



In this issue:

To the Praise of His
Glory p. 1

Reflections of the
Psalms: Psalm 4 p. 4

Preserving the Image p.
5

Created to Reflect the
Creator p. 7

To the Praise of His Glory

*“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.”
Ephesians 1:7-10*

In this study we want to look at three of the “in Him” statements. These passages spell out for us what it means to be in Christ. “In Christ” we have redemption; we have forgiveness; we have an inheritance; and when we trust “in Christ” we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. All these blessings are in Christ, and that is why it is so important that we abide in him.

In Christ we have Redemption and Forgiveness. Redemption is “the action of regaining or gaining possession of something in exchange for payment or clearing a debt.” In the Christian faith it means “the action of saving or being saved from sin, error, or evil.”

Why do we need redeeming? Why do we need saving? The idea



The remedy for sin is found in redemption.

of redemption is one of the major differences between a Christian world view and the materialistic world view. There is a vast difference in recognizing sin as sin and just thinking that we have a few neuroses. Men are not just stressed, depressed and anxious; they are sinners in need of saving.

Paul describes our dilemma in Rom. 7:13-25: “Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.”

Paul portrays the inward struggle that exists in the hearts of men. And the remedy for sin is found in redemption. The cost for this redemption is the blood of Jesus. As Paul told the elders of Ephesus, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all

We must remember that these blessing are ours "in Christ". They are not to be found outside of him or in any other person or philosophy.

the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). And as Paul told the Corinthians, "For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1Cor. 6:20). Peter declares in 1Pet. 1:18-20, "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life you inherited from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or spot. He was known before the foundation of the world, but was revealed in the last times for your sake."

There are two fundamental teachings regarding the great sacrifice for human transgression paid by Jesus our Lord upon the cross, which appear in this passage: (1) the concept of a ransom paid in order to deliver, and (2) the idea of sins forgiven, remitted, taken completely away. Jesus Christ himself described his earthly mission in respect to both of these, "giving his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28), and "shedding his blood for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28).

We must remember that these blessing are ours "in Christ". They are not to be found outside of him or in any other person or philosophy. These things are ours as he says, "through the riches of his grace." Paul says he made these to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence. Wisdom and prudence are also blessings that accrue to us "in Christ."

Wisdom: This is knowledge that sees into the heart of things, which knows them as they really are. It is the ability to see the great ultimate truths of

eternity. It more nearly approximates our word "insight. Prudence may be defined as "the understanding which leads to right action," "the ability to solve the problems of each moment of time," and "wise conduct." Neither wisdom nor prudence is merely a matter of an IQ. The only true wisdom and prudence are revealed from God through the sacred Scriptures. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." (Coffman)

This insight leads us to understand the "mystery of his will." We read in 1 Tim. 3:16, "Without question, this is the great mystery of our faith: Christ was revealed in a human body and vindicated by the Spirit. He was seen by angels and announced to the nations. He was believed in throughout the world and taken to heaven in glory."

This mystery is not a mystery any longer. It has been made known to men. Paul writes this about the mystery later in Eph. 3:1-6, "For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles...Surely you have heard about the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me

This mystery is not a mystery any longer. It has been made known to men.

for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus."

Paul states it this way in Eph. 1:10, "that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him."

We note again that all of this is done "in Him." And it is "according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself." This is not according to man's purposes or plans. Man is not the author of this; God is. And man cannot alter or change what

God has purposed in Christ Jesus.

In Christ we have an Inheritance: Eph. 1:11-12, “In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.”

Paul is here contrasting the Jews with the Gentiles. Those who first trusted in Christ are the Jews. As Paul states in Romans 1:16, the gospel is to the Jew first and also to the Gentiles. However, it was always God’s intention as he was working all things according to the counsel of his will to unite Jew and Gentile into one body in Christ.

Paul makes this clear in Gal. 3:26-29, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you *are* Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

We are heirs, we have an inheritance in Christ Jesus. All of this is “in Christ”. All of this is to the praise of God’s glory. We are intended to glorify God.

When we believe and obey the gospel, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of Promise.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism has this Question: What is the chief end of man? Answer: Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

Paul writes these things to the Corinthians regarding our inheritance in Christ: “But as it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him’” (1Cor. 2:9). “For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2Cor. 5:1).

What better inheritance could you ever have than

this? What better legacy can you leave to your friends and family? We must be sure that everyone knows that “in Him” we have obtained just such an inheritance.

In Christ we Are Sealed With the Holy Spirit of Promise: Eph. 1:13-14, “In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”

Who are those who also trusted? Paul is speaking now of the Gentile believers. The Jews had first trusted and now the Gentiles also trusted in the same word of truth. And what is that word of truth? It is the gospel of salvation.

As the Hebrew writer tells us, this gospel first began to be spoken by the Lord and then was confirmed to us by those witnesses that he had chosen: “Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?” (Heb. 2:1-4).

Paul here contrasts the Law of Moses with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Law was steadfast and taught us the difference in right and wrong. Although the Law was perfect, it could never save us because we could not keep its statutes. But Jesus did keep them and then gave his blood as the price of our redemption.

The writer of Hebrews poses this question: How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? We must not miss this gospel of salvation. Why would we neglect it? What would we spurn the loving invitation of the Lord? Every word of the gospel has been confirmed to us by miracles.

When we believe and obey the gospel, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of Promise. Peter proclaimed in his gospel sermon on the Day of Pentecost, “Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of

Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

The Apostle Paul trusted after he heard the word of truth. The Lord met him on the road to Damascus, but he told him to go into the city and he would be told what he must do. Ananias came to him and restored his sight. He told him that God had chosen him as a minister to the Gentiles, he said to him, “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

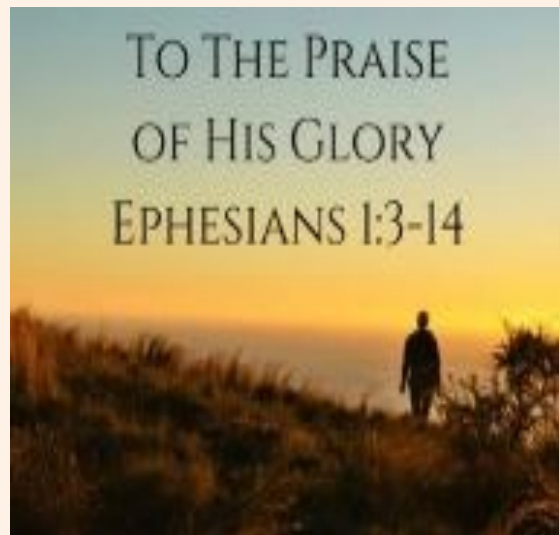
We must hear the word of truth, the gospel of salvation. And hearing that truth we must obey the Lord in baptism that we may receive his spirit, who is our guarantee until the day of final redemption.

The word translated “guarantee” is the Greek word, Strong’s 728 *arrhabōn* – properly, an installment; a *deposit* (“down-payment”) which *guarantees* the balance (the *full* purchase-price).

728 *arrhabōn* (“down-payment pledge”) is the regular term in NT times for “*earnest-money*,” i.e. *advance-payment* that guarantees *the rest* will be given. 728 (*arrhabōn*) then represents *full security* backed by the purchaser who supplies sufficient proof they will *fulfill* the entire pledge (promise).

And once again we are told that this is to the praise of God’s glory. God has purposed from the beginning of time that “in Him” we should be to the praise of his glory, that in him we should have redemption and forgiveness, that in him we should have a glorious inheritance, that in him we should trust in the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation and thereby be sealed with the guarantee of the Holy Spirit. And it is all to praise of his glory!

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Reflections of the Psalms: Psalm 4

One of the most important characteristics of David was that he was a man of prayer. Day and night, David was aware of the presence of his God, and he gained strength from that awareness. A good example of this is found in Psalm 4. This Psalm may have been written at night just prior to David going to bed.

Verse 1 shows David’s attitude as he began to present his prayer to God. Although we may not use the same words, the thoughts should be just the same when we address God the Father in prayer. As David begins his petition to God, it is clear that he is dealing with serious problems. Yet, there is no hint of pity or resentment. Instead, his first thoughts were directed toward those that were marching against him. David was God's anointed.

As such, it was the Lord's will that the people follow him - not fight against him. David knew that, in spite of those against him, the Lord would hear him and answer his prayer.

In the next two verses, David may have directed his thoughts to others that may be with him. We know from 1 Kings that there were many times where David and his followers were out numbered and fugitives. It would be easy for some to become discouraged, tired, and angry. But David wrote, "In your anger do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent. Offer right sacrifices and trust in the Lord." That principle would echo down through the centuries to Paul's words to the church in Ephesus, "In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while

you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold".

The lesson of David's words are equally valid today. Yet, how often, when we are faced with a real problem, do we heed the words of David? How often do we go to bed while we are filled with distress and anger? Do we sleep well? Do we wake up rested? No.

Then, the next day, we try to deal with our problems ALONE, and the last thing we will experience will be peace and rest. David understood that. Many years of his life were spent as a fugitive. Yet, he could find rest! How?

David wrote . . . "offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord". In time of trial, the time we spend just before going to bed

Where does prayer fit into your thoughts in dealing with problems?

can be very important for us. A few moments or minutes need to be used to consider the day, and involve the Lord in helping us. In prayer, we can ask for help from the Lord. But do we REALLY believe that the Lord helps us? One way we can know the answer to this question is to examine our practice of prayer.

How often do you pray? Where does prayer fit into your thoughts in dealing with problems? If prayer is not one of the FIRST things that you do, then you are either robbing yourself of one of the greatest sources of aid available, or you do not really believe that prayer works. Think on these things! Think about David's dependence on the Lord, and compare it to **your** dependence upon the Lord.

Yes, the time before we prepare to go to sleep at night can be a time to ask for help. We can simply ask for peace to have a good night's rest. Many of David's problems were still present the next morning, and the same holds true for us. But, the Lord will help us to have a restful night. That alone can help us to meet and solve the problems we face.

Finally, in the evening we can get our priorities straight once again. We can pause to count our blessings, and turn the worry over to the Lord. *He ca* handle it - we usually cannot.

We don't know all the thoughts that went through David's mind as he wrote this Psalm. But in spite of how tired he was, in spite of how much danger he was in, he remembered to trust and praise the Lord. We have the PROMISE of eternal life, because we are now children of God! How much more should we trust and praise our Father in Heaven?

In the last three verses, David wrote, "Many, LORD, are asking, 'Who will bring us prosperity?' Let the light of your face shine on us. Fill my heart with joy when their grain and new wine abound. In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, LORD, make me dwell in safety." Here are the words of a man of faith. Here are the words that every Christian should be able to echo, "In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, LORD, make me dwell in safety." Praise God that we can also say that as His Children!

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Preserving the Image

Pop quiz!! If you suddenly realized your house was on fire, what would you most want to save? That's a question most of us don't want to consider, but many would say "My family photos or videos". Many things can be replaced with the insurance settlement: furniture, appliances, dishes, etc. But how do you replace those treasured pictures of your ancestors?

We may never have to deal with a fire, but have

you looked at those old photos lately? Fire is not the only threat they face. Images fade with time, and exposure to sunlight (even inside most picture frames) only hastens that process. Time is a slower method of loss than fire, but just as certain.

For the past four or five years I've been working (off and on) on archiving our beloved family photos. Our children were raised during the age of film and we have a good many albums of our pre-

cious little ones. Using a scanner and a computer, I've slowly gone through the albums and digitized each snapshot. I've then made copies of those digital images so if my copies are destroyed someone else will have them. Digital images are more likely to survive the ravages of time.

I can't begin to estimate the number of hours I've spent archiving photos from my own and my mother's collection. The assurance I have, though, of my grandchildren being able to enjoy these family keepsakes makes it all worthwhile.

David's words were inspired, but he had no magic tricks for his faith.

A passage in the Bible that has been powerful in my life is 2 Corinthians 3:18: "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord." To do that passage justice would require more room than I devote for these devotionals. Let me quickly summarize, however, what Paul means.

The "mirror" of which Paul speaks refers to the word of God. James makes that clear in James 1:23,24. The only way I can truly "see" myself as God sees me is to come to the Bible and hear what

He has said. It's also the only reliable source of information about Jesus, the Savior of mankind. I must come to this Book often to really see Jesus.

The more I present myself before this Book, according to Paul, the more I'll be "transformed into the same image". What "image" does Paul mean? The image of the glory of the Lord. God's word can create change in my life. It can transform me from the weak and vile person that I may be into one who is more like Jesus Christ!

Does an old book really have such power to transform? If it's God's word, yes! "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). The Bible is much more than words-on-a-page. It lives!

Attaining the image of Christ in my life should be my number one goal. And preserving that image in the face of life's temptations and struggles is equally vital. When His image fills my life, I know God is pleased with me.

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November 4, 2010



Created to Reflect the Creator

You are a person with great value and worth. This is what the Bible tells us on the very first page. There is no shortage of articles that describe what many struggle with today. Depression, anxiety, fear, doubt, self-worth, are all things we struggle with on some level.

Recorded in Genesis 1 is the account of creation. The account of God shaping, bringing in to order, and creating the heavens and the earth. At the apex of God's good creation, He creates people in "His own image."

You are a person with great value and worth. This is what the Bible tells us on the very first page.

Genesis 1:26-27 (NKJV)

"Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."

People are set apart from the rest of God's good creation in that humans alone are created in His image. Humans are created to reflect God, their Creator. We are created in the image of God to be a representation of our Creator.

Turning the page of our Bibles, we quickly find God's good creation, His image-bearers, are distorted by sin. God had intended His image-bearers to share His love and goodness, demonstrating His kindness and sharing in His abundance. Then suddenly all that was disfigured by sin. Instead of cultivating and working with God's abundant creation, people began to selfishly use His creation causing harm, hurt, devastation, and even loss.

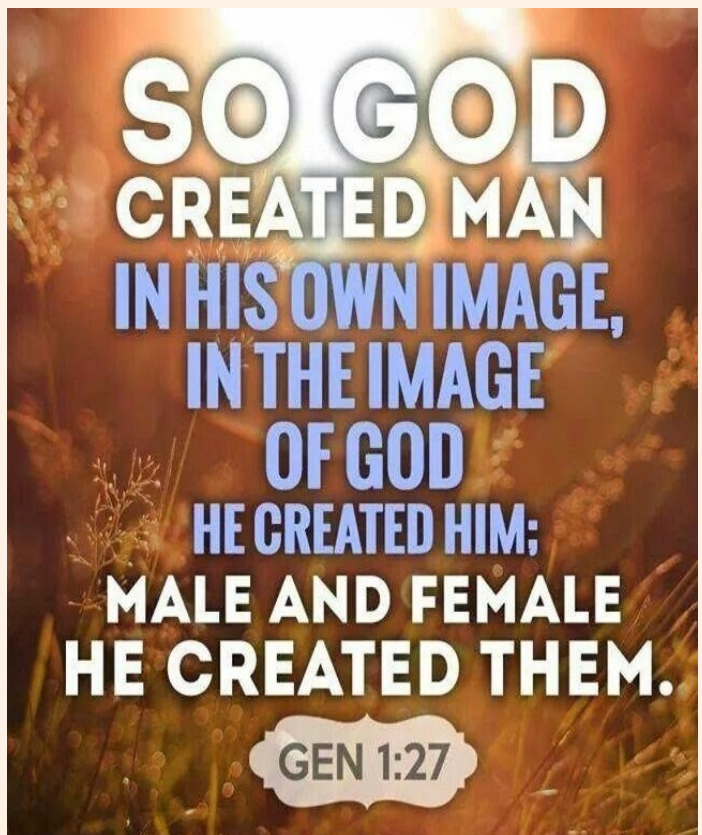
Thankfully, God sent His Son Jesus, who lived as a man on this earth. Through His selfless service, Jesus demonstrated what it is to truly live as the true Image of God. Through Him, an image distorted can be an image restored.

God has assigned His value and worth to every person no matter our background or past. Created in His image is not something earned or that can be taken away, it is assigned by God. Our worth is not defined by distortion but demonstrated through Jesus. Perhaps today, it's time to be restored so we can reflect the One who created us as His image-bearers.

Blessings!

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