



**Free  
Your  
Faith**



The first edition of a compilation of my preaches which are the basis of Liberty's beliefs and teachings.

I have over thirty English bibles on my computer and mainly use eleven of them from which I quote. Sometimes I use a combination of versions to clarify meaning.

Scripture tells us we are 'saved by grace'.\* Therefore I preach 'the gospel of the grace of God'.\*\*

Jesus said that He came to save people and He did not come to condemn anyone.\*\*\* Neither do I.

Jim Parker October 2023

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\* Ac 15:11 Eph 2:5 Eph 2:8

\*\* Ac 20:24

\*\*\* Joh 3:17

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# Grace And Peace

Here is an abridged version of the first few verses of Paul's second letter to the church in Corinth chapter 3:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone.

You show that you are a letter from Jesus, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

Such confidence as this is ours through Jesus before God.

Not that we are capable in ourselves, to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.

He has made us competent as ministers of a new way — not by what is penned, but of the Spirit; for what is written down kills, but the Spirit gives life.

How glorious is the ministry that brings us into the right standing with God and it is a glory that will last (2-9).



At the beginning of his book we call Revelation, the apostle John records that the Lord Jesus says to him, **John, write 7 letters**. John begins His 7 letters to the 7 churches with, **Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**. Paul's 10 New Testament letters begin with these very same words.

Coincidence, I do not think so; unusual, yes, because you did not start letters that way in those days. You would start the letter by saying 'Greetings' not 'grace and peace'. There must be something very significant about this explicit opening phrase to the 17 letters. It must be significant because in scripture 7 is the symbolic number of perfection, 10 is the symbolic number of completeness and 17 is the symbolic number of victory. \*\* (see Endnote).

Does this way of starting the letters mean something? Does the start of the letters say something about what is to come? Yes, I believe it does. I also believe grace and peace are present in the very heart of the letters and the spirit in which the letters were written. Let us have a look at the meaning of the individual words to find out what was central to the letters.

The Greek word used for grace is Charis (Karis), meaning 'something that brings joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness: It is about goodwill, loving-kindness, merciful kindness and favour'.



Favour means treating someone in a beneficial and privileged way. The Greek word used for peace is 'eirene' (i-ray'-nay) meaning, 'tranquillity, quietness, rest, a sense of harmony, and a deep sense of wellbeing'.

It would be a bit of a mouthful if we started a letter: May joy, sweetness and delight, loving and merciful kindness, and every privilege and benefit be upon you and may peace, tranquillity, quietness, rest, harmoniousness and a deep sense of wellbeing be yours. Maybe it is best to have the modern Western church meaning of grace - 'undeserved, unmerited favour'.

God treats us in a beneficial and privileged way. We do not deserve His favour, nor can we earn such favour. We cannot mess it up, we can never destroy it. We can never fall out of grace, we can only ever fall into grace. As for peace, for me it is what grace brings me in my relationship with God, where I have an untroubled mind because I can never lose God's favour. In my relationship with God, I am not worried about ever spoiling it, since He has taken care of everything to keep our unity.

When I looked at what bible commentators said about grace, one guy wrote, 'Grace is the empowering presence of God, enabling you to be who He created



you to be, and to do what He has called you to do.' Take note of this. What is important is what He created you to be, not what you or others may want to make you into, and what He has called you into, not what you determine to do, or what others think you should do. To repeat 'Grace is the empowering presence of God, enabling you to be who He created you to be, and to do what He has called you to do'.

My wife, Nina, and I have something in common. In our earlier Christian lives, both of us had been called into a ministry which in reality, we would not have chosen. For Nina, working in a drug rehabilitation centre, and for me, it was working with the homeless but both of us through those experiences learned a lot.

In them Nina and I found ourselves trying to do more than what God was asking of us. We very quickly involved ourselves in doing our good works instead of His 'God works'. We found we ran out of steam as the Lord will only empower us to do what He Himself asks us to do.

The lessons the Lord taught us were invaluable and have influenced both of us to this day. We know that the lasting value is always in the God works, not in our good Works. We know the sense of peace in what we do is always in the God works, not the good works.





We learned that in the God works we know when we have done enough. In the good works there never comes a point when it is enough. We have learned that we do not have to worry about our limitations because it does not all depend on us. We have learned more and more to rely upon Jesus.

Grace, defined as empowering and enabling you to be who God created you to be, is a quality that others have found at Liberty. Furthermore, the people of Liberty have found grace has empowered and enabled them to be themselves and given them wonderful peace of mind in their relationship with the Lord.

There are a number at Liberty who have found peace of mind with the Lord since meeting... ME! I say *me* with tongue in cheek, but nevertheless there is a truth in my joke. When Jesus called me into this ministry, Jesus asked me: 'Will you take Me to the LGBT community?' 'Yes', I said. So I brought to the community the Jesus I know; I could not bring any other Jesus, except the Jesus that asked and encouraged me to bring Him. What is more, I believe it is the Jesus that Paul knew and the Jesus that John knew. I have the same letter written upon my heart - a letter that I have now delivered to you. This letter is now written upon the hearts of Liberty folks and the beginning of the letter is the very essence of the



message to our community, [grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.](#)

Peace and rest come from knowing the undeserved, unmerited favour of God. Grace has empowered and enabled us, and will increasingly enable us to be the people God created us to be. A people, knowing the peace that passes human understanding - a deep, complete peace in our relationship of grace with God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

\*\* [Link To Notes Pg. 189 Symbolic Use Of Numbers](#)

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# Grace Is Sufficient

Over time it dawned on me I had in essence the same gospel message as the apostle Paul. It is this: **Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.** In one of his letters, Paul wrote he had a thorn in his side which he prayed three times for the Lord to take away. Believe it or not, three times I have asked the Lord to take away the thorn *by* my side - the pain in my neck. Paul and I got the same answer: **My grace is sufficient for you.** Sufficient for what? To bring and keep us in the privileged place of God's favour, no matter what we are like or what difficulties or people we are coping with.

It got me thinking. I had three questions: Is God's grace sufficient for me? Is God's grace sufficient for you? Is there enough grace to go around? Let us remind ourselves what grace is. Grace, as we know, is the undeserved, unmerited, favour of God.

God has always treated His children in a privileged and beneficial way. From Abraham's nephew, Lot, who had just a smidgen of faith, to King David who seemingly had loads of faith! The accounts of their lives show they were far from perfect, yet God's grace



was sufficient for each one of them. Sufficient for what? To keep them in their place of favour with God, no matter what they had done, or would do to mess up their lives. My dictionary meaning of 'sufficient' means; having enough to meet the need. How many sins have been committed since the beginning of time? Is God's grace sufficient to deal with them? The apostle, Paul, wrote in his letter to the church in Rome, [where sin increased, grace increased all the more \(5:20\)](#).

I remember speaking to a man who had started coming to Liberty. It became apparent to Nina and me that this guy had internalised homophobia. In other words, he was prejudiced against himself for being gay. Years earlier, the man had become a Christian and had walked straight into a homophobic church - not a hard thing to do.

As for many before him and since, the church had heaped guilt upon guilt upon this poor chap. For this guy, being gay was a sin and a sin too far. One day full of guilt, thinking he was in sin, he just blurted out, 'You cannot be a Christian and be gay'. I experienced what I call a 'Jesus gem'. It is a thought, an idea, a word of wisdom that you just know is not of yourself and Jesus gave me a gem of an answer to his statement: 'You cannot be a Christian and be gay'. I



instantly replied, ‘Are you saying there is a deficiency in the cross?’ Meaning, are you saying what Jesus did in dying for us was only good enough to earn forgiveness for some sins, but it was not enough to cover all sins.

The guy was stunned into silence, his colour literally drained and his eyes glazed over, as the light dawned. For years, he had believed you cannot be gay and a Christian, and now a switch had been flicked on. Of course, there was no deficiency in the cross; it was just not possible. Jesus’ sacrificial death covered every sin. This man had been taught and thought to be gay was a sin and a sin too far. He had been carrying the guilt for years.

Of course here at Liberty, we know being LGBT is a natural part of God’s creation and is not sinful in any way but there are a lot of folks out there who live with a crippling guilt that has been heaped upon them by Christians just for being LGBT. Others live, weighed down with guilt for something they have done or something they keep compulsively doing, or a failing they have. As a consequence, they consider themselves barred from God’s love and presence. They all need to know the sufficiency in God’s grace.

A preacher called Judson Cornwall once said that, ‘Christians have a problem with sin but God has no



problem with it because He sent the answer to sin, His Son'. The apostle, Paul, wrote in his letter to the church in Ephesus, [in Christ, we have the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace \(1:7\)](#). In another letter, this time to the church in Rome, Paul wrote, [those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness in Jesus Christ will reign in life \(5.17\)](#).

In its riches and abundance, grace buries sin under the weight of its sheer size, the gift of righteousness allows us to enjoy a relationship with Jesus right now, no matter what we are like. Some LGBT folks have an inferiority complex as a result of all the negative messages from society and religion. Others feel inferior because of things that have happened in our lives - ways we have failed or let ourselves and others down. The riches and abundance and the sufficiency of grace are there for us all. Our heads may try to tell us we are inferior but our hearts know there is a superior person living within us.

The Spirit of Jesus Christ is living within us and which means we are all success stories, created equals in Jesus, having the grace of God to meet every spiritual need and to keep us in the right place with God in His favour at all times. In the letter to the Ephesian



church, Paul wrote, [it is by grace we have been saved \(2:5\)](#).

In his first letter to the community in Corinth, Paul wrote, [by the grace of God I am what I am \(15:10\)](#). We can all say that, because we are the children of God and enjoy so much in favour each of us can say I am no ordinary child, I am God's favourite-

Grace acts as a protective covering, keeping us in the place of favour as God's favourite child, no matter what, and no matter how badly we mess up. Grace is an indescribable gift from an indefinable God. Grace is all-sufficient. Grace is beyond measure. Grace will exceed every expectation. Grace is what makes us different. Grace is the difference others see. Grace is Liberty's good news. Grace is Liberty's message.

Grace liberates us; we can relax and be free to be ourselves, knowing we are treasured by God just as we are. Grace is the beacon in our lives that gives us the ongoing peace with God people see. Grace enables God to do what he wants to do in the life of Liberty because of the riches of His grace, the abundance of His grace, and the sufficiency of His grace.

As witnessed by so many people, from members to visitors, who have told us so, the Spirit of grace is ever present at Liberty to give glory to Jesus through whom



God has poured out His grace on us, His favourite children.

In conclusion, here is an extract from the apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, in chapter 15: **The first thing I did was place before you what was placed so emphatically before me: that Christ died for all our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried; that he was raised from death on the third day, again exactly as scripture says; that he presented himself alive to Peter, then to his closest followers, and later to more than five hundred of his followers all at the same time; that he then spent time with James, then with all the apostles; and that he finally presented himself alive to me.**

**It was fitting that I bring up the rear. I don't deserve to be included in that inner circle, as you well know, having spent all those early years persecuting Christians and trying my best to stamp God's church right out of existence. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me (3-10).**

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# The Power of Grace

These words are taken from the first few verses of John's Gospel:

Jesus came to his own people, but they did not receive him. Yet to all those who did accept him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God our Father. God's Son became human and lived among us, we have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. From Christ's fullness we, his children, have all received, grace upon grace for the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus.

Do you ever feel as though life is not fair? We see inequality all around us. Unfairness is everywhere. It starts at birth with the brain power we get, whether we get good parents or bad parents, whether we go through traumas or have a safe childhood, the acceptance we experience, the rejection we encounter, the education and training we get or do not get. The health we have or the disability or illness we have to face, the income we have or have not, it goes on and



on, so much inequality, some with so many advantages, others with so many disadvantages. It would be so different if instead of all these advantages and disadvantages, life was a level playing field with no one better off than anyone else.

I believe God is into level playing fields and that is why Jesus came. This is where the power of grace comes in. Grace is the great leveller. The verse in John's gospel that states, [the law came through Moses, grace came through Jesus](#), seems to be making a contrast between the two - Moses and Jesus, law and grace. It is as though John is saying they are totally different.

The law commanded and demanded. The religious law commanded you as to what you must do to be right with God and then demanded you do it, whether you had the ability to do so or not. The law created discrimination and inequality. The law discriminated against a vast swathe of society - women and children, the sick and disabled. The law was also sectarian. There was a division between the priests and ordinary people. You had to rely on the priest to do their duty properly, to perform their religious ceremonies the right way, to keep you and me - the ordinary person - in the right place with God. Women and children had to rely on the men to maintain their responsibilities to



the system - in the whole system of keeping God sweet.

In contrast, grace is a great leveller. To start off, it is an unconditional gift, and everyone, no matter who they are, can receive a gift, it does not matter whether we are a man, woman, or child, what our circumstances are, or in what state our life is. Grace is also non-sectarian, we do not need to belong to a certain group or class of people. Grace is solely dependent upon Jesus. It does not depend upon a priest to do their duty or anyone to fulfil their responsibilities, because the duty is done and finished in Jesus, we have no obligations to keep God sweet and to keep ourselves right with God. All responsibility for our spiritual state with God has and is taken up by Jesus.

The apostle Jude wrote this at the end of his letter, [now to him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy \(1:24\)](#). How marvellous to think that Jesus is able to keep all of us spiritually perfect for God all the time! Not some of us, not the best of us, but all of us!

The law commands and demands, but grace liberates and frees us from the demands made upon us, which means grace makes us all equal before God. Grace



makes us free and equal. Free from relying on any system, or relying upon a priest or pastor, or anyone else! Grace even frees us from relying on ourselves, because grace totally relies on Jesus.

Grace sets us free from having to rely on anything or anyone apart from Jesus to keep us right with God.

Grace makes us spiritually equal. A person with more faith or who behaves better does not gain any more value before God; the grace that came to us through Jesus is the only means by which we are enabled to relate to God. We all stand on a level playing field before him with no person having a spiritual advantage over another. All equally the children of our Heavenly Father, counted as brothers and sisters to his Son Jesus!

Heb 2:11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them **brethren**.

Ro 8:29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many **brethren**.

Mt 28:10 Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell My **brethren** to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me.”



Grace is the great leveller but what level are we on? Scripture tells us we are on the highest spiritual level there is. This is what Paul writes in his letter to the church at Ephesus, **and God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms (2:6)**. There's no higher level. It is hard to understand but scripture tells us our rightful spiritual place right now in Christ Jesus is to be seated with Him in heaven.

Now to be in that spiritual place, we have a couple of essentials, we have to be righteous and holy, and they are the very things we have because Jesus freely gives us His own righteousness and holiness. His righteousness is our righteousness and His holiness is our holiness, He has even given us His glory. In the gospel of John, we read, **the glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one, even as we are one (17:22)**. In his letter to the church in Rome, Paul writes, **and those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified (8.30)**. We truly are one in Christ Jesus and we cannot get more equal than that.

Grace is a gift from God which frees us to be the people He created us to be with equal rights as children of God. Paul again writes in the letter to the Romans, **and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and**



joint-heirs with Christ; that we are glorified together (8:17).

Free and equal! No matter what inequalities we face in life, we are all equal to our Heavenly Father, counted as joint-heirs of the Kingdom of God with Jesus, and all because Jesus has done His duty. All because Jesus has taken the burden of responsibility!

The power of grace is that grace itself is free and is free to free us. Grace counts us equal, as liberated children of God in Jesus.

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# Church of Grace

These are the words Jesus speaks, according to the book of Revelation. written by John:

Write this to Philadelphia, to the Messenger of the church: The Holy, the True, with David's key in his hand, opening doors no one can lock, locking doors no one can open speaks. I see what you've done. Now see what I've done. I've opened a door before you that no one can slam shut. You don't have much strength, I know that; you used what you had to keep my Word. You didn't deny me when times were rough, and watch I will take those who call themselves true believers but are nothing of the kind, pretenders whose true membership is in the club of the adversary, watch I will strip off their pretensions and they're forced to acknowledge it's you that I've loved.

Because you kept my Word in passionate patience, I will keep you safe in the time of testing that will be here soon, and all over the earth, every man, woman, and child put to the test. I'm on my way. Keep a tight grip on what you have so no one distracts you and steals your crown. I will make each conqueror a pillar in the sanctuary of my God, a permanent position of



honour. Then I will write names on you, the pillars: I will write the Name of my God, the Name of God's City the new Jerusalem coming down out of Heaven and my new Name. He who has a listening ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches (3:7-13).

The apostle John, the writer of the book of Revelation, tells us in the first chapter he was in the Spirit. Even though we always have the Spirit dwelling in us, much of the time we go through life with our minds and emotions taken up with our physical, psychological and emotional needs. We can be in the Spirit in a number of ways and in varying degrees from a feeling of being lost in delight and joy while singing. Or it can be having an inspired picture in our mind's eye that we know is from God, or having a vision. A vision is like a vivid daydream; there's an intensity about it and there are different intensities of vividness. The way John describes his vision is so intense that he felt he was in heaven itself and maybe he was. But all he says is, 'I was in the Spirit', meaning he was conscious of his union with the Holy Spirit and was seeing things far beyond the realm of human awareness.

The first chapter of Revelation sets the scene and in the following two chapters, we find Jesus asking John to write letters to each of the seven named churches. Many theologians reckon the content of these letters is





not just relevant to the churches mentioned but is also to all churches in any given place and at any given time throughout history.

The first letter is written to the church in Ephesus and it warns them that after they began, as inspired by the Lord, they have finished up doing things in their own strength, according to their own ideas and traditions and lost their focus on Jesus, their first love. Even as individual Christians, we can easily fall into the same trap. Without realising it we can put Christian practices and church tradition before the Lord's leading.

It has always amazed me, there are people who have been rejected by their various churches and have come to Liberty and found acceptance, and yet they have clung on to what they were taught by those very same people who held them in contempt. Such is the power of religion.

Another letter is written to the church in Laodicea and the Spirit says they are lukewarm. The Christians in Laodicea had become like the Pharisees Jesus knew. The Pharisees taught obedience\*\* to the law - keeping the rules. Do as we say, then it will be OK. Obey, obey, obey - was the rule of the day. Their religion taught people to confess, repent and try as hard as they can. God is merciful as long as you try your hardest, and



then if you fail you fall, you fall into His grace. That was the teaching of the Pharisees and in my experience, that is still the teaching of many churches.

A church that is neither hot nor cold is lukewarm. As we know cold is good for ice cream and keeping the vegetables and milk fresh. We also know hot is good for pies and porridge as well as for Horlicks and the water bottle at bedtime. Hot and cold are total opposites; lukewarm is neither one nor the other.

Now scripture tells us the law is good, just as cold is good, scripture also tells us grace is good, just as hot is good. Even though they are both good, grace is as opposed to the law as hot is to cold. Similarly, the Pharisee and Christian! Those who mix some law and some grace finish up lukewarm - such was the Lord's charge against the church at Laodicea and churches like them.

So, the first church was Ephesus - the church which had forsaken their first love (2:4) and the second church in Laodicea was the church which was lukewarm (3:16). The third church was the one at Smyrna which had good news, but also in their congregation there were the purveyors of false news (2:10). The fourth was at Pergamum and the people needed to turn back to God as they were wrongly following their leaders with their false teachings and



practices (2:16). The fifth at Thyatira had a false leader with false credentials, who had seduced the people by appealing to their psychological and emotional needs and so had led them astray (2:20). The sixth church at Sardis was dying and almost dead. Sardis, where was the Spirit of life? The light and life of Jesus were almost extinguished; only a few faithful ones were holding on (3:2). The seventh and last church was in Philadelphia - the name of the place, meaning brotherly or sisterly love; the only church in which no fault was found.

To this church the Lord says (and I paraphrase), I have opened the door of opportunity and because I have opened it no one else can close it. Though lacking in strength you have remained faithful to the good news and upheld my name. Those who slander you, those who call themselves Christians, but are in name only, I will make them come, and see, and acknowledge my love for you because you have been strong, yet quietly remained faithful to what I have said. Hold very tight to what I have given you so that no one can take your crown.

Philadelphia, a church where no fault was found, was a church of grace, spotless, pure, holy, a church that knew their humanity counted for nothing. They themselves could do no wrong because they did not do



anything, it was all of God and what He would do as the perfect letter to Philadelphia emphasises these seven times.

For the Lord Jesus says:

1. I will make them come and bow down at your feet  
(Rev. 3:9),
2. I will make them know that I love you. (Rev. 3:9),
3. I will keep you from the hour of testing (Rev. 3:10),
4. I will make you a pillar (Rev. 3:12),
5. I will write on you the name of my God (Rev. 3:12),
6. I will write on you the name of the city of my God  
(Rev. 3:12),
7. I will write on you my new name (Rev. 3:12).

A sevenfold (perfect) promise from the Lord Jesus which I believe every church of grace can claim as their own. There is a good reason why I claim and believe these promises are for Liberty. Each letter the Lord writes to the seven churches ends with this advice. **Those who have a listening ear, let them hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.**

According to the seven letters, only Philadelphia, the grace church, was responding to the Spirit. At Liberty, we seek to follow the Lord of the book, not the book of



the Lord. We seek to follow, not by abiding in what the Spirit wrote but by living in the Spirit who wrote it.

My fellow holy ones, will you join me in holding tight to what the Lord has given us? Will you unite with me as the saints of Liberty with listening ears and hear what the Spirit is saying to our church of grace?

\*\* [Link To Notes Pg. 221 Obey or Hear?](#)

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## The Year Of The Lord's Grace

Taken from Luke's gospels chapter 4:

On the Sabbath day Jesus went into the synagogue as usual and He stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. Unrolling it, Jesus found the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and to release the oppressed, to proclaim **Jubilee, the year of the Lord's grace.**"

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the deacon and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and Jesus said to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled." All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips (16–22).

The apostle Paul said 'the law is spiritual'. Jesus said 'I have come to fulfil the law'. Our reading is an example of those two statements being fulfilled.

In Ex 23 God decreed in the law of Moses the land God would give to His people had to rest in the 7th year, it was called the Sabbath year. So for 6 years the



land God gave you as a gift, where you sowed your seed or planted your fruit trees and gathered the harvest, had to lie fallow in the seventh year.

This meant that you did no work for the whole year, you neither sowed seed nor reaped the harvest. It was a rest year for you and your family, your animals and the land. In year 6 the land had to provide enough food for you to eat until the harvest in year 9 (in year 8 you did the planting). If you did not have a bumper harvest in year 6 you would have to rely on God for your needs.

I think you would agree with me this would take, for the whole of God's people, a massive act of faith. Having no food for you and your family for such a length of time meant you could very possibly die of starvation.

Unfortunately the people failed in their faith. They never put this part of the law into practise. They were afraid. They failed to believe God would provide for them in the time they did not work, and they failed to rely on God for their provision. Yet they only had to look at their own history to see God's faithfulness in providing all they needed for 40 years in the wilderness. Not only did He miraculously supply food and water for 40 years in the desert but also miraculously for the whole 40 years their clothes and



shoes never wore out. The people forgot the words of Joshua, 'You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the LORD your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed' (23:14). But the people failed, not once did they keep the Sabbath year by resting from their planting and harvesting work and allowing their land and their animals to rest too. Unbelief was their failure. They could not quite trust God for their needs, it was just too hard.

Our reading is Jesus quoting Isaiah "He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and to release the oppressed, to proclaim Jubilee, the year of the Lord's grace." When He finishes reading the scriptures, Jesus says, 'Today these words are now fulfilled.'

To understand what Jesus meant by all this, we have to go back and look at the meaning of 'the year of the Lord's grace'. The year of the Lord's grace was the year of Jubilee which was a special extra year of rest and freedom.

Already every 7 years there was the Sabbath rest year then in the fiftieth year there was the Jubilee, a year of celebration. Lev 25-27 records what was to happen in Jubilee 'the year of the Lord's grace.' Some amazing things were meant to happen. Things that go against





human nature and express the generous nature of an all loving, all giving God.

In those days there were no pensions or benefits so if anything went wrong you had to borrow money to avoid going hungry. If for some reason you could not pay the money back; in Jubilee year your debt would be cancelled. In the year of the Lord's grace **all** you owed was written off. All of it!

If you could not borrow the money but you had land that was your inheritance from God and you had to sell the your land to raise cash, in Jubilee your land would legally returned to you.

If in your desperation when you had been facing starvation and your only way to get the money you needed was to sell yourself into servitude, into the service of another, in Jubilee year you would be set free.

So in Jubilee, the year of the Lord's grace, though you had not paid your debts they were cancelled just because of what what God said. God's grace would be on you, all your debts would be cancelled, you would be set free and your inheritance restored. No wonder Jubilee was meant to be a year of celebrations!\*\*

It is written the law is spiritual, so what is the spiritual significance of the year of Jubilee the year of the Lords



grace? Your debts had gone unpaid, but because it was God's year of grace, all your debts were cancelled, inheritances were restored, freedom from servitude was gained.

Remember Jesus' words in our reading about the year of God's grace. Jesus said, *'Today this scripture is fulfilled'*. Jesus was saying its Jubilee, *today* is the time of God's grace, the time when debts are cancelled, inheritance restored and people are set free from all debts and servitude. Jesus was proclaiming Jubilee, the year of celebration, rejoicing in God's goodness and generosity.

John records Jesus' words, *"No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends"* (15:15). The Son's and daughter's of God are not servants but His children, children who are not in servitude to their Father.

Jesus said to the thief on the cross, *'Today you will be with me in paradise'* because for the thief, as well as for us, Jesus paid the price, all spiritual debts are cancelled. In Jesus there is freedom from whatever spiritually enslaves us and our spiritual inheritance is secured, not that we earned it but because God declared it so. In Jesus *now* is the time of God's grace.



The apostle Paul wrote '*Now is the day of salvation*' (2Co 6:2); salvation means absolute freedom. Paul knew that in the death and resurrection of Jesus it was the time of grace and freedom.

Paul also wrote in Galatians, '*It is for freedom that Jesus has set us free*'. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of servitude (5:1). Jesus Himself said, *If I make you free, you shall be truly free* (Joh 8:36).

Freedom is legally ours, guaranteed in Jesus. I believe the fullness of our freedom has to be entered into. Freedom has to be experienced. Jubilee year was a time when no work was done a time of complete rest, a permanent Sabbath rest and a time when what had been lost was restored. However, not to work to earn our way, get something for nothing goes against everything we have been taught.

The Messianic Jew today fails to accept the fullness of the promise of the new covenant. 5 is the symbolic number of grace and God says 5 times in His promise 'I will', stating categorically it will be Him alone who will fulfil the new covenant according to His grace. Unlike the old covenant there will be no obligation or expectation placed upon the people.



Complete rest makes us feel ill at ease, it does not sit right, it just does not feel right. But we do not have to work for our sanctification, sanctification is a provision of God as are all our spiritual needs. 'God will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus' (Php 4:19). Our 'garments of salvation' (Isa 61:10), nor our shoes being 'the gospel of peace' (Eph 6:15) will never wear out.

Yet the time of grace means just that, do nothing of yourself to earn God's favour, rest in God's provision, rest in the supply of God, have faith in God meeting your every need; and that is hard. *Today* in 2023 'scripture is fulfilled'. *Today* is the time of God's grace, the time when spiritual debts are cancelled, people are set totally free. It is for freedom that Jesus has set us free and when Jesus makes you free, you shall truly be free. We enter that freedom by faith.

*Today* is Jubilee, *today* is the time of God's grace, *today* is the time to celebrate the undeserved favour of God and the freedom it brings. *Today* is Jubilee, where grace and freedom are found in Jesus. What a reason to celebrate! If we could grasp this our churches would be places of tremendous celebration and freedom. No one would doubt God's undeserved favour. No one would fret about their sins' or worry



that anything they had done was separating them from God. It would be obvious that all is covered by God's crazily generous, abundant, over extravagant grace!

\*\* [Link To Notes Pg. 192 for the Jubilee Observance.](#)

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# Foolish Grace

These are the first 14 verses of the gospel of John:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has come into being. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, He gave the right to become children of God, Children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.



The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

A question came to me when reading John, **For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (1:17)**. The question was, why did grace and truth come by Jesus? The end of our reading gives us the answer. Jesus was full of grace and truth. So when He came, He could not help bringing grace and truth; He was full of it.

John's gospel says, when Jesus came from the Father He was full of grace and truth. When the Lord called me to start this church He said, 'Will you take Me to the LGBT community?'

Which is what I have done, I have brought Jesus, the One who is full of grace and truth, and so I have brought to Liberty nothing but grace and truth.

Thirty odd years ago I remember reading of a Christian rock band going to Russia. Since there were really not many bibles in Russia at that time, during the concert the band threw copies of John's gospel into the crowd. Why John's gospel and not any other? Because John's gospel is about who Jesus is. The



Christian rock band wanted their Russian audience to meet Jesus.

The other gospels tell us mainly what Jesus did, but John reveals who Jesus is. Which is why our first bible study at Liberty was on the gospel of John and it lasted many months. The gospel is about revealing the person of Jesus. As I have brought Jesus and revealed Jesus, I just could not help but bring grace and truth because Jesus is full of it.

My favourite song has seemingly become a bit of a Liberty anthem: 'Jesus, all for Jesus' by Robin Mark. To proclaim Jesus is to declare grace and truth and to proclaim grace and truth is to declare Jesus.

Hosea says in chapter 9 verse 7, [the prophet and preacher is a fool, spiritual men and women are foolish...](#) I would love to have it reported that we at Liberty are all fools. We would be in good company, the prophet Jeremiah was called a fool, so too the apostle Paul, as was the one who is full of grace and truth, Jesus. He was certainly called a fool. Paul wrote, the Jew thought the gospel was foolish, in another place he wrote the Greek thought the gospel was foolish.

In another place Paul wrote the natural thinking person thought the gospel was foolish. So if the gospel





is foolish, I have a mission here at Liberty and which is, for us all to become fools for the sake of the foolish gospel. When Liberty has a reputation for being a church of fools, then I will have succeeded in my mission.

When Nina first met me she did not understand my message of grace. It seemed just too good to be true - a message some feel is foolish. Now she not only thinks it, Nina knows it. Nina knows I am not just an April fool, I am a fool all the year round. And not just in the human sense of the word! I want all of us here to fulfil what the prophet Hosea said, [The one who is both prophet and preacher is a fool; spiritual men and women are foolish...](#)

We are all prophets and preachers in our own way, and we are definitely all spiritual people. I would like you to join me and be absolutely off the wall, with the grace message that people think is too good to be true. If Liberty is known for the foolishness and craziness of grace - grace that is extreme, grace that goes way too far, it guarantees two things: criticism and rejection but in the end great rewards. Ask Jesus, who in the first century was called a foolish man. Because He went against the religious authorities and the traditional teachings of His day. He proclaimed grace from God that went too far.



In the 16th century a foolish man called Martin Luther went against the religious authorities and the traditional teachings of his day. He proclaimed grace from God that went too far.

In the 21st century a foolish man called Jim Parker went against the religious authorities and the traditional teachings of his day. He proclaimed grace from God that went too far, because it liberated everyone without exception.

Foolish folk, all proclaiming the foolish gospel, the good news of foolish grace.

## **Foolish Grace**

Jim was foolish enough to say,  
Hey you know what, it's OK,  
OK to be Gay,  
Jesus made them that way.

Jesus is Lord, our Saviour and King,  
Grace and truth, to us did He bring,  
Bringing us Joy and making us glad,  
Girl loves girl, and lad loves lad.



Love one another Jesus said,  
So into bed, jumped Ric 'n Fred,  
Sandra and Liz they stole a kiss,  
Jesus didn't think, there was 'owt' amiss,

Because grace and truth, had set them free,  
In just the way, God wanted 'em to be,  
In Love... in God... in Jesus... united in Him,  
All because of Jokey Jim.

His message of grace, seemed rather silly  
That united two people,  
Though they both had a willy.

So let's all be fools for the sake of grace,  
And gaze together on His beautiful face,  
And worship Jesus, exalt Him on High,  
Lifting Him up, higher than the sky,

To heaven and His throne,  
With Kingdom bells ringing,  
Glory to Jesus, the angels are singing.



Undeserving of God's favour,  
We were found, in our Saviour  
To be righteous, holy, and just  
As the Spirit, said we must.

Before the throne of Grace,  
Together, we stand,  
Holding each other by the hand,  
Lesbian, Gay, Bi, and Trans along with Nina  
And me, as one, in Liberty,

Together telling the wondrous story,  
Of Jesus, God's Son, the King of Glory,  
And His love for one and all,  
Fat or thin, short or tall,  
Girl or boy, straight or gay,  
With His life He did pay,

To make us equal, in God's sight,  
Bathed in Jesus' glorious Light,  
Knowing His truth and His grace,  
Taking our seat, in our rightful place,



In heaven's realms, our home on high,  
Sat with Jesus, heaven's hosts cry,  
Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, their voices ring,  
Then all together we join to sing,

Voices rise in a joyful sound,  
There are angels all around,  
We all cry: Holy to the Lamb,  
Expressing our love, to the great I AM.

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# Redeemed In Jesus

Jesus makes a promise to His brothers and sisters, in John's gospel:

I will talk to the Father, and He will provide you with another Friend, so that you will always have someone with you. This Friend is the Spirit of Truth. The godless world cannot take him in because it does not have eyes to see him, does not know what to look for. But you know him already because he has been staying with you, and will even be in you!

I will not leave you orphaned. I am coming back. In just a little while the world will no longer see me, but you are going to see me because I am alive and you are about to come alive. At that moment you will know absolutely that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you (14:16-20).

In Paul's letter to the Ephesian saints, he repeats the phrase - 'In Jesus' - 5 times. 5 is the symbolic number of grace.\*\*

When you think about it, it is a bit of an odd thing to be in Jesus. I often find myself in trouble, in Nina's bad books, in Dickey's meadow, or in the do-dah. I know exactly what all those things mean, and the



consequences of them. But ‘in Jesus,’ what does that mean and what are the consequences?

When Paul wrote that letter to the saints in Ephesus he told them about the revelation the Holy Spirit had given him which was [insight into the Mystery of Jesus Christ \(3:4\)](#). I looked up in my dictionary as to what ‘mystery’ meant, and found the following explanation: ‘something that is difficult or impossible to understand or explain or a person whose identity or nature is unknown’. Mystery is a word that seems to fit the bill for me, because there are many things I find hard to understand or explain.

I put it down to the fact that I, Jim Parker, am physical and I am talking about something that is spiritual. We live in the natural realm, whereas Jesus lives in a supernatural realm and we need something beyond our intellect to grasp what is meant. That something is the empowerment or inspiration of the Spirit; inspiration which gives us the ability to know something in our spirit we cannot figure out in our minds. Mysteries can only be revealed by the Holy Spirit. You cannot ‘argue’ someone into the Kingdom. Jesus, the Son of God, was born a man with a human nature but He also had a Divine nature which came to the fore in His ministry.



At the resurrection, Jesus the man somewhat changed, (His own disciples did not recognise Him [Joh 20:16](#) [Lu 24:31](#)), but His divine nature remained. I reckon, knowing the nature of Jesus only comes through experiencing Him. He increasingly reveals Himself to us, revelation in small pieces. So, the phrase 'in Jesus' has to be seen in a spiritual sense rather than a natural sense, because it is from God who is Spirit. It is the Spirit alone who is able to open our spiritual eyes to understand it.

Jesus, born an ordinary man, stepped into our natural realm with an invitation for us to step into His supernatural realm. Because of the sin of unbelief, humanity through their distrust had lost their connection with God and were separated from Him. But God had a plan to redeem the situation, He bought back fallen humanity by giving the perfect substitute - His Son, Jesus. His Son died in humanity's place, His Son, paying in full the redeeming price to bring humanity back into connection with God.

Someone very kindly gave Nina and I a voucher for a restaurant in town - a voucher for a free afternoon tea for two. We can exchange this voucher for afternoon tea for free. We did not have to do anything to earn it; all we have to do is trust that when we present the voucher in the restaurant, we will receive the





afternoon tea. Tea for two in exchange for a piece of paper, it is already paid for!

That is a clear explanation of redemption. Think of it like this, using the child-like idea of St Peter at the gate to heaven. That picture is a way to think about something in an eternal dimension that is beyond us. When every saint gets to heaven we give our redemption voucher to St Peter on the gate. On it reads: This person knows and loves Jesus. Jesus has died in their place and paid the cost of redeeming them. The voucher is stamped 'Paid in full', taking our voucher, Peter says, 'Fabulous' and lets us into heaven for free. That is because Paul informs us, [according to the riches of God's grace your sins are forgiven \(Eph 1:7\)](#). Jesus has redeemed the situation and paid the redeeming price.

What is so fantastic about the voucher Jesus gives us, this get-out-of-jail card which never runs out, is that spiritually, supernaturally we can enter into heaven, into His realm right now. Jesus naturally died, and supernaturally rose from the dead. We have to trust God when He says, [because you believe in my Son your life is hidden in His \(Col 3:3\)](#). God is saying when I look at you I see Jesus. To God we are in Jesus. We have the voucher right now; it is our ticket into heaven at any time. There is a Bob Dylan song 'Knocking on



Heaven's Door'. What the song does not tell us is that there is a sign above the door. When we possess the right voucher, there is no need to knock, since we can just walk straight in.

Another consequence of spiritually being in Jesus is that we are the spiritual descendants of Abraham and inherit all the promises from God that were given to him, ...*you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Gal 3:29)*. Paul told the saints in Ephesus about these promises - that in Jesus we have got an inheritance, like the voucher we have right now - we have right now an inheritance. Along with the voucher and the promises comes the ability to share in the divine nature of Jesus Himself.

The Apostle Peter confirms it in his second letter: *God has given us (notice given, a gift that cannot be earned). God has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through them we can participate in the divine nature (1:4)*.

So there it is. We have the promises and we share in Jesus' divine nature right here and right now. The nature that allows us to know God and to love Him and to know his love for us. The promises are made to all God's children. All are involved, and no human being or human organisation or institution has the power to block those promises that come from God



Himself. Which takes me back to the beginning and the apostle Paul's experience of [insight into the Mystery of Jesus Christ](#) and as Jesus promised in our reading, [‘You will know absolutely that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you’](#).

The mystery of Christ Jesus is within us, His divine nature. As we live in faith, we grow in our ability to trust in Jesus more and more. We do not get free from all our faults and failings, nor our bad habits and selfish ways and suddenly become perfect human beings. But there are times, despite us, when His qualities, His nature, come alive in us, as inspired by His Spirit.

I remember a homeless guy who told me he was feeling suicidal, so I took him by his hands and said, ‘I know something of what you feel like because I have experienced depression.’ As I held his hands in mine I was flooded from head to toe with love and the love I felt within me flowed out towards this man, I could see he felt the impact of it and I saw him physically relax as the anxiety and the stress left him. It was a beautiful moment as God's love passed through me. It does not mean I can be loving all the time. Nina could probably write a long list of my failings, but for those few minutes, supernaturally God's nature flowed through me.



It is Jesus' divine life and nature that can at times be inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit, and reveal Jesus to others who do not yet know Him. We become bearers of His life as others meet Him in us, and discover that life for themselves. They come to know the mystery of Jesus being in them, and they in turn, know absolutely that they are in Jesus.

\*\* [Link To Notes Pg. 189 Symbolic Use Of Numbers](#)

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# Inheritance In Jesus

The following words are taken from the first chapter of Paul's letter to the Ephesians:

All praise to the glory of God's grace, by which He has made us fully accepted in His beloved Son Jesus. In Jesus we have redemption through His spilt blood, and the forgiveness of our sins, all according to the riches of His glorious grace which He lavished on us, in all wisdom and insight (6-8)

In Jesus we also have received an inheritance, in Jesus we also trusted, when we heard the truth in the gospel of our salvation. Also in Jesus, the moment we believed, we were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, the Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance.

My ex-wife was a marvellous cook and also a marvellous gardener. Sometimes she would put these two marvellous skills together. Every autumn there was an abundance of fruit which found their way into pies and pastries, cakes and trifles. The surplus would be preserved through bottling the fruit. She started the process by washing and sterilising the jars. There could not be any contamination or the fruit would



spoil, so every jar had to be spotlessly clean. The fruit was then packed tight into the jars and a lid was put on to seal it. Nothing could get in to contaminate or spoil the wonderful fruit inside. It was kept in perfect condition for years, well until the fruit found its way into pies and pastries, cakes and trifles. Ah, the memories!

The apostle Paul records in Ephesians the wonderful gifts we have in Jesus, when we become saints by believing and trusting in the Lord. God sees us as being in Jesus. He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him (Eph 1:4), He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight (Col 1:22). According to God's plan and purpose, when he looks at us, He chooses to see His Son, Jesus, instead of seeing us as human beings with all our faults and failings. From the moment we believe in Jesus, our life is hidden from the eyes of God. Your life is now hidden in Jesus (Col 3:3).

In our reading it says, in Jesus we have redemption. We are a free people, free of penalties and punishments because He paid the price for the forgiveness of our sins. That is not some of our sins, or most of them, that is all of them, past, present and



future. What an outrageous gospel, what an outrageous grace!

Being totally forgiven makes us spotlessly clean, a bit like the fruit storage jars, washed clean and sterilised from every possible germ. In God's sight, that level of cleanliness makes us immediately fit for heaven. Scripture records, Jesus **is the same yesterday today and forever (Heb 13:8)**. And because we are in Jesus, we are in God's sight spotlessly clean yesterday, today and forever.

It is as though we have a gift voucher which reads, Heaven... Admit one... Free. Paul says that Heaven's entrance ticket is prepaid, and (I quote) **according to the riches of his grace**. The riches of his grace - a bottomless amount of undeserved favour from God, a massive grace gift voucher.

So much grace we would have no chance of ever using it all up, even if we had 100 lifetimes. There is more than enough grace for every situation or circumstance, we can never earn it; no one can. We can never fall out of grace or fall away from grace. We can only ever fall into grace and it is always more than enough for our needs. The great news is that the grace gift voucher is there for us as soon as we come to know Jesus and trust in Him for our future. So we are spiritually cleansed in Jesus, like the jars were cleansed.



So, back to the kitchen and the fruit being preserved in jars! What was next? The filling, all that precious fruit was put inside the sterilised spotless jars. We are like that fruit, packed into the perfectly spotless jar that is Jesus to be kept in spiritually perfect condition for ever, not because of what we are like but because of who we are in.

Our reading says in Jesus we have an inheritance and the inheritance is every promise made by God to the ancestors of Jesus - Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Promises, such as the one He made to Abraham: **I will bless you and make you a blessing (Ge 12:2)**, have been passed down throughout the generations of Jesus' family. Now, because God sees us in Jesus, every promise of God throughout the generations are passed down to Jesus' spiritual family, and are ours to claim, Paul said, **we are joint-heirs in Christ Jesus (Ro 8:17)**. We share equally in this inheritance simply because we are God's children. We do not have to do anything to inherit, it is our guarantee simply because of who we are - God's daughters and sons.

Ephesians goes on to say about our trust in Jesus, we trust Him because we heard about Him one way or another. I say one way or another because folks come to know Jesus in such a variety of ways, it is always the right way for each individual. That is why the verse





in Ephesians 1 ends, **What you personally heard was the good news of your salvation.** To make that plain, it was the good news of your freedom - free to be you, free from everything that at one time came between you and God. The moment you believed in, trusted in, relied upon Jesus, He became your brother, and you are family and a rightful heir along with Him.

What happens the very instant we believe is what is called the Divine Exchange. \*\*\*

- Jesus made Himself nothing... to give us everything,
- He accepted the poverty of earth... to give us the riches of heaven,
- He took our punishment... to give us forgiveness,
- He was cursed... so that we would be blessed,
- He took our sin... and gave us His righteousness,
- He took our guilt... to give us his glory,
- He endured rejection by God... to give us acceptance with God,



- He lived a temporal life... to give us eternal life,
- He died in darkness... to give us life in His glorious light,
- He rose victorious from death... to make us conquerors in life.

Being in Jesus the divine exchange applies yesterday, today and forever. Without us knowing it, at the very moment we trusted in Jesus the divine exchange took place. Once that had taken place Paul tells us we were immediately sealed by the Holy Spirit.

That takes us back to the preserved fruit. Paul writes in the second letter to the church in Corinth that [we have this treasure in jars \(4:7\)](#), jars that have been washed clean and sterilised. Spotless jars,\*\* filled with Jesus' love, His righteousness, His holiness, the inheritance, the promises, the blessings and the Spirit's fruit.

We are like jars, full of fruit, all tightly packed in, the lid, put on and sealed shut with His love by the Holy Spirit. Because of that spiritual seal, nothing we can do can ever contaminate us, nothing can pollute us, nothing can spoil us, sealed in and preserved forever, eternally in Jesus.



**\*\*Endnote:**

Eph 5:27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without spot or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

‘Spot’ without outward defilement, ‘blemish’ without inward defilement, and without ‘wrinkle’, the Bride has not and will not age.

\*\*\* [Link To See Notes Pg. 196 The Divine Exchange](#)

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# A Holy Temple In Jesus

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul wrote,

Jesus Himself is our peace, He has made both Jew and Gentile as one and has destroyed all the barriers, and torn down all the walls that divided men and women, He did this by abolishing the law with its commandments and regulations. When He died, the law died with Him. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the Jew and the Gentile and men and woman, so by making peace, Christ brought us together through his death on the Cross. The Cross got us to embrace one another, and accept our differences and diversity.

Christ came and preached peace to all that listened, treating all as equals. For through him we all have access to God by one Spirit. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow-citizens with God's people and more than that, you are family. This is all built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

In Jesus the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in



Jesus you too are being built together to become a house in which God lives by his Spirit (2:14-22).

God sees us as redeemed people who have a tremendous inheritance, who possess the gift of faith from Him. We are sealed with the Holy Spirit, so we can never lose what He has promised and given us. But how do we see ourselves? Do we dare see ourselves as God sees us? Or, does how we see ourselves agree more with how others see us?

The Church and society have judged many of us negatively. Many of us have been subjected to criticism or bullying or hurt from people in our lives. These things give us a tendency to have a low opinion of ourselves, but God has a high opinion of each one of his children. We teach at Liberty that God treasures each one of us as precious to Him. The Lord accepts us exactly as we are. That is why He chose us, I have never yet known God to make a wrong choice.

Many of us find God's unconditional love and his delight in each one of us hard to accept. It is hard for us to think spiritually and grasp that. Because we are 'In Jesus', God sees us as perfect. **Your life is hidden with Christ Jesus in God (Col 3:3).**

Paul then writes in Ephesians about how those who trust in Jesus are God's Temple. Like the Temple in



Jerusalem that Solomon built! Solomon had built it precisely according to the plans God had given him. Imagine if we had the money to build our own house and furnish it just as we liked. Imagine the chance to get together with a great architect, employ the finest builders and craftsmen to build our dream home.

A house made exactly to our specifications with no expense spared and then furnished to the highest standards, a house precisely how we want it. What is more we could position our house exactly where we would like it to be - in the city, in the country, with sea views or by a river, anywhere we would like with an outlook we would like. We could build it to our own design, furnished with the things we like, precious things, beautiful things.

Well that is what God did when He gave the plans to Solomon for His Temple. He said to Solomon: **Build me a house on a hill, overlooking the city, and furnish it in just the way I want it.** Solomon did build the Temple, God's house, and God supplied the money, the men and materials to do it. Once finished, Solomon dedicated it to God, handed over the keys as it were, and scripture tells us the presence of the Lord came and took up residence in His new house. They knew his presence was there because they felt the air was thick with the presence of God and they saw what



looked like a glistening cloud as it filled the whole place.

In the first book of Kings chapter 8, it tells us that when the Temple was finished, the glory of God came and filled The Temple. The Jews called that presence the Shekinah glory, Shekinah meaning ‘to dwell’. God’s presence was visible and God’s presence was so powerful it totally overwhelmed the priests stopping them carrying out their duties.

The temple became Holy the moment God moved in, it was His new house. It was not the design or the craftsmanship or structure that made it holy. It was holy because the Holy One was there. From then on the temple was holy because of God’s presence. If you wanted to go into the Temple, you had to have a bath and put on clean clothes. Before you even stepped foot in the building, there was a whole set of rituals to go through. You had to go through the rituals before you could enter, the rituals were to make yourself worthy to enter the temple, God’s house on the hill.

Scripture tells us Solomon’s Temple symbolised the Temple to come, which would be made of people, flesh and blood, not stone. God’s Temple today is each one of us who knows Him. God has built each of us of flesh and blood, each one of us is unique and designed by God. At the moment when we come to trust in Jesus,



God himself takes up residence within us. We become God's temple, God's house, the place where God dwells. A place where He wants to live with a unique outlook on life. The place where God lives is holy, purely because He is there.

God's homes throughout human history are all different, with different aspects and features, in different locations and different outlooks. Each Christian is different and each Christian is home to God. Each one is unique and since God dwells there each one is holy because of God's abiding presence - God's Shekinah, God's presence within.

What's more, the letter to the Ephesians tells us not only are the individual Christians God's Holy Temple but every time Christians gather together God's presence is among us. So, Liberty is God's house. Not the bricks and mortar which surround us, but the body of saints gathered together make it God's house. Washed clean and clothed in new clothes.

As scripture tells us, we are washed with the blood of the lamb and clothed in the garments of salvation and His presence among us makes Liberty a holy residence. God is the architect of the house of Liberty, God is building it according to His plan and design. He is furnishing the House of Liberty with those He has chosen and called to be here. He has chosen each





of us for our uniqueness. We are chosen specially because He wants to surround Himself with those who are precious and beautiful in His sight.

God wants His house to be filled with joy - a happy and pleasant place for Him to live in. But yet a home where He can share His peace - a place for folks in which to rest and maybe to recover from the stresses of life. God wants to share Liberty, His temple, His house. He wants to make it a home where people can come in and meet Him and know the joy of the new life He brings in Jesus.

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## Boldness In Jesus

In chapter 8 of Luke's gospel we read about someone who came to Jesus trusting He would heal them:

In the crowd that day was a woman who had been subject to menstrual bleeding for twelve years, but no doctor could cure her. She came up behind Jesus and touched the hem of his garment, and immediately her bleeding stopped. Who touched me? Jesus asked. When they all denied it, Peter said, Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you. But Jesus said, Someone touched me; I felt power go out from me.

When the woman realised that she could not remain hidden, she came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed. Then Jesus said to her, Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace (43-48).

In Jesus, this is how God sees those who trust in His Son and become the children of God through that trust. In Jesus we have the forgiveness of sin because Jesus paid the price according to the riches of his grace. In Jesus we have an inheritance because, through that trust in Jesus, God sees us as family and



so we, as His children, have ancestral rights and promises.

As saints, holy ones made holy by and in Jesus, we are given those rights, solely based on the fact we trusted Jesus and committed ourselves to Him. It was then God's will to see us and accept us as one in Jesus. In Jesus we received all the benefits of a family member and, as confirmation, the Holy Spirit put God's seal upon us as a guarantee and as a confident assurance. Not only are we in Jesus but Jesus is in us. We become God's temple, God's house. God lives within us.

Saint means holy one. His presence within us makes us holy, as His light and glory radiate out from His Spirit that is infused with our spirit. In Paul's first letter to the Colossians, he writes, **Those that are joined unto the Lord are one spirit (6:17)**. Furthermore as a group or a gathering of believers in Jesus, we become a temple that has the potential to radiate His light and glory into our community, as collectively we express our trust in Jesus.

So to the final - 'In Jesus'! In the book of Ephesians, we are told in Jesus and through faith in Him, we can boldly approach God with freedom and confidence. That confidence is faith, because that is what faith is, it is trust and reliance in Jesus. We have faith in different degrees, but Jesus said even faith that is as



tiny as a mustard seed is enough for him to work with. It is about trusting in who He is and depending on Him, trusting in Him to give us the right standing before God. Right standing before God is righteousness - nothing more, nothing less.

In our reading about a woman who was slowly bleeding to death (menorrhagia), her only hope was Jesus. Forcing her way through the crowd, she reached out to touch Jesus. It was a daring and bold thing to do. This woman's condition made her ceremonially unclean and the religious rules prohibited her going out in public and she was strictly forbidden from touching anyone. According to the Mosaic law she was unclean because of the bleeding, so she had lived for 12 years self-isolated, being shunned by everyone and regarded as contaminated. Anyone she touched would automatically become unclean, they would be contaminated themselves, so no one wanted her near them. But this woman had faith to overcome the law and its rules that restricted her and condemned her to a life of isolation.

As this woman reached out and touched the hem of Jesus' garment. Instead of Jesus becoming unclean according to the religious law, His purity flowed out to her. Instead of her unrighteousness affecting Jesus and making Him unclean, His righteousness flowed



out to the woman and made her clean. Immediately this woman stopped bleeding, the unclean was made clean. A divine exchange had occurred.

The power Jesus said He felt leave Him was greater than the power of the religious law that bound her - the rules that restricted her. Her faith was greater and her faith in Jesus made her bold enough to approach Him and bold enough to touch Him, and that boldness and touch set her free. She realised at last she was free from this terrible condition that had ruined her life and cut her off from everyone.

But then her boldness deserted her; joy turned to fear as Jesus suddenly asked, Who touched me? The woman came to Jesus trembling, fear had gripped her. She knew the law, the religion that discriminated against her. She knew the condemnation and penalties for breaking her self-isolation. But instead of being angry, instead of a rollicking, instead of disapproval, instead of a scowling face, she saw Jesus smiling broadly and Jesus, seeing the fear in her eyes, immediately said in His best Nazareth accent (as a Lancastrian I always imagine Jesus having a broad Galilee accent somewhat akin to my wonderful Lancashire dialect), ‘Na-then love, cheer up, yer faith has saved-ya’. She was God’s daughter. Jesus said, lifting her spirit, ‘Get yerself ‘ome, go in peace’.



Faith makes you daring and bold, and, in our reading, the woman's faith made her bold, but when she saw herself in terms of the religious rules, as someone who people looked down on, the boldness deserted her and fear came in. How many of us have tried to get near to Jesus, even touch Him, only to let religious rules and religious condemnation come and convince us we are not good enough and frighten us off. It happened to me, has it happened to you?

So the last 'in Jesus' of Ephesians says, In Jesus and through faith in Him we may boldly approach God with freedom and confidence.

Charles Wesley was an Anglican minister who had a knowledge of God but did not know Him. That is, until his eyes were opened to the truths contained in the new testament book of Galatians. A light came on in his heart and for the very first time Charley discovered the peace of God which comes through faith alone. His eyes were opened to the magnitude of God's love which amazed him. Two days later, Charley boy wrote a hymn based on his new experience of being freed from all the effort to get God's approval, to just trusting in Jesus. While rejoicing in God's amazing love Charles Wesley wrote his famous hymn 'And can it be'.



## **Taken from ‘And Can It Be’**

Amazing love! How can it be,  
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

He left His Father’s throne above—  
So free, so infinite His grace—  
Emptied Himself of all but love,

’Tis mercy all, immense and free,  
For, O my God, it found out me!

Long my imprisoned spirit lay,  
I woke, the dungeon was flamed with light;  
My chains fell off, my heart was free,  
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.



No condemnation now I dread;  
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine;  
Alive in Him, my living Head,  
And clothed in righteousness divine,

Bold I approach th' eternal throne,  
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

Charley exclaims over and over in his hymn 'Amazing love, how can it be?' Because Charley is filled with admiration and wonder as to why Jesus would die for him, he has to admit, it is a mystery; he cannot fathom the extent of God's mercy. As the hymn continues, Charley gives the answer – it is because of the sheer depth of God's love. But that is not all which Charley is in wonder at. He has discovered it is all free and all because of God's infinite grace - grace without limits. Amazing love and limitless grace that fuels God's mercy!

Charley cannot comprehend how immense the mercy is; it is beyond his finite mind. What he does understand is that it is given freely. Grace found in God's amazing love has made him free to follow Jesus





without the chains of religion's expectations binding him up. Charley had felt imprisoned, bound up in a religious system whose demands he could never meet. He tried and tried but never felt good enough for God. He felt enclosed in a dungeon of darkness, until that glorious day when Jesus the light of the world shone in. His imprisonment ended, the chains of religion, the rules which told him that no matter how hard he tried he could never be good enough.

Those chains that wore him down and restricted his ability to just be himself were gone. The chains of religion could not hold him anymore, they fell off leaving him free, Charley wrote... 'My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed Thee'.

The condemnation and guilt he used to carry were gone; the rules that once controlled him had vanished. But now Charley knew he was in Jesus, in whom he had forgiveness, in whom he had an inheritance, in whom he trusted, and in whom he now had the boldness not only to touch Jesus' garment but the boldness to approach God Himself at any time, no matter what was happening in his life. In Jesus, Charley had the boldness of faith to claim the crown of righteousness that Jesus had bought for him.



We read in Paul's second letter to Timothy that Jesus has bought [a crown of righteousness \(4:8\)](#) just for you and me. Just like Charley, all we need is the boldness of faith to claim our crown in Jesus - the One in whom we trust.

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# Spiritual Blessing In Christ

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul begins:

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. Because of His love God had already decided that through Jesus Christ he would make us his sons and daughters, this was his will and purpose.

To the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in his dear Son Jesus (1:1-6).

If there is an overriding theme in the book of Ephesians, it is this: that the life of the saint is not about doing but about being. In Ephesians, the author, Paul, not only uses the phrase 'In Jesus' 5 times (5 is the symbolic number of grace); Paul also uses the phrase 'In Christ' 10 times, (10 is the symbolic number



of completeness). It is those 10 'In Christ' statements that we are going to look at.

Just to explain the word Christ. Christ is from the Greek word - 'Christos', which is from the Hebrew word, Messiah. Christ is not Jesus' surname, neither for that matter is it His name. Christ is a formal title (an identifying name, signifying status). Messiah and Christ both literally mean 'Anointed One'. Jesus was the anointed King from the royal line of King David.

So, Ephesians starts with the apostle Paul addressing to whom the letter is addressed. In the second chapter, Paul explains his position: [Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, to the faithful in Christ Jesus \(2:1\)](#). Paul is writing to Christians - those folks who trust and rely on the Lord Jesus. He calls these believers saints and faithful. Saint is a formal title (an identifying name signifying status). Saints are 'holy ones'. Paul is saying that those who are in Christ are holy ones.

Jesus, the 'anointed one', was the Messiah, the Christ, not by what He did. His identifying name was gained not by doing; but by being. Our identifying name is not gained by doing; it is because of being. Being a saint is not of ourselves. We cannot make ourselves holy. We are made holy simply because we have come to trust and rely on Jesus. We do not have to make



ourselves pure or good or anything. We can just be ourselves, knowing Jesus. Because the Christian life, the life of the saint, is not about doing but about being.

Popes cannot appoint saints; only God can do that, for all who trust in His Son Jesus, God chooses to call them 'saints'. There's an idiom which states 'you can choose your friends but you cannot choose your family'. Well, God does choose His family and since we belong to the family of God, we are holy, not because of what we have done or what we will do. We are holy because of who we are, and not what we do. And because of who we are, as family members in Christ, we are also called faithful. Faithful not in the sense of remaining loyal and steadfast or remaining loyal to a sexual partner. But a faithful group of people who share a common belief. In this case, the common belief is trust and reliance in Jesus.

I knew a chap called Alan, who told me he had been a regular in his church for 30 years before he really became a Christian. For 30 years of attending church, he had thought he was a Christian, and had gone through all the motions but did not know Jesus. Then Alan met Jesus and came into a relationship. He then realised for the previous 30 years he had relied on a system rather than relying on a person, Jesus. Alan



discovered that the Christian life was not about doing but about being.

Religion tells us, 'Sacraments are outward signs of an inward grace'. As we have already discovered Charley Wesley and now Alan practised the outward signs for years but never experienced the inward grace. Because the outward sign cannot create the inward grace! Only knowing the Lord Jesus brings about the inward grace. We can take holy communion and not have communion with God that is holy. We can have religion and not have a relationship. Charley and Alan changed from what they had to do to what Jesus had done. From the religion of what we do into the faith in what Jesus has done!

Jesus prayed in John 17 that all (without exception) who believed in Him would be one in Him. We all want a relationship, a boyfriend, a girlfriend, a lifelong partner, the desire is in the very fabric of our being. God is no different. That is where we get the desire from, God wants a relationship with us - personal and intimate. He has made that possible by [blessing us with every spiritual blessing in Christ \(Eph 1:3\)](#). God in His love for us, has in His Son Jesus given us everything we need for a relationship with God. Because the Christian life is not about doing but about being.



There are 5 relationship gifts in scripture (5 the number of grace), five gifts which give us and keep us in a relationship in Jesus with God:

1. the gift of grace ([Romans 5:15](#)),
2. the gift of faith ([Ephesians 2:8](#)),
3. the gift of righteousness ([Romans 5:17](#)),
4. the gift of the Holy Spirit ([Acts 2:38](#)),
5. the gift of God is eternal life ([Romans 6:23](#)).

The last gift of eternal life tells us how long the relationship will last. There will be no break-ups nor separation; it will be an eternal relationship. Can we gain any of those gifts by going to church? Or practising the outward signs of religion? Or gain gifts by being good or gain gifts by doing good? Practising Christianity outwardly did no good for Alan. Because the Christian life is not about doing but about being.

Finally, in the third chapter of Paul's letter to the Galatians, we read that Christ has redeemed us so that [the blessing of Abraham might come on us through Jesus...\(3:14\)](#). That blessing was the first promise made to Abram in the book of Genesis: [I will bless you ... and you will be a blessing \(12:2\)](#). God promised to bless Abram. Who was Abram going to be a blessing to? God.



Any relationship should be based upon blessing one another. Despite my jokes, Nina and I above all bless one another. God wanted a relationship with Abram and so God had to give Abram the ways and means - the ingredients for the relationship.

Abram's greatest blessing was his relationship with God. Read Abram's story. He was not perfect by any means. By our modern western standards, he was a liar, an adulterer and incestuous, he married his half-sister Sarah, not exactly the model lifestyle of a saint. Yet it did not matter because his relationship with God was not about doing but about being.

Our relationship also is not about what we do or do not do. Our relationship is not about doing but about being and being in Christ Jesus. As it is written in the book of Acts: [For in the Lord we live, and move, and have our being \(17:28\)](#).

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# Gathered Together In Christ

In the first chapter of his letter to the Colossians, Paul explains how Jesus is the means to reconcile all of creation to God:

Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.

He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Once you were separated from God and alienated because of your untrusting ways. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, blameless and free from accusation (1:15-22).



We are looking at the 10 times the Apostle Paul uses the term ‘in Christ’ in the book of Ephesians. We have covered the first two and we find the third in the letter to the Ephesians, where it says: **According to His will, His purpose and plan, in the fullness of the time, God will gather together in one, all things in Christ, everything in heaven and on earth (1:10).** To put that as simply as I can, God is going to restore everything back to the way it was in the beginning according to His plan.

Scripture records that in the beginning everything was ‘very good’. The original Hebrew text of Genesis says, ‘exceedingly good’. In our reading, we heard how in the beginning, God created everything in Christ Jesus, in the end God restores everything in Jesus, once again making everything ‘exceedingly good’.

So what happened in the beginning that is in need of restoration at the end? In the beginning, God was in a relationship with humanity and as in any relationship, there has to be trust; that is essential for any relationship to be permanent. In the Genesis creation story, God had an intimate, life-giving connection with humanity. They lived in the simplicity of trusting in God. As any good father would, the Lord warned Adam (who represented humanity), not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and bad.



God knew it would only give them moral knowledge, humanity would be able to tell the difference between right and wrong. This gave them the power to judge themselves and each other, and they would also be able to judge God. The knowledge would not give them the ability to be exceedingly good, nor to do good exceedingly. The Lord knew the fruit of the tree of knowledge would not feed their stomachs, it would only feed their egos and their pride, their vanity.

Eating of the tree of knowledge broke the bond between God and humanity, simply because they had not fully trusted in what God had said. **‘Do not eat from the judgement tree, you will surely die.’** I can almost hear the Lord cry out, Why did you not believe me? The Lord felt betrayed. Relationships are built on trust and reliance on each other, consequently separation was the only answer.

The Lord had intended an eternal connection and an everlasting bond but now those whom he loved would die. God hatched another plan - plan B. God would choose a people - a nation to whom he would relate. Plan B was different. Instead of just giving them the ability to judge through the knowledge of good and bad, God spelt out exactly what good and bad was. He knew the knowledge still would not give them the power nor the ability to be exceedingly good nor to do



exceedingly good, so he provided a remedy to take care of their failures. When the people failed to be exceedingly good and do exceedingly good, instead of them dying, an animal could die in their place as a sacrifice and so keep the relationship intact. If the people kept to the rules of the system of ceremonies and sacrifices religiously, then their bond with God would not be broken. All went well for a time, but eventually their egos got the better of them.

The people related to God and were blessed by Him but their pride fooled them into believing they were blessed because they were so successful at being good. Eventually they were so full of themselves, they forgot about the trusting way of relating to the Lord. Even though He cried out to them, His words fell on deaf ears. The Lord felt betrayed. He had loved them and cared for them, He had faithfully done everything that He had agreed to do, but they had been unfaithful. Their inflated egos ignored God's blessing in their lives and they relied on themselves instead of upon Him. Relationships are built on trust and reliance upon one another, and so therefore separation was the only answer. There would be another plan - plan C. This relationship would depend upon God alone.

Now people would not need to know what was good or how to do good because God himself would live in



them. His life and goodness would be in them. His goodness would empower them to be exceedingly good and do exceedingly good. All they had to do was to trust. After all, trust is the basis of all relationships and that is all God wanted from the beginning. There would be no system - no rules to religiously keep; instead, there would be total freedom from the worry of being good and doing good because God would do it all.

God had created everything through the Word. God would recreate everything to a state of being exceedingly good, once again through the Word, including His relationship with humanity. So the Word became flesh. Plan C was JC, God's Son. He became human and He was exceedingly good. It was a glorious plan, JC would keep absolute trust in God, He would be exceedingly good and do exceedingly good. JC would not eat of the tree of knowledge, JC was not here to judge but to save ([Joh 3:17, 8:15](#)). JC only did, and only said what God empowered Him to say or do, and so in that, JC also fulfilled the original plan A, the simplicity of trusting God. Plan B the religious system, JC would keep every rule, every ceremony, every sacrifice. He would keep it all exceedingly well and in doing so JC would also fulfil Plan B.



Plan C was trust on another level, because to fulfil Plan C, JC had to be the exceedingly good sacrifice that had to die, and JC had to trust that God would raise Him to life again. So on the third day God Himself filled JC with His life; and a union between JC and God took place. At last God had what he always desired - a union and the perfect relationship with humanity in JC.

The glory of plan C was that when people trusted in JC, JC would become one with them. It would be a marriage made in heaven; the two would become one flesh because JC is flesh. But also in this marriage, the two would become one spirit, because JC is spirit. What a glorious plan, JC becomes human so that the human can become spirit.

The lives of those united with JC would be hidden in JC; they too would become exceedingly good simply because they were united in JC's exceeding goodness and as long as they trusted in JC, together they would do exceedingly good through and in JC. Plan C is an exceedingly good plan. It is a relationship built on trust, and when God's people continue in trust, the relationship will develop, grow and mature, and become exceedingly good.

In the beginning everything was exceedingly good. In Christ - plan C - God chose to restore everything to the



way it was. If we are in Christ, we are in the ongoing plan C; we are part of something that is exceedingly good. The gathering together of all those in Christ. Those in heaven and those on earth, united in a relationship with God, will never again be separated. Nothing ever again - absolutely nothing - can separate us from the love of God because of JC and because we are from head to foot, from inside out and from outside in, we are in JC. What a joy to know we are exceedingly good, in the exceedingly good JC.

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# To The Praise Of His Glory In Christ

In the first chapter of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, we read:

We have obtained an inheritance in Christ our Lord, being chosen according to the purpose of God who works out all things according to His will, so we... who first trusted in Christ... should be to the praise of His glory.

And you also trusted In Him, after we heard the truth in the good news of our salvation. In Jesus, you having believed, we were sealed with the Holy Spirit. Who is the guarantee of our inheritance ...to the praise of His glory (11-14).

Twice in our reading it says about the saints, we are to the praise of His glory. Beginning in verse 12, **we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory**. So it starts off by saying, 'we who first trusted'. Now by saying there is a first by definition, there has to be a second. So in verse 12 it says, we who first trusted in Christ, and then in verse 13 it says, and **'you also trusted in Him'**.





When you look at the context in which these verses were written, the ‘we trusted’ was the Jew and the ‘you also trusted’ was the Gentile. This was written in an incredibly racist world where Jews looked down on non-Jews - the Gentiles. Jews considered the Gentiles unclean, unfit and undesirable; they were to be kept at a distance. Jews kept themselves rigidly apart from the Gentiles who they disliked intensely. Paul, here though, is putting Jew and Gentile on a par, giving them equality brought about purely through their trust in Jesus Christ. In that era, it was a shocking statement, which was revolutionary in nature. An all-inclusive statement, if I have ever heard one!

It includes everyone, even a nobody like me from Blackburn. If nothing else, trust in Christ is unifying, but it also does us good. Because at the end of each address to the Jew and then to the Gentile there is a marvellous phrase. A phrase that is unifying and also uplifting, it says, ‘[to the praise of His glory](#)’.

Paul wrote in his letter to the Galatians, [it is for freedom that Christ has set us free \(5:1\)](#). I believe wholeheartedly this includes the freedom to be ourselves. I see the gospel - the good news of the Lord Jesus - as being for all, and to me that message above all else rings loud and clear. Another message which rings very loud in Ephesians is that the Christian life,



the life of the saint, is not about doing, but about being. A message well worth repeating. Being a saint is not about what you do; it is about who you are in Christ. And, just being exactly as you are, as Paul explains twice, do not forget you are [‘To the praise of His glory’](#).

What does that expression mean? To understand what it means, I want us to watch a video. The video is an extract from Britain's Got Talent, of a choir made up of girls aged 12 to 16. The choir is performing on the show, because of what Mr Williams their teacher had done for them.

[Video Link To Mr Williams](#)

I thought the choir was fabulous. The girls and their singing were evidence of Mr Williams' wonderful talent as a teacher, as well as a witness of his love and dedication. The girls were proud of what he had done for them and that evening they gave him glory and you could tell Mr Williams was so incredibly proud of them. What he had done for this girls' choir, for Mr Williams, was to the praise of his glory. Their beautiful singing reflected the person who had made that possible. It demonstrated the dedication and talent of



his teaching, and it gave him glory as the one who made all it possible.

We, who know Jesus, have come to know him, because of his love and dedication to us, He gave his very life for us. The difference between Mr Williams and Jesus is that we do not need to perform for Jesus. We give Him glory just by being ourselves. It is God who formed and fashioned us both in the womb and until this very moment in our lives in Christ. Jesus is incredibly proud of us. We are '[to the praise of His glory](#)'.

We are the evidence that Jesus succeeded on the cross. We show His resurrection, as well as bear witness that He shut tight the separation between God and humanity. We are the proof that what Jesus did bore fruit. The fruit is found in each one of us who have come into a living relationship with Him. Just by knowing Him and loving him, we add to his glory. We are the result of God's plan in His Son Jesus. We are the redeemed - the holy ones of God. We are '[to the praise of His glory](#)'. We are those who live in the light of His life and presence. We are the crowning achievement of all His Son Jesus did on earth.

There are those who think people like us should be kept at a distance. To them who think we are unclean, unfit and undesirable. Their opinions do not matter, it



is only what Jesus thinks that matters. We must always remember it is not even what we in our human capacity think of ourselves. For whatever reason it is definitely not what others think of us. It is what Jesus thinks - what is being thought and said about us in Heaven. We are [‘to the praise of His glory’](#).

Our human condition or our human frailties matter not a jot to Jesus, He is dedicated to us just as we are. Whether we sing in tune or sing out of tune down here does not matter. We are a choir in perfect harmony in Christ in heaven. God has pressed the golden buzzer, we have won the final. Our names are in lights, and we are top of the bill - all of us individually and collectively headliners [‘to the praise of his glory’](#). We are all appearing at the royal command performance, singing praises for our King and to our King. All of heaven along with Jesus are on their feet. I can see Jesus now applauding us, because we are [‘to the praise of His glory’](#).

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# Seated In Heaven In Christ

The following text is taken from the first two chapters of Paul's letter to Ephesians:

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know how immense is his power at work in us who believe. This power working in us is the same divine energy which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.

Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our unrighteousness—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us through Christ Jesus.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God it is not the result of anything you have done, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus.



A number of years ago the physicist Stephen Hawking, the guy in the wheelchair with the computer voice, said the cosmos originated from nothing. Upon hearing that, I thought, 'I could have told you that, to me you have just confirmed the existence of God' and the fact God created everything out of nothing. God said simply something and it just happened, it just came into being.

Stephen's theory was a result of studying a Black Hole in outer space. He said a black hole was a result of a huge star imploding, or collapsing in on itself. The gigantic star collapsed inward and disappeared into itself, into infinity, and another word for infinity is eternity.

The theory went further and Stephen said this is how everything came into being. Instead of an implosion, the reverse took place an explosion occurred originating from nothing, from infinity. From infinity or eternity an explosion happened which our Stephen named the 'Big Bang'. This explosion caused matter to be thrown outwards and in doing so the cosmos came into being. Well that is the theory anyway.

I have got to say though this theory coincides with my belief in God who created everything out of nothing. God spoke from infinity, from eternity, and an explosion of light and energy occurred and there it



was, the beginning, the creation of the heavens and the earth. We cannot imagine the power of such an event, it is beyond us.

I remember lying in my swag bag in the middle of the Australian desert several years ago looking at the night sky. Due to no light pollution the night sky is incredibly clear. You can see with wonderful clarity billions upon billions of stars shining like diamonds in the night sky, it really is awesome.

I was chatting to Ashfaq the Imam from Blackpool Mosque and I asked him his views on the story of creation. His answer coincided with my own view of it, that the six days of creation are not literal 24 hour days, but each day symbolises an age of development. Let there be light, day 1, let there be an atmosphere and land, day 2, let there be plants and trees, day 3 etc. There is a progression first light, from light comes the energy to form air and mountains, from light and energy comes life.

In Paul's second letter to the Corinthians we read: [if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation...\(5:17\)](#). We can find similarities between the Genesis story of the creation of the cosmos and the New Creation which happens when someone comes into a relationship with the Lord.



The physical creation started with light. The new creation starts with light, Jesus shining into our spiritual darkness. From His light along with an energising by the Holy Spirit, together they bring Life. In the physical creation life first appears on the third day, as on the third day resurrection life comes. In creation the sun is the source of light and the moon reflects that light. In the new creation Jesus is the source of our light and we reflect his light as we are created anew to bear the image of God.

According to Genesis God intended from the beginning that humanity should bear his spiritual image. That image was lost but, through the salvation which Jesus brings, it is restored.

Genesis then tells us, on the 7th day God rested when the work of creation was completed just as Jesus rested when the work of salvation was completed. Jesus sat down as our reading tells us.

The letter to the Ephesians also tells us we are created in Christ, and in Christ we are seated in heaven. Being seated signifies being in a place and a state of rest. As the new creation we can rest in what has been done for us. Jesus has done all the work to make our salvation and our standing with God complete. Sit down, put your feet up, just chill.





In his letter to the Philippians Paul wrote, **because of your communion in the gospel from the first day until now, be confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus (1:5-6)**. These 2 verses confirm the progression from the first day until now, right this very minute. Our new life in God is created in Christ Jesus and is brought to completeness in Christ Jesus.

The apostle Paul was inspired to write these words - **'created in Christ Jesus'** - because the Lord wanted to point us to the Genesis creation story and see the parallels. From infinity, from eternity an explosion of light and energy with an unimaginable power formed and fashioned creation, the Lord is pointing out it is from infinity, the same source, and it is from eternity, the same immense power, that the new creation is formed and fashioned.

The power of divine light and energy within us is what is highlighted in our reading. This enormous power that created the cosmos is the same infinite power which raised Jesus from the dead. That same infinite power gave us new life, that same power changed our unrighteousness to righteousness, that same power makes us complete in Christ. That same power is now at work within us, we have God's potential.



I will explain, there is within us the capability to do the extraordinary, to bring others into new life. Because the infinite power which brought life to the cosmos, the infinite power that resurrected Jesus from the dead, the infinite power that gave us life in Christ Jesus, is the power which lives on within us.

As in the beginning the Spirit hovered over creation, the same Spirit now hovers over the new creation, over us, to bring light and energy and life to others. The same Spirit brings the infinite power to remove, restore and release, to release the infinite power of Jesus' life within each new creation. We are saved by the infinite power of grace, we are saved by the infinite power of faith.

We tend to underestimate the power of grace and faith but yet that is what brought us together at Liberty. Although I know my personal magnetism has great pulling power, I know much more, that the infinite power of His grace which is within me, *and* within Liberty, has greater pulling power.

By God's divine power Liberty was born from eternity, bringing new life. By its very nature, life reproduces and over the years Liberty has seen people experience new birth and be born into the family of God.



We have also seen renewed life, as many who had been convinced they were not worthy find an enduring peace with God brought about by the gospel of grace. Through the infinite power of grace, the infinite life of God in Christ Jesus will empower us to greater things. Fulfilling our desire to bring glory to the creator of all that is both visible and invisible.

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## Made Near In Christ

In the 27th chapter of his gospel, Matthew records the events of Jesus' crucifixion:

The guards placed a written accusation above his head. It read, "This is Jesus, the king of the Jews." At that time they crucified two criminals with him, one on his right and the other on his left.

Those who passed by insulted him. They shook their heads and said, "You were going to tear down God's temple and build it again in three days. Save yourself! If you're the Son of God, come down from the cross."

The chief priests together with the scribes and the leaders made fun of him in the same way. They said, He saved others, but he can't save himself. So he's Israel's king! Let him come down from the cross now, and we'll believe him. He trusted God. Let God rescue him now if he wants. After all, this man said, I am the Son of God. Even a criminal crucified with him insulted him in the same way.

At noon darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (37-46)



Continuing our theme in the book of Ephesians of being in Christ, we read in Paul's letter: **But now in Christ Jesus you who were separated and afar off, are made near in the blood of Christ (2:13).**

We sing a song to the Lord called 'You are Beautiful' by Phil Wickham. I looked up in my dictionary the word 'beautiful' it means, lovely, exceedingly good, of extreme excellence. I did not realise I was singing about the loveliness, the exceeding goodness and the extreme excellence of the Lord.

I am going to tell a story about two women, both to be found in a garden, and for the purpose of the story the first woman represents humanity in the first creation, and the second woman represents all those in Christ in the new creation. In Scripture all those in Christ are often referred as Jesus' woman, '**the bride of Christ**'.

The story of the first woman in a garden: It was a beautiful day and a beautiful garden, for it was a beautiful God that had made them both. A beautiful woman walked in this beautiful garden in this beautiful day when she saw this beautiful tree.

In the middle of this beautiful garden was this beautiful tree which was adorned with beautiful fruit. The beautiful woman looked at the beautiful tree and desired its beautiful fruit, the beautiful woman really



wanted the beautiful fruit of the beautiful tree. The beautiful woman wanted the beauty of the beautiful fruit because mistakenly the beautiful woman thought the beautiful fruit would add to her beauty.

But when the beautiful God had created the beautiful woman, God looked at the beautiful woman He had created and He saw she was extremely lovely, exceedingly good and beautiful. She was made in God's own image, so she could not be more beautiful. The beautiful woman had made the mistake of thinking she could make herself even more beautiful than the way God had created her.

The beautiful tree had beautiful fruit, but neither the tree nor the fruit had the exceedingly beautiful image of the exceedingly beautiful God. When the beautiful woman swallowed the beautiful fruit, she swallowed a lie, she was deceived by her own desire for more, and that ruined her true beauty.

The woman had beauty in the extreme and she had life in abundance, for the woman had the beauty and the life of God. But because the woman stopped trusting God, God and the woman were separated, a vast chasm was opened up between them. No longer did the woman possess the Lord's loveliness, goodness or excellence, the woman whom God had created in love would die.



God is life, God had no experience of death, that was the extent of the separation, they could not be more separated. God wanted the woman back, the woman was part of His love, part of His life, God knew the gulf of death between them could only be restored by God Himself.

So a plan of restoration was made, of rebirth, a new beginning with a new creation, a plan which would take thousands of years to fulfil. The plan was that God through His Son, would reach out and restore the relationship He once had with the woman. It was a perfect plan brought to completion by God Himself, God's Son would attribute all the failings of the woman to His Son, God's Son would be a substitute.

It was the plan of divine exchange, God's Son would take into Himself all the flaws, the faults and failings of the woman. In exchange God's Son would freely give His qualities to the woman, once again she would have the beauty of God. So God became human in His son Jesus, Jesus and God were united in the cause of restoration.

The union was in trust, Jesus trusted God all His life, the relationship was built on trust. Jesus trusted in God for every need. Jesus' trust and belief in God was exchanged for the woman's distrust and unbelief. The first exchange!



It was trust which took Jesus to the place of punishment and pain to pay the price of restoration. At Calvary on the cross God's substitute, Jesus, was dying, His life was ebbing away, darkness covered the land, as did the sin and ugliness of humanity. And so the imperfections of the woman were exchanged for the purity and beauty of Jesus. The second exchange!

It was at this point Jesus cried out, 'My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?' The chasm of separation had gaped wide as God's substitute died. Jesus had physically died so that the woman could live. The third exchange!

Jesus was in the void of death, the total separation in exchange for the woman's restored union with God. The fourth exchange!

The Holy Spirit moved over the grave that was void of light and life, it was the dawn of a new beginning, the new creation was complete in the resurrection of God's substitute. A mortal life had been exchanged for an eternal life. The fifth exchange!

The first creation, the physical creation described in the story of the Garden of Paradise can be a picture of the new creation, the creation of new life in us when we come to know and trust Jesus. As in the first creation God made the woman in His image. So also in





the new creation God has made His children in His image of loveliness, exceedingly good and extremely beautiful. But through the centuries those who are created anew have over and over again tried to add to what God has done.

Why is it we want more? Why is it we are not satisfied in God's creation? Why do we try to add to what God has created in exceeding goodness and extreme beauty? It is as foolish as 'gilding a lily' trying to make a lily that is perfectly beautiful, even more beautiful by our efforts. The result always fails.

A beautiful lily is created by God, it is alive, swaying in the wind, displaying its different colours, shades, and textures. It can feed the insects with nectar and pollen, it can reproduce and give life in its seeds which grow into more lilies. It is perfectly designed and perfectly beautiful just in the way God created it. Nothing can be added to its life or its beauty.



A gilded lily is a lily painted with gold leaf, it is created by humanity, it is lifeless, it has a certain beauty but it is not beautiful, it is stiff and rigid, there is no food for the insects. No seeds! It cannot reproduce and its



beauty is all the same colour, no variation in shades and textures. It is stiff - dead.

Why is it we desire to make ourselves more like Jesus when God says we are already like Jesus? Why do we strain to put a man-made beauty into ourselves when we already have the beauty of the beautiful Jesus? Why do we swallow the lie which says we must change ourselves to please God more?



Can we be like the beautiful woman in the beautiful garden who wanted to add to her beauty? She was conceited enough to think she could add to what God had finished. Finished to God's satisfaction, in beauty, loveliness, goodness and excellence!

The story of the second woman in the garden: God's substitute, Jesus, was buried in a beautiful garden. A beautiful woman walked in that beautiful garden on a beautiful day. The beautiful woman on this beautiful day saw that the grave was empty, as she turned her eyes fell upon a beautiful man, it was her beautiful Saviour, the beautiful Jesus.

This beautiful woman whose name was Mary Magdalene had not always been beautiful, there had



been an ugliness about her, that is, until earlier in her life she had met Jesus. Jesus exchanged her ugliness for His beauty, and the exchange was so profound that the desire for anything but Jesus disappeared, the beautiful woman wanted nothing more. Mary Magdalene, the once proud woman now coveted nothing, the beautiful woman looked only at the beautiful Jesus.

She was no longer separated from Jesus. God Himself and the woman once again walked together in a garden. The beautiful woman saw herself as Jesus saw her, she was a new creation living in an exchanged life, in the image of her Saviour.

As Paul writes to the Corinthians of the divine exchange, **we once bore the image of the earthly, we now bear the image of the heavenly, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory,'** (1 Co 15:49, 2 Co 3:18). We must not swallow the lie. We must not gild the lily and become lifeless. We must not make the mistake of thinking we can make ourselves more beautiful than the way God has created us.

We need to see ourselves as Mary saw herself on that first resurrection day. We need to see ourselves as God sees us, in Christ, excelling in loveliness, extreme in goodness and exceedingly... beautiful.

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# Promised Unity In Christ

In his letter to the church in Ephesus Paul wrote:

For this reason I kneel before the Father of our Lord Jesus. From whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name.

I pray that according to the riches of His glory he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.

And to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fulness of God (3:14-19).

The 6th verse of that same chapter tells us as a body of believers, we all share in God's promise of being united in Christ.

It says on a £10 bank note 'I promise to pay the bearer £10'. The monetary system in this country at its basic level works on a promise, printed on this note as an unconditional guarantee. I think Christianity works at



a basic level, on a promise. Trouble is, I also believe that often Christianity has gone away from simply trusting in God's promise and behaved more as if God had given us a loan with conditions attached instead of a lifetime unconditional guarantee.

At the age of 14 when I first trusted in Jesus, I was full of excitement, enthusiasm, exuberance and expectation. Well, the church soon knocked that out of me! It told me what I had to do and not do to please God, and that put a damper on things. Over the following year I experienced a great change in my life, I became more Christian. I actually became religious, and I involved myself in Christian religious activities, I tried to be a goody two shoes as I thought my performance would please God.

I tried to be self-controlled, to be patient, to stop swearing, to be loving, to always think of others before myself. I failed. I failed totally, utterly and completely. I could not change myself or my basic selfish nature. I failed in my Christian religious activities and performance but it would be over 20 years later that I would discover why.

After only a year after I came to know Jesus, I left the church because I failed in my Christian religious activities and performance. I failed my Christian religious activities and performance because they



relied upon my efforts, I was the problem. I did not reach my own high standards, and I was the weakest link.

The 5th chapter of Matthew's gospel begins with the 9 beatitudes like being pure and meek and merciful and my thirsting after righteousness. My Christian religious activities and performance gave me the illusion that this was achievable. But really it was not an illusion, it was a delusion. I was deluded into vanity, the vain notion that I could achieve the compassion and moral excellence of Jesus.

Later on in the same chapter we read that Jesus said, 'Be perfect' (5:48). How perfect? Be as perfect as God Himself. But no matter how hard I tried, through my Christian religious activities and performance, I could not achieve perfection.

Being a bit of a perfectionist, I have this compulsive behaviour pattern of always wanting to do things properly. So, this command to be perfect, to say the least, did my head in, because no matter how hard I tried or applied my Christian religious activities and performance I just could not conform. This is why I left the church the first time round. I condemned myself for not being good enough, but after twenty odd years I returned to church a lot older and a bit wiser.



I figured out what everyone else in my church did, they ignored Jesus' command to be perfect and concentrated on improving their Christian religious activities and performance. So I, along with everyone else, disregarded it. Do you know something? I have never met anyone who does not sidestep Jesus' command to be perfect ([Mat 5:48](#)). I've noticed people quote scripture verses they think they have the capability of doing or, they are deceived as I was by their own pride into thinking they can live up to religious demands.

Coming back into the church I was again full of excitement, enthusiasm, exuberance and expectation. But back into the system I very quickly slipped back into my Christian religious activities and performance. My promotion was very quick, I did not have to serve as clerk of the court, or as a solicitor or even a barrister. Nope, I went straight in as a judge.

Have you noticed in a court room the judge always sits higher than everyone else. Judges always look down on people. And I was a judge who did not need a jury, knowing I was doing well in my Christian religious activities and performance, which kept my arrogance well topped up. My self-righteousness achievable, attainable by my religious activities and performance!



Christian Religious Activity and Performance or C.R.A.P. for short. Yes, once I was full of excitement, full of enthusiasm, full of exuberance, full of expectation, but now I found I was just full of C.R.A.P.

All my C.R.A.P. had just made me tired, not perfect, so, tired of C.R.A.P, I turned to Jesus, knowing there must be more to Christianity than this. I asked, 'Lord, I want more and more of you, I want to know you and know your love'.

A few months later in answer to that prayer, I found myself face to face with a woman I looked down on with distaste. I despised her for no other reason than she was alcoholic and homeless. In my book that meant probably a scrounger and too lazy to work etc! But as this woman spoke to me, miraculously the Lord caused me to love her, a flood of emotion entered the top of my head and flowed through my entire body. It was a very warm feeling, I felt as though I was glowing, I knew it was Jesus' love and compassion, and for just a few minutes I came to know the love of Jesus for this woman. For those few precious minutes I believe, as far as is humanly possible, I was filled with all the fullness of God.

Perfect, God had fulfilled in me the command to be perfect (Mt 5:48), no longer did I need to ignore the verse and its demand. I had the supply. His perfect





love within me and at that moment He chose to show it, I did not have to force myself, the promise in Christ could be manifested at any time of His choosing.

At times when he chooses not to show His love, I do not have to fret about trying to manufacture it. I am free to just be me and trust he will show his power in me, as and when he chooses according to the perfect plan and purpose of God that is in Christ Jesus. Most people at Liberty know that the last thing that Liberty would want to do is to fill anyone full of Christian religious activities and performance. No more C.R.A.P!

Just as Paul prayed for the Ephesian believers, **I pray that according to the riches of his glory, you are strengthened with power by his Spirit**, I pray for all of Liberty that **Christ lives in our hearts by faith. That we are all rooted and grounded in love, so that we will truly grasp how vast God's love is** and know this love as part of our daily life.

My Lord, I pray for the perfection found only in Christ Jesus to be demonstrated as and when You choose in our lives. Lord, fill us with excitement and enthusiasm, fill us with exuberance and expectation, fill us with the promise of Your Holy Spirit.



As Paul writes in the 3rd chapter of his letter to the Ephesians: Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen (3:20-21).

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# His Purpose In Christ

In his letter to the Romans, Paul wrote:

There is no condemnation now for those who live united in Christ. For the law of the Spirit, which brings us life in union with Christ Jesus, has set me free from the law of sin and death.

What the Law could not do, because human nature was weak, God did. He condemned sin in human nature by sending his own Son, who came as a man with a sinful human nature, to do away with sin. God did this so that the righteous demands of the law might be fully satisfied in us who live according to the Spirit, and not according to our human nature.

Those who live as their human nature tells them to, have their minds controlled by what human nature wants.

Those who live as the Spirit inspires them to, have their minds directed by what the Spirit desires. To be controlled by human nature results in death; to be inspired by the Spirit results in life and peace (8:1-6).

The last example of the 'in Christ' expression is found in Paul's letter to the Ephesians: [According to the](#)



eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (3:11). The eternal purpose of God's plan had always been to bring humanity into an eternal relationship with Himself. A relationship that is foolproof, that even we, in our worst moments, cannot mess up. It was always the will and intention of God to accomplish and fulfil His plan through and in Christ Jesus His Son.

I left the church in my teens because of the never-ending pressure to do more and more Christian religious activity and performance (CRAP for short!). Paul was speaking of his previous religious activity and performance when he wrote to the Philippians he said he now ...counted them as dung (Php 3:8) and about the frustration, guilt and shame of never seeming to be able to do enough or to be good enough! When I returned to church after 20 odd years I soon found myself once again immersed in C...R...A...P... I was in it up to my neck. Unbeknownst to me, The Lord had plans for me.

The timing of going back into my Blackburn church was God-ordained because this time I met some ordinary people in whom God had done some quite extraordinary things. Folks in their 80's and 90's whom God by His grace had called abroad as missionaries to spread the gospel, the good news of



Jesus in places where He had never been heard of. Most of them cotton mill workers whom God had chosen and sent all round the world, now these people were elderly. I visited them just to listen to their adventures and how God had done some wonderful things in their lives. They all had one thing in common: their trust in the Lord Jesus to equip them for their calling.

They trusted that when the Lord called them to do something, even leave their own country and go into the unknown, they trusted their needs would always be met. As they saw the Lord repeatedly care for them they relied on the Lord through good times and bad and they discovered Jesus never let them down. With such delight these old people shared their stories of the Lord with me, those special encounters with God. They showed me what a life truly given to God was like.

I could see the depth of relationship with the Lord in them and I could see years of experience had served to strengthen their faith and deepen their reliance on Him. That made me want what they had, I wanted more of Jesus. Through these folks I was convinced that their faithful trust in Jesus, not Christian religious activity and performance, was the only way to a deeper relationship with the Lord. They never



once spoke of striving to make themselves better, or more moral or kinder or more loving. No. They knew they themselves had plenty of personal faults and failings. But they did not rely on their own goodness to keep them in relationship with God. They relied on Jesus who always turned out to be reliable.

As I looked around the people at my Blackburn church I could see folks steeped in C...R...A...P... It upset me because on the whole they were lovely people. I wondered why these old missionaries had not passed on what they had to the next generation. It was much later I learned you can pass on the C...R...A...P..., you can pass on the system but you cannot pass on the faith. It was even much later that it dawned on me that that notion is not quite true, because these missionaries had passed on a thirst for their kind of faith to me through their stories of Jesus.

What they had been telling me in reality were their testimonies, what I had been actually listening to was the Lord's testimony in their lives. Scripture tells us faith comes by hearing and I had been hearing the Lord tell His story of His grace in these old people's lives. Just as I saw grace and faith at work in the lives of these retired missionaries I started to see grace and faith at work in the lives of the people in Scripture. The faults and failings of biblical characters just



showed up God's grace more clearly. God treated them in ways they could never deserve.\*\* See Endnote pg. 122.

I more clearly saw grace and faith in their lives. God lit up the pages of my bible and highlighted this to me. By now I had moved to Blackpool and I found myself preaching at my new church every two or three weeks. Increasingly I was preaching grace and faith, righteousness not rules, relationship not regulations.

In the gospel according to Matthew, we read: [Seek first the Kingdom of God and God's righteousness \(6:33\)](#). I first thought to myself: What is the Kingdom of God? Thankfully the apostle Paul tells us in his letter to the Romans: [The kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit \(14:17\)](#). Paul tells us the kingdom of God has spiritual power, it brings life and harmony with God. Paul also tells us what the Kingdom of God is not and it is not being clever in words or oratory nor indeed anything man-made. It is not even being highly moral or making ourselves kinder or more loving, for such attributes lack spiritual power.

The Kingdom of God, which Jesus preached, was a compelling invitation to every woman and man to receive as a gift. Totally undeserved righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit! Now that is



incredibly good news! Luke also tells us Jesus preached the Kingdom of God wherever He went and added it was the very reason He was sent from God (Lu 4:43). Later when Jesus sent His disciples out, He instructed them to preach the Kingdom of God.

I wonder how many folk realise Jesus never asked people to repent for forgiveness - not the Samaritan woman, not the paralytic, nor the blind, deaf, lame or leprous, not the apostles including Paul, not even Peter after his denial. All sin was cancelled out and righteousness (Jesus' own righteousness) was given freely to people who did not deserve it. The gospel of Mark tells us John the Baptist preached '[repentance for the forgiveness of sins](#)' (1:4). So many churches today, have preached, and do preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins. It comes from the preaching of John, not the preaching of Jesus.

I heard the preacher Judson Cornwall once say, 'God has no problem with sin because He has sent the answer'. It is a fallacy, based on a false teaching, that our sins separate us from God. Nothing can separate us. In the 8th chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans, we read that there is only one thing that spoils our relationship with God, and that is unbelief (35-39). Repentance and asking for forgiveness ended 2000





years ago. My prayer for today is ‘I believe, help me in my unbelief.’

The Christian life has to be lived in Christ, through and in union with the Spirit of Jesus. In total reliance upon the sufficiency which is in the grace of God. It is this that I saw in the Missionaries - a grace-powered God-inspired life, a life of faith, a life of trust, in union with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said the Kingdom of God was like you scattering seeds. Just step back and watch them grow. Watered from heaven, they flower and bear fruit without any effort. Jesus also said the Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, see how small it is but yet grows effortlessly into the largest tree in the garden.

For years I have preached righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit - the gospel of grace - and I have seen this good, incredible, even fabulous news bring freedom to many. I liken Liberty to a mustard seed planted in fertile ground, I have never expected anything less than Liberty to grow into a large fruitful tree through the power of the Holy Spirit in Christ Jesus. Through the power of grace, righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.



As prophesied, Liberty has been pruned, however, the mustard seed is growing in Christ, to the praise of His glory.

**\*\*Endnote:**

And to Adam he said, "Because you have **listened to the voice of your wife** and have eaten of the judgment tree ([Ge 3:17](#)). And Sarai said to Abram, "Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And **Abram listened to the voice of Sarai** ([Ge 16:2](#)).

Adam listened to his wife and believed her instead of believing God and was cursed. Abram was not cursed for listening to his wife instead of believing God, quite the opposite. The promise 'trumps' the offence. God's faithfulness to His own word and the promise to bless Abram ([Ge 12:1](#)) was greater than all Abram's offences and of all those who descend from him who have an inheritance from Abram in Christ Jesus ([Gal 3:16,29](#)). There are consequences for acting in 'the flesh', Ishmael was the result not just in human terms but also in spiritual terms ([Gal 4:22 – 31](#)). Despite this the promise still stands and God is ultimately faithful.

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## Complete In Him

Taken from Jesus' prayer in John 17.

"I pray for every Christian, that they become one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they become one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.

"And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, becoming one. I in them, and You in Me; made complete in one and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me (20-23 ).

Jesus said, 'I in them, and You in Me; made complete in one.' Paul confirms this, 'For in Jesus dwells all the fullness of God; and we are complete in Him' (Col 2:9,10). Fullness: the condition of being filled to capacity, if you fill a cup to its brim it is full you cannot add any more to it. 'And **we are complete in Him**', before we knew him we were incomplete. When we come to know Jesus the fullness of the God dwells in us, we are **complete**, that is we the individual saint and collectively the Church. As Paul says, **God sees you holy in his sight, faultless and free from guilt** (Col 1:22). Always remember it is not how we see



ourselves, nor how others see us, it is how God sees us that counts, **holy, faultless and free from guilt.**

In the parable of the Garden of Paradise in Ge 2: verse 21 says that in the Garden, **‘the Lord caused the Man to go into a deep sleep and while he was asleep the Lord took the woman out of His side’.** Even though they were now two the Lord said they were one, and God **‘called **them** Adam’ (Ge 5:2).** Two yet one. No division, no discord, nothing divisive. The woman was part of the man and the woman was the man’s alter ego, she was the man’s other self and the man was her other self. They had perfect oneness. The woman looked different to the man, acted differently to the man yet remained united in him. Each individual functioned differently but each one brought something to the relationship the other could not, the woman made the man complete and the man made the woman complete

Remember the bible is a picture book and the whole story of the Garden, what was in it, and the events that took place there are all an illustration of future events. I want to look at two pictures from the Garden.

The first picture: Paul tells us in Romans 5:14 that Adam was symbolic of Jesus, Adam was an illustration or picture of Jesus. When Adam was put to sleep and God took part of him to form the woman from his



side, his very substance. This is a picture of Christians, collectively called the Bride of Christ, coming out of Jesus' side, out of his very substance.

I will explain: When at the crucifixion the spear pierced Jesus' side blood and water came out. Blood symbolizes humanity and water symbolizes Spirit. The blood of Jesus' humanity with the spirit of His divinity poured out bringing into existence the new creation. His perfect life, His death and resurrection made the new creation possible, created from His very substance. Being made of his very substance we become the woman of Christ, the bride of Christ, the church. Collectively and individually we complete the picture. We have been re unified with God, we are in Jesus one substance, one body, Complete in Jesus we become His alter ego, His other self. Two yet one. No division, no discord, nothing divisive.

Jesus' prayer recorded by John, '[I in them, and You in Me; made complete in one](#)' (Joh 17:23). That prayer has been answered. We are one with Jesus we are the essence, the substance of Jesus. As one body we are equal with every other Christian all made one in Jesus, not by any human effort but according to God's divine purpose through and in his Son Jesus. Just as God saw the man and woman as one in the first creation, God sees the man Jesus and His woman the church as



one in the new creation. All Jesus' attributes and qualities are bestowed on us, the bride. Jesus is the very essence of the bride, truly one with the bride. \*\*

The second picture: Looking at another aspect of the Garden representation and what is commonly called the fall of man there is another illustration. It is false teaching that says Adam disobeyed God and that his disobedience caused the fall and the separation between humanity and God. The writer tells us that the damage was done not because of disobedience, but because of unbelief, the loss of trust in God. All relationships depend on trust. When trust is lost the relationship is severely damaged or even destroyed.

Ge 3:17 And God said to the man, "You listened to your wife and ate the fruit which I told you not to eat. Because of what you have done, the ground will be under a curse. You will have to work hard all your life to make it produce enough food for you. God is not saying you disobeyed Me, God is saying you listened to the women and believed her and ate the fruit; and by definition that means you did not listen to Me and believe Me. He is saying you lost trust in my words to you, and trusted your wife's words. The curse is; what



you got to eat for free, that nourished and sustained your life, you will have to work hard for now.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus broke that curse, once and for all. But often we live our spiritual lives as if we are still under it.

In my early Christian life I worked my socks off for things I did not realise I had been freely given. I worked hard to make myself righteous and holy and to keep myself in relationship with God. Have you?

Jesus reversed the curse. Do not live as if you are still under the curse like I once did; not realising the truth in Romans, **those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through Jesus Christ (5:17).**

In my home church I remember singing a song to Jesus entitled, ‘We have come into his house’; some of you may remember it. ‘We have come into his house to magnify His name and worship Him’, repeat. There’s a line in the song that says, ‘He is all my righteousness I stand complete in Him and worship Him’. I now find

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<sup>1</sup> This then in reality, and what the curse teaches us is this, what you got for free, you now have to work for it. It is ironic that in my experience the church teaches to work hard for our relationship with God, when in reality we possess all we need for our relationship which has been freely given.



it amazing that I sang these words and had no understanding of what it meant. It was one of the many song lyrics I sang without any understanding.

We have looked at the 5 times in Ephesians that Paul says 'In Jesus' and the 10 times Paul says 'In Christ'. That adds up to 15 times that Paul emphasises that we are in Jesus Christ. 5 the symbolic number of grace, 10 the symbolic number of completeness 15 the number of rest.\*\*\* Let us not work for the gifts we already have. Instead lets celebrate what we have received as gifts.

These gifts nourish and sustain our spiritual lives without having to work hard. In Christ Jesus we are complete as we have His very essence. Jesus is the love of God in human form. Jesus is our holiness, Jesus is our righteousness, Jesus is our perfection, Jesus is our peace, Jesus is our rest, Jesus is our glory, Jesus is our eternal life, Jesus is our oneness and Jesus is the one in whom we are complete in His perfection to the glory of His name.

\*\* [Go To Pg. 196 The Divine Exchange](#)

\*\*\* [Go To Pg. 189 Symbolic Use Of Numbers](#)

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## Jesus Supreme

Taken from chapter 1 of Paul's letter to the Colossians:

Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.

He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And Jesus is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fulness dwell in him (15 – 19).

Scripture says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding (Pr 3:5). Trust means to have confidence in and confidence means being free from doubt. To give this verse a fuller meaning; Being free from any doubt, put your whole trust in the Lord and do not rely your own human understanding. This verse like many others in scripture it is impossible to do. We just cannot do it. But that is the point, the Lord does not want US to do it, He wants Jesus to do it through us.



I'm a great believer in what I call experiential theology. I'll give you two examples. First example; the apostle Paul was specifically called to preach the gospel to non Jews, the Gentiles. He did this with great success travelling from town to town only staying long enough to establish a church. Problems arose for those churches when Jewish Christians came along and told them they had to obey certain Jewish religious practices, including, being circumcised. Sounds painful but that is what this lot were insisting on.

Paul went to Jerusalem to stop the Jews interfering in what He had been called to do, proclaim the 'gospel of the grace of God' to the Gentiles and establish them as followers of Jesus. Paul pointed out without following any Jewish religious practises the Gentiles were trusting in Jesus and the Holy Spirit was active in their lives and blessing their socks off. Paul argued that he experienced the life of Jesus in the Gentile Christians. Paul said 'Has the Holy Spirit got it wrong?' the answer obviously was no. The Holy Spirit had not got it wrong and was capable of bringing Gentiles to know and live in Jesus without them having to follow any Jewish ceremonies.

By using experience, instead of arguing scripture or traditions, Paul convinced the religious Jewish



Christian leaders, that the Gentiles had a genuine faith in Jesus and did not need to get circumcised to make their faith any better.

Second example of experiential theology. One summer when Liberty met in North Shore Methodist Church building, a couple of holidaymakers came into our meeting. During our opening song I saw they were joining in our charismatic worship with enthusiasm.

That evening they heard Robert give his testimony. Robert told how he had been kicked out of a church because he was gay, but had not only found a welcome at Liberty, he had also found Jesus at Liberty. The first time Robert attended Liberty Jesus had appeared to him and spoke to him. Robert told how Jesus had assured him that everything would work out all right for him and Jesus stayed with him as he walked back to his homeless hostel that night. That evening Robert experienced a peace and joy like never before.

A time of worship followed and this couple freely entered in, again in an enthusiastic manner and the woman was even moved to publicly pray.

As soon as the meeting ended the couple approached Nina with a question, 'Robert said in his testimony he was gay, are all the people here gay?' 'Most of them' Nina replied. The woman continued, 'We're on holiday



staying in a hotel over the road and came to church as we do every Sunday. We thought we were coming to a Methodist meeting. As soon as we walked in, I could sense the presence of the Holy Spirit in the meeting. I've thoroughly enjoyed the service and I never ever imagined worshipping with gay people. I've been taught that you cannot be gay and Christian but I'm going to re-examine my theology because Jesus is here and His Holy Spirit is with you. The Holy Spirit does not get things wrong.'

This couple's theology was changed by experience - experiential theology. Things they had once believed because of their understanding of scripture changed because of their direct experience. A preacher said; 'It only takes an ounce of personal experience to change one's theology'. This woman had experienced the life of Jesus among us and was trusting in what the Lord had showed her. She knew Jesus was among us blessing us with his presence. No longer was she leaning on her own understanding of the theology of gay issues but was looking to the Lord to help her adjust her theology to make sense of what she had experienced. An experience others have had while visiting us.

This couple had come from what's known in church circles as a 'bible believing church' and I've heard



others like them call themselves 'bible people'. But often they put their understanding of scripture above experiencing what Jesus is actually doing. The Jewish leadership did exactly the same thing.

Sadly there have been times when a certain understanding of the Book of the Lord has taken precedence over the 'Lord of the Book'.

Scriptural references have been used to justify slavery and inequality for women when the Lord of the Book valued every human being equally. God's love is unconditional yet people introduce conditions to validate their doctrines.

A preacher once said, 'Jesus is of no importance unless He is of supreme importance.'

Let Liberty people be known as Jesus people. Let the songs we sing like 'Jesus be the centre' and 'All for Jesus' be a reality in our lives. Let the songs come alive within us, let them be our experience. A theologian once said; 'The time is fast approaching when one will either be a mystic or an unbeliever.' What a strange quote I thought. To me an unbeliever is someone who does not wholeheartedly trust in Jesus, but what's a mystic? Sounds like someone a bit weird and removed from everyday life, eyes permanently looking up to the sky in a weird, off



putting sort of way. So I was a bit surprised when I looked in my dictionary as to what a mystic was.

Mystic: Someone who seeks to have unity with God and believes in the existence of realities beyond human comprehension. Wow! I never knew that. Another dictionary said: A mystic does not want only to believe in God, a mystic wants to experience God.

In John's gospel Jesus talked about us being one in Him and one with God the Father. But as I read further about the meaning of mystic my research concluded the mystic wanted more than a oneness with God, but also a desire to experience the mystery of God. A mystic wants to know God. I never thought I'd want to belong to a church full of mystics. People united to God in Jesus, who have experienced and want to experience for themselves more of the wonder of God.

I want to unite with people who hold Jesus as supreme in all things. People that do not lean on their own understanding, but know Jesus and trust in Him with all their hearts. I want to be with 'Jesus people' who know Him and walk with Him, not bible people who spend extraordinary amounts of time either defending or promoting their particular beliefs. Or justifying themselves by their particular interpretation of certain bible verses. I want to join with people who have come



to know Jesus, experienced Jesus, seen Jesus, heard Jesus, touched Jesus, tasted Jesus, and smelled Jesus.

People who know the grace of Jesus, the love of Jesus, the faithfulness of Jesus, the kindness of Jesus, and the goodness of Jesus. People who declare the glory of Jesus, the magnificence of Jesus, the Majesty of Jesus, the splendour of Jesus, and the supremacy of Jesus.

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## It Is Finished

The first five verses of John's gospel chapter 17.

Jesus said this, as he looked towards heaven and prayed: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him power over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.

Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and your Son Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

The first words spoken by Jesus are recorded according to Luke's gospel as, 'I must be about My Father's business' (2:49). The last words spoken by Jesus before he died are recorded by John 'It is finished' (19:30). I reckon what was finished was his father's business

God wanted to restore the relationship He once had with humanity and so He sent His Son to re-establish





the spiritual and emotional connection. God wanted to give life and energy to a relationship that had died; restoration and regeneration, this was God the Father's business that He committed to His Son Jesus. Jesus' mission was the restoration of a relationship between God and humanity akin to a relationship between trusted friends and lovers.

'It is finished', the Greek for finished is 'teleo' which also means, complete, fulfilled, paid in full. For example if you paid £30 for a meal in a Greek restaurant that cost £20 they would stamp your bill 'teleo,' **paid in full**. Jesus said to His mother Mary that He was '[about His Father's business](#)'. As He died He said He had accomplished, completed and brought to an end that business. No one would think of taking a paint brush and a pot of paint and try to add to Da Vinci's The Last Supper, or put finishing touches to the Mona Lisa. No one would do that because we know these paintings are finished works. Finished by the artist who began them. In the same way, that is how we are to look at Jesus' life's work, culminating in the work on the cross. He cried out, '[It is finished!](#)' You cannot complete a completed work. You cannot finish a finished work. Our salvation is won. All our sins are permanently erased. We are forever cleansed and made pure by His death on the cross.\*\* See Endnote pg. 143



Christ paid completely and perfectly for our total forgiveness. There are those who say sin separates people of faith from God. This is just not true. In what is known as the ‘fall of man’ humanity was cursed, that means cut off or separated from God. Cursed is a loaded word, but all it means in this context is that humanity lost that life giving connection we were designed to have with God, humanity was alienated, separated from God. But Paul in Galatians says this about people of faith, ‘[Christ Jesus redeemed us from the curse, by becoming a curse for us, by experiencing our alienation from God the source of all love](#)’ (3:13). This is confirmed at the end of Romans 8 where it is recorded that nothing can separate us from the love of God (35-39).

We are told by Matthew that Jesus cried out from the cross to His Father, ‘[My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?](#)’ (27:46). He cried out in despair because for the first time throughout all eternity the Son was separated from His Father. Jesus died alone, entering the darkness, the blackness of death. For 3 days ‘the light of the world’ was extinguished. According to John, Jesus said what sustained Him was, ‘[to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish his work](#)’ (4:34). His last words were ‘[it is finished](#)’. He’d accomplished His lifetime’s work. He brought to an end that which separated humanity from God the Father.



What actually separated and separates humanity from God? My first church told me it was sin, 'Which sin?' I asked. 'Any sin' was the reply, because sin for them and for me was the breaking what would be collectively called Biblical law or laws, that was the message. However in practise it was not collective it was selective. Selected first by the pastor, then the leadership, and then the members of the congregation (including myself), but the three did not always agree. That is the very nature of rules and laws. Laws are open to different interpretation and brings contention and division. But the message of the Gospel is unity, oneness in Jesus and God.

For the first 5 years of my Christian life I struggled with sins that I did and could not stop, not realising God had made it so simple. It is not our sins that separate us from God, it is not sins at all but 'sin', singular. One sin separates humanity from God. That one sin is unrighteousness, and to put that quite simply, it is not having God's righteousness. Paul writes in Romans, '[As it is written, There is no-one righteous, not even one](#)' (3:10). Originally God made humanity in His image which included having God's righteousness that enabled us to connect and to be in harmony with Him.



God's plan and purpose was to restore His righteousness to humanity through faith. Only Jesus who was perfect could do this. Paul informs the Romans, **All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God (3:23)**. Most Christians see that as meaning because we do wrong things we fall short of God's standards, and the church decides what those standards are. Does it say, 'All have sinned and come short of standards of behaviour? No, it says come short of the **glory of God**. No human being, no matter how morally good and loving achieves the level of the glory of God.

The glory of God is the benchmark, the measuring stick, the only standard. Unwittingly Christians then do as Paul writes in Romans, **For they are ignorant of God's righteousness, going about trying to establish their own righteousness, they have not accepted the only way to the righteousness of God is through faith alone (10:3)**. The only way to the righteousness of God is by faith alone not by moral behaviour.

Striving to attain an ethical and moral standard falls miles short of what is acceptable to God. Everyone comes short of the glory of God. For no matter what we say or do, all will come short of the glory of God and the glory of God is the only acceptable level. The beauty of this is that makes us all equal. We are all in



need of help to gain the glory of God because none of us can get it by ourselves. This creates a level playing field from the greatest to the least. We all need help to obtain God's glory. What was the Father's business that Jesus completed? To do God's will and restore to us the glory of God. Jesus' prayer in [Joh 17:22](#) **Father the same glory you gave me, I gave them.** What glory is that? The glory of God. So then, we no longer fall short, we have all been **given** the glory of God. Every Christian, no matter their standing in the church or in society has been given the glory of God simply through their faith. The glory of God is a gift, we have nothing to strive for, nothing to achieve.

The glory of God was given to Jesus, Jesus then gave us God's glory. It is impossible for us ever to fall short ever again it is a non-returnable gift. God's glory permanently ours 24/7 as Paul writes to the Romans, '[those he called, he justified; those he justified, he also glorified](#)' (8:30).

I preach the gospel of the grace of God. The gospel means good news and news never tells you what to do; news tells you what's **already** been done. Jesus has done it to perfection, it is complete, it is finished.

[Jesus reflects the brightness of God's glory and is the exact likeness of God's own being, sustaining the universe with his powerful word. After achieving](#)



forgiveness for humanities sin, he sat down in heaven at the right-hand side of God Most High (Heb 1:3). You can only sit down and rest when you've finished. I know Jesus has finished, making me perfectly acceptable to God. Therefore now knowing I possess the glory of Jesus I have His peace, no longer do I work and strive for the unobtainable. I rest in Jesus' finished work knowing I'm loved and accepted as I am and He has generously given me His glory. In my relationship with God I have a peace that goes beyond human understanding.

John writes that Jesus said 'I can of Myself do nothing' (5:30). I echo and imitate Jesus in this, 'I Jim Parker can of myself do nothing', as Jesus relied on God the Father I rely on Jesus, God the Son. I glory not in my achievements, but by faith rest in His achievements and His glory.

I pray that if you do not have that peace of knowing you are reconnected to God for all time that you will be able to reach out to the Lord and to ask Him and allow Him to make the reconnection.

If you know the Lord but continually judge yourself and are haunted by the guilt of your mistakes, faults and failings I pray you will realise Jesus was judged in your stead and you have God's total acceptance and love no matter how much you mess up in the eyes of



your peers and yourself. I pray that you will be able to rely more and more on Jesus as you face the pressures and stresses of life. I pray for all that need to know, that all separation from God, for any reason whatsoever is in the past and it is finished.

**\*\* Endnote:**

The blood from the animal sacrifices of the Old Covenant contained death and so decayed, it only gave a temporary relief. Similarly the practice of confession and repentance only gives a temporary peace. Both these practices are reliant upon the practitioner and not upon the Lord. Relying on the substitutional sacrifice of Jesus is all sufficient, as the following comments and scripture references confirm.

The blood of Jesus contains life, resurrected and eternal living blood appropriating the 10 following benefits, constantly and permanently.

The application of the blood is always made by the High Priest. Jesus is our High Priest.

1. We have propitiation (merciful covering) through the blood Ro 3:25
2. We have justification through the blood Ro 5:9



3. We have redemption through the blood Eph 1:7
4. We have forgiveness through the blood Eph 1:7
5. We have been made near through the blood Eph 2:13
6. We have peace through the blood Col 1:20
7. We have a purged conscience through the blood Heb 9:14
8. We have boldness through the blood Heb 10:19
9. We have cleansing through the blood 1Jo 1:7
10. We have victory through the blood Re 12:11

Ten is the symbolic number of completeness and we are complete in the blood. According to Paul's letter to the Colossians, [you are complete in him, who is the head of all rule and authority \(2:10\)](#).

If confession or repentance were necessary it would surely mean the blood would have some deficiency. Or, if confession or repentance were necessary to apply the blood, then Jesus our High Priest would be rendered redundant.

Our High Priest, has performed his office perfectly and made us clean from all sin purely by his work, and not by our utterances or physical activity.





**I recommend you watch this excellent video till the end. Run time 69 minutes.**

[Video Link: Rob Bell, The Goat Has Left The Building](#)

[Sermon Outline: The Goat Has Left The Building](#)

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# Mercy

Paul's epistle to the Ephesians chapter 2:

Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions, it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by what you do or have done, so that no-one can boast. (4-9).

In our reading we are told twice for emphasis it is by grace we are saved. The reason God saved us by His grace is because He loves us and has an overabundance of mercy. The text says God is rich in mercy, so there is always more than enough for anyone, no matter what we are like. The apostle Paul in Titus writes about God saving us, **It is not by keeping the law, we have already done that, but according to His mercy he saved us (3:5).**



So what is mercy? My dictionary says mercy is; A disposition to be kind and forgiving. The feeling that motivates compassion. One bible commentator writes: **Mercy is unconditional love, reaching out to meet what is necessary and lacking, without considering the merit of the person who receives that need.** God's mercy is because of His unconditional love, which is abundantly kind, forgiving and compassionate towards His people, even though we have done nothing to deserve it. Grace and mercy are linked, in that grace is unconditional favour and mercy is unconditional kindness and unconditional forgiveness.

When Jesus gave the beatitudes he was explaining what the law of Moses said of mercy; **Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy (Mt 5:7).** Under the law of Moses you had to show mercy to then get mercy from God. You had to give mercy to get God's mercy. Mercy was on condition you did your part. At the end of Jesus' ministry He declared the law was finished. He put an end to all the conditions attached to the law. No longer had God's people to be merciful to receive God's mercy. Now God's grace meant all could receive his kindness and forgiveness without having to do anything to deserve them.



Nina and I differ, I am not naturally a people person, I can be quite unfeeling and hard at times. Nina is more outgoing; a people person. Her nature, unlike me, is to be thoughtful and kind and forgiving. You would think from that, that Nina's attitude of being merciful would gain her greater credit with God than the unmerciful me. But, and there is a but, Nina's kindness and forgiving nature is limited. At times people have hurt her very deeply and finding kindness and forgiveness has been very hard for her, if not impossible. Nina has a natural tendency to be kind and forgiving yet I know she's not able to be like that all the time to everyone. Nina falls short of being perfectly merciful.

Jesus challenges the self righteous Pharisees by quoting the prophet Hosea and says to them, what does this mean 'God requires mercy not sacrifice?' (Ho 6:6). For hard hearted me often it would be far easier for me to sacrifice an animal than show mercy. Which is the point Jesus was making, the impossibility of the law. God requires mercy however, God's people cannot show mercy all the time to everyone. We are not capable. The rules can tell us to be kind and forgiving but the rules have no power to help us.

The meaning of 'God requires mercy not sacrifice' is, God does not want self sacrifice or animal sacrifice or any sacrifice full stop. For a long time I felt a failure



knowing I was so often not able to be merciful. But now I see things differently. I see that the mercy He requires is **His mercy** not our mercy, God wants us to accept our inabilities and our failures in regards to being kind and forgiving. And accept that God shows His mercy towards those we could never ever show mercy to. None of us can love, show favour, be kind and forgiving in the way God does. And by saying 'the way God does' I mean perfectly, all the time, no matter what.

We can though, accept that God does love those we might think undeserving, or who have hurt us. The people we are closest to, and our fellow Christians are in many ways the most difficult of people to show mercy to. We have lots of expectations of them and it hurts when they let us down or are downright thoughtless or cruel to us. This is where we need help from God because it can seem unfair that he loves and approves of people we do not approve of. But it only seems unfair if we think that in some way we deserve God's mercy and someone else does not.

Prejudice from Christians especially those who demonstrate against us at Pride hurt us. Despite that hurt we need to ask God to help us grasp that his



abundant grace and mercy are poured out on them just as generously as they are poured out on us. Only He can help us to start being able to see them more as He does, through the eyes of love and grace. When we *truly* grasp that God's love and mercy is a gift then we are more able to accept He will give his gifts to anyone He chooses whether we approve or do not approve of them. We do not have to strive to be what we are not. We can rest in Him, just as we are. And we can allow Him to work in us by His Spirit to show His mercy through us at times even when it is beyond our human ability.

The apostle Paul began his letters to the churches 'grace and peace to you' and maybe that is something we need. We have received God's grace, but can we show God's grace, Can we say 'grace and peace to you' to those who criticise us, those who have and do hurt us? We are flawed human beings living along side flawed human beings, often we cannot show grace to each other. And that is OK because He continues to show grace to us despite our limitations.

We can also desire in our hearts that God will work in us by His Spirit to enable his mercy and grace to flow through us to others. Not because we achieve that in ourselves, but because His Spirit is responding to that



desire in us. Lets pray and ask that the Holy Spirit flows through us and enable us, more and more to be channels for His love, grace and mercy to others in Jesus.

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## The Sign Of Jonah

This happened after the Jewish religious leaders had rejected Jesus as the Messiah. The following is taken from Matthew 16:

Jesus said "An unholy and unfaithful people look for a miraculous sign. But the only sign they will be given is the sign of Jonah." Jesus then left.

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say I the Son of Man is?" They answered, "Some say you are John the Baptizer, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He asked them, "But who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God!"

Jesus replied, "Simon, son of Jonah, you are blessed! No human being has revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven has revealed it to you. I also say to you, That you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. And I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven (4,13–19).

When Jesus was in Bethsaida he made a journey from there to Caesarea Philippi a Gentile city, about 18





miles away, it was Sin City of its day. No respectable Jew would be seen anywhere near that evil place which sat at the foot of Mount Hermon, part of the Golan Heights.

Caesarea Philippi butted up against a large cliff, known as ‘The Rock of the Gods’. It was the place where the Greek gods Hades and Pan were worshipped. Set in the cliff was a large cave said to be the entrance to the underworld, the place of the dead Hades was the god of the underworld. Pan was a fertility god, half man and half goat, with the legs and horns of a goat. Pan was the inspiration behind images of Roman Catholic artists, later used to depict the Devil. The fertility god was depicted as being part goat, because Pan worshippers had sex with goats as part of their rituals. The resulting image of Pan was half goat and half man with horns.

Why did Jesus go to such a debauched Gentile place?

The Jewish religious leadership had rejected Jesus. So, from ministering to Jews in Galilee the most religious part of Israel (compare it with the southern Bible Belt in the USA) Jesus went to the totally opposite part of Israel to make a point. I think the point was to show the religious leaders, that as the Messiah he had given them opportunity to recognise Him, but now they had firmly rejected Him He would



go to the Gentiles. The Gentiles were seen as unclean and therefore completely unacceptable to God. In the eyes of the Jew, Jesus could not have gone to a worse place than this den of iniquity and evil that was Caesarea Philippi.

Israel's leaders had denounced Jesus as a heretic, so at the foot of the cliff known as 'the rock of the gods' Jesus asks His disciples, 'Who do the people say I am?' According to Matt 16 The disciples replied Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. Eventually Peter said 'you are the Messiah, the Son of God'.

Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was revealed to you by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; (Mt 16:17-19)

So standing at 'the rock of the gods' Jesus told Simon he was the rock, the foundation on which Jesus Himself would build His church. Jesus was outside the cave which it was believed to be the gateway to the underworld and the dead, the gate of Hades. At this place Jesus said that the grave will not overcome His church. Quite the opposite, His church would be victorious over Hades and death.



Twice in this passage from Matthew, Jonah is mentioned. The first time Jonah comes up is in Jesus' response to the demand from the religious leaders for a sign. Jesus told them there would be no more signs except for the sign of Jonah. So what is the sign of Jonah?

Jonah was God's prophet. God had spoken to His people lots of times through the prophet Jonah and they had ignored and rejected him. They had turned their back on God, and so God turned His back on them and asked His prophet Jonah to go to the Gentiles in Nineveh.

Jonah was in the port of Joppa at the time and was shocked at being asked to go to the Gentiles, no way would his religious prejudice allow him to go. However God arranged circumstances to put pressure on him and so eventually very reluctantly Jonah arrived in the Gentile city of Nineveh. it was Sin City of its day. So with reluctance Jonah preached to the Ninevites not expecting them to listen. After all, God's people had never listened to him.

Jonah was gobsmacked when they all turned to God and came to faith in Him. He had not seen that coming! He was angry with God for allowing that to happen for such disreputable, unworthy people.



The sign of Jonah has different aspects, this is first and foremost. Jesus the Son of God was rejected by the Jewish leaders and went to the Gentiles and specifically to 'Sin City'. Centuries before, the Jewish leaders had rejected God's prophet Jonah, so God sent him to the Gentiles in Nineveh the Sin city of its day.

In the story of Jonah there are 17 parallels with Jesus these add up to the sign of Jonah.\*\*

Why did Jesus name Simon His rock on which He'd build His church? What were the keys to the Kingdom Jesus gave him?

Simon who Jesus called Peter, meaning the rock, laid the foundation of the church. The keys to the Kingdom were the gospel. With the first key Peter opened the door for the Jews to the Kingdom of Heaven (Acts 2). With the second key he was to open the door to the Kingdom of Heaven to the Gentiles at Cornelius' house (Acts 10).

But, like Jonah, Peter's prejudice would not let him go near to the Gentiles. In his eyes they were unclean and way beneath him. Jesus called Simon son of Jonah when in reality Simon's father was called John. Jesus saw Simon's likeness to Jonah. Like Jonah Simon Peter was in Joppa when God shocked him to the core by asking him to go to the Gentiles, and just like



Jonah, Simon Peter's religious prejudice would not let him. Like with Jonah God had to persuade him.

God sent Peter to Cornelius's house where he preached the gospel to the whole household of Gentiles and to his shock saw them come to faith in God. When Jesus called Simon Peter son of Jonah Jesus was being prophetic, seeing into the future He saw Simon behaving just like Jonah.

Just as the sign of Jonah had great significance in its day, the sign of Jonah is for the church today because prophesy can have multiple fulfilment. History repeats itself because we fail to learn from it the first time round.

When Jonah finally stepped foot in 'Sin City' Nineveh, God gave Jonah the words to say and so Jonah preached the word of God. Jonah had good news for them from God which was the key to opening up their hearts. Scripture tells us the Gentile Ninevites 'believed God'. As stated earlier that phrase 'believed God' was first used of Abraham when he was a Gentile who believed God (a sign of Jonah the Jews failed to see).

Abraham experienced God's grace in receiving righteousness from God as a gift. Jonah said, God's attitude towards the Ninevites was 'gracious and



compassionate and rich in love'. The Ninevites received God's righteousness. God was not prejudiced. God saved the Ninevites, a sign of Jonah Peter failed to see as recorded in Acts 10, **God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean (28). I now realise how true it is that God does not show favouritism' (34).** A sign of Jonah the church fails to see, especially towards the LGBT+ community.

God did not ask Jonah to preach the Law of Moses, he never preached the law to the Ninevites; like Abraham they were totally ignorant of the law. Grace never speaks law in any form. Jonah never introduced religious law to them. He gave them no religious activities, no religious practices and no religious traditions.

Nineveh a city of 120,000, all were saved. How many inhabitants were LGBT+? Maybe 6-12,000 souls, God did not discriminate, **all** were saved.

All who dwelled in Nineveh were saved just because they responded when they heard God's voice through His prophet Jonah. They trusted in God and the Lord's grace and compassion and the riches of His love took care of the rest. There is a simplicity in responding to God when we hear His voice and letting His grace and the riches of His love take care of all the rest.



Surely this is the sign of Jonah, surely this is the signature of Jesus.

**\*\*[Go To Pg. 212 The Sign Of The Prophet Jonah](#)**

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## Imitating Jesus

Jesus was passing through Jericho. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a tree to see him, as Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down. I must stay at your house today." So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner'." But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." Luke 19:1 -10

Zacchaeus the tax collector was called a 'sinner' by the religious minded onlookers, Jesus however never calls him a sinner, nor asks him to repent of his past, nor asks him to change his behaviour in the future. Zacchaeus stays in post as a tax collector, which is obviously OK with Jesus if not by the onlookers.





Jesus says salvation has come to Zacchaeus yet never asks anything of him except an invitation to stay in his house, today. Which is to be noted, because when we experienced our salvation, that realisation of our connection to God, comes with the same invitation ‘I must stay at your house today’. Because today is the day of salvation.

Jesus did not ask anything of Zacchaeus and Jesus does not ask of anything from us, though we were asked to do plenty by the religious minded, who still treated us as sinners and not the saints we had become. It is also important to remember in this story of Zacchaeus’ conversion, Zacchaeus’ wallet is also converted. Without Jesus asking, Zacchaeus wants to give away his riches. It begs the question why and what is this story teaching us because every story has a spiritual significance?

The answer is that in this story we find Zacchaeus up the right tree while the religious minded onlookers are barking up the wrong tree. Let me explain. Scripture tells us that in the centre of the garden of paradise there were two trees. The tree of knowledge of right and wrong and the tree of life. The tree knowledge of right and wrong, through its fruit, gave humanity the ability to know right and wrong. This tree gave humanity, with their new found knowledge, the power



to pass judgement and this they did by first judging themselves and then judging God. However this tree also brought death. In contrast the tree of life gave wisdom and fruit that nourished and sustained life, **She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, And happy are all who retain her Pr 3:18.**

The religious onlookers must have been eating from the tree of knowledge for them to pass judgement on Zacchaeus enabling them to call him a sinner. Whereas Jesus made no such judgement and treated Zacchaeus with respect and dignity. It was a big deal in those days to eat a meal with someone, it meant you had a bond with them. When Jesus had a meal at Zacchaeus' house He was saying to all around, this man is my equal.

According to our various testimonies of when we came to know Jesus, we also entered a Christian religion that placed demands, obligations and expectations upon us. Jesus asked nothing of Zacchaeus, no demand, no obligation or expectation was placed upon him, yet he changed. Zacchaeus was small in stature, but he is a great example of the grace shown by Jesus, a grace which was received and a grace that had a power to give, in a new way, in a new life.

The story of Zacchaeus begins with him climbing the right tree and ends with him eating from the right



tree; the tree of life, whose fruit changed his heart. This is the power of the new creation, the new person. This is the result of salvation, if grace is allowed to have its way, unburdened by human philosophies, traditions and religiosity.

Being a messenger of the gospel of grace I have often been asked the question, Are you saying that through grace we are free to do anything we want? Yes is the answer; grace does set us free to do anything we want. But what do we then want to do? Does that really mean we will actually do anything we want?

Like many others, my old church believed Christians were not under the old covenant but under the new covenant. They believed that the new covenant meant God had put his law, in their minds and written it on their hearts.' The new covenant is a glorious promise of all that God will do for His people asking nothing from them. So what is God's law, the 'my law' in this covenantal promise.

Was it the 613 rules in the law of Moses or just the 10 commandments; or does God mean something else altogether? Common sense if nothing else tells us 'My law' cannot mean the law of Moses. In that old law there are commands like do not eat from a dead carcass, or if you have a hairy spot you have to be isolated for seven days. These cannot apply to God.



Nor can the ten commandments as God cannot steal or worship an idol, nor honour His Father and mother, He has none.

‘My laws’ of which God speaks, are the laws by which God lives. God’s laws are His life laws, let me explain. I once had a large garden in which I planted a Victoria plum tree. Victoria hardly grew in the first year and not much more in the second, but I knew below ground Victoria was putting out roots, strong roots that would keep her upright in the winter storms. In the spring of the fifth year Victoria had now shot up to be twelve foot high, blossom was on her branches for the very first time. That autumn Victoria produced an abundance of fruit, the juiciest plums ever, as I plucked them off her branches and stuffed them straight into my mouth.

All this was because, God had written the law of the plum tree within the seed from which Victoria grew; she had produced blossoms then plums. In the right way and at the right time, without any effort as if it was the most natural thing on earth for Victoria to do. ‘My law’, the law of God will make us fruitful in the right way at the right time, unique fruit from each individual saint. We will mature just like Victoria did, if we let the law that God has written inside us, live. Victoria had a life source in a seed from her mother,



nutrients from the ground, rain from the sky and fresh air to breathe, all provided by God for life. She grew and produced her fruit effortlessly.

Without trying, with Gods law of life within us, we too can live our lives as his saints without effort, just allowing Him to be our life source, our provider and our keeper through the storms of life. Victoria sprang up and matured just as God intended; as did the apple tree and gooseberry bush, the blackberry bush and the damson tree in my garden. Each one different, maturing and producing in its own time and way, according to the law of life God had put inside them. Each one free to be itself, free to do its own thing while relying on God for life.

Christian life is no different if Gods law within is given free reign. A life that relies upon God. A life that grows and matures in the unique way it is designed to, according to the law of life written within. As surely a giraffe gives birth to a giraffe after its own kind, a giraffe in the image and likeness of a giraffe, in the same way the Spirit of God gives birth to the spiritual after its own kind. We saints do not have to try to be in the image and likeness of God, we're born again that way. Like Victoria we were grown from seed, **We are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Gal 3:29).**



Grace gives us the freedom to do anything we want without losing our connection with God. The question is what will we want to do? Or will the law of God, the law of life within us, cause us to live according to the new life within us.? \*\*

For Zacchaeus, his new life caused immediate change; without a prompt, command or demand Zacchaeus' now wanted to freely give away his riches just like His Lord and Saviour freely gave away His riches. Zacchaeus was expressing the effect of Jesus' new life in him. Without even thinking, Zacchaeus was imitating Jesus.

### \*\*Endnote

After the anointing of Saul by Samuel scripture informs us: [1Sa 10:6](#) Then the Spirit of the LORD will rush upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man. [1Sa 10:9](#) When he turned his back to leave Samuel, God gave him another heart.

[Jas 3:12](#) 12 My brethren can a fig-tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

[2Co 5:17](#) So that if anyone is in Christ, that one is a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

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## The Peace of Naaman

Jesus speaking in Luke 4 to the Jews that were meeting in the synagogue:

Jesus said "I tell you the truth, no prophet is accepted in his home town. I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when it didn't rain for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a Gentile widow in the region of Sidon.

And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only the Syrian Gentile Naaman." All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this (24 – 28).

The Lord God called idolatry 'a great sin' Ex 32:21,30,31 And Moses said to Aaron, "What did this people do to you that you have brought **so great a sin** upon them?" 30 Now it came to pass on the next day that Moses said to the people, "You have committed a **great sin**. 31 Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Oh, these people have committed



a **great sin**, and have made for themselves a god of gold!

There were lots of sins, however, the worship of an idol, thus making it a god, was a great sin. Jesus' audience of religious Jews in Luke 4 knew that bowing down to religious artefacts or the image of a god was a great sin. Which makes the story of the Syrian army general called Naaman all the more remarkable.

Jesus begins the story by pointing to God's spokesperson and Israel's prophet Elijah. Jesus reminded his audience that when the great prophet Elijah was starving during a famine, the Lord God led Elijah to a Gentile widow not a Jewish widow. She saved his life by giving him food and drink. The Jewish religious rules maintained the Gentiles were unclean, impure, they were despised and Jews called the Gentiles 'dogs'. Jews who kept all the religious rules would never eat in the presence of such a contaminated Gentile let alone lodge with a single woman and eat at her table like Elijah did. Yet here God was using the 'unclean', and furthermore a woman, to feed God's spokesperson the great prophet Elijah.

Jesus then reminds His Jewish audience of what happened when another great prophet, Elisha, healed a Gentile of leprosy, even though there were plenty of





Jews with the disease. God did not choose to heal a Jew from leprosy. He chose a Gentile Syrian Army General, an enemy of Israel, to heal from leprosy. He did not choose a Jew. The story of Naaman has a surprising ending which goes against the Jewish religion, against Christian religion, and in my experience Christian thinking.

Naaman's story begins with Naaman praying without success to the Syrian God Rimmon for a cure of his leprosy. Fortunately Naaman has a Jewish servant girl who tells him to go to Israel's prophet Elisha. So desperate to get rid of this horrible disease that was slowly disfiguring him and killing him Naaman goes to Elisha. Elisha instructs Naaman what he must do, 'Go and wash in the River Jordan seven times.' After washing seven times in the Jordan, Naaman's leprosy has disappeared and his skin is as smooth as silk. Naaman goes back to Elisha to offer him thanks and money, which Elisha refuses, after all God cured Naaman not Elisha. You cannot sell what does not belong to you. Naaman declares to Elisha 'Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel.' In this statement Naaman turns his back on every idol and every so called god and looks totally and exclusively to the Lord God.



It is at this point in the Naaman's story something surprising is said. Naaman begins by saying, "When I return home, and my King and master goes to the temple of Rimmon to worship, I will have to go with my master and bow down before Rimmon. Will the Lord God forgive me." Elisha replies "Go live in peace." What's astonishing, in this statement from God's man Elisha, is that here's an enemy of Israel, a Gentile committing the greatest sin in the book. The greatest sin of bowing down to an idol, and God's prophet does not seem to be at all concerned, quite the opposite he just says, "Go live in peace." The Jewish religion could not have tolerated anyone bowing down to another so called god. Yet in Naaman's case, God is saying through His spokesperson, the prophet Elisha, "I've got it covered, go live in peace."

Because Jesus was rejected by his own Jewish people, God went to the Gentiles. No more would religion and its rules declare what was unclean or impure, nor discriminate or condemn. Grace would bring a peace religion could not bring. Grace is what God showed to Naaman and Naaman lived in peace.

The Jews Jesus was speaking to were blinded by their religion and its rules and could not see the grace God had shown to various women and men throughout Jewish history. Women and men the Jewish rules said



were unclean and should be rejected. By setting its own standards, religion and its doctrines and decrees tries to control people's behaviour. Those who do what the maxims say, become proud and look down on, or exclude, those who do not or are unable to keep the rules. Religion and its principles promote guilt, division and creates fear. I know this from my own life, as do all who have had the experience of religious intolerance and spiritual abuse.

Naaman was an unclean despised Gentile general and a sworn enemy of Israel, but he experienced God's favour he in no way deserved – in other words he experienced grace. Jesus was highlighting this radical grace to His Jewish listeners. Grace that went way beyond their religious rules. Naaman went home in peace. He had been powerfully touched by God and now knew God and because Elisha had placed no obligations or expectations on him, Naaman could live in the peace of God. Elisha gave him no precepts or principles to follow he simply gave Naaman God's peace. There were no demands of changes in behaviour, no calls for lifestyle changes. No money required, Naaman simply accepted the peace of God as a gift.

Naaman's story illustrates that if grace covered the greatest sin of idolatry and gave peace, surely grace



can cover the lesser sins and give absolute peace. Grace makes religion and its rules about what we must do to please God redundant. The Jewish religion blinded people to God's grace in Elijah's day, Elisha's day, and Jesus' day. The Christian religion and its precepts blind people to the fact that throughout history God has shown grace to those the rules said were impure, undeserving, undesirable and unworthy.

The good news of Jesus Christ is the gospel of peace, peace that passes human understanding. Human understanding cannot grasp the fulness of grace and the peace it gives. [“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!” \(Ro 10:15\).](#)

Many have experienced 'the gospel of fear', 'the gospel of religion' that brings fear. Fear that Jesus will not want me near Him because of who I am, or because of what I have done or not done. The gospel of fear that makes us judge our own behaviour and keeps us in fear of our sisters and brothers criticism, judgementalism and condemnation.

The gospel of peace places no obligations or expectations on us. The Prince of Peace said 'My burden is light' and 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' We can rest in knowing that truth, and have peace. The peace 'which surpasses all understanding'



is the peace that is only truly found in grace and a tranquillity that rests in our grace giver, the Prince of Peace, Jesus.

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## Go In Peace

Taken from Luke chapter 7:

A Pharisee invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. When a woman known to be a sinner in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume. She cried and wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and that she is a sinner." Jesus told the Pharisee a parable. "Two men owed money to a money-lender. One owed him five hundred pounds, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he cancelled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" The Pharisee replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt cancelled." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said.

Then he turned towards the woman and said to the Pharisee, "Do you see this woman? I came into your



house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven — for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."

Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven, your faith has saved you; go in peace" (36- 50).

I remember going to my church on Sunday mornings accepting as true and right and proper everything that went on in the service. The emphasis was on obedience, repentance and confessing your sins, I freely admitted to my sins and also vowed not to do them again. Which briefly cleared my conscience. I was instructed that I had to turn away from my sins which along with remorse was part of the repentance they taught. This was in fact impossible, because lots of my sins were actually who I was. For one I could be short tempered especially when stressed. Ask Nina, I can still be short tempered even though I've asked the Lord to help me. A prayer which has so far gone unanswered. It is in our flawed human nature to be imperfect in so many ways.



For me, part of the Sunday morning service became ritualistic. I wanted to be part of the church and the church community so I went through the motions and said the right words. Yet in my heart I was being hypocritical, I was saying things I could not possibly do. Experience has taught me, most Christians were going through the same dilemma, saying sorry for things they'd vow not to do again while fully knowing they will do them again. Like others, I found the whole ritual of repentance, being remorseful and saying sorry gave me a clear-ish conscience for awhile, but it did not last.

Yet by and large my life went on unaltered. My short temper, my critical attitudes, the sarcasm that hurts people all remained. I was told my nicotine addiction was a sin, yet a well respected retired missionary in the congregation said, 'Don't worry about it, Wesley smoked all his life'. Phew! That let me off the hook. It was far easier to hide my smoking and my other faults when in the company of Christians than stop smoking or turn away from my sins.

Our reading is the story of Jesus going to a Pharisees home for dinner. Now Pharisees were not bad people they were religious people who regularly went to worship in their church (which to them was the temple or synagogue). They repented of their sins and





had found the ritualism gave them a sort of clear-ish conscience. They tried to live perfect lives and were also good at telling others how they should live. In fact the Pharisees were not all that much different from the way I was. They believed their interpretation of scripture was infallible in much the same way my church said their interpretation was infallible. However Jesus called them hypocrites, They said one thing and did another. In fact they were the same as me or was it me being more like them? They were good decent people by and large who tried not to sin. That is, the obvious sin's which others could see.

The story reveals that a woman who is called a sinner comes to the Pharisees house and worships at the feet of Jesus. She is known in the town as a sinner and she has brought with her a jar of very expensive perfume. She pours this expensive perfume over Jesus' feet which in that culture meant she was anointing him, she was honouring Him. The perfume was the best money could buy and the woman was in this way giving her all. Kneeling at Jesus' feet was an acknowledgement of her position, she was showing Jesus her greatest respect.

The Pharisee was outraged, he presumed Jesus must have known about this woman, who the Pharisee felt it was shameful to even have her in his house. Jesus saw



the Pharisee was indignant and pointed out that to the Pharisee he may have invited Jesus to dinner but he had disrespected Him. It was expected in that culture to wash a guest's feet and kiss them in greeting. By not washing Jesus' feet or giving him the right greeting, the Pharisee had shown his other guests he looked down on Jesus. Yet this unnamed woman, the so called sinner had shown Jesus the greatest respect and love. She had honoured Jesus and had acknowledged His position.

To everyone gathered Jesus now drops His bombshell and says to the woman your sins are forgiven. What! She had not even repented! then Jesus adds 'your faith has saved you; **go in peace.**' Go in peace, not a temporary peace that is shattered when you next do something wrong but a forever, lasting, eternal peace I give you as a gift because you have faith in ME.

Years ago it was stories like this one which caused me to have an inner conflict. Back then my church was teaching me one thing, yet stories like this one in Luke were teaching me another. I was just like the Pharisee hypocritical and acting at being holy to make myself feel better I was also pretending to be holy for the benefit of others. Practising my rituals of repentance and confession and saying sorry I will not do it again



did clear my conscience and did give me measure of peace for a while; that is until I failed yet again.

I did not really know what grace meant, bible verses mentioned grace, I heard people referring to grace, I even sang about grace. Apparently it was amazing! However, grace had no real meaning to me, yet it was pure grace that Jesus showed to this woman in the story. I never saw it as grace as I was blind to grace. Like the Pharisee in the story I had become sin focused, whereas the woman she was Jesus focused. The teachings on obedience, sin, ritualistic observance had blinded me to what now seems blindingly obvious. Our reading is a story shouting out grace.

Here's is a woman who does nothing but worship Jesus. She remains simply herself, and worships Jesus from her heart not according to some human belief system or tradition. She is Jesus centred, she never acknowledges that she is a sinner, she never repents, she never confesses her sins, never says sorry for her sins. Never vows to change her ways, and does not promise to fit in with the customs, practices and traditions of religion. Yet Jesus says, 'Your sins are forgiven, your faith has saved you, go in peace'. Jesus does not say your sins are temporarily forgiven, you are saved for now, your peace will wear off so come back every week and renew it. Jesus did not say your



past sins, your future sins or even some of your sins, He said your sins are forgiven; all of them.

At that point He had not died on the cross. So it is not the cross we come to to have our sins forgiven. We simply come to Jesus. Jesus did not say to the woman 'you are saved but you will have to keep working at it', Jesus did not say 'try not to sin again', Jesus did not say, 'try not to behave like you once did'. Jesus did not say, 'I now want you to imitate me, be like me; also read your bible, say your prayers, love everyone, feed the poor.'

The woman came in a sinner and went out a saint knowing absolute perfect peace with God. The woman came in asking for nothing and went out possessing the 'exceeding riches of his grace in His kindness toward' her\*\* (Eph 2:7) and a 'peace that passes understanding' (Php 4:7). The woman came in and worshipped in faith, the woman went out in peace. At the feet of Jesus she had received grace.

Is that not the perfect church service, come **as you are** to worship, and go out with peace in your heart, no need to review your failings and make promises you cannot keep. But just worship in the truth of who you are, worshipping in faith and in grace, with admiration and adoration for our Lord and King, Jesus.



**\*\* Endnote:**

God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory (Php 4:19). By grace the riches of God's glory are freely given to us, without any obligation or expectation being placed upon us His saints. These riches are sevenfold: kindness, tolerance and patience (Ro 2:4), mercy (Ro 9:23), wisdom and knowledge (Ro 11:33), power (Eph 3:16). The grace of God is unearned and unmerited, His kindness is not conditional and His mercy, that is His forgiveness, is also unconditional (Jer 31:34).

This unnamed female sinner in our reading, the bleeding woman and Naaman the Gentile have the same need which is met by the riches of God's glory by grace. Resulting in the same outcome for all of them 'go in peace' as the prophet of Israel Elijah declares to Naaman, as does Jesus the prophet of Israel to the two woman. Permanent peace should be every Christians unfettered daily experience in their relationship with God 'who is rich in mercy' (Eph 2:4). A mercy in which God's unconditional forgiveness does away with repentance and any requirement for confession as was taught by my home church. My witness is that God has met all my spiritual need according to His riches in glory, I am free from the Christian religion I was



once bound up in, I have complete peace with God and know the great joy found in the gospel of the grace of God.

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## Great Joy

Taken from the second chapter of Luke's good news:

There were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were afraid. But the angel said to them, "Do not fear. Behold I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." (8 - 14)

Our reading takes place at night, it is the first time in the New Testament that the good news, also known as the gospel, is preached. Angel means messenger, the messenger preaches the gospel at the birth of Jesus to some shepherds. Luke tells us this messenger is bringing good news, plus the messenger also brings a measure of the glory of the Lord which the text says shone all around them. In other words a light pierced the darkness; both the speaker and the listeners of the good news were bathed in light. This is a significant point, as a measure of the glory of the Lord and His light is shone in the hearts of listeners every time the



good news of Jesus is heard. The Good News is that Jesus has made us right with God, reconnected us with God and guaranteed that connection with God forever.

The shepherd's were afraid, and who would not be afraid. I imagine something like a dazzling searchlight was suddenly switched on and there was somebody stood there. No wonder the first words of the messenger were 'fear not'. The messenger continues; 'behold' meaning to see with your eyes and know within your hearts. See and know the gospel, the good news of **great joy**, the news of the promised Messiah, the Christ... **Jesus is here.**

The good news of a bit of joy or little joy, no! The good news of **great joy**. Joy that brought light and dispelled darkness, the good news of great joy drove out fear. The gospel shines light into darkness, darkness is gone! The gospel brings joy where there was fear, fear is gone! Fear flees when joy arrives. Fear is bad news, joy is good news. The gospel is totally and absolutely without of fear. The good news is not good advice, nor good conduct or good behaviour.

News always tells us what's been done, not what we have to do.





Joy is not a word we use every day it is about an incredibly overwhelming delight, pleasure, happiness. Something that almost bursts out of us and cannot be kept under wraps. Joy is so uncontainable, its a feeling hard to describe. The Greek word joy in scripture is 'chara' its the base of the word charisma and charismatic meaning gift and gifted.

It was the gift of joy God gave Nina in the middle of her grief when her baby died, the Lord gave her such a joy in Him she wanted to dance at her son's funeral. This supernatural gift of joy from Heaven, a joy given by the Holy Spirit lifted her and helped her to cope with the pain of losing her son. David says in his Psalm, *You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy.* Then David adds *'that my heart may sing to you and not be silent (30:11,12).* Dancing and singing can be expressions of joy. Paul wrote in his first letter to the folks in the church at Thessalonica *'in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the gospel with joy, given by the Holy Spirit' (1:6).*

Nina was given joy in her time of suffering. David had his wailing turn to dancing and his singing was caused by joy. These are supernatural happenings caused by the Spirit of God. When the Christians in Thessalonica were going through a time of terrible suffering they



were given joy by the Holy Spirit. What is the fruit of the Holy Spirit; love, peace and joy.

God is love, Jesus is the Prince of Peace, The Spirit is joy, the joy that is unspeakable because we have not got the words to express our delight. The joy that can come on us even in the worst times in our lives, a joy that does not depend on anything external, the joy that is our strength in our times of hardship.

At the beginning in the Garden of Paradise humanity distrusted God and ate from the tree of judgement. Up to then they had the love, peace and joy that flowed from being in continuous connection and harmony with God. Now connection was broken they lost that pure love, peace and joy. The story tells us they hid from God, because fear had taken the place of joy and they were afraid. Their walk with God had ceased, their companionship gone, fear had replaced joy. Bad news was announced, human beings for the very first time declaring that they were afraid. Fear has been a constant part of our lives through all the generations.

No wonder John in his first letter wrote, **There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear (4:18 )**. Fear and love are not companions, fear and peace do not hold hands, fear and joy cannot walk together. The bad news in the garden was, 'we were afraid'; the good news of the gospel is 'do not be afraid'. Before Jesus



came to earth, did the Trinity have a meeting where it was decided that Jesus would come to scare the life out of people? No, the opposite. I was brought up on the devil and the hell of hellfire preaching. I tell you, it was not glad tidings of great joy, quite the opposite, it was the bad news of eternal punishment.

When we read the scriptures or we listen to preachers, the plumb line is this; is this good news or bad news? Is there any fear or a feeling of anxiousness or apprehension in the message. As it is written in Romans, **For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear (8:15)**. The good news of the gospel is, there is absolutely nothing about God to be afraid of. If anything brings about fear reject it, it is not of God. There is **no fear in love**.

Life at times can be crap with not an ounce of joy in it. It was like that for David for long periods of time, and probably at his lowest time he said in his Psalm, **Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, uphold me by Your generous Spirit (51:12)**. It is OK to feel down; it is just as OK to ask Jesus to lift you up. He knows how it feels to be down. He wept when his friend Lazarus died. Jesus knows all about emotional and mental suffering, in great distress He sweated blood in the Garden of Gethsemane. Yet in Hebrews we read this about Jesus; **‘for the joy that was set before him, He**



endured the cross' (12:2). I'm convinced Jesus was upheld by God's generous Spirit. I am also convinced, if anything robs us of Love, Peace and Joy it is not of God. If our feelings or our experiences in church are not to be found in Love, Peace and Joy, they are not of God's generous Spirit.

The gospel is peace and goodwill to **ALL**. I'm no angel, but my message is the same; 'fear not: for, behold, I bring you good news of **great joy**'...

**Jesus is here.**

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## Companion Notes

### **Symbolic use of numbers in scriptures:**

When the biblical use of numbers is known it allows us to see a sub text, a deeper level of meaning in scripture.

#### **5 symbolises grace:**

The first time the word grace is found in scripture is the 5th time Noah's name is found. According to Genesis 6:8 'Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.'

God promised five things to Jacob 1 give him the land, 2 be with him 3 keep him, 4 guide him, 5 never leave him. Because five promises were listed the subtext is these things were gifts of grace and not earned.

#### **7 symbolises perfection:**

John saw in heaven 7 seals, 7 trumpets, 7 stars, 7 vials, 7 lamps, 7 crowns, 7 Angels.

Understanding numbers means the reader is aware John saw the perfection of heaven.



### **10 symbolises completeness:**

In Genesis 1 the phrase ‘God said’ appears ten times in the creation story. The sub text is God’s creation is complete,

Jesus declared ‘I AM’ 10 times. The sub text is Jesus is completely God.

### **15 symbolises rest:**

The Israelites rested three times on the fifteenth day  
Leviticus 23:6,7 Leviticus 23:34,35 Esther 9:20-22

The fifteenth time the name Naomi occurs, who is a type of the Holy Spirit, is in her seeking rest for Ruth.

Naomi finds rest for Ruth in the kinsman redeemer Boaz, who is a type of Christ. Kinsman is found fifteen times in the book of Ruth.

### **17 symbolises victory:**

At the end of Romans 8 Paul states 17 things that ‘we are more than conquerors’ over, in other words victorious over.

Jesus was raised from the dead on the 17<sup>th</sup> of the month. The sub text indicates Jesus had victory over death.



**An introduction to symbolic numbers in scripture:**

Click on Link: [You Can Always Count On God](#)

**For a more in depth study of symbolic numbers:**

Biblical Mathematics, by Ed F. Vallowe

Number in Scripture, by E.W.Bullinger

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# The Jubilee Programme

'The fiftieth year shall be a Jubilee to you' (Le 25:11).

Scripture gives detailed instructions for:

1. The Tithing Year, which occurs every 3 years.
2. The Sabbath Year, which occurs every 7 years.
3. The Jubilee year, which occurs ever 50 years.

The instructions are laid out in De 14:28, 26:12. Every three years, the Israelites were to leave their villages, taking with them a tenth (a tithe) of that year's crops, herds and flocks. They were to travel to the nearest town centre there they would deposit their tithe. The poor, orphans, widows and foreigners (as well as the Levitical priests) were then invited to come and help themselves to whatever they needed.

The 'sabbath programme', every 7 years De 15, Lev 25. One years holiday for everyone. The land was to be left uncultivated. There was to be no work but instead rest for everyone, including the servants, hired workers, animals and the land, for a whole year. They could plant again in the 8<sup>th</sup> year but that planting would not be ready to harvest until the 9<sup>th</sup> year. The ecological benefits of allowing the land to rest are well known.





Just as people have renewed energy levels after resting, so the land has increased fertility after lying fallow for a period of time. But if the people did not work for a year, how were they going to survive? God anticipated this concern and told them the harvest from the first six years will be sufficient to feed the people for nine years. Furthermore, food that grew naturally could also be eaten Le 25:20-22. The people had to trust God for their survival.

Also in this seventh year all debts were to be cancelled and any indentured servants were to be released from servitude.

The Jubilee, every 50 years Le 25 required five things. The first four being a repetition of the sabbath programme; one years holiday for everyone, the land left uncultivated, all debts cancelled and indentured servants released. In addition all property had to be restored to its original owner who had sold their land because they had fallen on hard times. The purchaser was in reality leasing the land as it was 'sold' according to the time left before restitution.

The 'Jubilee program' ensured no inequality in society.

The Jubilee was fulfilled in Jesus, Isaiah prophesied:  
[The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the](#)



LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken hearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD (Isa 61:1,2.).

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

Ac 3:21 "whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

To understand the impact of the 'jubilee programme' on the people we need to look at the fifty-year grid (on the next page) where in a fifty year cycle, the tithing programme would occur sixteen times, the sabbath programme seven times and the Jubilee programme once.



- a. Every three years represents the tithing programme.
- b. Every seven years the sabbath programme.
- c. Every fifty years the jubilee programme.

1	11	21a+b	31	41
2	12a	22	32	42a+b
3a	13	23	33a	43
4	14b	24a	34	44
5	15a	25	35b	45a
6a	16	25	36a	46
7b	17	27a	37	47
8	18a	28b	38	48a
9a	19	29	39a	49b
10	20	30a	40	50c

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## Divine Exchange

In his second letter to the Corinthians Paul writes: **For God has made His Son Jesus to be sin for us, so that we are made the righteousness of God in Him (5:21).**

As believers in the Lord Jesus, we are no longer sinners, we are saints (holy ones). Jesus has made us righteous and holy.

In the book of Hebrews we read: **By God's will we are sanctified (made holy) through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (10:10).**

Later in the same text can be found this verse: **For by one offering he has perfected forever them that are sanctified (made holy) (10:14).**

Meaning that when God looks at us, He does not see our sin, He sees us as forever righteous. He sees us this way because He sees Jesus.

In John's gospel, the following words of Jesus are recorded: **"That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me" (17:21).**



The text continues: "And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one" (17:22).

In his letter to the Romans, Paul writes: Moreover those He predestined, these He also called; those He called, these He also justified; and those He justified, these He also glorified (8.30).

The Bible in Basic English version is as follows: And those who were marked out by him were named; and those who were named were given righteousness; and to those to whom he gave righteousness, in the same way he gave glory.

In the God's Word version, the passage reads: He also called those whom he had already appointed. He approved of those whom he had called, and he gave glory to those whom he had approved of.

When we pray, we pray as a righteous woman or a righteous man. Even when we fail by human standards, God says we are nothing but righteous in His sight - as Paul writes in his letter to the Colossians, in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight (1:22).



**As believers in the Lord Jesus we are the very righteousness of God, in our Lord Jesus.** We are approved, we are accepted, and we are free from the power of sin to condemn us.

This is good news because we were once prisoners of sin. Sin is not what we do; it is the person we are. In the book of Romans, 47 times the word "sin" is '*hamartia*', which is a noun. We have thought of sin as our actions, but sin is who we are, outside of Jesus.

We were not sinners because of our actions; we were sinners because of Adam's sin of disbelief resulting in unrighteousness. As Paul writes, '*...you were once slaves of sin*' (Ro 6:17).

But Jesus did something beautiful.

Because of His unfailing love for us, Jesus freed us from the prison of sin and secured for us a place of righteousness in Him. He provided the divine exchange, His perfection for our imperfection, The Father's glory for our worthlessness, The Spirit's Joy for our sadness, The Son's rejoicing for our dejection, God's righteousness for our unrighteousness. In the New King James version of the bible, we read in the book of Isaiah: *...To give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the*



spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD (61:3).

In his letter to the Romans 6:18 Paul states: **And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness (6:18)** - Slaves in the sense of someone entirely dominated by some influence.

A divinely ordained exchange begins with atonement (at-one-ment) and a fulfilment of the offerings found in Leviticus.

In Leviticus there are specific directions on how to offer different animal sacrifices to the Lord. I will mention the sacrifices for the sin offering and the burnt offering here. In offering a lamb for example, it was essential the animal selected for the offering was absolutely pure, without fault or blemish. After the priest confirmed the purity of the offering the offerer had to lay their hands on the lamb and as this was done, an exchange took place. It is worth noting the priest examined the offering, not the offerer.

In the sin offering the laying on of hands meant **the sin of the offerer** was transferred to the lamb. Additionally in this symbolic act, the **life of the offerer** would also transfer to the lamb. As scripture says the penalty for sin is death, the lamb would then die in the offerer's place. In other words, the lamb



took the penalty which should have fallen on the person making the offering.

Paul tells us in Romans chapter 6 ‘we are dead to sin’ Furthermore we died in our lamb Jesus, were buried with Him and rose with Him into ‘newness of life.’ (2-4),

Paul goes on to say in the following verse: **If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection (6:5).**

In the burnt offering the laying on of hands transferred the **purity of the lamb onto the person making the offering.**

These exchanges took place by imputation ( chashab in Hebrew, translated as impute, credited, counted).

The lamb of the sin offering took all the offerer's sin and the penalty for sin, and the lamb of the burnt offering gave the offerer its purity and its innocent life.

In Isaiah, we read: **...the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all (53:6).**

The Hebrew for iniquity is ‘avon which not only means the immorality or the offence, but the consequence as well. Jesus, our lamb, took upon





Himself our sin and the penalty for the offence, thus in one selfless act freeing the Christian of all consequences, guilt or shame.

In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote: For he has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; [the sin offering] so that we are made the righteousness of God in Him. [the burnt offering] (5:21).

In Hebrews 9:4 the writer tells us Jesus 'offered himself to God' as an oblation (a gift). Leviticus informs us that the offerer brought the offerings of both the sin offering and the burnt offering as oblations, as gifts to God.

The children of God **become one with** Jesus through the exchange of the 'at-one-ment' of our lamb **Jesus** who, like the lamb at the sin offering, became sin for us and who also, like the lamb in the burnt offering became our righteousness. Both the letter to the Ephesians and the letter to the Colossians both say we are ...'holy and blameless in his sight' (1:4) (1:22). This is the fulfilment of Jesus' promise as recorded in John's gospel: **And the glory which you gave me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one.... I in them, and you in me, that they may be made perfect in one (17:22-23)**; The divine exchange perfects the Christian.



If any accuser judges your life and questions your authenticity as a Christian, tell them not to look at you but to look at your lamb. It is Jesus who makes you a child of God, not your life, your morality or your achievements.

God said to Abraham, "I have made you the father of many nations." Abraham did not have any children at that point. But God said, "I have made you" (past tense). As far as God was concerned, it had already happened. So when God says He has 'laid all iniquity' upon Jesus, as far as God is concerned, it has happened. All means all, past, present, and future.

The divine exchange is the greatest get-out clause ever. We have been **freed from sin** and **found in righteousness**. Sin has no power in our lives to affect our relationship with God.

Sadly many believers today are still living in guilt and condemnation. They believe Christianity is about right living. So when they fail, they are consumed with guilt. Christianity is not about right living, Christianity is about right believing.

When we see ourselves as sinners (still caught in the prison of sin, guilt and condemnation), we actually empower sin. Whenever we live under condemnation



for what we have done, we are doomed to repeat it. It is a vicious cycle.

**The power of sin is broken when we refuse to receive condemnation.** In his letter to the Romans, Paul wrote: **...Reckon (count) yourself dead to sin (6:11).**

Do not focus on sin. Sin has no power in our lives. You cannot lose your righteousness through your disobedience, because you never received righteousness in the first place by your obedience. Righteousness is a gift.

Your righteousness is from Jesus. Focus on Him.

Remember, when God sees you, He sees Jesus, you are one in Him. You are accepted. You are complete. You are forever righteous... **'because as He is (in Heaven right now), so are we in this world'** (1 John 4:17).

In the letter to the Romans we read: **Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified (8.30).**

Jesus said, **'ALL I have IS yours'** (Lu 15:31).



## **The Exchanges:**

### **1. Jesus took our blame that we might be forgiven:**

Jesus took all our immorality and offences in exchange for forgiveness - [the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace](#); When Christians confess their sins, God does not know what the confessor is talking about, as God has already dealt with sin (see 3), Jesus our lamb became sin for us (2 Cor 5:21). For the Christian, sin does not exist, otherwise Jesus died for nothing.

### **2. Jesus was physically wounded that we might be spiritually healed:**

In the book of Isaiah, we read: [But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed \(53:5\)](#).

This is a spiritual healing. This could not be a physical healing, otherwise no Christian would ever visit the doctor or for that matter the undertaker. The atonement is a perfect and whole work, therefore it is a perfect spiritual healing. We are made whole in the resurrection thus enabled in 'the newness of life'; His life.



**3. Jesus was made sin with our sinfulness, our sin-filled life exchanged for His sinless life that we might be made righteous with his righteousness:**

The Old Testament prophet, Isaiah, states: ...the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all (53:6).

In his second letter to the Corinthians Paul writes: For he has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; [the sin offering] so that are made the righteousness of God in Him. [the burnt offering] (5:21).

**4. Jesus died our death that we might share his life and express His life as inspired by His Spirit:**

In Paul's letter to the Colossians we read: For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God (3:3).

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul writes: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me (2:20).

**5 Jesus was made a curse that we might receive the blessing:**

In Paul's letter to the Galatians, we read: Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become



a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree” (3:13)

As those ‘in Christ’ are of the seed of Abraham (see Romans 4:16), we inherit the promises including ‘I will bless you.’

In his letter to the Galatians Paul writes: [that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus \(3:14\)](#).

## **6. Jesus endured our poverty that we might share his abundance:**

In Paul's second letter to the Corinthians we read: [For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich \(8:9\)](#).

In his letter to the Ephesians Paul reminds us of [the exceeding riches of His grace \(2:7\)](#).

## **7. Jesus bore our guilt that we might share his glory:**

In the book of Hebrews, we read: [How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience \(the guilt offering\) from dead works to serve the living God \(9:14\) let us draw near to God](#)



with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience (Heb 10:22).

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul writes: **But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus (4:19).**

This is echoed in John's gospel by the words of Jesus: **And the glory which you gave me, I have given them (17:22);**

### **8. Jesus received injustice that we might be justified:**

In the book of Acts, the writer states: **In his humiliation he was deprived of justice (8:33).**

In his letter to the Romans, Paul writes: **Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him (5:9).**

### **9. Jesus endured our rejection that we might have his acceptance with the Father:**

Jesus endured 7 rejections - from his brethren as recorded in John's gospel (7:5), from his community in Matthew's gospel (13:54-57), from the people in Mark's gospel (15:13-14), from the disciples in Matthew's gospel (26:56), from his religion in Matthew's gospel (26:65), from Herod, the judge, in



Luke's gospel (23:11), and finally from God the Father in Matthew's gospel (27:46) - 'My God, my God, why have thou forsaken me (separated from me?)'.

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul states what we receive in exchange: ...He has made us accepted in the Beloved (1:6).

In his letter to the Romans, Paul explains the reason: ...(Nothing) shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (8.39).

**10. Jesus was cut off (separated) by death that we might be joined to God eternally:**

In the book of Hebrews we read: ...that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone (2:9). In John's gospel it is stated: ...Whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life (3:15). Later in the same gospel, Jesus says: Abide in me, and I in you (15:4)... In his letter to the Romans, Paul emphasizes: ...(Nothing) shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (8.39).

**11. Our old self as been put to death in Him that the new self might come to life in us:**

Ga 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; Ro 6:6





Knowing this, that our old self is crucified with him, Eph 4:24 ...put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Col 3:10 ...and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

## **12. Jesus wore the crown of humiliation in exchange for the crown of Glory:**

One crown in exchange for five crowns. In Matthew's gospel we read: [and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head \(27:29\)](#). In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes: [an incorruptible crown \(imperishable, immortal\), \(9:25\)](#). In his first letter to the Thessalonians Paul writes about [a crown of rejoicing \(2:19\)](#). In the second letter to Timothy it is [the crown of righteousness \(4:8\)](#), in James' epistle [the crown of life \(1:12\)](#), and finally in Peter's first letter, [a crown of glory \(5:4\)](#).

**This is the divine exchange according to Isaiah,** [To console those who mourn in Zion, exchange beauty for ashes, exchange the oil of joy for mourning, exchange the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified \(61:3\)](#)



**Taken from ‘Christian Liberty’ Martin Luther puts it like this,**

The incomparable benefit of faith is that it unites the soul with Christ as a bride is united with her bridegroom. By this mystery, as the Apostle teaches, Christ and the soul become one flesh. If they are one flesh and there is between them a true marriage--indeed the most perfect of all marriages, since human marriages are but poor examples of this one true marriage--it follows that everything they have they hold in common, the good as well as the bad.

Accordingly, the believing soul can boast and glory in whatever Christ has as though it were its own, and whatever the soul has, Christ claims as his own. Let us compare these and we shall see inestimable benefits. Christ is full of grace, life, and salvation. The soul is full of sin, death, and damnation. Now let faith come between them and sin, death, and damnation will be Christ's, while grace, life, and salvation will be the soul's; for if Christ is a bridegroom, he must take upon himself the things which are his bride's and bestow upon her the things that are his.

If he gives her his body and very self, how shall he not give her all that he is? If he takes the body of the bride, how shall he not take all that is hers?

**Jesus put it like this, ‘ALL I Have Is Yours’.**



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# The Sign Of The Prophet Jonah

An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah (Mt 12:39).

‘For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation’ (Lu 11:30) A sign for the Jew and a sign for the Gentile of every generation.

At the preaching of Jonah, the Gentile Ninevites listened when the Jews would not. From the beginning His ministry, up to the present day it is the Gentiles who accept Jesus; when most Jews do not. Not all Jews rejected or reject Him, not all Jews rejected Jonah. But mostly, it is the Gentiles not the Jews who turned to God in the days of Jonah and it is the Gentiles not the Jews who seek God in the days of Jesus. Even now in the days of Jesus the sign of Jonah is still not fully understood.

Joseph, Moses, and David, all three experienced rejection from their kinsmen, they all went away and took Gentile wives. Similarly, Jesus was rejected by the majority of Israel and has gone away and taken a



predominantly Gentile bride as the church. Just as Joseph, Moses, and David all returned so will Jesus.

### **Parallels between Jonah and Jesus:**

- Jonah is a ‘type’ (scriptural foreshadowing) of the Lord Jesus.
- Jonah and Jesus both came from Galilee (Joh 7:52 2Ki 14:25)
- Jonah and Jesus first preached to the Jews before the Gentiles
- Jonah and Jesus both had a contentious message from God.
- Jonah slept as the storm rages just as Jesus did (Jon 1:5 Mr 4:38)
- Jonah was willing to lay down his life for others as Jesus was (Jon 1:12 Joh 10:17,18)
- The ships crew and Pilate both claimed they were “innocent of the blood” of a just person. (Joh 1:14 Mt 27:24)
- Jonah spent three days and nights in the belly of a fish (Jon 1:17); Jesus spent three days and nights in the belly of the earth



- Jonah, like Jesus felt he was "cast out" of God's sight (Jon 2:2 Mt 27:46) "my God, my God why have you forsaken me."
- Jonah like Jesus would not see corruption (Jon 2:6 Ps 16:10 Ac 13:34-37)
- Jonah, as good as dead, rose from the depths (Jon 2:10); Jesus rose from the dead
- After he rose, Jonah preached for 40 days (Jon 3:4); after he rose, Jesus preached for 40 days (Acts 1:3)
- Jonah, understood something of the grace of God (Jon 2:8, 4:2); Jesus came from the Father full of grace (Joh 1:14)
- Jonah was sent to a city known for its wickedness (Jon 1:2); Jesus was sent to a city that killed the prophets (Mt 23:37) and killed him
- Jonah preached what God told him to (Jon 3:2); as did Jesus (Joh 5:19)
- Jonah suffered (mildly) after preaching his message (Jon 4:8); Jesus suffered (mightily) after preaching his.
- When the people of Nineveh heard the message, they were 'cut to the heart and repented' (Jon 3:5); when the people of Jerusalem heard the message, they were 'cut to the heart and repented' (Ac 2:37)



Scripture says, ‘So the people of Nineveh believed God’ (Jon 3:5)

In Scripture this phrase ‘**believed God**’ is only used about one other person namely Abraham (Ge 15:6) This is a sign of Jonah the Jewish leaders should not have missed.

Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Jas 2:23 And the scripture was fulfilled which says, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him as righteousness (Ga 3:6).

Abraham received the gift of faith by grace, he now has righteousness imputed, the righteousness of the Lord was ascribed to Abraham giving him the same virtue.

Righteousness is a noun and righteous is an adjective and this is Abraham’s state and standing, possessing the only right and acceptable standard before God. He is completely justified by faith, receiving freedom from all guilt and the penalty attached to sin, Abraham had been rendered by God as just and innocent.

Like their father in faith Abraham, the Ninevites legal standing, because they ‘believed God’, possessed by imputation God’s own righteousness.



Abraham and the Ninevites had 10 things in common:

- They were not circumcised.
- They were not Jews.
- They did not believe in Jesus as a means of there salvation.
- They were not bound by scripture.
- They did not live by the religious doctrines and traditions, Jewish nor Christian.
- They did not live under the law of Moses including the 10 Commandments.
- They were not under any law except the laws of the society in which they lived.
- They were saved by grace through faith.
- They also lived under grace.
- They both possessed the promises of God.

Without the Law of Moses, Abraham and the Ninevites did not know the rights and wrongs as defined by the ten commandments and the rest of the decrees of Moses. As a result neither Abraham nor the Ninevites knew what sin was, ‘[sin is not imputed when there is no law](#)’ (Ro 5:13).





However, the Ninevites did know what was regarded as 'bad' ([Jon 3:8](#)) according to their culture. Which begs the question how? Like us all they had a conscience taught and developed by family and friends and society that teaches the difference between right and wrong, good and bad.

To understand the sign of Jonah we need to grasp the ways Abraham, our father in faith, who 'believed God' and was made righteous, foreshadows the Ninevites who 'believed God' and were saved.

Paul wrote to the Romans: [Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.](#)

[Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: 'Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.'](#)

[Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness.](#)



Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, **in order that righteousness might be credited to them.** And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but **through the righteousness that comes by faith.** For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless, because law brings wrath. And **where there is no law there is no transgression.**

Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be **guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring**—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us **all** (4:3-16).

Abraham 'believed God' which made him righteous before God. Nothing more was needed.



The Ninevites believed God which made them righteous before God. Nothing more was needed.

Every Christian who 'believes God' is made righteous before God. Nothing more is needed.

Paul also wrote to the Romans: **For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ (5:17).**

Finally, it is vitally important in understanding 'the sign of Jonah' to remember prophesy can have multiple fulfilment. What happens to or was said to Israel can apply to the Church or to individual Christians. With this in mind, it is necessary to remember Jonah like Jesus first went to the Jews, and the majority rejected him. Only following the rejection did Jonah and Jesus turn to the Gentiles who, in their untold numbers, were and are saved by grace through faith.

Both Jonah and Jesus were rejected by the civil and religious establishments who were busy judging them according to their religious law. The same will happen again as the pattern repeats itself of the rejection of the prophet and their message. But then who will Jesus turn to? In the parable of the invitation to a



wedding I believe Jesus tells us (Lu 14:15-24). At the end of the parable the bridegroom turned to all who were rejected and excluded by the law as being unworthy, ‘the poor, and the maimed, and the lame, and the blind’. Also the bridegrooms servants were told to look for those ‘in the highways and hedges (the spiritually homeless) who were also not seen as acceptable.

Jonah’s prejudice was formed by His religion, a religion that gave the Jews a sense of pride, a feeling of superiority over non Jews because they were ‘the chosen’ and lived a pure life. Following this pattern the Gentile church rejects those they consider sinners, those who are seen as impure, unclean or unworthy because they do not comply with their religions rules of life. But it is those very people, those rejected and seen as unworthy, that will be accepted by Jesus with open arms simply because for no other reason, they the rejected ‘believed God’.

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## Obey or Hear?

This is not a comprehensive study. Its purpose is to challenge thinking and to provoke one's own examination of the scriptures in order to confront one's mindset. You and I suffer from ignorance, prejudice and bias as we read the bible. The trouble is, the interpreters suffered from the same shortcomings, no matter how careful they were.

Gal 3:1-5 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not **obey** the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?

2 This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the **hearing** of faith?

3 Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

4 Have you suffered so many things in vain--if indeed it was in vain?

5 Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the **hearing** of faith?



These five verses from the KJV tell us we receive the Spirit by hearing and faith rather than by ‘the works of the law’ which involves obeying rules of living. Hence the statement in verse 1 regarding *obeying* the truth seems out of tune with the following verses.

Several versions of the bible e.g. ESV, GNBE, GWV, NIV, omit the word ‘obey’ here.

This gives rise to the question, if this word is incorrect what else is? I ask this question because Christianity seems to be built upon our obedience and being obedient to the bible. Some call it the manual for life. Its accuracy therefore, if this be true, would be paramount. But yet this one word, ‘obey’ upon which much rests, seems to be an incorrect translation of the preceding Greek and Hebrew words.

The mindset of the English speaking church is based upon the King James Version (KJV), for our tutors were brought up under its influence. Not until the New International Version (NIV) was published did the KJV and New KJV (NKJV) start to wane in popularity. Never the less the mindset could not be updated and so many of the prejudices and bias of the KJV influenced later versions. Interestingly the word obey is found 66 times in the KJV and increases to 150 times in the NIV. This is achieved by doing away with the KJV words like ‘keep’ and ‘observe.’



According to my Greek Lexicon the word 'obey' in Gal 3:1 is translated from the Greek word peitho. My Lexicon says the meaning of peitho is as follows:

1) persuade 1a) to persuade, i.e. to induce one by words to believe

"To induce one by words to believe" seems a far better translation than "obey" in the light of verse 5 which says, we receive the Spirit "by the hearing of faith?"

Faith is a work of the Spirit (induced or quickened), obedience is a work of the law, so why use the word 'obey' as a translation for 'peitho' here.

'Obey' is often also given as a translation of the Greek word "hupakouo" as follows.

And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation to all them that **obey** him (Heb 5:9). Wherefore, my beloved, as you have always **obeyed**, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling (Php 2:12).

'Hupakouo' means to listen or to hear and we know "faith comes by hearing. The interpretation here is 'obey' and 'obeyed'. Why? I suggest the alternative rendering of this verse as:



And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation to all them that **obey hear** him (Heb 5:9). Wherefore, my beloved, as you have always **obeyed listened** not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling (Php 2:12).

Another word I suggest is mistranslated as 'obey' is in Genesis where the Hebrew word "Shama" meaning to hear or listen is translated as 'obey'

God speaking to Abraham, "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast **obeyed** my voice" Ge 22:18.

Rendering this "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast **listened** to my voice" Ge 22:18 puts a different light on it.

Jerome wrote the Latin Vulgate and stamped his personality on the translation. His ascetic\*\* mindset moulded his thinking and determined the bias of his translation. This contributed to a works orientated bias which can be clearly seen in the Catholic tradition.

Catholic influence on bible interpreters has affected subsequent generations because they relied upon and therefore were influenced by previous translations. The first Jewish Church was influenced by the Law





and Jewish tradition was passed on to the Gentile Church through the Didache\*\*. They in turn kept this influence, which the Catholic Church embraced. Catholicism is based on works as is the Law, also Catholicism is tradition based. The Rabbis added laws and traditions to the Law of Moses. These added laws and traditions were known as the 'oral law', later called the 'Mishnah'. The Popes added laws and traditions to the gospel and created—the Catechism, Missal and Liturgies.

#### Footnote:

\*\* Ascetic, a person who renounces material comforts and leads a life of austere self-discipline, especially as an act of religious devotion.

\*\* The Didache (lit. 'Teaching'), also known as The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, is an anonymous early Christian treatise, dated by most modern scholars to the first century which puts forward Christian ethics, rituals such as baptism and Eucharist, and Church organization. Thus forming 'Church Orders' which has the purpose of offering authoritative 'apostolic' prescriptions on matters pertaining to the Church. I believe that through these 'apostolic teachings' the Church was Judaized and



used to support the authority of those over the laity (in Greek the Nicolaitans, means 'over the laity' (Re 2:6,15)).

From out of Catholicism came Protestantism in all its varied forms from Anglican to the Charismatics each one with their rules and doctrinal statements. All upholding traditions going back centuries that are 'bible based'. Requiring obedience to the bible keeps the laity in check, each denomination with their own different interpretation of scripture dictating what should be obeyed. As long as we keep focused on obeying we are not relying on trust and believing. Though schisms have divided and sub-divided movements there are some basic concepts that unite them all. A life of obedience is one of them, because each generation has derived it from those early sources.

Looking again at 'peitho' translated in KJV as obey can also mean 'be persuaded'

Obey (peitho) them that have the rule over you (Heb 13:17). can be used as enforcing certain standards to keep the laity in check whereas 'be persuaded' by them that have rule over you suggests being open to listen to them.



The Church has been bewitched by endeavouring to obey what is commonly called God's Word. Much of the church uses the bible as a rule book, and requires adherence to those rules so setting up a life of works. But Paul wrote "[the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God](#)" (Ga 2 20) Only Christ Jesus could keep and fulfil the law, only Jesus Christ can keep and therefore fulfil God's Word because, He is the Word. Is the Spirit received by obeying God's Word, or by the hearing of God's Word? Are we so foolish? having begun in the Spirit and born again of the Spirit of God, do we now seek to be made perfect by the flesh. Does obedience or faith please God? Again Paul wrote '[But without faith it is impossible to please him](#)' (Heb 11:6).

Much of the Church has perverted the gospel of grace by requiring obedience, leading to the bondage of legalism. It is by grace through faith alone that humanity is justified, and it is by faith alone that he is to live out his new life in the freedom of the Spirit. Galatians stands as an eloquent and vigorous apologetic for the essential New Testament truth that man is justified by faith in Jesus Christ, nothing less nothing more, and that he is sanctified not by the legalistic work of obedience, but by faith in God's work for him, in him and through him by the grace and power of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. It was the



rediscovery of the basic message of Galatians which brought about the Reformation. Galatians is often referred to as "Luther's book," because Martin Luther relied so strongly on this letter in his writings and arguments against the prevailing theology of his day. A key verse is, [Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified \(Ga 2:16\).](#)

This Truth of grace + faith = justification, grace+ faith = righteousness, grace + faith = sanctification, has been largely lost in the theology of today. A rediscovery is required again and another reformation must occur. Only by the grace and power of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit will this happen. I pray for this now, so to see the change in people brought about by freedom in the Spirit, [where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom \(2Co 3:17\).](#)

The accusation of dissoluteness (lacking moral control) and carnality brought about by this seemingly unbridled freedom is often a criticism. Suggesting that our faith is about trusting and responding to Jesus and the work of the Spirit in us, without requiring any adherence to rules of behaviour. Paul was faced with



this very criticism and responded vigorously to it in Romans 6 beginning in verse 1 with, **What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase? Is the Holy Spirit a Spirit of licentiousness or the Spirit of Freedom?** (See pg. 232 Compliance not obedience).

**And having been set free from sin, you became servants of righteousness (Ro 6:18).**

The Lord does not give us the ability to obey. That is why we repeatedly fail to do so. Faith though is a gift of God bringing about His required righteousness in us. We have so often become pedantic, that is, book learners observing rules and details without true insight or understanding. The church must stop abiding by the book of the Lord and abide by the Lord of the book.

**`I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman; 2 every branch in me not bearing fruit, He doth take it away, and every one bearing fruit, He doth cleanse by pruning it, that it may bear more fruit; 3 already you are clean, because of the word that I have spoken to you; 4 remain in me, and I in you, as the branch is not able to bear fruit of itself, if it may not remain in the vine, so neither you, if you do not remain in me. 5 `I am the vine, you the branches; he who is remaining in me, and I in him, this one does**



bear much fruit, because apart from me you are not able to do anything (Joh 15:1-5).

1. The Father is the husbandman. 2. He cleanses by pruning (HE not you). 3. By His Word. 4. Remain in Me, Jesus The Word, I the Word in you (keeping you clean). 5. Apart from Me you can do nothing (including cleanliness by your obedience).

Antinomianism (without laws but faith alone) has been misunderstood and criticised throughout the centuries. Abraham, is living proof of a life lived in faith alone (as did all believers up to the giving of the law). Abraham was antinomian. He had no bible therefore no law or laws, rules or regulations, dictums or doctrines. His trust in God to direct his steps and guide him through life earned him the name our 'Father in Faith'.

Doctrines, are not truth. They always cause disagreement hence schism. These doctrines have formed the basis of church practice resulting in man made religion, legislation, rules, regulations, thus doctrines have become law.

The Reformation belief of the imputation of Christ's Righteousness and Justification through faith alone has been lost to doctrines of works causing self righteousness and judgementalism. For, being



ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness Ro 10:3. In my view we need to restore the sufficiency of this truth and remove the heavy yoke of having to create our own righteousness by works.

Paul says in Galatians, Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage (5:1).

### **Disobedience:**

The same erroneousness translation occurs in 'the children of disobedience (apeitheia)' (Eph 5:6). The same obedience orientated mindset has made a biased translation which should actually read 'unbelief'. e.g. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief (apeitheia) (Heb 4:11).

The Young's Literal version renders it: May we be diligent, then, to enter into that rest, that no one in the same example of the unbelief may fall.

Note, God's displeasure is in the children of unbelief not in the sons and daughters of God, the children of belief. Why have the translators used the word disobedience? Is it due to their bias towards the works needed to please God?



The same biased translation also occurs in Romans where the translation in the KJV says, **For as by one man's disobedience (parakoe) many were made sinners, so by the obedience (hupakouo) of one shall many be made righteous (5:19).**

The word 'disobedience' is translated from the Greek 'parakoe' which means hearing amiss, careless listening. The word 'obedience' is translated from the Greek 'hupakoe' meaning careful listening from 'hupakouo' meaning to listen, to hear.

I propose the verse would be more accurately rendered:

**For as by one man's careless listening and hearing amiss many were made sinners, so by the careful listening and hearing of one man many were made righteous.**

Faith comes from hearing, and that gift of faith gives the saint the righteousness of Jesus.

### **Compliance Not Obedience**

No one can obey God perfectly simply because He has not given anyone the ability to do so; on the other hand, Christians can and do comply with the will of God, according to their new nature. Compliance is part of the divine nature which is inherent in all





believers, it is intrinsic to the new creation, the new you, and emanates from your spirit. Previously one's actions were directed from the soul, the mind.

Compliance\*\* is the disposition\*\* (see Endnote pg.234) of the believer's mind and a characteristic of the Christian's surrendered will. Compliance is the influence\*\* of God's will over the believer's will. Compliance is not complying with instructions or commands but, it is the effect of the nature of Christ who lives within the saint to act in accordance to the will of God (Ga 2:20).

One day reading the story in John 4 about Jesus' meeting with the woman at the well, I knew from a previous study this woman, a Gentile and a Samaritan, was the most despised of people by the religion of the day. You could not get any lower on the religious ladder. I felt the Lord Jesus say to me 'I still want to go to the most despised' (this was God's will). Having once been steeped in the conservative evangelical religion, I knew immediately who the Lord meant, the gay community. The Lord continued, 'Are you willing to go, are you willing to take Me?' This was not an instruction or a command, it was a question inviting an answer of my choosing. My answer was 'Yes.' In compliance to the will of God, my will united with His, my spirit at one with His Spirit.



Compliance is not what you do, it is who you are. Compliance is Christ-like in that it is perfected in Him and always, without fail, glorifies its source, God.

Compliance has a caveat, because of the power of the human mind with all its imperfections, one's actions must be according to the guidance, unction or inspiration of the Spirit, for only the Spirit knows the perfect will of God. As Ga 5:18 says, 'if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law', so by definition, if your actions are not compelled by the law, your actions are by the faith emanating from God. Compliance is having the disposition of the ever open ear to the Spirit's direction. In this way the compliance of your new nature has power over your old human nature.

God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no-one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. (1Co 2:10)



### **Endnote:**

\*\* Compliance... **A disposition or tendency to yield to the will of others** (in this context to God).

\*\* Disposition... A person's inherent qualities of **mind** and **character**.

\*\* Influence... Causing something **without** any direct or apparent **effort**

Ro 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be **transformed by the renewing of your mind**, that you may **prove (Gk. discern) what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**

The renewing of your mind is by Spiritual means and not natural and needs no effort from oneself. The Greek word 'metamorphoo, transform', is the same for 'transfigure'. The transfiguration of The Lord Jesus on the Mount was by the Spirit therefore a supernatural event. It is the Spirit that transforms (transfigures) your mind to nonconformity to the world and leads one to discern the will of God.

1Co 2:16 For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But **we have the mind of Christ.**

Eph 5:30 For we are **members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.**



Ga 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; **it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;** and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

2Pe 1:3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

2Pe 1:4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be **partakers of the divine nature,**

Heb 12:10 For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be **partakers of his holiness.**

1Jo 4:17 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because **as He is, so are we in this world.**

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