

*Jesus said to the people who believed in him,*

*“You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings.*

*And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*

John 8:31-32 (NLT)

A guide on how to have a rich and satisfying life.

*By*

*Tom Reynolds*

Personal Testimony: Growing up in what I now see as a very legalistic Christian home I came to believe that I could never measure up to the unrealistic expectations placed on me. As a result my sense of self-worth became measured by my performance and how others either accepted or rejected me. I began drinking at about the age of fifteen. Since in my mind I came to believe that I was a failure, I came to find that alcohol was a good escape. By eighteen I was without a doubt a functioning alcoholic who did about everything I was told was evil as a child. By the age of twenty-four I was basically “in the gutter” and was even having trouble keeping a job.

As a result of the grace of God, a loving and forgiving wife, and in-laws who exhibited non-judgmental love in a way I hadn’t before experienced, I became a Christian. At the age of twenty-four I realized that now I had the power to overcome my addiction to alcohol and tobacco. And thanks be to God I have been delivered from my bondage. Because of my rescue I want to share something with you.

God loves you so very, very much. How do I know that? He told me. In 1 John 3 the Bible says, *“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.”* (Verse 16). Again in 1 John 4 we read, *What is love? It is not that we loved God. It is that he loved us and sent his Son to give his life to pay for our sins…So we know that God loves us. We depend on it. God is love…”* (Verses 10, 16).



God wants you to enjoy…

‒Life, Love, Liberty, Guilt-free living

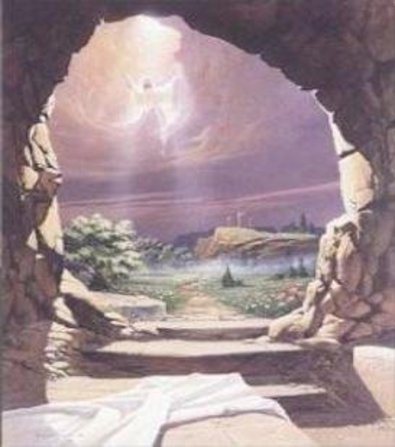
And do I have Good News for You!

* In spite of alienating ourselves from the One and Only Holy God, and our continuing inability to restore that fractured relationship, our loving Father has provided a way for us to have a living, intimate relationship with Him.

Jesus paid the penalty for all your sins! They were nailed to the cross.



He rose from the grave in order for you to live a free and full life – A life free from bondage and guilt! It’s now up to you. All you need to do is accept God’s gift of grace!



Grace

Grace is God's gift of liberation to the human race. God had His Son, Jesus Christ, punished in our place to pay the price that we owe for our sins. He gave His Son’s life as a free gift to humankind in order for us not to perish for our sins, but have everlasting life. God gave us this free gift of grace in order for our relationship with God to be restored. Just as with any gift, we must accept God's gift of reconciliation. If we choose not to know about this free gift or choose not to accept God's gift of grace, we will perish (be eternally separated from God) as a result of our sins.

▼

Romans 5:15: *“God's gift is different from Adam's sin. Many people died because of the sin of that one man. But it was even more sure that God's grace would also come through one man. That man is Jesus Christ. God's gift of grace was more than enough for the whole world.”*

1 John 5:11-12 NIrV: *“Here is God's witness. He has given us eternal life. That life is found in his Son. Those who belong to the Son have life. Those who do not belong to the Son of God do not have life.”*

* These scriptures tell us that God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son, Jesus Christ. In other words, the way to possess eternal life is to possess God’s Son. The question is how can a person possess the Son of God?

Our Problem



* Separation from God

Isaiah 59:2 NIrV: *“But your sins have separated you from your God. They have caused him to turn his face away from you. So he won't listen to you.”*

Romans 5:8 NIrV: *“But here is how God has shown his love for us. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

* + Why did Christ have to die for us? Because *“all have sinned and fall short of the glory (the perfect holiness) of God”* (Romans 3:23).
  + Habakkuk 1:13a NIrV: *(To God) You are too just to tolerate evil; you are unable to condone wrongdoing*.
* God is absolutely holy and righteous. Sin cannot exist in his presence. That’s bad news for a sinful human race. God’s holiness demands that sin be punished – by death. His righteousness does not allow any exceptions to that rule.
  + James 2:10 NIV: *For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it*.

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The Futility of Our Works

Romans 11:6 (NIRV): *And if they are chosen by grace, it is no longer a matter of working for it. If it were, grace wouldn't be grace anymore*.

Galatians 2:16 NIV: *“(We) know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.”*

* What does God want you to have faith in? Jesus is indeed who he claimed to be—the Christ, or Messiah. That he died on a cross for our sins, and that believing this to be the truth (and acting on it) is both necessary and sufficient for guilt-free living and eternal life.
  + Hebrews 9:27-28 (NCV): *Just as everyone must die once and then be judged, so Christ was offered as a sacrifice one time to take away the sins of many people. And he will come a second time, not to offer himself for sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him*.
* Earlier we said that Grace is God's gift of liberation to the human race. Now let’s look at some principles of saving grace.



Three principles of saving grace

1. Faith acknowledges our inability to do what is required to correct our relationship with God.
2. Faith is simply saying “I can’t, but God can. I can’t work, but God can and will.”
3. God has already provided salvation. It is spoken of as a “gift of grace.”

* The reception of that gift is faith.
  + Faith means receiving something; it means not the earning of a reward but the acceptance of a gift. To say that we are saved by grace through faith is to say that we do not save ourselves, but are saved only by the one in whom our faith rests.

Salvation by Grace

Ephesians 2:8-10 NIrV: *“God's grace has saved you because of your faith in Christ. Your salvation doesn't come from anything you do. It is God's gift. It is not based on anything you have done. No one can brag about earning it. God made us. He created us to belong to Christ Jesus. Now we can do good things. Long ago God prepared them for us to do.”*

* God offers salvation to you. This is salvation “by grace.”
  + Grace is God’s gift to those who will accept it. It is his undeserved, unearned divine assistance given to us for our salvation and moving us on to Christ-likeness that began when we accepted God’s grace. We call God our Heavenly Father. He gives with no strings attached. God’s love is unconditional, unlimited and everlasting.

What should our reaction to grace be?

* Gratitude.
* Praise.
* Sense of awe.
* Willingness to express our faith as the Scriptures teach.

Expressions of a Saving Faith

**IMPORTANT NOTE**: (Our expressions **do not save us**, they exhibit our faith in Jesus Christ is real and genuine.)

*The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love*. (Galatians 3-5:6 NIV)

* Biblical, saving faith will always express itself according Divine declarations. (See Also James 2:14-26).

Belief (Our inner expression 1)

John 3:16-17 CEV: *“God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never really die. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn its people. He sent him to save them!”*

Galatians 2:16 NLT: “*And yet we Jewish Christians know that we become right with God, not by doing what the law commands, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be accepted by God because of our faith in Christ—and not because we have obeyed the law. For no one will ever be saved by obeying the law.”*

Repentance (Our inner expression 2)

Matthew 4:17 NLT: *From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”*

Acts 3:19 NLT: *Now turn from your sins and turn to God, so you can be cleansed of your sins*.

Repent: Repentance means a change of mind and purpose and life. Repentance means agreeing with God when it comes to what is right and what is wrong.

* Expressing our Faith and Repentance: Loving Father, I acknowledge my need for a Savior. I realize that I cannot by my own works earn a relationship with you. I know that I must come to you by grace through my sincere, heartfelt faith in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I am willing to let you change my heart and mind when it comes to right and wrong. I desire to live according to your will for me. I am willing to acknowledge my faith through the outer expressions found in your Holy Word. Amen.

Public Acknowledgement (Our outer expression 1)

Matthew 10:32-33 NLT: *“If anyone acknowledges me publicly here on earth, I will openly acknowledge that person before my Father in heaven. But if anyone denies me here on earth, I will deny that person before my Father in heaven.”*

Romans 10:9-10 NCV: *If you use your mouth to say, “Jesus is Lord,” and if you believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, you will be saved. We believe with our hearts, and so we are made right with God. And we use our mouths to say that we believe, and so we are saved*.

Baptism (Our outer expression 2)



The Example of Jesus: Matthew 3:13-15 (NCV): *At that time Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan River and wanted John to baptize him. But John tried to stop him, saying, “Why do you come to me to be baptized? I need to be baptized by you!”*

*Jesus answered, “Let it be this way for now. We should do all things that are God's will.” So John agreed to baptize Jesus.*

The Command of Jesus: Matthew 28:18-20 NIrV: *“Then Jesus came to them. He said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. So you must go and make disciples of all nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And you can be sure that I am always with you, to the very end.”*

An Early Example: Acts 8:36-38 NCV: *While they were traveling down the road, they came to some water. The officer said, “Look, here is water. What is stopping me from being baptized?” Philip answered, “If you believe with all your heart, you can.” The officer said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” Then the officer commanded the chariot to stop. Both Philip and the officer went down into the water, and Philip baptized him*.

How it Ties Together: Galatians 3:26-27 NCV: *So you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have been made like him*.

Colossians 2:11-12 NIrV: *When you received Christ, you were also circumcised by putting away your sinful nature. Human hands didn't circumcise you. Christ did. When you were baptized, you were buried together with him. You were raised to life together with him by believing in God's power. God raised Jesus from the dead.*

(For more on the subject of baptism see: Acts 2:36-41; 8:26-40; 9:1-19; 10:44-48; 16:11-15, 29-34; 18:7-8; 22:1-16; Romans 6:1-4)

Grow

1 Peter 3:18 NIrV: *Grow in the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Get to know him better. Give him glory both now and forever. Amen.*

2 Timothy 3:16-17 NIrV: *God has breathed life into all of Scripture. It is useful for teaching us what is true. It is useful for correcting our mistakes. It is useful for making our lives whole again. It is useful for training us to do what is right. By using Scripture, a man of God can be completely prepared to do every good thing.*

Hebrews 10:24-25 NIrV: *Let us consider how we can stir up one another to love. Let us help one another to do good works. Let us not give up meeting together. Some are in the habit of doing this. Instead, let us cheer each other up with words of hope. Let us do it all the more as you see the day coming when Christ will return.*

It is eternally important that you get involved in a Bible study and worship and fellowship with fellow believers.

Study compiled by Tom Reynolds

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