believe that if we do enough stuff right, we can earn a place of honor. Yet the Lord says those assignments have already been made. The Father has ordained the future assignments of individual saints,

## *Resting in the Father's Arrangements*

just as He ordains who will come to Christ or who was called to serve as one of the twelve disciples during His earthly sojourn.

We also learn that the saints will indeed reign with Christ in the coming age. He will establish His kingdom and we will serve as joint-heirs with Him.

In addition, we learn that in His humanity, while here on earth, the Son was not allowed to know all the Father was doing ultimately. There were some things the Son simply did not know because He had chosen to become fully man on earth. In discussing the events that will unfold in the end of this age, Jesus said, "No one knows the day or the hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son Himself. Only the Father knows" (Matthew 24:36 NLT).

Another important truth is that the Son trusted the Father's ordained (predestined) plan completely. He knew the Father's character to be the embodiment of love and wisdom. He also knew that the Father is sovereign, Lord over all. God the Father determines every detail in the universe, from falling sparrows to the hairs on our heads.

The Son Himself knew the Father's plan was not to be altered. Even at Gethsemane, as He prayed to be saved from the cross, He ultimately bowed His head to the Father. "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." Christ had already announced to the disciples several times that He would die and be resurrected in three days. He knew the Father's will would be done, yet, in His humanity, He was free to fully express His human needs. However, His place of ultimate peace was found in trusting the Father's sovereign plan.

*Lord, give us the grace to rest in that which we do not understand and rely on the wisdom of the Father's arrangements!*

# *The Mystery of Prayer*

*Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet  
for this be enquired of by the house of Israel.  
—Ezekiel 36:37*



The mystery of prayer and how it works can be one of the most confusing aspects of our daily lives in Christ. First, we have the humanistic idea that “prayer changes things.” In other words, we are often taught that if you pray long enough or hard enough or with enough faith or with enough people, God will change His plans in response to our human prayer efforts. This is simply not true.

However, there is a sense in which prayer does change things. Here is how and why prayer can be said to change things: Prayer is God’s chosen means for releasing His power to accomplish His purposes.

True prayer begins in heaven. God the Father has a plan. He sends His Spirit into our hearts and minds and we feel “moved”

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to pray for a particular person or situation. For example, you may be moved to pray for your neighbors who live two doors down from you. Eventually they come to know Christ. Did your prayers make the difference? Yes and no. The Lord moved you to participate in the accomplishment of His purpose. What a privilege!

However, notice in this example that you were probably not moved to pray for every single family on your block. That is because He was calling that family in particular to Himself.

In the Ezekiel passage, the Lord says He will see to it that Israel prays for what the Lord has already prophesied He will do! He changes the hearts of even hard-hearted, stiff-necked people (like you and I and the Israelites) to get in tune with His plan. He did this by moving Israel to pray for His mercy.

For example, Jonah prayed to be delivered from the belly of the great fish so that he could proclaim salvation to the Ninevites. This was not Jonah's initial plan. But the Lord brought him into a place of agreement with God's plan. Thus, Jonah's prayers were the means for releasing him from his desperate circumstances.

In John 17:24 Jesus prayed, "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am." The Lord was headed for heaven and was praying for believers to be with Him there. Yet there are times when we see a loved one in a life or death situation and we want to pray, "Dear God, I will that he gets well and stays here with me." These are the moments when we need to remember that true prayer is when we listen for His direction, His will, not ours.

An early twentieth century saint wrote, "If only prayer in accord with God's will is fulfilled, why pray at all?...The

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answer is simple: Prayer is an essential part of God's ordained program.... God is engaged in drawing His creatures to Himself by various means.... Prayer does not originate with us, but with Him.... Prediction (of what is ordained) does not dispense with prayer, it draws it out."

We know that the apostle John wrote the entire book of Revelation giving the prophetic details, the timing, and the events related to Christ's second coming. And what is John's closing statement? A prayer! "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20). John prayed for what he knew would eventually happen.

The exciting reality is that when the Lord moves us to pray for someone or for some situation, we can be expectant about the results! He is initiating our concern or our interest or our sense of "burden." That is because He is involving us in accomplishing what He has already ordained. John Piper said, "The Lord asks us to do what only He can do!" In other words, He asks us to preach the gospel, to pray for healing or salvation or protection or whatever is on our hearts, but only He can accomplish the results!

The purpose of prayer is not for us to dictate to God what we want Him to do. He alone knows the end from the beginning. His purposes will be accomplished, and they will be perfect.

It is often our humanistic way of thinking that creates our frustration with what appears to be "unanswered" prayer. Or we think we should have prayed harder and longer and thereby changed the outcome of a situation. Yet we read that the God of Israel "is not human that He should change His mind" (1 Samuel 15:29 NLT).

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As Charles Spurgeon wrote, “Be thou content to leave thy prayer in His hands, who knows when to give, and how to give and what to give and what to withhold.”

*Lord, teach us to listen more intently so that we might join You in Your plans, prayerfully.*

## *Set Free... While Sleeping*

*I the Lord have called thee...to open the blind eyes,  
to bring out the prisoners from the prison,  
and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.*

—Isaiah 42:6-7



God the Father is speaking to His servant, God the Son, in this passage. We learn that Christ will come to set prisoners free and bring them out of the darkness of their prison house. And God is describing the condition of all humans outside of Christ. We are held captive by Satan, enslaved to him, chained in darkness until we are rescued by Christ Himself.

In Colossians 1:13 Paul said that the Father “has delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.” We have been set free by the Son’s redemptive work on our behalf.

Acts 12:5-18 paints a marvelous picture of what has happened to us as believers. It is portrayed in the actual events Peter experienced. Peter was taken prisoner by Herod (who is a

## *Set Free... While Sleeping*

picture of Satan and the bondage of the law at work). He was chained to two soldiers and placed under the watch of sixteen guards. The prison was filled with darkness. Escape was humanly impossible. He was scheduled to go to trial the next morning and be condemned to death.

This situation, of course, depicts our condition outside of Christ. We are guilty of breaking God's laws. Satan has us bound because of that, and we are condemned to die. We are held captive, in spiritual darkness, with no hope of escape.

In Acts 12:6-7 we read that while Peter was asleep a miracle suddenly occurred. An angel of the Lord came to him; a light shone in the darkness. The angel of the Lord "raised him up, saying 'Arise up quickly' and his chains fell off...."

Isn't it amazing to see that Peter was asleep, having no knowledge that he was about to be rescued? He certainly did not contribute to the rescue! Peter was stunned by this miraculous deliverance. The angelic messenger told him to "Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals...cast thy garment about thee and follow me."

As Peter followed the angel, every door was opened miraculously, including the huge iron gate that protected the entire city. At this point Peter finally realized what had happened. "The Lord has sent his angel and saved me..." (Acts 12:11 NLT).

The apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians with the same angelic message. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (Ephesians 5:14). The Lord's call wakes us from our sleep. He shines the light of the gospel into our hearts and we are set free from sin and darkness. This is the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24).

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Paul also instructed delivered saints to gird ourselves with truth and be sure our feet are shod with the gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:14-15). We have been clothed in the garment of His righteousness and we are now free to follow Him. The gates of the heavenly city of Jerusalem are open to us!

Our personal deliverance from the penalty of death is a miracle. We have been set free, redeemed from an eternity separated from the Savior. And all of this was arranged while we were yet sleeping.

*Lord, we fall on our faces when we think of this incredible act of Your sovereign grace on our behalf.*

## *Saved and then Called*

*Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling.  
—2 Timothy 1:9*



The Spirit of God reveals the heart and truth of the Father in His Word. And often, He teaches us amazing truth through even the order or arrangement of the written Word. In this passage from Paul's second letter to Timothy, it is significant that the Lord saves us first. Then He calls those He has saved!

Paul taught this miraculous reality again and again. In Romans 8:30 we read, "Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called..." We were His by His choosing before we responded to His call. And He only calls those He has already saved!

In the book of Acts, Luke taught this same truth. In Acts 13:48 he wrote, "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." The Greek word for ordained is *tasso* which means appointed or selected.

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In Matthew chapter 22, Jesus Himself gives a parable that reveals a significant truth about being called. He tells of a king who invites people to his son's marriage feast. The call, the invitation, goes out to many people. But they all have reasons why they decline the invitation. They are basically busy with their own lives.

Then the king sends his servants to gather another group of people and these accept the invitation. Jesus concludes this strange parable by saying, "Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14). The Greek word for chosen is *ekletos*, sometimes translated *elect*. The elect of God are those who are chosen by Him. God is the King in the parable. His Son is getting married. The invitation to the marriage feast continues to go out and is heard by many in the world today. Yet most apparently hear with the physical ear only.

In the parable of Matthew 13, Jesus teaches that the ears that hear spiritual truth are the ears of the elect, those who have been predestined to believe (Matthew 13:10-16, 43). Faith is a gift and comes to us through the "hearing of the Word" (Romans 10:17). The Lord alone opens our ears to hear.

The great nineteenth century preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, commented on 2 Timothy 1:9 ("Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling"). He said that believers are "perfectly saved in God's purpose.... God neither chose them nor called them because they were holy, but He called them that they might be holy, and holiness is the beauty produced by His workmanship in them. The excellencies we see in a believer are as much the work of God as the atonement itself."

*Saved and then Called*

It is the magnificence (and the mystery) of the Lord's grace that brings us to His throne with joy and thanksgiving.

*Oh Lord, open our eyes as well as our ears that we might see the wonders in Your Word.*

# Heart Surgery

*The Lord opened her heart to give heed to what was said....*

—Acts 16:14 RSV



The Word of God has a lot to say about the heart. The condition of the heart of every human is described in Jeremiah 17:9, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” The Lord confirms this in the New Testament. “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulterers, fornicators, thefts, false witness, blasphemies...” (Matthew 15:19). That sounds like the ultimate in wickedness, doesn’t it?

In the book of Romans, Paul described “the lusts” of the heart, the “hardness and impenitent heart.” He suggests that the heart needs to be circumcised, to undergo surgery (Romans 1:24, 2:5, 29).

Ezekiel, the prophet, described the heart of the natural man as “whorish,” “stony,” and idolatrous (Ezekiel 6:9, 11:19, 14:3-4).

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King Solomon described the natural man as one who has a heart that “studies destruction” (Proverbs 24:2). The Lord described the religious people of His day and said, “These people honor me with their lips but their hearts are far from me” (Mark 7:6 NIV).

Isn't it remarkable that the Lord determines our condition based on what He sees in our hearts, the very center of who we are? The Greek word for heart is *kardia*. And we know, physically, when we have cardiac illness, our very lives are at risk. The Lord says our spiritual lives are at risk because of the spiritual heart disease present in every human being.

It is interesting that most people think they can “fix themselves up” spiritually. Some believe that doing good deeds, being kind, or being charitable will qualify them for spiritual health. But the Lord says outward activity will not cure a diseased heart. Or we are often told we just need to make better choices and be more responsive and obedient to the things of God. Yet a deceitful, desperately wicked heart is incapable of being authentically responsive to God.

So what is the answer? God Himself has to give us a new heart. He literally has to perform major heart surgery on us, individually. Not one of us can operate on ourselves. We cannot change our own hearts. Even a heart surgeon cannot perform physical surgery on his or her own heart. The same is true regarding our inability to perform spiritual heart surgery on ourselves. It is impossible.

The sovereign Lord of the universe must invade our hearts. And when He does He says, “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; I will take away the stony heart of your flesh...and I will cause you to walk in My statutes” (Ezekiel 36:26-27). Jeremiah writes of God's sovereign work

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also. The Lord God says, “I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord...they shall return unto me with their whole heart” (Jeremiah 24:7).

We see how this transplant works in the story of Lydia in Acts 16:12-15. The apostle Paul had recently arrived in the city of Philippi. On the Sabbath he journeyed outside the city to a place where the believers gathered for prayer by a river. Paul and his friends began to visit with a group of women who were there. One of the women, Lydia, was a successful entrepreneur, a seller of very valuable purple dye. She heard Paul talking about the truths of the Word of God. And we read, “whose heart the Lord opened” so that she paid close attention to what Paul was teaching. She believed the truths of Christ as Savior and asked to be baptized as a believer. Lydia heard the truth because God sovereignly opened up her heart to hear.

Paul called the message he preached “the word of faith.” He quoted Moses who said, “The Word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart” (Romans 10:8). Paul then described how we believe: “For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:10). We are to “believe in our hearts.” Only those who have had heart surgery have a heart able to hear and believe.

Jesus said, “Those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart” (Matthew 15:18). Therefore, Paul concluded that if we believe in our heart we will confess Christ with our mouth.

There is much for us to learn here, especially in the realm of prayer. When we have friends and loved ones who do not confess

## *Heart Surgery*

Christ as their Lord, we need to pray that the Lord would open their hearts to receive His Word.

*Lord, we praise You for giving us new hearts. We are so grateful for Your surgery!*

## *Born of the Spirit*

*Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from  
or where it is going, so you can't explain  
how people are born of the Spirit.*  
—John 3:8 NLT



In John chapter 3 we meet Nicodemus, a law-keeping, Bible-reading, religious leader in the Jewish community. He knew his Old Testament from memory. He was a Pharisee, a chief rabbi. Yet Jesus announced to Nicodemus, this religious, God-fearing man, that he would never even see the kingdom of God unless he was “born again” (John 3:3 NLT).

Nicodemus expressed his confusion about what Jesus was saying. Christ elaborated, “Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives new life from heaven” (John 3:6 NLT). The Lord revealed an incredible secret to Nicodemus. No natural human being can go to heaven. The Spirit of God has to create a new being, a new creation, that is heavenly in nature. The “old person” dies, and a new person, a heavenly person, is created (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 2:20).

## *Born of the Spirit*

Again Nicodemus was puzzled. He wanted to know how this works. Would he have to return to his mother's womb in order to be born again? Jesus startled Nicodemus with His mystifying answer from John 3:8. He simply said it is impossible to explain how people are born of the Spirit and made a new creation!

The news the Lord gave Nicodemus is also shocking even to the Bible-believing Christian world of today. Jesus explained that the wind blows sovereignly and no human being can control it. The Holy Spirit blows on whom He will and the new birth results.

In our physical births as babies, we had no control whatsoever. God sovereignly created us and placed us in the wombs of our mothers. He decided where we would be born geographically, when we would be born into history, and even our physical and mental condition at birth. He alone determined who would be our parents. The exact same sovereign Lord determines who will be born of the Spirit.

The apostle John knew this truth and wrote, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13).

The apostle Paul described this new birth by saying, "No one is able to say, Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3b NLT). Jesus' brother, the apostle James, describes how the Lord engineers this new life in us. "Of his own will he conceived us with the word of truth" (James 1:18). The word of truth is here depicted as the seed of spiritual sperm through which the new birth occurs, with the Father choosing to create this new life.

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Heaven is populated with sinners who have been cleansed from all their sin by faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ, Who paid for the sins of all who believe in Him. Those are the heavenly beings who are born again by the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit. This incredible privilege of becoming a citizen of heaven is a result of nothing we could do by human effort any more than we could have orchestrated our physical birth before we were born! The faith to believe is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8-9). We cannot produce faith. Faith is given to us by the sovereign power of the Holy Spirit. We then have eyes to see Who Jesus is and we confess Him as Lord, the result of the gift of faith.

*Lord, we praise You for the grace and mercy You have given us that we might be given the eyes to see Who You are and a new heart with which to believe.*

# *Unaided Omnipotence*

*Our sufficiency is of God.*  
—2 Corinthians 3:5



Are there times in your life when you want to just “give up” on some dream, or hope, or project, or heart’s desire? Maybe you have prayed for years about a situation or you have longed to serve the Lord in a particular way, or you have wished you had different circumstances or the “right” resources, gifts, or talents to accomplish some specific goal.

Discouragement is one of the great tools of the enemy in our lives. And one of the reasons Satan is very successful in this area of attack is because we have a flawed belief system. In spite of what we may know theologically, a part of our flesh-bound humanity thinks we ought to be able to change things or accomplish something or achieve some goal. We may pray over whatever is the issue, but then we begin to try to “make it

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happen,” whatever the “it” may be. Perhaps it is seeing a loved one come to Christ. You find yourself scheming on how to make that happen. Or you may want to improve your marriage relationship. So you read books on the subject and try to make a meaningful difference.

In all of these scenarios we sometimes see amazing, miraculous events unfold and we are encouraged in our walk with the Lord. But when nothing seems to change and all our efforts seem hopeless, it is then that the enemy attacks. One of the lies Satan tells us is that “if only you had...or hadn’t...done this or that,” then God would have answered your prayers. Or the accuser says, “If you were a more committed Christian...or if you were tithing...or if you hadn’t made those terrible choices earlier in your life...” And we believe the lies he brings to mind because we still have some confidence in our own ability to contribute to the work of God. We do not really believe that all that is of value in His eyes is what He alone accomplishes.

Charles Spurgeon, in preaching on this topic, gave the example of Moses in the wilderness leading six hundred thousand Israelite men and their families, who are clamoring for meat. The Lord tells Moses, “I will give them a month’s supply of meat.” Now Moses simply can’t believe such a thing is possible. He responds, “All the fish in the sea aren’t enough to feed these people. All the animals in all our herds and flocks aren’t enough, God!” And the Lord answered, “Is the Lord’s hand waxed short? Thou shalt see now whether My Word shall come to pass unto thee or not” (Numbers 11:21-23).

Spurgeon then added his encouraging commentary. “Moses, overtaken by a fit of unbelief, looks to the outward means of solving this problem.... But does the Creator expect the creature

## *Unaided Omnipotence*

to fulfill His promise? No. He who makes the promise fulfills it by His own UNAIDED OMNIPOTENCE. His promises do not depend upon the cooperation of the puny strength of man!”

Oh, what a flood of heartfelt faith and relief comes pouring into our lives when we really see this. It is God’s UNAIDED OMNIPOTENCE that is the sole source of all that unfolds in our lives. He alone works all things together to accomplish His own will. Oh, yes, He works through human beings, but He doesn’t depend on us or expect us to do “our part.” He simply omnipotently and sovereignly orchestrates all the people and all the possibilities into one grand symphony for His own glory. He alone is sufficient. He is our sufficiency! God Himself is enough; we only need to know Him. If we truly know Him as the all-sufficient One, we are able to rest in Him, knowing that He will arrange every detail of our lives in harmony with His will.

The apostle Paul wrote about why God works in this way. “God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise... that no flesh should glory in His presence.... He that glories, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:27-31). And in Romans 16:27 LB, “To God, who alone is wise, be the glory forever....”

*Father, enlarge our hearts and minds to believe that You alone know the end from the beginning. And thus we can trust Your love and sovereign grace.*

# *Freed from Sin*

*For he that is dead is freed from sin.*  
—Romans 6:7



The book of Romans is life-changing when the Holy Spirit unlocks for us the miraculous secrets buried in this magnificent treatise. However, without the wisdom of the Spirit it is easy to totally miss the amazing truths hidden here. The apostle Paul explained, among other incredible truths, the secret of freedom.

Most of us are familiar with Christ's words about freedom recorded by the apostle John. The Lord said, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). The Jewish religious leaders could not comprehend what Jesus was saying (John 8:33). The Lord explained to them that they were slaves to sin, held captive by sin that would lead them ultimately to God's judgment and eternal destruction (John 8:35-44). Then

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He repeated Himself, “If the Son sets you free you will be free indeed” (John 8:32 NLT). Jesus was explaining that a person is either a slave to sin (captured by Satan himself) or that person has been set free from sin and from the wrath of God that falls on sin.

Notice that the Lord told these religious leaders what the key to being set free is. “You will know the truth and the truth will set you free.” Jesus said in John 14:6, “I am...the truth.” The truth is a Person, God Himself. And He alone has the power to free us from sin’s power and consequences. The Greek word Jesus uses for know is *ginosko* which means “to know by experience, to become acquainted with.” These religious leaders did not “ginosko” Jesus Christ. They saw Him as just another rabbi, a teacher. And they didn’t like what He taught. God, in human form, was talking to them; the Truth was speaking and they were arguing with Him.

Paul explained this truth about freedom from sin in Romans 6. “We died and were buried with Christ...and just as Christ was raised from the dead...we will also be raised as He was. Our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ...We are no longer slaves to sin. So you should consider yourselves dead to sin...Sin is no longer your master...Instead, you are free by God’s grace” (Romans 6:4-14 NLT).

The question that must be asked is, “How did this death of mine happen? When did I get raised from the dead?” Herein lies the mystery of salvation. For you and for me to be set free from sin requires that there is a new, sin-free me that must come into existence. The old me, the sinner, has to die. Then the Spirit of God has to miraculously create a totally new me. This person is created sinless! As John writes in 1 John 3:9, “Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin.”

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Whoa! This is an entirely new truth that in our natural mind we cannot grasp. Let's review how the Scripture explains who we really are if we know Jesus Christ as God in the flesh, Who died for our sins.

First, Christ explained to Nicodemus that a miraculous work of the Holy Spirit is required for a person to be free from sin. "You must be born again," He said. By the sovereign work of God's spirit He actually slays the old you and creates a new you (John 3:3-5). He explained how this miracle happens. "The Son of Man must be lifted up on a pole, so that everyone who believes in me will have eternal life" (John 3:14-15 NLT). I become a new, sin-free creation of God by believing that Christ died in my place, on the "pole," for my sin. He rose from the dead, having conquered the captor, Satan, who had held me as a slave. Christ infused His life, His sin-free blood, into me. And I know it is true because I believe! Even my "believing" is proof that I've been set free because we cannot believe and call Jesus Lord unless the Spirit has already done this work in us (1 Corinthians 12:3).

The apostle Paul taught this amazing truth in his other letters also. In Galatians we read, "I have been crucified with Christ. I myself no longer live, but Christ lives in me. So I live my life in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God" (Galatians 2:19-20 NLT).

Again, Paul explained that God the Father made Christ, Who knew no sin, "to be sin so that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). "Now you are free from sin, your old master, and you have become slaves to your new master, righteousness" (Romans 6:18 NLT). "So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to

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Christ Jesus. For the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you through Christ Jesus from the power of sin that leads to death” (Romans 8:1-2 NLT).

Have we really comprehended this truth? Have we dared to believe that we have been freed forever from sin? Do we believe that in the Lord’s eyes we are counted as totally righteous, perfect, sinless? Never again will we be condemned because of our sin. This is the reality for those who confess Jesus to be God in the flesh. What might happen if we dared to believe God’s Word on this matter?

*Open our eyes, Lord. We long to grasp such grace.*

# *A New Creation*

*What this means is that those who become  
Christians become new persons.*

*They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone.  
A new life has begun! All this newness of life is from God,  
who brought us back to Himself through what Christ did.*

*—2 Corinthians 5:17-18 NLT*



It is thrilling to actually grasp that the Lord Himself is life. He is Creator. Nothing lives unless He gives life. Scientists today, for all their research and efforts, cannot figure out what life is. But the Scripture tells us. Life is a Person. His name is Jesus Christ. He said, “I am...the Life” (John 14:6). And we read in the gospel of John that the Word of God Who became flesh, Jesus Christ, is the Creator of all things. “He was with God, and He was God. He was in the beginning with God. He created everything there is. Nothing exists that He didn’t make. Life itself was in Him...” (John 1:1-4 NLT).

In Genesis 1 the Lord brought forth life in the animal kingdom. Then Adam was created from the dust of the ground and God “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life” (Genesis 2:7). So we

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see the Lord as the Author and Creator of physical life. When Christ said, “I am...the Life,” the Greek word is *zoa*, which means the opposite of death. It involves resurrected life and eternal life. This life is “the gift of God.” “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

Why is this truth significant for us personally? The significance is multi-layered. First, listen to the words of John, “And this is the record, that God gave to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that has the Son has the life; and he that does not have the Son of God does not have the life” (1 John 5:11, 12). We learn that eternal life is a gift from God. We cannot earn it. And this gift is Jesus Christ. If this life is not indwelling us, we are trapped in eternal death.

Herein also lies the secret of being “born again.” The Lord creates a new life, a new creation, and places His Spirit and eternal life in those who believe that He is God in the flesh. (Even the believing is His work, for He is the Author and Finisher of faith and belief—Hebrews 12:2). The Greek word used here for new is *kainos*, which means “of a totally different kind or quality.”

In other words, to be “born again” is not about reforming our attitudes or shaping up morally or becoming religious. It is about a totally new (different) creation being brought into existence. The prophet Ezekiel described this experience in the Lord’s own words. “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26-27). The work of salvation is God’s sovereign work of grace in us.

## *Heavenly Treasures*

And as if this creative, life-changing work of God were not enough, He went on to make additional promises. “And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.... I will also save you from all your uncleanness” (Ezekiel 36:27).

Ezekiel was describing what is going to happen to unbelieving Israelites when the Lord returns. And the process of this new creation is the same process by which He creates eternal life in every individual who is “born again.”

Our very understanding of these truths is the basis for worshipping the Lord for Who He is, King of the universe. When we begin to grasp His sovereignty, we have a whole new appreciation for the term “amazing grace.” In addition, we gain a new appreciation for the purpose of prayer. When we ask the Lord to reveal Himself to those we love who do not know Him, it is because He is the giver of this new life. He is the giver of life and He is the life. No amount of human logic or human persuasion can produce eternal life. We speak the truth of Christ to others, but the light is His to give.

Finally, when we begin to see that in Christ we are a different creation, a new creation, we experience fresh understanding of these words: we are “no more than foreigners and nomads here on earth” (Hebrews 11:13 NLT). We often feel as if we don’t quite “fit in.” That is because we are new creatures in Christ. What a miracle!

*Father, we praise You as Creator, having made us into new creations!*

# *All Things*

*In whom also we have obtained an inheritance,  
being predestinated according to the purpose of him  
who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.  
—Ephesians 1:11*



There is something staggering in the truth that the Lord actually coordinates every detail in the universe to serve His own will. Nothing escapes His perfect control. The New Living Translation says, “All things happen just as He decided long ago.” It is not only that He controls these details, He actually planned them. He ordains these details, having designed every detail before the world was created.

As if that is not mind-boggling enough, we read, “God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them” (Romans 8:28 NLT). The more familiar King James Version reads, “All things work together for good” for the believer.

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Here we have one more miraculous truth. He not only controls all things and ordains all things, He actually controls and ordains for one specific purpose: He is bringing specific good into the lives of those who are in Christ. His entire focus is on His own family, those who are born again in Christ. He has designed the entire creation to bring His perfect plan for good into your life!

We read in Colossians 1:16-18, “For by Him (Christ) were all things created...all things were created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things and by Him all things consist.... He is the Head of the Body...the Firstborn from the dead...that in all things He might have the pre-eminence.”

Here we see the reason the Lord is working all things together for good in our lives—we are members of His body and all things were created by Him and for Him. We are in Him and are therefore heirs of all His plans for His own glory.

And the Lord is actively involved in bringing this goodness to fruition in all things that have unfolded in our past, present, and future. In Ephesians 1:11 He is said to be working all things after the counsel of His own will. The Greek word for working is *energeo*, to be actively, efficiently involved.

In Romans 8:28 we read, “all things work together” for our good. The Greek word for work in this passage is *sunergeo*, which has the sense of helper or companion in labour. In other words, He is personally involved in working out the sometimes messy, and often confusing, details of our lives.

How might your life, or my life, be different if we were living in this reality every single moment of every single day? The great saints of old walked boldly in these staggering truths. King David wrote, “You saw me before I was born. Every day

## *All Things*

of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.... How precious are your thoughts about me, O God. And when I wake up in the morning You are still with me!” (Psalm 139:16-18 NLT).

Perhaps we need to find new words with which to praise Him for His constant *energeo* in all the things of our lives. “Marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well!” (Psalm 139:14).

*Lord, help me see that, truly, all that is at work in my life right now is flowing from Your sovereign, perfect, loving plan.*

# *The Gift of Faith in the Midst of Darkness*

*Arise and take the young Child and His mother, and flee into  
Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word.*

—Matthew 2:13



When King Herod discovered that the Old Testament prophesied the arrival of the King of Jews, he felt threatened. As a result of the visit of the wise men who followed a miraculous star, Herod did some inquiring from the Jewish priests and scribes. He learned that the birthplace of this King was in Bethlehem and had occurred several months earlier. Thus he sent out a decree, “Kill all the babies under two years old in Bethlehem and the surrounding area.”

The Lord protected the Child by warning Joseph and Mary. He sent an angel to Joseph in a dream. The angel instructed Joseph to take Mary and the Child and flee at once to Egypt. “He arose and took the young Child and His mother by night, and departed into Egypt.”

## *The Gift of Faith in the Midst of Darkness*

Suddenly, without any time for preparation or even any understanding as to why this trip was necessary, these lives were thrown into disarray. There is no record that the angel explained what was coming. The journey to Egypt was two hundred miles over desert territory, and their family and friends were left behind. The duration of their stay was completely uncertain. “Be there until I bring thee word,” the angel said.

You and I may not receive direction from an angel in a dream, but we sometimes experience confusion and uncertainty when we find ourselves on an Egypt journey. We wonder why God has us in a particular situation. We wonder when we will be freed from uncertainty or discomfort. And we may even experience feeling abandoned by or disconnected from those we love. We have a sense of “being in the dark,” even as Joseph fled “in the night.”

The gift of faith was operating in Joseph. He simply believed the Word of God. He acted on the Word; he believed God knew what He was doing. He trusted the One he worshipped. And as a result, this family escaped the satanic plot that was unfolding by Herod’s hand.

This same enemy, the wicked one, is plotting against us, day after day, hour by hour. Yet the Lord Himself has prayed that we be “kept from the wicked one” (John 17:15). When we experience darkness, confusion, and uncertainty, we have a way out—to dare to believe the Word He has provided. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths” (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Amazingly, the Old Testament prophets had written that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) and also that

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He would come out of Egypt (Hosea 11:1). Only the sovereign Lord could orchestrate these events. This same sovereign Lord has written all our days in His book (Psalm 139:16). Our darkness does not hide us from Him, nor Him from us (Psalm 139:11-12).

*Lord, give us faith to believe, to trust Your wisdom, and to follow You even when we don't know where You are leading, why the trip is necessary, or what the outcome will be.*

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