

Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

(2 Corinthians 9:15)

Jesus

God's Inexpressible Gift to You

Jan Blonk

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Jesus: God's Inexpressible Gift to You

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Introduction

The goal of this book is quite simple: to emphasize that God has freely given you an inexpressible gift that's far beyond your understanding. Without exaggeration, God's gift to you is worth more than all the riches throughout history. That's quite a claim.

Throughout the following pages, I want to share that truth in thirty short chapters, each taking about three minutes. Will you take the time to learn about *God's Inexpressible Gift to You*?

As with any gift, it must be received. The same is true with Jesus. This receiving is done by faith, which is believing in who Jesus is and what He has accomplished, obtained, and promised to do. The Bible states that faith isn't just believing certain facts about Jesus; it's coming *to* and trusting *in* Him—banking your whole life on Jesus.

For example, if you were to receive a letter from your local grocery store, stating that you've been selected for a \$500 gift card, having to claim it within ten days, your faith will be evident by believing what is written *and* by going to the store in order to receive the gift card. Just believing the facts wouldn't do you any good.

The Bible ends with a universal invitation, which includes you: "The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price" (Revelation 22:17). One's faith or unbelief will be evidenced by one's coming or lack of coming.

This short book is made up of three sections. The first section is about the reason *why* you need Jesus. Whether you realize it or not, you are in utter need of Him. The second section is about Jesus as *God's Inexpressible Gift to You*. It's about who He is and what He has accomplished, obtained, and promised to do. The last section is about the faith that believes *and* comes to Jesus.

These three sections are called *The Need*, *The Gift*, and *The Response*, covering ten days each. They are about *your* need, God's gift to *you*, and *your* response to His gift. What if you had thrown the grocery store letter away without ever opening it? You would've thrown a \$500 gift card away.

Will you at least read this "letter" and base your response on what this "letter" will share with you? It's about far more than just a \$500 gift card. It's about your temporal and eternal well-being, which is priceless, right?

Since the stakes are incomprehensibly high, the Bible uses confronting language at times. It wants to shake you to the core in order to get your attention. If you were asleep

while a fire has started in your kitchen, it wouldn't do you any good if someone whispered that truth in your ears. Instead, the best thing to do is to be as loud as possible when it comes to that destructive reality.

God's word also uses "loud" language. For example, we read: "For whoever finds me [Jesus] finds life and obtains favor from the Lord, but he who fails to find me injures himself; all who hate me love death" (Proverbs 8:35-36).

Without question, your very life is at stake. You don't have the guarantee that the fire won't destroy your bedroom soon. You don't have the guarantee of tomorrow. Will you love your life by finding Jesus, or will you love death by rejecting *God's Inexpressible Gift to You*? That's the most important question you'll ever have to face.

The Need

The Background

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." . . . So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Genesis 1:26-27

As a teenager, I was fascinated and intrigued by one's background. Why does a person act the way he acts? Often, if we knew the background, we would gain a more proper understanding of his actions. A new-born son of an outspoken racist would have a far different upbringing than if he had been born to an outspoken non-racist, right?

In order to properly understand God's inexpressible gift to you, you need to know the background. It starts with the first verse in the Bible: "In the beginning, God . . ." (Genesis 1:1). Unless we start with God, we will always lack the proper understanding of creation and history. He is ultimate and we are not. He is our creator and we are *His* creatures. To deny God's existence is to reject truth and reality. What is left is utter deception.

When God made man, He made them male and female. His design was clear: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." You and I have been created to be an image-bearer of God, showing forth His likeness.

That doesn't refer to any physical similarities—God is Spirit—but in doing what is good and right. Since God is perfectly good and right, He cannot do anything but that which is good and right. He acts according to His divine nature and cannot do otherwise.

After He had created Adam and Eve in His image and after His likeness, there was perfect harmony between God and man. He delighted in man and man delighted in Him. Something happened, though, that would prove to be far more disastrous than anything possible. You need to know what happened in order to understand yourself, especially in relation to your creator.

The Need

The Background (2)

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Genesis 2:16-17

“And they lived happily ever after.” No, that’s not how the story continued after God’s creation of Adam and Eve. Their delightful fellowship with their creator and with each other would take an irreversible turn, one that involved everyone who would stem from them.

God had placed them in the Garden of Eden. As our creator, He has full creator rights, being sovereign and supreme over *His* creation. He commanded Adam: “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:16-17).

Their blessedness would be based on their obedience to their creator—to not eat “of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” God had made it unquestionably clear that disobedience would result in death.

This death would be far more than just physical death; it would result in an eternal separation from God. That separation, though, would already start when they disobeyed their maker. The Bible refers to that as spiritual deadness, whereby one is “alienated from the life of God” (Ephesians 4:18). The vital connection between God and man would be separated through sin in the same way as a cut-in-two electricity cord won’t be able to deliver electricity to an electronic device, being “alienated from the life of God.”

Since God is perfectly holy, being “of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong” (Habakkuk 1:13), He cannot ignore sin. It goes against His very being. His justice won’t allow Him to overlook any wrongdoing. To do so would be God’s denial of Himself, which can never be. He will always be true to Himself.

The Need

The Background (3)

But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Genesis 3:4-5

God’s enemy, known as the devil, Satan, and “that ancient serpent” (Revelation 20:2), is one of His created angels. He had rebelled against God. We read that background story in Isaiah: “You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High’” (Isaiah 14:13-14). Satan wanted to be “like the Most High.”

It’s no surprise that the “ancient serpent” enticed Eve with the same bait. He denied the truth of God’s word and warning. Instead, he portrayed disobedience to God as great gain—as a wonderful advantage that would result in being “like God.” That’s why the Bible refers to sin as “deceitful desires” (Ephesians 4:22). Sin promises glamour and glory but, sooner or later, will give you death and destruction.

God’s word doesn’t deny that sin can be enjoyable for the moment, but it’s short-lived, even if it’s enjoyable till your very last breath. The Bible refers to sin as “the fleeting pleasures of sin” (Hebrews 11:25). It describes sin as sweet as honey, but in the end, it’s “bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword” (Proverbs 5:3).

To “be like God” was too enticing to ignore. Yet, it was all based on a lie. Jesus referred to Satan as “the father of lies” (John 8:44). To believe him is to believe in a catastrophic deception. The Bible doesn’t communicate Satan’s strength but his cunning deceit.

The question that Adam and Eve faced is still the same question that you are facing: whom do you believe? On whom or what have you based your convictions about God, sin, salvation, judgment, and eternity?

Do you believe what God has stated in His word about these five realities, or do you believe what others have said about them? Whether you realize it or not, you have core

convictions about these five eternal realities. Are your convictions true or false? Needless to say, to know the truth about these five realities is vital, to say the least.

The Need

The Background (4)

Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

Genesis 3:7-8

Adam and Eve believed Satan's lie and rejected God's truth. They experienced a rude awakening, though. Instead of becoming "like God," they realized that they were naked. Instead of an utter God-consciousness, enjoying His love, care, and presence, they became self-conscious. Instead of being God-centered, they became man-centered.

The promised glory materialized into a devastating loss—the loss of God Himself. While they used to look forward *to* and delight *in* God's presence, He had now become a dreadful reality, especially since His warning would come true, "you shall surely die."

The anticipation and excitement of the moment had turned into a pending judgment with the word *death* stamped upon it. They would reap what they had sown: "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap" (Galatians 6:7). The inevitable came about.

In their disobedience, they aligned themselves with "that ancient serpent" and his rebellion against God. Their rebellion, though, wasn't an isolated case. Sin and death had entered God's good creation, exercising dominion over them. They became subject to "the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2).

While you may reject God and think you are your own free person, nothing is further from the truth. Mankind became subject to "the law of sin and death," which is like the law of gravity when you jump from a skyscraper and think you're doing fine.

Was all hope lost? Would they forever "suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might" (2 Thessalonians 1:9)? Not at all! As we will see in *The Gift*, God gave Adam and Eve (and mankind) the

promise of a savior who would come and “destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). Through His Son, God would “deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery” (Hebrews 2:15).

The Need

Adam as Our Seed

One trespass led to condemnation for all men . . . by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners.

Romans 5:18-19

You and I were fully involved in Adam's trespass, just like a tree with all its branches is part of the same seed. Job said: "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? There is not one" (Job 14:4). As the head—the root—of the human race, there were inevitable results for all who stem from Adam. In other words: if you were to inject poison into the roots of a tree, it would poison the whole tree.

That's what happened with Adam's "one trespass." It led to the "condemnation for all men," including you and me. Because the poison of sin had entered the root of the tree, the entire tree was condemned. While you may or may not get upset with Adam, it cannot be undone. It would be the same as adding a cup of arsenic to a wholesome gallon of fresh milk. It's then good for nothing.

As a result of his "one trespass," man would be born in a state of sin and rebellion against God. King David said: "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5). You and I were born "in sin."

The poison of sin entered humanity. We've been born as sinners, having an innate enmity against God, whether we express that through blatant sins or just ignoring Him. Jesus said: "A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit" (Matthew 7:18). The tree called mankind has been contaminated with sin at the very root of it. As such, it can only produce sin.

Centuries later, the apostle Paul made a sweeping statement: "For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh" (Romans 7:18), which is a reference to his fallen, sinful nature.

While the outside of an apple from a diseased tree may look good and appealing, the inside is rotten to the core. Jeremiah expressed man's heart as follows: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

By nature, you and I are part of this “desperately sick” tree. Jesus expressed that as follows: “For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander” (Matthew 15:19).

The Need

A Definite Cannot

For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Romans 8:7-8

Even though you may be a small tree limb on the top of the most humongous tree in this world—one that has been growing for centuries—you're not independent of the seed where it all began.

Adam was created as morally innocent. That changed drastically and irreversibly through his "one trespass." From then on, all moral innocence was lost. Instead, there would be sin, death, and condemnation.

Solomon wrote: "See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes" (Ecclesiastes 7:29). The Hebrew word for man is *Adam*, which can refer to a single male person or the whole human race.

Notice the connection between *man* and *they*. You and I are part of *they*. The seed of the human race lost its moral innocence by a sin-injection. As a result, the entire tree has been affected by the pervasive reality of sin.

In today's verses, the apostle Paul describes the definite results of that fatal day. "The flesh" refers to our sinful nature that can be traced back to Adam's "one trespass." Our sinful nature has been so corrupted by sin that there is a definite cannot: "Those who are in the flesh *cannot* please God."

In other words: would you accept and drink from a wholesome gallon of milk if it contained just one ounce of arsenic? Even so, God cannot accept anything that has been contaminated with sin. It goes against His holy, righteous, and good nature.

By nature, we are inherently hostile toward God. Our case is dreadfully serious. Yet, the deceitfulness of sin still runs our veins, continuously deceiving us. We don't realize our perilous state, even believing it's the right way: "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death" (Proverbs 14:12). Multitudes will experience a rude awakening when they pass from this life into eternity.

The Need

Children of Wrath

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath.

Ephesians 2:1-3

If your physician were to find a disturbing and most likely fatal tumor, would you prefer him to ignore that, sugarcoat it, or give you all the “raw” details? If there was a readily available course of action with the most favorable outcome, would you consider it a moral crime if he withheld the truth about the tumor and the cure?

In writing to Christians, Paul reminded them that they used to be “dead in the trespasses and sins,” just like everyone else who stems from Adam. Such spiritual deadness is a spiritual unresponsiveness to God and His word. It means that all activity is void of any spiritual life from God. That connection has been severed through sin.

In these three verses, we read that we follow “the course of this world,” which is “following the prince of the power of the air.” By nature, we follow Satan in his rebellion against God. There’s no neutral ground when it comes to God or Satan. One either follows God or one follows Satan. Man isn’t an independent creature with some form of spiritual self-governing authority.

John made a sharp distinction between “the children of God” and “the children of the devil” (1 John 3:10). By nature, we are “the sons of disobedience.” We follow Satan in his rebellion against God, who is *now* at work in everyone who belongs to Adam, being part of his domain, which is “the domain of darkness” (Colossians 1:13).

You are not exempt from that reality. Your supposed freedom is a delusion. Jesus expressed that as follows: “Everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin” (John 8:34). It would be ludicrous to consider yourself free when you can walk back and forth in your prison cell whenever you would like to do so.

By nature, our sole pursuit is to live “in the passions of our flesh,” the passions of our sinful nature. As slaves to sin, we carry out its demands, which are “the desires of the body and the mind.” While these passions may be enjoyable for the moment, the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness is hanging over our heads, able to strike us down at any moment. We need to be saved from our sins and God’s just wrath against us.

The Need

The Judgment

And this is the judgement: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

John 3:19

As mentioned in the *Introduction*, this book has three distinct sections: *The Need*, *The Gift*, and *The Response*, each covering ten days. Just like a lamp would hardly be noticed nor appreciated in broad daylight—when the sun is beaming through the windows—even so, *God's Inexpressible Gift to You* won't be truly considered, let alone embraced, unless you realize your utter need for His gift.

If you were a betting person when it comes to the truth of God's word, you would be gambling with your eternal well-being and your eternal misery. Yes, the stakes are that high. Yet, man's mind is under a demonic spell, just like King Théoden in *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*. He wasn't able to think in accordance with that which was true. In our case, though, it's much more than a spell. It's part of our fallen nature.

As mentioned before, God gave Adam and Eve (and mankind) the promise of a savior who would come and "destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). The first gospel promise was a bright ray of light amidst the darkness of sin, death, and judgment (see Genesis 3:15). If people were to embrace God's promise, they would embrace the one who would conquer sin and death, obtaining their freedom.

When Jesus came about two thousand years ago, God fulfilled His promise. Now, through faith in Him, we embrace the one who has conquered sin and death through His righteous life, sacrificial death, and victorious resurrection. He is our divine substitute, who lived a perfect righteous life and suffered the just penalty of our sins.

Nevertheless, even in light of such amazing grace, "people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil." Instead of embracing God's light—the reality of Jesus—they reject His salvation and continue their pursuit of evil.

In other words: mankind has had the light of (God's promise of) Jesus since Adam committed his trespass; yet man loves the darkness and doesn't want to come to the light.

In the end, God's judgment will be based on that kind of love affair that has continuously rejected His salvation. Indeed, as mentioned in the *Introduction*, "All who hate me love death" (Proverbs 8:36).

The Need

God's Law

Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet."

Romans 7:7

Why did God give His law, especially the Ten Commandments? Was it a means to gain His favor by living accordingly? Not at all! Yet, there are many who believe they're going to heaven because they think they are good people.

God's word makes it clear that there's no salvation through the adherence of His law. Instead, God's law reveals the reality of our sinfulness, His just wrath against us, and our full accountability toward Him.

We read: "Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified [stand righteous] in his sight, since *through the law comes knowledge of sin*" (Romans 3:19-20). That's what Paul also said in today's verse. God's law reveals our inherent sinfulness.

Often, man's inherent hostility toward God is dormant when God is portrayed as a benevolent being who is tolerant and non-judgmental, loving us all, no matter what. While it is certainly true that God loves us and His love is far greater than our sins and rebellion, His love isn't a tolerant and non-judgmental kind of love. Rather, His love is expressed in and through the death of His Son, a death that we rightly deserve.

Additionally, God's law reveals His holy, righteous, and good nature. Ultimately, we don't sin against a particular law but against the person who gave us His law, our perfectly holy creator to whom we are fully accountable.

As such, "It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). There's no hope of salvation through God's law but only through His promise. His law reveals our utter need for His salvation.

The Need

Falling Short

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Romans 3:23

Today is the last day of *The Need*. God's gift of His Son isn't necessarily about a better life on this earth—it's far better to follow Jesus than to follow Satan, though—it's about your eternal delight or eternal doom.

As we read yesterday, God gave the law so that we would know the reality of sin that's in our hearts, expressed through our words and works: "Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, 'You shall not covet'" (Romans 7:7).

When we look at God's Ten Commandments, we can be certain that we have often deliberately transgressed against them. Jesus even stressed that God's commandments aren't only about "the letter of the law" but also about "the spirit of the law."

For example, referring to the seventh commandment, He said: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:27-28). The apostle John wrote: "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him" (1 John 3:15). It's not just the action; it is also the desire and the intention.

It doesn't require much self-examination to say the same as what Paul wrote: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." To fall short of God's glory means that we don't deserve the eternal enjoyment of His beauty and excellence. Rather, we deserve an eternal separation from Him. By the way, our sinful nature keeps us from seeing His beauty and excellence, which infinitely outweighs all the supposed enjoyment and pleasures in this world.

In light of God's nature, each sin requires a just penalty, including all your sinful desires and intentions. As such, Paul wrote that you are "storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed" (Romans 2:5).

That's why Jesus is *God's Inexpressible Gift to You*, as you will see in the next ten days.

The Gift

God's Promise

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.

Genesis 3:15

When Adam and Eve sinned, they aligned themselves with Satan and his rebellion against God. As such, they submitted to him as “the god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4), even though he is only a created being. Their submission has some similarities to Anakin Skywalker, submitting himself to the Sith Lord, Darth Sidious. Adam and Eve became part of “the domain of darkness” (Colossians 1:13).

Was it not for God's gracious promise, He could've easily left them to themselves, just as He had left Satan and the fallen angels to themselves. He didn't! Even before He pronounced His judgment on them, God gave them a victorious promise.

Through “her offspring,” God would deliver them from “the domain of darkness” and transfer them to “the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:13-14). The word *redemption* refers to the payment of a ransom.

While the first gospel promise may have been somewhat cryptic, God promised that someone would come from Eve who would fatally bruise Satan's head. He promised a savior who would come and “destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). The promise also indicated that such a divine victory would come through suffering: “And you shall bruise his heel.” Jesus obtained this victory when He died on the cross for sinners.

Through His death, God canceled “the record of debt [the debt of our sins] that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him” (Colossians 2:14-15).

Since every sin demands an eternal separation from God, Jesus had to die for our sins in order to save us. He suffered God's just wrath on our behalf. Since He had never sinned, death couldn't hold Him. He rose from the grave on the third day, which we

celebrate at Easter. Therefore, to reject Jesus is to reject God's only way of salvation.

The Gift

God's Promise (2)

The gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 1:1-4

God's promise to Adam and Eve, the promise of "her offspring," has been mankind's only hope for salvation from sin and death. Ever since, mankind has been sharply divided between those who've embraced God's promise by faith *and* those who've continued to follow "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2-3).

Those who embraced God's promise—even before Jesus was born—were saved from their sins and an eternal separation from God. That was on the basis of Jesus' promised victory over sin and death—it was on the basis of Him paying for all their sins through His death. Those who rejected God's promise continued in their rebellion against God and suffered the punishment for their sins.

The Old Testament—the history from Adam and Eve till the birth of Jesus—is the story of God's promise. In order to fulfill His promise of "her offspring," God chose Abraham and his physical lineage through whom Jesus would come. God made it clear to Abraham, though, that the promised deliverer would be a blessing to "all the families [nations] of the earth" (Genesis 12:3). Throughout the Old Testament, God would continually reiterate His first gospel promise in many and various ways.

God also chose King David, who was part of Abraham's lineage, as the royal line through whom Jesus would be born as the eternal King, conquering Satan, sin, and death by freely giving His life for His people, which are those who have embraced Him by faith.

Jesus is unique. He is "descended from David" and is the Son of Man. Through His resurrection from the death, which is the conclusive evidence that He fully conquered sin and death, He was "declared to be the Son of God in power" (Romans 1:4). In other

words, His resurrection proved that He is God — truly God and truly Man.

Only Jesus can save you from God's just wrath against your sins. Or as John wrote: "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him" (John 3:36).

The Gift

Jesus as Our Seed

One act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men . . . by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

Romans 5:18-19

The most important issue in your life isn't about *what* you know or *who* you know; it's about to *whom* you belong. On the fifth day of *The Need*, we looked at these two verses in Romans but only addressed one aspect of them. Today, we have the second part.

Here are they in their entirety: "Therefore, as one trespass [by Adam] led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness [by Jesus] leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience [Adam] the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience [Jesus] the many will be made righteous."

By nature, we belong to Adam—we stem from him. He is our seed, so to speak. Through his "one trespass," the whole tree was diseased with the poison of sin running through every tree limb, whether great or small. There's no remedy for this deceased tree, except to be cut down and thrown in the fire.

God's Inexpressible Gift to You is about Him giving you another seed to whom you can belong. That seed is perfectly holy, righteous, and good. When Jesus walked on this earth, He never sinned. Paul wrote that He "knew no sin" (2 Corinthians 5:21). The author of Hebrews stated that Jesus is "holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens" (Hebrews 7:26).

Anyone's salvation is wholly based on belonging to Jesus—stemming from Him. When you belong to Jesus—when you are "in Him" like a tree stems from being "in" the seed—you have eternal life.

That's why Jesus said to a religious leader: "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again'" (John 3:7). This religious leader was, by nature, part of the deceased tree, just like everyone else. He needed a new birth, a birth "from above." The same is true for you. All supposed morality and religiosity are utterly inadequate to save you from your sins and an eternal separation from God. Only Jesus can do so!

The Gift

Jesus as Our Seed (2)

Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

Romans 5:18-19

The Bible refers to Adam as “the first man” and Jesus as “the second man.” It also refers to Jesus as “the man of heaven,” indicating His true divinity and true humanity (1 Corinthians 15:47-48). By nature, we belong to Adam. Through spiritual birth, we belong to Jesus. That’s why Jesus said: “You must be born again” (John 3:7).

Adam’s “one trespass led to condemnation for all men,” which is in relation to all who stem from him. By nature, you are already condemned. Your only hope is in the one who has performed “one act of righteousness.”

When Jesus started His ministry, He said that He had come “to fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15). Jesus lived a perfectly righteous life. He perfectly obeyed the Father with all His thoughts, emotions, motives, words, and works. That was one major aspect of Him fulfilling all righteousness.

The second major aspect is His death on the cross, suffering the just penalty for sin. God will never excuse or minimize sin. He will never ignore or overlook it, no matter how “small” it may seem. Every sin will have its just retribution. That’s why Jesus is *God’s Inexpressible Gift to You*—a gift of pure grace.

In His great love, God gave Jesus and “laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6). When you embrace God’s sin-bearer by faith, you will never have to suffer for any of your sins. Instead, you will eternally experience “fullness of joy” and “pleasures forevermore” (Psalm 16:11). On the other hand, when you reject God’s sin-bearer, you will have to suffer for each of your sins, *ad infinitum*. The choice is up to you.

Through Adam’s disobedience, “the many were made sinners.” Through Jesus’ obedience, “the many will be made righteous.” This “will be made” is a lifelong process,

known as sanctification. This process will be instantly completed when we leave this earth, known as glorification. Then, we will be perfectly righteous (see Hebrews 12:23).

The Gift

Bearing Our Sins

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

1 Peter 2:24-25

God's great love for you is demonstrated by the gift of His Son: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

His love can never be seen and experienced apart from Jesus. In other words, when you've embraced Jesus by faith, you are the eternal recipient *of* and participant *in* the Father's love for His Son.

Such divine love doesn't find the reason in a sinner—in you—but only in God Himself. As such, God's love is entirely unconditional—you don't have to meet any condition to eternally enjoy His love. *That* is certainly good news.

We read that Jesus "bore our sins in his body on the tree." Through His death on the cross, God has provided the only way for salvation—the only way for us to be delivered from "the domain of darkness" and be transferred to "the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:13). His death is the only way through which we can be delivered from our belonging to Adam and, instead, belong to Jesus.

It's through His wounds that we can be healed, which is the healing from our "straying like sheep" to our returning to "the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls." It's the healing from a life that's dominated by sin to a life that practices what is right, slowly but surely.

Thankfully, every believer has the assurance that God "who began a good work in you will bring it to completion" (Philippians 1:6). Salvation is His gracious gift and work, from beginning to end.

The Gift

Jesus Gave Himself

Who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Galatians 1:4-5

The more serious your disease, the more prone you are to seek the proper and much-needed medical attention, including surgery if necessary. No one has ever walked into an emergency room or sought any kind of medical care without a definite need for it. The same is true regarding your spiritual health. Obviously, when you believe that you are fine, even though that's not the case, you won't pursue a savior.

At the core of sin is a powerful and pervasive deception, including believing that you're fine and not in need of Jesus. Furthermore, if the whole world was limping with their right leg, it would seem a normal, acceptable, and inevitable condition of the human race—of how things should be. There is, however, nothing “normal” about sin.

The Bible describes the time in which we live as “the present evil age.” John wrote that “the whole world lies in the power of the evil one” (1 John 5:20). By nature, we follow “the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2). By nature, we are one of “the sons of disobedience,” deserving God's just wrath.

Jesus gave Himself for our sins in order “to deliver us from the present evil age.” He gave Himself to deliver us from our inherent allegiance to “the prince of the power of the air.” Through His death on the cross, He severed that allegiance. As such, His death is described as a ransom, freeing those who are subject to sin and death.

As such, you are not an independent creature. You are either part of “the domain of darkness” or “the kingdom of his beloved Son.” Your allegiance is either to “the prince of the power of the air” or to the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

God's Inexpressible Gift to You is the eternal deliverance from Satan's dominion over you to the eternal enjoyment of God and His glory. Jesus gave Himself for that deliverance by way of unimaginable suffering and a horrendous death. Amazing grace, indeed!

The Gift

Our Justification

Who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

Romans 4:15

The oldest book in the Bible addresses the most important question in the universe: “How can a man be in the right before God?” (Job 9:2). How can we be accepted by Him? Since God is perfectly righteous, He cannot and will not accept anything that isn’t perfectly righteous. Obviously, you and I don’t have such perfect righteousness. Instead, we are filled with sinful thoughts, emotions, intentions, words, and actions.

Our only hope is in Jesus. The Father delivered Him up for “our trespasses” and raised Him up for “our justification.” The word justification means that God declares us as perfectly righteous, even though we don’t have any righteousness of ourselves.

There are certain truths that make up the Christian faith. If one of those truths were to be eliminated, it wouldn’t be the Christian faith any longer. The virgin birth, for example. This means that Jesus was conceived through the Holy Spirit. The angel said to Mary: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy — the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

As such, Jesus is truly God and truly man, unstained from man’s inherent sinful nature. Therefore, He is the only one who could atone for sin, being without sin Himself. If Jesus had only sinned once, He could never have been able to save us from our sins.

Another essential truth is His resurrection from the dead, which we celebrate at Easter. If Jesus had sinned, there could’ve been no resurrection for Him because sin results in death. His resurrection proves that He is the sinless Son of God. It also proves that He conclusively dealt with our sins, paying the full price for them.

When we embrace Jesus by faith, the Father declares us as perfectly righteous, not because of anything we have done, but solely because of who Jesus is and what He has done. God will then credit His perfectly righteous life as ours. Paul referred to such grace as “the free gift of righteousness” (Romans 5:17). An inexpressible gift, indeed!

The Gift

A New Creation

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself.

2 Corinthians 5:17-18

Jesus said to a respected religious leader: “You must be born again” (John 3:7), which can also be translated as “born from above.” Unless you are born again, you will continue to belong to Adam and his “one trespass,” which “led to condemnation for all men” (Romans 5:18). By nature, we are “in Adam.” Through spiritual birth, we are “in Christ.”

When Nicodemus asked Jesus how one could be born again, Jesus referred to an Old Testament story. The Israelites had greatly sinned. As a result, God “sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died.”

The people turned to Moses and asked him to pray for them, which he did. God instructed Moses to “make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live. So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live” (Numbers 21:4-9).

In referring to this story, confirming its credibility, Jesus said: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up [a reference to His death on the cross], that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:14-16).

God’s love is evidently expressed in the death of His Son: “But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified [declared righteous] by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life” (Romans 5:8-10).

When we look to the cross—when we believe in Jesus and His great work of

salvation—we are “a new creation.” Instead of being “in Adam,” we are “in Christ.” As a result, “the old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself.”

The Gift

In Christ Jesus

And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

1 Corinthians 1:30-31

Salvation is the eternal transfer from being "in Adam" to being "in Christ Jesus." It's from belonging to Adam and his "one trespass," which "led to condemnation for all men," to belonging to Jesus and his "one act of righteousness," which "leads to justification and life for all men" (Romans 5:18).

Through spiritual birth, which is wholly based on Jesus' righteous life, sacrificial death, and victorious resurrection, we become a new creation. Instead of belonging to Adam as our (sinful) seed, we belong to Jesus as our (righteous) seed.

The prophet Jeremiah had foretold that Jesus would become the source of all our righteous standing before God *and* all our righteous living toward Him: "And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness'" (Jeremiah 23:6).

Jesus is all our righteousness, through whom alone we can approach the Father and enjoy His eternal favor. Indeed, "No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). There is not one shred of supposed human goodness that can be the ground for approaching the Father and relating to Him. We can only do so through Jesus.

Jesus' perfect righteous life includes *everything* He's entitled to—all the Father's favor, blessings, and promises. Paul wrote: "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? (Romans 8:32).

Today's verses state that Jesus is the expression of God's wisdom. It's God's way to save those who deserve nothing but His wrath. Instead, He gives them "all things," which includes every blessing and promise. Simply put, there's nothing good that the Father will withhold from those who are "in Christ Jesus."

God's wisdom is revealed in the fact that Jesus has become our righteousness (our perfect standing before God), our sanctification (our growing conformity to Him, slowly

but surely), and our redemption (our perfect conformity to Him when we enter glory). That's a Christian's comfort, hope, and joy, even amidst a fallen world that's characterized by the reality of sin and death.

The Gift

By His Grace as a Gift

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.

Romans 3:23-25

On the last day of *The Need*, we looked at the first part of these verses: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” While I placed a period at the end of that verse, there is a comma. Our sins and falling short of God’s glory—having no entitlement to the eternal enjoyment of God—isn’t the end. There’s more to the story.

God declares us as perfectly righteous “by his grace as a gift.” Paul wrote about “the free gift of righteousness” (Romans 5:17). You don’t deserve it, and you cannot earn it. The only thing you must do is to receive it by faith, taking God at His word.

John expressed that as follows: “Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son.”

What is God’s testimony? “And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:10-12). Paul expressed the same: “The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

The word *redemption* refers to the payment of a ransom. Through His life and death, Jesus paid for all our sins *and* for all our righteous living. When we are “in Christ Jesus,” we have the Father’s infinite favor, which includes all His blessings and promises.

The Father has put Jesus forward as “a propitiation by his blood.” The word *propitiation* means the averting of God’s just wrath. Instead of directing His wrath toward us, He directed it to His Son, who bore our sins. The only way to receive such inexpressible grace is to receive God’s testimony “by faith,” which we will consider in the last section of this book.

The Response

Come!

Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.

Isaiah 55:1-2

When it comes to God's love, fully expressed through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, there are only two responses: to accept or reject. Each response has temporal and eternal consequences. As we read in these two verses, one can never charge God with a lack of concern, persistence, or urgency when it comes to your temporal and eternal well-being.

In the *Introduction*, I wrote: "The Bible also uses 'loud' language. For example, we read: 'For whoever finds me [Jesus] finds life and obtains favor from the Lord, but he who fails to find me injures himself; all who hate me love death'" (Proverbs 8:35-36).

Jesus said: "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? (Matthew 16:26). What is the value of your soul? Or, even more confronting, how much do *you* value your own soul?

The Bible uses metaphorical language to communicate profound spiritual realities. For example, man's physical necessities are used as an illustration of his greatest desire in life—to be deeply satisfied. Man's most basic pursuit in life is to experience satisfaction. While that may be pursued in a trillion different ways, each way has the same driving force—man's desire to be deeply satisfied.

You've been created to find your full satisfaction in God. Obviously, an infinite ocean is more than able to satisfy a small cup. Therefore, God wouldn't be God if He isn't able to satisfy your very being, even in such a way that everything else is as *nothing* compared with Him.

Sin deceives you into thinking that you can find genuine and greater satisfaction in anyone or anything else but God. Whatever your current state, though, He calls you to

come to Him, removing all possible obstacles and objections. Your temporal and eternal bliss is “without money and without price.” Just listen diligently to Him about the good news of His Son. It’s far better than you can even begin to imagine.

The Response

Come! (2)

**The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.”
And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life
without price.**

Revelation 22:17

This is almost the last verse in God’s word. There are only four more verses left before John ends up with *Amen*. Just like through the prophet Isaiah, God extends a clear and compelling call to you—come.

Once again, He uses man’s most basic physical need—water. In doing so, He addresses your most basic spiritual need—to be truly satisfied. It has been said that God created man with a void that only He can fill. The deceitfulness of sin portrays anyone or anything else as a delightful substitute that, sooner or later, will prove to be a devastating sham.

Throughout the Bible, a life with God is expressed in terms of profound satisfaction. For example, Moses prayed: “Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days” (Psalm 90:14).

The opposite is also true. A life without God is described as the quest for vanity, pursuing that which is without true meaning and value. Solomon referred to that as “a striving after wind,” having no genuine and real substance to it ((Ecclesiastes 1:14).

Wouldn’t it be deeply tragic if all your pursuing and striving throughout your life were for absolute vanity, searching for that which has no inherent meaning or value? Don’t get me wrong. All the good things in life have meaning and value. When you take God out of the equation, though, there’s only emptiness in the end. Only He can give true meaning and value to all the good things in life.

Sin is the horrendous reality that deserves God’s just retribution because it’s a willful rejection of God Himself. Adam and Eve’s rejection of God’s word—their rejection of God Himself—was motivated by a desire to find greater satisfaction apart from Him. That desire proved to be a deceptive and destructive reality.

In His great love, God calls you to come to Him and “take the water of life without price.” He calls you to come to Him and find your temporal and eternal satisfaction in Him. In the words of Isaiah: “Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?” (Isa. 55:2).

The Response

Come! (3)

Whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

John 6:37

In the fourth chapter of the gospel of John, there's a story about Jesus and "a woman from Samaria." The Samaritans were a mixed race and despised by the Jews. Not only that, in that culture it wasn't the norm for a man to publicly converse with a woman, let alone with a hated Samaritan. Yet, Jesus did so. Why? God's gift is for everyone. There are no exceptions.

During their conversation, after Jesus had asked her to draw some water from the well, He said: "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water" (John 4:10).

In using the well as an illustration, Jesus also said: "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:13-14). Jesus referred to the all-sufficient satisfaction of our hearts, even throughout endless ages. God wouldn't be God if He couldn't deeply and truly satisfy your heart and mind.

As their conversation continued, Jesus knew she had been involved with five husbands, "and the one you now have is not your husband" (John 4:18), He addressed her most basic desire for satisfaction, which she had tried to fill with husband after husband.

God has made you with a void that only He can satisfy. As such, heaven is characterized by abundance and satisfaction (in God's presence), while hell is characterized by emptiness and disillusion (away from God's presence).

Whoever you are or whatever you may have done, God's invitation is true till your last breath: "The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without

price" (Revelation 22:17).

Jesus also said: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive" (John 7:37-39). God is the only one who can truly satisfy your heart. Will you believe and come to Jesus? He said: "Whoever comes to me I will never cast out."

The Response

Come! (4)

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Matthew 11:28-30

Life can be full of burdens, whether self-inflicted or those who are part of living in a fallen world. Often, the burdens can become unbearable, especially if there doesn't seem to be an end in sight. While some may arrogantly boast that they are strong and powerful, despising the weak, everyone has a breaking point, when life is far more than you can handle.

The psalmist wrote that God knows our frailty: "For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust" (Psalm 103:13). Throughout the Bible, God is portrayed as a shepherd who genuinely cares, especially for sheep that have gone astray.

Jesus told this parable: "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing." He concluded the story with: "Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents [turns to Jesus] than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:3-7).

Today, we have one of His most famous invitations. It is extended to "all who labor and are heavy laden." For an awakened conscience, the burden of sin is, by far, the greatest burden that anyone can bear. Jesus invites you to come to Him and find rest for your soul. He is "gentle and lowly in heart."

His gentleness and lowliness of heart are evidenced by Him leaving heaven's glory for an old rugged cross, "the emblem of suffering and shame" (from *The Old Rugged Cross*). There isn't one obstacle or objection that can withstand His invitation to you. It's as free and as full as free and full can be.

The main question: will you come to Him and find rest for your soul? Will you take

His yoke upon you, submitting to His guidance and help? His nearness and strength will make all the difference, not just now but forevermore.

The Response

Believe in Jesus

Then he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.”

Acts 16:30-31

The author of Hebrews wrote: “And without faith it is impossible to please him” (Hebrews 11:6). This means that the only way to please God is through faith in who He is and what He has declared in His word, especially in relation to the good news about His Son. The opposite is also true. When there is no faith, God has stated: “My soul has no pleasure in him” (Hebrews 10:38).

The most respected moralist or religious person will be utterly rejected unless he has placed his faith in Jesus. He is the only way to the Father: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

In today’s verses, the Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas: “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” Their answer was plain and simple: “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.” What is faith, though? The author of Hebrews gave us the biblical definition of faith: “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1).

Genuine faith is much more than knowing (and believing) certain facts about Jesus, though. One can know all the parts of a car and how they work together in starting the car. Unless one goes inside the car, turns the key in the ignition, puts it in drive, and steps on the accelerator, one isn’t going anywhere. Biblical faith is a genuine trust, evidenced by coming to Jesus and embracing Him for who He is, including for what He has accomplished, obtained, and promised to do.

Eve demonstrated her faith in the serpent’s lie by eating the fruit of “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 3:6). Saving faith demonstrates itself by taking Jesus for who He is, for what He has said, and for what He has done.

For example, He said: “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst” (John 6:35). Faith is a continual coming to

Jesus to find your satisfaction in Him. It's about taking His words to heart.

The Response

Fearing the Word of the Lord

Then whoever feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh hurried his slaves and his livestock into the houses, but whoever did not pay attention to the word of the Lord left his slaves and his livestock in the field.

Exodus 9:20-21

God had plainly foretold the seventh plague in Egypt. He had said: “Behold, about this time tomorrow I will cause very heavy hail to fall, such as never has been in Egypt from the day it was founded until now.”

Not only had He foretold the plague with unmistakable words, but He had also stated the only possible way of escape: “Now therefore send, get your livestock and all that you have in the field into safe shelter, for every man and beast that is in the field and is not brought home will die when the hail falls on them” (Exodus 9:18-19).

Throughout the Bible, we see the same. Sooner or later, God will judge those who rebel against Him. He clearly forewarns them *and* declares the only way of salvation. He not only reveals the disease of man’s heart but also declares the cure, so to speak.

When it comes to God’s pronounced judgment and escape from it, there are only two possible responses—to believe him or to pay no attention to Him. There were those who “feared the word of the Lord” and took proper action. The others “did not pay attention to the word of the Lord.” Faith in Jesus is not just believing certain truths about Him; it is also *responding* to those truths. These Egyptians believed in God’s coming judgment *and* took the right action.

The same is true in your case. God has clearly foretold that those who rebel against Him “will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might” (2 Thessalonians 1:9). Yet, He has also given you a way of escape, which is through faith His Son: “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Will you flee to Jesus for refuge from the coming judgment?

In Proverbs, we have a sobering warning for those who “did not pay attention to the

word of the Lord.” We read: “Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when terror strikes you, when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you” (Proverbs 1:24-27). What is your response to your creator?

The Response

To Believe or Not to Believe

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

John 3:18

God uses tender words to call people to come to Him. For example, in Isaiah we read: “Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool” (Isaiah 1:18). He only requires a sincere confession of sin: “Only acknowledge your guilt, that you rebelled against the Lord your God . . . and that you have not obeyed my voice, declares the Lord” (Jeremiah 3:13).

The author of Proverbs wrote the same: “Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy” (Proverbs 28:13). That’s the meaning of repentance, whereby we confess our sins and turn to Jesus by faith as our divine savior.

God wouldn’t be perfectly loving, though, if He also didn’t use strong words to shake you to the core of your being. If you were about to drink a soda, unaware that someone had put arsenic in it, it wouldn’t do you any good if your “friend,” knowing the truth, just expressed how much he loves and appreciates you. A true friend would tell you about the inevitable consequences with unmistakable words.

Today’s verse follows the most famous verse in the Bible: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him” (John 3:16-17).

When you believe in Jesus, you won’t be condemned for any of your sins. When you don’t believe in Jesus, though, you are *condemned already*. You’re like a prisoner on death row, awaiting the day of your execution. Upon your “execution,” you will be cast “into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew

25:30). This will be endless.

The Response

To Believe or Not to Believe (2)

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

John 3:36

God's wrath is the most dreadful reality there is. Paul wrote that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth." By nature, man willfully suppresses God's truth.

He also wrote that no one has an excuse for such deliberate rebellion: "For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse" (Romans 1:18-20).

Creation is the grand testimony of our creator. If you found a wallet with a few thousand dollars, you would make the inference that the wallet belongs to someone who has lost it, even though you don't know that person or have ever seen him.

Every single moment, creation declares the reality of God: "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard" (Psalm 19:1-3). Creation continuously "speaks" of a divine creator to whom you are fully accountable.

When it comes to God's Son, you have two options: "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but *the wrath of God remains on him.*" There's no neutrality when it comes to God. He is either wholly for you or wholly against you, which is in relation to your acceptance or rejection of His Son.

Paul wrote: "Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed" (Romans 2:4-5). God

desires your very best, your eternal well-being. Do you also desire your very best?

The Response

To Believe or Not to Believe (3)

Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

1 John 5:10-12

Whatever you may believe about Jesus, you can never accuse Him of not desiring your very best—your temporal and eternal well-being. Without question, He values your soul much more than you do yourself.

Through His righteous life, sacrificial death, and victorious resurrection, He has demonstrated that His desire for your well-being is much more than just talk. He has made it possible for you to be fully forgiven of all your sins and have a perfect righteousness—His righteous life, freely credited to you. As a result, you'll be able to enjoy God's infinite favor and delightful presence throughout eternity.

The personal knowledge of such a gracious God is the essence of eternal life. Jesus defined that with these words: "And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (John 17:3).

When you believe in Jesus, you will have "the testimony" within yourself. This means that God's Holy Spirit will confirm the truth about the person and work of Jesus Christ. When you don't believe the testimony that the Father "has borne concerning his Son," you have made Him a liar. As such, the ultimate question is: do you believe in God, or do you believe in Satan?

There isn't much more that I can write in relation to your temporal and eternal well-being. While you may reject Jesus (and the message of this book), I have only sought your very best, which is Jesus Himself. To have Him is to have eternal bliss. To reject Him is to have eternal separation from God, experiencing His endless wrath against your sins. The choice is yours.

The Response

To Believe or Not to Believe (4)

And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”

Mark 16:15-16

These were some of Jesus’ last words to His followers when He was about to ascend to His Father. The mission was clear: “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.” As you may recall, the word *gospel* means *good news*. It’s God’s good news about His Son, about His righteous life, sacrificial death, and victorious resurrection, providing salvation from your sins and endless ages of bliss.

There are only two responses: “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” Often, the first part is only emphasized — the part about believing to be saved. Jesus, though, also wants the second part to be emphasized — the part about not believing and being condemned. He wants you to have all the details, so to speak.

In his letter to the believers in Corinth, Paul wrote: “But we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:23-24).

The message of Jesus’ death on the cross for our sins was “a stumbling block to Jews.” For moral and religious people, the message of the cross is hard to accept, because Jesus’ death indicts all one’s morality and religiosity as utterly worthless when it comes to one’s salvation. As such, they stumble over that truth, desiring to save themselves by their own supposed morality and religiosity. Many express their “faith” by believing they are a good person and on their way to heaven. That’s one of the greatest deceptions.

There are also those who believe that the message of Jesus Christ and His death on the cross is utter folly. They laugh and mock it. Multitudes are in that camp. The main question: what do you believe about Jesus’ death on the cross? Do you believe that your own “goodness” will save you? Do you think it’s folly? Or do you believe that Jesus is

God's gracious answer to those who have willfully rebelled and sinned against Him, including you? Your response has eternal consequences.

Conclusion

When Jesus promised the Holy Spirit, He said: “And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged” (John 16:8-11). These three words—sin, righteousness, and judgment—are the three words that define all truth and reality.

Thankfully, through faith in Jesus and His great work of salvation, you can be fully forgiven of your sins, receive His perfectly righteous life as your eternal possession, and never have to face God’s just, unending wrath. Will you embrace Jesus by faith?

About the Author

Born and raised in the Netherlands, Jan is the Dutch equivalent of John and is pronounced “yawn.” When I was 19, I entered the U.S. for the first time and volunteered at Times Square Church, working on the Raven Truck and at The Upper Room, reaching out to the homeless.

When I returned home, I started my external undergraduate degree program with Global University (at that time known as ICI University), while working at a homeless shelter in Rotterdam. In 2001, I had the opportunity to pursue my graduate degree program on a work scholarship in Florida, which included teaching at a Christian academy and at a seminary.

In 2007, I married Rachel, and we have two children—Hannah and Isaiah. We reside in the Daytona Beach area. For more info about my books and fundraising for the spread of God’s gospel and the relief of His saints, please go to www.thecauseofchrist.com and www.christ-centered-books.com

Books by the Author

An Unfathomable Gift!: God's Astonishing Grace

A Glorious Sacrifice: Seeing and Savoring God's Matchless Love

Battling Sexual Temptations and Sins: Overcoming through God's Word and Spirit

Joy to the World: Christmas throughout the Year

The Glory of Christ: Discovering Ultimate Meaning – Finding True Fulfillment

A Christ-Centered Identity: Discovering Your God-Given Identity in His Son

In Christ Alone: What Every Christian Needs to Know More Deeply and Experience More Profoundly

Meeting God at Wits' End: Hope for the Weary

God's Triumphant Mercy: A Reflection of Psalm 51

When Good Things Happen to Bad People: A Fallen World and a Faithful Promise

It's All about Jesus: The Bible's Grand Testimony

His All-Sufficient Blood: Living in the Daily Reality of What Jesus Conclusively Accomplished and Obtained

What Does It Mean to Be Filled with the Holy Spirit? A Crucial Consideration of the Ministry and Message of John the Baptist

Adam and Jesus: Two Men, Two Roots, and Two Destinies

Jesus: God's Inexpressible Gift to You

The Man of Heaven: A Christ-Centered Commentary on Galatians

A Universal Message and a Divine Application: Six Biblical Truths Regarding the Debate between Arminianism and Calvinism

The Five Points of Calvinism in Light of Jesus Christ: Attaining an Undivided View of the Person and Work of Jesus Christ

The Most Controversial Chapter in the Bible: The Reality and Truth of Romans 9 Will Inevitably and Pervasively Determine Your Entire Understanding of God and His Sacred Scriptures

God's Foolishness and Weakness: The Eternal Reality of the Cross Amidst a Fallen World

God and Your Social Media: Being a Faithful and Wise Manager of Your God-Given Influence

A Simple Test of Your Faith and Love: 25 Irrefutable Bible Verses about Helping Other Christians When You Have a Free, Simple, and Easy Opportunity to Do So

The Parable of the Good Samaritan in the World of Social Media: When You Can Help Your Neighbor without Any Cost or Effort on Your Part

A Definite Opportunity for Churches and Ministries: How Much Do You Value One Extra Person or One Extra Bible?