

Christ and the Cross

a 40-day devotional for Lent

Melanie Newton

“Christ and the Cross” devotional is adapted from [Graceful Living Today](#)—a 150-day devotional containing truth that leads you to a life of freedom and joy in Jesus.

Jesus Christ presented Himself as the answer to every need of the human heart. The New Testament writers unanimously taught the same. Multitudes of people throughout the centuries since have witnessed that He does indeed do what He promised for those who trust and follow him.

This devotional will help you build a foundation for successful, enjoyable Christian living based on God’s “grace” to you and for you. As you apply these truths in your life, you will experience a life of freedom and joy!

We pray that God will use this devotional to strengthen you in your faith walk with Him.

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Published by Joyful Walk Ministries.

Day 1

The Cross: God's Solution to the Sin Issue

Read and Confirm the Truth

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

What did John the Baptist declare about Jesus?

Understand the Truth

The ultimate grace gift came—Jesus Christ. But, why did He come? What was His purpose? From the time sin entered into mankind's relationship with the Creator God, the one question that continually demands an answer is, "How can guilty sinful man be made right in the eyes of a holy God?" John declared that God was sending an answer to this question in Jesus (John 1:29).

Man's spiritual problem can be compared to death caused by a fatal disease: (1) Sin ("the disease" Romans 3:23—all sinned) and (2) Death ("result of the disease" Romans 6:23—wages of sin). Man's twofold problem demanded a twofold solution:

- 1) For the problem of sin, man needs forgiveness and righteousness. Answer: Christ's death (the cross). Mankind can now be cured of the disease.
- 2) For the problem of death, man needs regeneration (the restoration of life). Answer: Christ's resurrection. Mankind can now be given life that is forever.

The Gospel message included the answer to both spiritual problems. The following quote by a 20th century Bible teacher captures the gospel message in a nutshell.

"Jesus Christ **laid down** His life **for** you...
So that He could **give** His life **to** you...
So that He could **live** His life **through** you." (Ian Thomas, *The Saving Life of Christ*)

Reflect & Respond to God in Prayer

Day 2

The Cross: God's Solution to the Sin Issue

Read and Confirm the Truth

This is the message we have heard from Him and declare to you: God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all. (1 John 1:5)

What does John (Jesus' disciple) declare about God in 1 John 1:5?

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:9)

What does the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah declare about the human heart (man's sickness) in Jeremiah 17:9?

Understand the Truth

Our God is a holy God, meaning He is completely separated from anything that is sinful or evil. There is no sin in Him at all. As John writes, "God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all." God is perfect. It is a unique part of His character—who He is.

Man is not holy. Jeremiah describes the human heart as being deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Some translations used the phrase "desperately wicked" to describe man's sickness. This is a part of mankind's character—a part of every human. Thus, there is a gap between God's holiness and mankind's sinfulness, or "sickness."

Reflect & Respond to God in Prayer

Day 3

The Cross: God's Solution to the Sin Issue

Read and Confirm the Truth

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.
(Romans 1:18-23)

What does Paul reveal about mankind's sickness in Romans 1:18-23?

What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." (Romans 3:9-12)

What does Paul reveal about mankind's sickness in Romans 3:9-12?

Understand the Truth

Paul's description of godless or wicked men is very telling. God's invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. Yet, people willingly suppress the truth and exchange the truth about God for a lie. Jews or non-Jews—all experience mankind's sickness. All are sinful. None do good on their own. No one is righteous apart from God. Such sickness leads to destructive behavior. And, it leads to death and separation from a holy God. Not a pretty picture but yet a reality we must all face.

Reflect & Respond to God in Prayer

Day 4

The Cross: God's Solution to the Sin Issue

Read and Confirm the Truth

By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return. (Genesis 3:19)

What is God's pronouncement of judgment on man's "sickness" in Genesis 3:19?

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness... (Romans 1:18)

What is God's response to man's sickness in Romans 1:18?

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned... (Romans 5:12)

What is God's pronouncement of judgment on Romans 5:12?

Understand the Truth

The death mentioned in the three verses you just read refers to both physical death and spiritual separation from God. Both are the end result of sin's effect on all life.

God's response to all evil and sin is righteous, holy wrath (Romans 1:18). We must not project our experience with human anger onto God and assume that "His is the same, only bigger." God's wrath is not a mood or a fit of temper. God's disposition toward sin and evil is as constant and unrelenting as His love and goodness. He hates and rejects evil in a perfect and holy anger. He will never bend or compromise with it. His own nature demands that He judge it through action. A Christian writer from the 20th century describes it this way:

"Since God's first concern for His universe is its moral health, that is, its holiness, whatever is contrary to this is necessarily under His eternal displeasure. Wherever the holiness of God confronts unholiness there is conflict: This conflict arises from the irreconcilable natures of holiness and sin. God's attitude and action in the conflict are His anger. **To preserve His creation God must destroy whatever would destroy it.** When He arises to put down destruction and save the world from irreparable moral collapse He is said to be angry. Every wrathful judgment of God in the history of the world has been a holy act of preservation." (A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, page 106)

Reflect & Respond to God in Prayer

Day 5

The Cross: God's Solution to the Sin Issue

Read and Confirm the Truth

Because God is holy, sin must be judged. God prescribed a substitute to pay the penalty for mankind's sin.

The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. (Genesis 3:21)

What substitute paid the penalty for mankind's sin in Genesis 3:21?

Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household... Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lamb... The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt. (Exodus 12:3, 6-7, 13)

What substitute paid the price to protect Israel in Exodus 12:3, 5-7, 12-13?

This is how Aaron is to enter the Most Holy Place: He must first bring a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. He is to put on the sacred linen tunic, with linen undergarments next to his body; he is to tie the linen sash around him and put on the linen turban. These are sacred garments; so he must bathe himself with water before he puts them on. From the Israelite community he is to take two male goats for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. (Leviticus 16:3-5)

What substitutes paid the penalty for mankind's sin in Leviticus 16:3-5?

Understand the Truth

Animals died to provide skin garments to cover Adam and Eve. A lamb died to provide blood to cover the doorframes to protect the Israelites from the plague. A young bull, 2 rams and two male goats died to pay the penalty for the priest's sins as well as for those of the community of Israel.

The purposes of the animal sacrifices prescribed in the Old Testament were:

- * To teach the seriousness of sin.
- * To teach that God is forgiving, but that forgiveness comes only at a price, through the death of an innocent substitute.
- * To provide a place for man to transfer his guilt & receive temporal forgiveness.
- * To point symbolically to Christ's ultimate sacrifice.

The death of the animal was a sad and ugly thing just as sin is a sad and ugly thing. But, the innocent animal's sacrifice provided forgiveness for mankind's sin and opened the way for a person to have a relationship with a holy God.

Reflect & Respond to God in Prayer

Day 6

The Cross: God's Solution to the Sin Issue

Read and Confirm the Truth

Now if you as a community unintentionally fail to keep any of these commands the LORD gave Moses—any of the LORD's commands to you through him, from the day the LORD gave them and continuing through the generations to come—and if this is done unintentionally without the community being aware of it, then the whole community is to offer a young bull for a burnt offering as an aroma pleasing to the LORD, along with its prescribed grain offering and drink offering, and a male goat for a sin offering. The priest is to make atonement for the whole Israelite community, and they will be forgiven, for it was not intentional and they have presented to the LORD for their wrong a food offering and a sin offering. The whole Israelite community and the foreigners residing among them will be forgiven, because all the people were involved in the unintentional wrong. But if just one person sins unintentionally, that person must bring a year-old female goat for a sin offering. The priest is to make atonement before the LORD for the one who erred by sinning unintentionally, and when atonement has been made, that person will be forgiven. One and the same law applies to everyone who sins unintentionally, whether a native-born Israelite or a foreigner residing among you. But anyone who sins defiantly, whether native-born or foreigner, blasphemes the LORD and must be cut off from the people of Israel. Because they have despised the Lord's word and broken his commands, they must surely be cut off; their guilt remains on them. (Numbers 15:22-31)

According to Number 15:22-31, what were the prescribed sacrifices to cover unintentional sin?

What if someone sins intentionally ("defiantly"), what happened then?

Understand the Truth

People in Old Testament times were accepted by God and received eternal life in the same way as we are today: by faith in the merciful grace of God (though the content of their knowledge was different). For daily living, however, forgiveness was taught and dispensed differently under the Law. Forgiveness under the Law came through "atonement," literally, a "covering." Guilt was "covered" for some undetermined time. Forgiveness under the Law was dispensed in a piecemeal fashion. Forgiveness could be obtained "up to date" but not given in advance. Forgiveness under Law was at best temporary.

Forgiveness under the Mosaic Law had its limitations. Forgiveness for "minor" or "unintentional" sins was obtained through prescribed sacrifices. For anyone who sinned defiantly (intentionally), there was no forgiveness through the Law apart from the once per year removal on the Day of Atonement. Those who deliberately sinned must throw themselves on the mercy of God. Forgiveness was not automatic! Heart attitudes were measured. God measured the heart attitudes and responded to faith with forgiveness (2 Samuel 12:13).

Reflect & Respond to God in Prayer

Day 7

The Cross: God's Solution to the Sin Issue

Read and Confirm the Truth

*For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.
(Hosea 6:6)*

What does God say about His desire regarding man's heart in Hosea 6:6?

With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:6-8)

What does God say about His desire regarding man's heart in Micah 6:6-8?

The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. Otherwise, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins. It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. (Hebrews 10:1-4)

According to Hebrews 10:1-4, why was forgiveness through the Law ultimately inadequate?

Understand the Truth

As the prophet Hosea declared, God desires both men and women to love mercy and to acknowledge Him. Sacrifices apart from faithfulness to the Lord's will are wholly unacceptable to Him. The prophet Micah wrote that God desires His people to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly before Him. Righteous hearts and righteous behavior are better than sacrifices. God wants obedience, not compliance.

Compliance is an act of yielding to a wish, request or demand of someone in authority. It is basically just keeping the rules. Obedience is an act of being submissive to the authority springing from commitment and trust. God has always wanted obedient hearts more than compliance, which is just following the rules without the heart being touched.

Adding to the hard-heartedness associated with the sacrifices is the truth that forgiveness through the Mosaic Law was ultimately inadequate anyway. The sacrifices had to be repeated annually. The sacrifices could not make perfect those who were even doing it. The sacrifices could not cleanse once for all. The sacrifices could not take away guilt. God had a solution planned that would be so much better!

Reflect & Respond to God in Prayer

Day 8

Christ's Finished Work On the Cross

Read and Confirm the Truth

He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that He must be killed and after three days rise again. (Mark 8:31)

What did Jesus teach His disciples about His purpose in Mark 8:31?

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45)

What else did Jesus remind His followers about His purpose in Mark 10:45?

He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter His glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself. (Luke 24:25-27)

How did Jesus remind His followers about His purpose in Luke 24:25-27?

He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." Then He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (Luke 24:44-47)

What did Jesus remind His disciples about His purpose in Luke 24:44-47?

Understand the Truth

In Mark 8:31, Jesus taught that He must suffer, be rejected by the Jewish religious leaders, and be killed. But, He would rise again on the third day. His purpose was to serve and give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). Speaking to His disciples, Jesus reminded them what the Scriptures had declared all along that He would suffer, then enter His glory. Repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations.

Jesus understood His purpose—to give His life for all mankind. This was no surprise to Him or to God the Father who sent Him. It was God's plan all along. Jesus would accomplish His purpose through His death and resurrection.

Reflect & Respond to God in Prayer

Day 9

Christ's Finished Work On the Cross

Read and Confirm the Truth

He Himself bore our sin in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed. (1 Peter 2:24)

What did Peter emphasize about Jesus' death in 1 Peter 2:24?

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. (1 Peter 3:18)

What did Peter emphasize about Jesus' death in 1 Peter 3:18?

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:6-8)

What did Paul emphasize about Jesus' death in Romans 5:6-8?

Understand the Truth

As Peter wrote, Jesus bore our sins in His own body so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness. What a change in life strategy for us! By His death, we are brought near to God. Jesus does that for everyone who believes in Him. And, Paul wrote that God demonstrated His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Jesus died for us. Isn't that act of love for ungodly humans such an amazing thing?!

Reflect & Respond to God in Prayer

Day 10

Christ's Finished Work On the Cross

Read and Confirm the Truth

But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, He went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but He entered the Most Holy Place once for all by His own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that He has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant. (Hebrews 9:11-15)

According to Hebrews 9:11-15, in what ways is Christ's offering of Himself better than the old Mosaic Law system?

Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest [Jesus] had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God, and since that time He waits for His enemies to be made His footstool. For by one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. (Hebrews 10:11-14)

According to Hebrews 10:11-14, in what ways is Christ's offering of Himself better than the old Mosaic Law system?

Understand the Truth

When Jesus said, "It is finished" in John 19:30, He meant just that. Finished. Complete. Done once for all. The writer of Hebrews confirmed this to be true. Whereas the gifts and sacrifices under the Old Testament law were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper, the blood of Christ cleanses our consciences so we may freely and joyfully serve God. The sacrifices could never take away sins, only cover them. Christ's sacrifice, however, has not only taken away the sins but also made perfect forever those who are being made holy—all believers.

Reflect & Respond to God in Prayer

Day 11

Christ's Finished Work On the Cross

Read and Confirm the Truth

At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. (Matthew 27:51)

What happened in Matthew 27:51?

Before this, who alone could enter the Most Holy Place and with what?

But only the high priest entered the inner room [the Most Holy Place], and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. (Hebrews 9:7)

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, His body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. (Hebrews 10:19-22)

Now, who can enter the Most Holy Place (God's presence) because of Jesus' blood (Hebrews 9:7 and 10:19-22)?

What is the benefit to us in doing so?

Understand the Truth

The curtain of the temple that separated the main part of the temple from the Most Holy Place representing God's presence with His people Israel was torn from top to bottom. God did this. Now we can enter the Most Holy Place (God's presence) with confidence by the blood of Jesus. We no longer rely on a High Priest going in once a year to represent us before God. Jesus is our High Priest, His body is the torn curtain, and we can draw near to God with full assurance of already being cleansed of all sin. What a marvelous opportunity!

*"God tore the curtain, for when the Lord Jesus Christ 'became sin for us,' and purchased our salvation by his own blood, the regulations of the old covenant were rendered null and void. Never again would God require the blood of a bull, a goat or a lamb. The priesthood was now defunct, the temple redundant and the law abolished." (Charles Price, *Alive in Christ*, page 80)*

Man's disease problem is cured. Christ has through His sacrifice done all that needs to be done to reconcile guilty men to a holy God. This is the meaning of the phrase, "justification by faith." For any person, all that is required to benefit from what Jesus accomplished is to believe or trust in Him.

Reflect & Respond to God in Prayer

Day 12

Christ's Finished Work On the Cross

Read and Confirm the Truth

Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony. Whoever does not believe God has made Him out to be a liar, because they have not believed the testimony God has given about His Son. And this is the testimony: God has given 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. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. (1 John 5:10-13)

According to 1 John 5:10-13, what can we know for sure?

Why can we know this for sure?

Understand the Truth

We can know for sure that God has given us eternal life through faith (belief) in His Son. We have it already. Assurance of salvation can be known and experienced by (1) clearly understanding the gospel, and (2) trusting God's promises in Jesus Christ. Assurance is not confidence in our own ability to hold on to Christ but confidence in *Him* and His promises to hold on to us!

Reflect & Respond to God in Prayer

Day 13

Justification by Faith Alone

Read and Confirm the Truth

Romans 3:19-28 is often called “the heart of the Bible.”

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin. But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. (Romans 3:19-24)

According to Romans 3:19-24, what is declared about the source of our justification (being declared not guilty)?

God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of His blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance He had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—He did it to demonstrate His righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. Because of what law? The law that requires works? No, because of the law that requires faith. For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. (Romans 3:25-28)

What is declared in Romans 3:25-28 about the source of our justification?

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. (Romans 5:1-2)

What does Romans 5:1-2 say about how we are justified before God?

Understand the Truth

As Paul stated so clearly in Romans 3, we all are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ. This comes to us by faith apart from any works that we do. This is true for all who believe (verse 22). It is a gift of God. He does this to exclude all boasting in our own efforts. We receive justification (being declared not guilty of sin) by faith in Jesus Christ. Romans 5:12 declares that we have been justified through faith. Through Christ we have gained access by faith into His grace in which we now stand.

Reflect & Respond to God in Prayer

Day 14

Justification by Faith Alone

Read and Confirm the Truth

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

What does Ephesians 2:8-9 teach about our salvation?

Understand the Truth

Our salvation comes through faith as a gift of God, not by our works. It is a result of God's grace to us. Remember that grace is "unmerited favor." Consider the benefits of knowing that both your salvation and your justification ("not guilty" standing before God) are by faith alone rather than through any works you must do to earn God's forgiveness. As a result, you can enjoy living in the confidence of your relationship with God and your eternal destiny. You can experience true freedom from having to pay penance (make amends) to God because of your sin. Your heart can feel true gratefulness for what God has done for you. 😊

Reflect & Respond to God in Prayer

"Do you want to give up the guilt? Or, do you prefer to hang onto it like an heirloom? Forgetting you've been cleansed from past sins makes you nearsighted and blind and keeps you from developing maturity in Christ (2 Peter 1:9). A failure to recognize and trust that the sin issue between you and God is over will effectively stop your spiritual growth in Christ...We can become totally preoccupied with the thing that God is *finished* dealing with—sin—that we neglect what God is trying to do with us *today*—teach us about life!" (Bob George, *Classic Christianity*, p. 60)

Day 15

Justification by Faith Alone

Read and Confirm the Truth

Read this old Irish hymn by Charities Lees Smith written in 1863 under the name "The Advocate." It is now called "Before the Throne of God Above" and is a beautiful illustration of what Christ has done for you. If you'd like to sing it, search for an online version.

Before the throne of God above, I have a strong and perfect plea
A great high Priest whose Name is Love whoever lives and pleads for me
My name is graven on His hands, my name is written on His heart
I know that while in heaven He stands, no tongue can bid me to depart
No tongue can bid me to depart

When Satan tempts me to despair and tells me of the guilt within
Upward I look and see Him there who made an end to all my sin
Because the sinless Savior died, my sinful soul is counted free
For God the just is satisfied to look on Him and pardon me
To look on Him and pardon me

Behold Him there the risen Lamb, my perfect spotless righteousness
The great unchangeable I am the King of glory and of grace
One with Himself I cannot die, my soul is purchased by His blood
My life is hid with Christ on high with Christ my Savior and my God!
With Christ my Savior and my God!

Reflect & Respond to God in Prayer

Reflect on the words to the song above. Respond in any way you choose (journaling, prayer, poem, art, song) to illustrate your thanks to God for ending the sacrificial system and completely forgiving you by your faith in Christ alone.

Day 16

Announcement to the World: It is Finished!

Read and Confirm the Truth

Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through Him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the Law of Moses. (Acts 13:38-39)

What truth did Paul declare in Acts 13:38-39?

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. (John 3:16-18)

What truth did John declare about "whoever believes in Him" (John 3:16-18)?

What information is give about those who do not believe in Him (John 3:16-18)?

Understand the Truth

The gospel is an announcement to the world of an accomplished fact. What God set out to do for mankind, He accomplished. The apostles declared this from the time of Pentecost (Acts 2) and beyond.

Salvation is available on the basis of a single condition: faith (or "belief"). Belief is not just intellectual assent that something might be true. Belief is a commitment of the will. It is the difference between walking alongside a pool of water (seeing it is there) and jumping into the water (experiencing the water personally). God acted; we are to respond to His action by saying yes and jumping into the new life God has for us. Those who respond with faith in Jesus Christ, God's Son, receive a firm assurance of security (1 John 5:13), a secure new identity in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), and a true knowledge of God as seen through all that He has done through Christ's finished work on the cross.

Reflect & Respond to God in Prayer

Day 17

Christ's Finished Work on the Cross

Six terms describe how our relationship with God is changed because of our faith in Jesus Christ. These 6 relationship changes are the direct result of Christ's finished work on the cross so they are often called "words of the cross." We will cover them one at a time.

Word of the Cross #1 Propitiation: "God's holy wrath is fully satisfied"

Propitiation is an old word that means to satisfy or appease someone in order to win their favor. That implies you've done something to lose their favor, usually incurring anger. You can probably recall a time when you incurred the anger of someone you love and needed to make some kind of restitution to "appease" their anger. The act of appeasement leads to that person now being satisfied because restitution has been made. So, the relationship can be restored. That is the basis for propitiation.

Read and Confirm the Truth

*[Christ] whom God displayed publicly as a **propitiation** in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; (Romans 3:25, NASV)*

According to Romans 3:25, God displayed Christ publicly as what?

Because of the forbearance of God, what could He now do for us (Romans 3:25)?

*In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the **propitiation** for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. (1 John 4:10, NASV)*

What is the Son called in 1 John 4:10? What motivated God to do this for us?

Understand the Truth

God presented Christ as a sacrifice of propitiation for our sins. Some translations use the words "sacrifice of atonement" or "atoning sacrifice" to illustrate this. Biblical propitiation represents an important change in our relationship with God. It is often associated with God's mercy toward us. Mercy is commonly defined as "not getting what we deserve." Our problem before Christ: God's righteous anger toward man's sin. Remember that God's wrath is an action against sin to preserve His creation, not a mood or fit of temper. Without appeasement, all people are justly destined for eternal punishment. But God, out of His great mercy, provided a way for His anger against man's sin to be satisfied through blood sacrifice on the Day of Atonement in the Old Testament (Leviticus 16) and finally through Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross.

In the New Testament, the same word used to describe God's "satisfaction" with Jesus' shed blood also describes the top surface of the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies, which was called the "atonement cover" or the "mercy seat" in Hebrews 9:5, depending on the translation. The mercy seat was sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice (a perfect lamb) on the annual Day of Atonement. By this ceremony, God's anger at sin was appeased, and the people's sins were forgiven up to that point.

Jesus' death on the cross provided the permanent way that God's anger against man's sin was appeased. The New Testament writers teach that Jesus' sacrifice of atonement fully satisfied God's righteous anger against man's sin for those who trust in Him.

Reflect & Respond to God in Prayer

Day 18

Christ's Finished Work on the Cross

Word of the Cross #1 PROPITIATION: "God's holy wrath is fully satisfied"

Read and Confirm the Truth

*And He Himself is the **propitiation** for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. (1 John 2:2, NASV)*

According to 1 John 2:2, to whom does God's offer of mercy extend?

Understand the Truth

Because Jesus Christ has endured in our place the full wrath of God for our sins, God is able to extend mercy without compromise with evil. His holiness has been fully satisfied with the offering of Jesus Christ. The payment has been made for the whole world; God's mercy extends to the whole world. But it must be individually acknowledged. God acted. The response He expects is belief in His Son. Why would anyone not jump at the opportunity to take this wonderful offer?!

You can dwell on the FACT that God's anger at man's sin was fully satisfied by Jesus' finished work on the cross. The second verse of the beautiful song, In Christ Alone, expresses this:

In Christ alone, who took on flesh, fullness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness scorned by the ones He came to save:
"Til on that cross as Jesus died, **the wrath of God was satisfied** –
For every sin on Him was laid; here in the death of Christ I live.

You CAN know and live with confidence that God is no longer angry at your sin because you believe in His Son. He is no longer angry with you. How does that make you feel?

Reflect & Respond to God in Prayer

If God's holy wrath against you has been satisfied, and you live in the freedom of knowing His graceful love more than His wrath, how are you at being a grace-giver to those who have angered you? If you are holding onto anger toward someone and no restitution has been made, pray that God will enable you to surrender the anger and rest in His love and peace.

Day 19

Christ's Finished Work on the Cross

Word of the Cross #2 RECONCILIATION: "Our relationship with God is restored."

The word reconciliation means to re-establish friendship between two parties, to settle or resolve a dispute, and/or to bring acceptance. Most of us are aware of personal relationships that have required reconciliation. How sad it is when a broken relationship continues to remain broken and isn't reconciled. What joy we experience when we see a broken relationship repaired and healthy again. Reconciliation is certainly a reason for rejoicing!

Read and Confirm the Truth

For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life! Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. (Romans 5:10-11)

What did our God do for us according to Romans 5:10-11?

All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:18-20)

What did our God do for us according to 2 Corinthians 5:18-20?

For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now He has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation. (Colossians 1:19-22)

What did our God do for us according to Colossians 1:19-22?

Understand the Truth

Before Christ, our problem was a state of alienation (separation) from God because of sin (Isaiah 59:2). But God did something about that—He reconciled us to Himself through Jesus' death, and we are saved through His life. We have received reconciliation. Reconciliation is a present reality for Christians and is worthy of our rejoicing. And, there is even rejoicing in heaven as we experience repentance (Luke 15:7, 10) that results in reconciliation with our God.

God has also given us the ministry of reconciliation, whereby we appeal to the world in hopes of persuading those who listen to be reconciled to God through faith in Christ. And, even more than that, God was pleased to reconcile all things on earth and heaven through Jesus' blood so He can present us holy and blameless in His sight.

Reflect & Respond to God in Prayer

Day 20

Christ's Finished Work on the Cross

Word of the Cross #2 RECONCILIATION: "Our relationship with God is restored."

Read and Confirm the Truth

But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

According to Romans 5:8, what was God's motivation for reconciliation?

All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

According to 2 Corinthians 5:19, God gave us the ministry of reconciliation because He is reconciling what?

Understand the Truth

God demonstrated His love for us when Christ died for us so that we could be reconciled to Him. This reconciliation extends to the whole world, that is, to everyone who chooses to receive it by faith.

Jesus Christ has fully paid man's debt, removing the barrier between God and men. God's "books" have been balanced; the debt has been paid. God stands eagerly welcoming anyone who will believe the good news and come home (repent).

Dwell on the FACT that the barrier of sin has been taken away and a bridge has been built between you and God because of Jesus' finished work on the cross. This was God's act of reconciliation offered to you.

According to 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, we have been given the ministry of reconciliation, announcing to our world that God is no longer counting men's sins against them through Christ and imploring those in our sphere of influence to be reconciled to God.

"Reconcile to Himself all things" does not mean that Christ by His death has saved all people...When Adam & Eve sinned, not only was the harmony between God and man destroyed, but also disorder came into creation (Romans 8:19-22). So when Christ died on the cross, He made peace possible between God and mankind, and He restored in principle the harmony in the physical world, though the full realization of the latter will come only when Christ returns." (NIV Study Bible, note on Colossians 1:20, page 1814)

The same power of reconciliation is available to you through Christ for your relationships. If you are in the midst of a relationship that is broken and in need of reconciliation, pray that God would work His mighty hand in the relationship and provide you with His wisdom in pursuing reconciliation. What steps can you take to reconcile the relationship?

Reflect & Respond to God in Prayer

Day 21

Christ's Finished Work on the Cross

Word of the Cross #3 REDEMPTION: "We have been purchased out of slavery to sin and released into freedom."

Redemption can refer to recovering ownership by paying a stipulated sum. Or, it can mean to set something or someone free from bondage by paying a ransom, such as for a kidnapped person or releasing a slave to become free.

Another example of redemption might be the pawning of an item of value then going back later to pay what is owed on the "loan" to get that item back. Some energetic people like to buy "fixer upper" houses and flip them, turning each into a beautiful home. All those are examples of redemption.

Read and Confirm the Truth

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. (Mark 10:45)

What did Jesus declare about His purpose in Mark 10:45?

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that He lavished on us. (Ephesians 1:7-8)

How are we redeemed according to Ephesians 1:7?

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 handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. (1 Peter 1:18-19)

From what are we redeemed (1 Peter 1:18-19)?

Understand the Truth

Biblical redemption is based on an understanding of the pain of slavery—a common practice in the Roman Empire at the time. Nearly 50% of the people were slaves—1 out of every 2 men, women, and children! The readers of the New Testament were very familiar with the hopelessness of being owned by a slave master, the buying and selling associated with the slave market, and the only two ways out of the miserable cycle—either die or be bought by someone who would set you free.

Jesus Christ declared that He came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many. It is through Christ's blood (the purchase price) that we are redeemed. We are redeemed from the slavery of sin and from the empty way of life handed down to us by our forefathers.

Redemption represents an important change in our relationship with God. Before Christ, mankind was in a state of slavery to sin and to death (spiritual & physical). Biblical redemption means that man has been purchased at a price, the blood of Christ, out of slavery and released into freedom to serve God in obedience.

Reflect & Respond to God in Prayer

Day 22

Christ's Finished Work on the Cross

Word of the Cross #3 REDEMPTION: " We have been purchased out of slavery to sin and released into freedom."

Read and Confirm the Truth

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole." He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit. (Galatians 3:13-14)

Based upon Galatians 3:13-14, from what did Jesus Christ redeem us?

Why?

...while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good. (Titus 2:13-14)

According to Titus 2:14, from what did Jesus Christ redeem us?

Why?

Understand the Truth

Jesus Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit and the blessing given to Abraham of righteousness by faith alone. Jesus Christ also redeemed us from all wickedness to purify for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good.

In the Bible, to redeem means to free someone from something bad by paying a penalty or a ransom (see Exodus 21:30; 13:13). Likewise, in the Greek world slaves could be redeemed by the payment of a price, either by someone else or by the slave himself. Similarly, Jesus redeems believers from the "curse of the law" (Gal. 3:13) and "all wickedness" (Titus 2:14). The ransom price is not silver or gold, but Christ's blood (Eph. 1:7; 1 Peter 1:19; Rev. 5:9). (*NIV Study Bible*, note on 1 Peter 1:19, page 1889)

Reflect & Respond to God in Prayer

Day 23

Christ's Finished Work on the Cross

Word of the Cross #3 REDEMPTION: " We have been purchased out of slavery to sin and released into freedom."

Read and Confirm the Truth

For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Colossians 1:13-14)

From what have we been rescued (Colossians 1:13-14)?

To what have we been brought?

And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." (Revelation 5:9-10)

According to Revelation 5:9-10, who has Jesus purchased with His blood?

For what purpose?

Understand the Truth

As God redeems us, He rescues us from the dominion of darkness and brings us into the kingdom of the Son He loves. We have forgiveness of sins because we are redeemed. God chose to purchase men and women for God from every tribe, language, people, and nation. Why? He wants us to be a kingdom and priests to serve Him.

Who will be redeemed? The one who puts her faith in Jesus Christ. When Jesus Christ died, He purchased redemption for everyone who would put her trust in Him. These are the redeemed ones representing every tribe and language and people and nation in Revelation 5:9-10.

Reflect & Respond to God in Prayer

Day 24

Christ's Finished Work on the Cross

Word of the Cross #3 REDEMPTION: "Man has been purchased by the blood of Christ out of slavery and released into freedom."

Read and Confirm the Truth

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means! Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. (Romans 6:15-18)

From Romans 6:15-18, being a slave to sin leads to what results?

Being a slave of God (obedience, righteousness) leads to what results?

Understand the Truth

The life of slavery to sin leads to someone offering their bodies to impurity and ever-increasing wickedness, free from the control of righteousness with no benefits, only shame. The end result is death. The life of freedom leads to someone offering their bodies to God and His righteousness leading to holiness, lavished grace and eternal life. Their life is characterized by hearts under obedience to God.

Since Jesus Christ has paid a full ransom price, the believer is a possession of God and is secure in freedom until His complete redemption (of the body) is accomplished.

Are you experiencing the freedom from slavery to sin in your life right now? If not, do you have confidence that you do not have to listen to the voice of your old slave master sin?

Reflect & Respond to God in Prayer

Day 25

Christ's Finished Work on the Cross

Word of the Cross #3 REDEMPTION: "Man has been purchased by the blood of Christ out of slavery and released into freedom."

Read and Confirm the Truth

I am using an example from everyday life because of your human limitations. Just as you used to offer yourselves as slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:19-23)

From Romans 6:19-23, being a slave to sin leads to what results?

Being a slave of God (obedience, righteousness) leads to what results?

For the wages of sin is _____, but the gift of God is _____ in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Understand the Truth

You have a new master now with greater power living inside of you—the Spirit of God Himself—who can give you freedom from any entrapping sin. Claim that freedom now. Choose to obey the Spirit inside you who will lead you and empower you to say “no” to sin.

Dwell on the FACT that you, as a believer, have been purchased by the blood of Christ out of slavery to sin and released into freedom as God's act of redemption. The third verse of In Christ Alone, illustrates redemption this way:

There in the ground His body lay; light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious Day; up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and He is mine - bought with the precious blood of Christ.

Reflect & Respond to God in Prayer

Day 26

Christ's Finished Work on the Cross

Word of the Cross #4 FORGIVENESS: "Man's guilt has been transferred to a substitute and taken away."

Forgiveness represents an important change in our relationship with God. Our problem before Christ: Mankind is guilty before a holy God. God's answer is to take away the guilt.

Read and Confirm the Truth

In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. (Hebrews 9:22)

He is to cast lots for the two goats—one lot for the Lord and the other for the scapegoat. Aaron shall bring the goat whose lot falls to the Lord and sacrifice it for a sin offering. But the goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the Lord to be used for making atonement by sending it into the wilderness as a scapegoat. (Leviticus 16:8-10)

"When Aaron has finished making atonement for the Most Holy Place, the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall bring forward the live goat. He is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites—all their sins—and put them on the goat's head. He shall send the goat away into the wilderness in the care of someone appointed for the task. The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a remote place; and the man shall release it in the wilderness. (Leviticus 16:20-22)

According to Hebrews 9:22, what was required for God to offer forgiveness?

According to Leviticus 16:8-10, what happened to the goat "for the Lord?"

According to Leviticus 16:20-22, what was the role of the scapegoat?

Understand the Truth

According to God's own plan, the shedding of blood was required for God to offer forgiveness to anyone. The Greek word translated "forgiveness" means literally, "to send off or send away." The result is "to separate the sin from the sinner" as described in Leviticus 16:20-22 (the role of the "scapegoat"). The scapegoat represented the sins of the people (both intentional and unintentional) being taken away from God's presence in the community.

Reflect and Respond to God in Prayer

Day 27

Christ's Finished Work on the Cross

Word of the Cross #4 FORGIVENESS: "Man's guilt has been transferred to a substitute and taken away."

Read and Confirm the Truth

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the Lord. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." (Jeremiah 31:34)

In John 1:29, what did John the Baptist publicly declare about Jesus?

What did God promise in Jeremiah 31:34 about man's sins?

Understand the Truth

John the Baptist announced as Jesus came to be baptized that Jesus was the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world through shedding His own blood.

God promises in Jeremiah 31:34 that one day He will forgive our wickedness and remember our sins no more. They will be removed from His mind. That happened when Jesus shed His own blood on the cross so that anyone who trusts in Jesus as Savior would have their sins removed. Isn't that wonderful?

Reflect and Respond to God in Prayer to God in Prayer

Day 28

Christ's Finished Work on the Cross

Word of the Cross #4 FORGIVENESS: "Man's guilt has been transferred to a substitute and taken away."

Read and Confirm the Truth

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; He has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. (Colossians 2:13-14)

According to Colossians 2:13-14, what did God do to our sins for us?

How many of our sins are covered by this action?

...that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:19)

What do you learn from 2 Corinthians 5:19 about God counting our sins against us?

God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

The action of God described in 2 Corinthians 5:21 is called the "Great Exchange." What is being exchanged?

Understand the Truth

On the cross, God canceled the measuring stick that made us continually guilty before God—the Law. That was taken away. As a result, God forgave us all our sins in Christ Jesus. ALL of our sins.

Since the believer's sins have been taken away, God does not hold them (sins) against him/her. Sins are applied to Jesus who takes them on our behalf. Forgiveness is complete and continual. As 2 Corinthians 5:19 says, [God] is "not counting men's sins against them." Only one sin separates any man or woman from eternal life with God—rejecting faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:16-18). What a relief that is!

Instead, God places all of our sins on His Son Jesus. God places Jesus' righteousness on us in the place of our sins. That is the Great Exchange. What a marvelous act of grace on God's part. We do not deserve this. It is a gift of love. The only requirement to receive this gift of love is by faith in Jesus Christ as Savior.

Reflect and Respond to God in Prayer

Day 29

Christ's Finished Work on the Cross

Word of the Cross #4 FORGIVENESS: "Man's guilt has been transferred to a substitute and taken away."

Read and Confirm the Truth

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, (Acts 3:19)

According to Acts 3:19, what happens when someone repents of their sin (turns away from it) and turns to God?

Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through Him everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses. (Acts 13:38-39)

According to Acts 13:38-39, to whom does God grant forgiveness?

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, His body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. (Hebrews 10:19-22)

What has God promised to do with your guilt as a result of Christ's offering (Hebrews 10:19-22)?

Understand the Truth

God extends His forgiveness to everyone who believes in Christ, turning away from their sin and toward God. According to Ephesians 1:7, forgiveness is something we possess as believers through Jesus' blood shed for us. We receive God's forgiveness for all our sins (past, present, and future) from the moment we place our faith in Jesus Christ. Yet, many believers continue to live in guilt.

Dwell on the FACT that Jesus promises to cleanse your conscience from guilt. Will you take Him at His word? If there is any past sin for which you are still feeling guilty, claim God's complete forgiveness today. You can simply tell God,

"Thank You for forgiving me, thank You for cleansing me...Thank You for being bigger than my sins, and being able to turn things around in ways I cannot imagine. With Jesus' help, I receive the assurance that You have forgiven me. Help my heart catch up with my head on this. Help me to see that You allowed me to go down that dark path into sin because You are able to redeem even the worst things we do." (Sue Bohlin, Probe Ministries, Sept. 2012)

Now, choose to believe you are forgiven and allow Jesus to cleanse your conscience from any residual guilt. Every time you think about it again, thank God for His amazing gift and experience "times of refreshing from the Lord (Acts 3:19)!"

Reflect and Respond to God in Prayer

Day 30

Christ's Finished Work on the Cross

Word of the Cross #5 JUSTIFICATION: "The believer in Jesus Christ is declared righteous before God."

Justification is a legal term that literally means, "to declare righteous, to declare not guilty." English New Testaments use "justified" and "made righteous" interchangeably, but both mean just about the same thing. Justification represents an important change in our relationship with God. Our problem before Christ: Man's need for perfect acceptability before a holy God.

Read and Confirm the Truth

Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin. (Romans 3:20)

What is declared in Romans 3:20 about being righteous in God's sight?

Understand the Truth

God's forgiveness and justification of the believer are not due to compromise on God's part or a relaxing of His holy standards. These are possible because the sacrifice of Jesus Christ fully honored and satisfied the righteous demands of a holy God.

In our culture, we use the term "acquitted" for someone who is declared not guilty. And, this acquittal is for the one wrong act of which the person is being accused. Yet, we do many other wrong things. For us as believers, God declares us "not guilty" of all sin, once and for all, based on our faith alone in His Son! He declares us righteous while we are still capable of sinning. What a deal!

"The term 'justified' describes what happens when someone believes in Christ as His Savior: from the negative viewpoint, He [God] declares the person to be not guilty; from the positive viewpoint, He [God] declares him to be righteous. He cancels the guilt of the person's sin and credits righteousness to him...God will declare everyone who puts his trust in Jesus not guilty but righteous...Christ's righteousness (His obedience to God's law and His sacrificial death) will be credited to believers as their own. Paul uses the word 'credited' nine times in [Romans] chapter 4 alone." (*NIV Study Bible*, Romans 3:24 note, p. 1710)

Reflect and Respond to God in Prayer

Day 31

Christ's Finished Work on the Cross

Word of the Cross #5 JUSTIFICATION: "The believer in Jesus Christ is declared righteous before God."

Read and Confirm the Truth

*But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of His blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance He had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—He did it to demonstrate His righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.
(Romans 3:21-26)*

How does anyone receive righteousness (or be justified) according to Romans 3:21-26?

God's justice demands punishment for sin. Based on what you have learned, how is His justice satisfied?

Who gets to receive the "not guilty" verdict?

Understand the Truth

So, God not only declares us "not guilty" of all sin through our faith in His Son, He also gives us a new status called "righteousness before God." It is not our own righteousness that does it. When God looks on you and me, He sees His Son's righteousness taking the place of our sin—even our sin after we've been believers for a long time.

Picture an accountant's spreadsheet dedicated to your life. On the left side of the page is the heading "your sins;" on the right side of the page is the heading "Christ's righteousness." When you and I sin (intentionally or unintentionally) for the rest of our lives, God replaces that sin on the "your sins" side with Christ's righteousness and puts your sin on His side—your sin is taken away (forgiveness). It is a continual balancing. Your sin never stays on your side of the page because God declares in 2 Corinthians 5:19 that He is "not counting men's sins against them." You are forever declared "not guilty" in His sight. Isn't that great news?!

Reflect and Respond to God in Prayer

Day 32

Christ's Finished Work on the Cross

Word of the Cross #5 JUSTIFICATION: "The believer in Jesus Christ is declared righteous before God."

Read and Confirm the Truth

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. (Romans 5:1-2)

According to Romans 5:1-2, what do we get as a result of being justified?

*For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life!
(Romans 5:10)*

If we were once enemies of God (Romans 5:10), what could peace with God (Romans 5:2) now mean?

For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now He has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation... (Colossians 1:19-22)

What does Paul declare about our change of relationship with God (Colossians 1:20-22)?

Understand the Truth

According to Romans 5:1-2, we now have peace with God as a benefit of being justified. We are no longer enemies but are reconciled to Him as saved ones. We are no longer alienated from God as enemies in our minds because of our evil behavior. Instead, we are now presented as "holy in His sight," without blemish and free from accusation.

Justification is God's act as Judge, where He declares a guilty sinner to be totally righteous in His sight, on the basis of Christ's finished work on the cross and that person's faith in Him. Justification is by faith alone and not depending upon any works a believer can do to earn acceptability in God's sight, even after they are saved.

Reflect and Respond to God in Prayer

Day 33

Christ's Finished Work on the Cross

Word of the Cross #5 JUSTIFICATION: "The believer in Jesus Christ is declared righteous before God."

Read and Confirm the Truth

Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by His Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. (Philippians 3:2-6)

But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. (Philippians 3:7-9)

In Philippians 3:2-6, Paul describes his “confidence in the flesh” (his efforts) to achieve righteousness before God. What did Paul list to prove that he had reasons to put confidence in the flesh?

What did Paul conclude about his efforts in Philippians 3:7-9?

What had Paul done to obtain his new righteous standing before God?

Understand the Truth

Paul considered his birth status, education, pursuit of knowledge, and zeal to get rid of Christians as evidence that he had plenty of reasons to convince himself that he was a “righteous” Jew and that God should have been pleased with his efforts. But, after knowing Christ, Paul declared all those things that he once thought were in his favor to be rubbish, a loss not a win when it comes to faith. Instead, he discovered that knowing Jesus Christ as Lord was far better. He now preferred to be found in Christ with the righteousness that comes through faith not by his own efforts. All Paul had to do to gain his new righteous standing before God was to trust in Jesus Christ as His Savior and Lord. That is true for you as well.

Reflect and Respond to God in Prayer

Day 34

Christ's Finished Work on the Cross

Word of the Cross #5 JUSTIFICATION: "The believer in Jesus Christ is declared righteous before God."

Read and Confirm the Truth

So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. (Galatians 3:26-27)

What does Paul declare about believers in Galatians 3:26-27?

Understand the Truth

In Galatians 3, Paul declares that every believer was a child of God by faith and, therefore, clothed with Christ. When God looks on you and me, He sees Jesus and His righteousness, not all of our faults. It is an amazing plan that is totally based on His grace toward us, not anything we have earned by our own efforts.

If you are still wrestling with the notion that you are not good enough to please God, remember that no one can ever be good enough on his or her own merits to please God. Dwell on the FACT of your justification—being declared righteous so that you are now perfectly acceptable to a holy God based on your faith in His Son.

How do you feel about this? When you are tempted to think that God could not possibly accept you because of your weaknesses and guilty past, what should you declare to yourself?

Reflect and Respond to God in Prayer

Day 35

Christ's Finished Work on the Cross

Word of the Cross #6 SANCTIFICATION: "Set apart as God's possession for His exclusive use."

Like propitiation, sanctification is a word we do not use in our daily vocabulary. To be sanctified means to be made holy. To be "holy" means to be "set apart for special use." Because the two words—sanctified and holy—are so closely connected, they are used interchangeably in our English translations. They mean the same thing, though.

Read and Confirm the Truth

I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me. (Acts 26:17-18)

According to Acts 26:17-18, believers in Jesus Christ have their eyes opened to turn from what and to what?

Understand the Truth

Sanctification represents another important change in our standing with God. Our problem before Christ: Man's need to be separated from the world and separated to God. This is accomplished through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as all believers are turned from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. God demands that we be holy as He is holy (1 Peter 1:16). God makes us holy in His sight by our faith in Jesus Christ.

Reflect and Respond to God in Prayer

Day 36

Christ's Finished Work on the Cross

Word of the Cross #6 SANCTIFICATION: "Set apart as God's possession for His exclusive use."

Read and Confirm the Truth

And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (Hebrews 10:10)

As stated in Hebrews 10:10, how are we made holy/sanctified in God's sight?

... for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." (1 Peter 1:16)

What does God desire of us (1 Peter 1:16)?

Understand the Truth

Sanctification is more than just having a different status before God. It provides a different purpose as well. Every believer has been set apart as God's special, beloved possession for His exclusive use. To be set apart for special use is similar to using fine china and silverware for special occasions. It is the opposite of ordinary and common. You are God's special, beloved possession—called by Him to be dedicated to His service. How sweet is that!

Reflect and Respond to God in Prayer

Day 37

Christ's Finished Work on the Cross

Word of the Cross #6 SANCTIFICATION: "Set apart as God's possession for His exclusive use."

Read and Confirm the Truth

To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be His holy people: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 1:7)
Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the church of God in Corinth, together with all His holy people throughout Achaia (2 Corinthians 1:1)
Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To God's holy people in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus: (Ephesians 1:1)

Who, in particular, are being called "holy people" (same as the word "saints") in Romans 1:7; 2 Corinthians 1:1; and Ephesians 1:1?

Understand the Truth

Sanctified ones are called "holy people" and "saints" in the New Testament, depending on the translation. Whenever you see "saints," "holy ones" or "holy people," those words are translating the Greek word *hagios*. Paul used the word *hagios* to describe the believers in Rome, Corinth, and Ephesus. Many translators choose to use the English word "saint" to represent Paul's intended meaning.

The word "saint" comes from the Greek word *hagios*, "holy," meaning separated from sin and dedicated to God. All believers are called "holy ones" (*hagioi*) based upon their faith in Jesus Christ, not on any exceptional behavior. A saint is identified by position, what God declares to be true about you. Every believer is one of God's saints, totally loved and accepted by him—considered a saint of God by position, not by behavior. (*Vines Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, pages 307-308)

Believers are made holy by Christ's death on the cross in their relational status before God. That means you are one of God's saints by faith in Jesus Christ. That is your status before God.

Reflect and Respond to God in Prayer

Day 38

Christ's Finished Work on the Cross

Word of the Cross #6 SANCTIFICATION: "Set apart as God's possession for His exclusive use."

Read and Confirm the Truth

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

Believers are also "being made holy" by the Holy Spirit as an ongoing reality. Into what is the Holy Spirit transforming us according to 2 Corinthians 3:18?

For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. (Romans 8:29)

In "being made holy" by the Holy Spirit, to what are we being conformed in Romans 8:29?

Understand the Truth

Believers are made holy by Christ's death on the cross in their relational status before God. That means you are one of God's saints by faith in Jesus Christ. That is your status before God.

Believers are also "being made holy" in their thoughts, words, and actions by the work of the Holy Spirit. This is ongoing from the moment of salvation until the Lord comes or the believer dies when our "being made holy" is complete. The goal of the Spirit's work is to transform us into the likeness of Christ so that we become in thought and behavior what we are in status—holy as God is holy.

Dwell on the FACT that God declares you holy because of your faith in Christ. You are set apart by Him, for Him. This is your status before God because of your faith.

Your behavior matches your position when you submit to the Spirit's work to intentionally separate you from what God calls sin and then commit yourself to being used for His purposes—24/7.

Reflect on how you can commit yourself to God's use throughout a typical day as you care for your household, be a parent or grandparent to children, work for an employer, interact with people around you, or spend your leisure time.

Reflect and Respond to God in Prayer

Day 39

Christ's Finished Work on the Cross

Read and Confirm the Truth

He himself bore our sin in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed. (1 Peter 2:24)

Because Jesus bore our sin in His body on the cross, by His wounds you have been _____.

Understand the Truth

Because of the cross, you can dwell on the FACT that God was fully satisfied by Jesus' finished work on the cross. God is no longer angry at your sin because you believe in His Son. You can dwell on the FACT that the barrier of sin has been taken away and complete reconciliation between you and God is possible because of Jesus' finished work on the cross. Your relationship with God is restored. You can dwell on the FACT that you, as a believer, have been purchased by the blood of Christ out of slavery and released into freedom as God's act of redemption. You have a new master with greater power living inside of you, the Spirit of God Himself, who can give you freedom from any entrapping sin.

You can also dwell on the FACT that you are completely forgiven of your sins and that Jesus promises to cleanse your conscience from guilt. You can dwell on the FACT that you have been declared righteous (justified) and are now perfectly acceptable to a holy God based on your faith in His Son. And, you can dwell on the FACT that God declares you holy because of your faith in Christ. You are sanctified—set apart by Him, for Him.

Now, consider these truths about you by completing the following statements:

- * Because God is no longer angry at my sin (propitiation)...
- * Because I am reconciled to God...
- * Because I am redeemed...
- * Because I am forgiven...
- * Because I am justified...
- * Because I am sanctified...

Reflect and Respond to God in Prayer

Day 40

Christ's Finished Work on the Cross

Read and Confirm the Truth

He himself bore our sin in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed. (1 Peter 2:24)

Jesus bore our sin in His body on the cross so that we might do what?

Understand the Truth

Mankind's disease was sin. Because of this disease, we were: 1) never able to make ourselves well, 2) in bondage to the disease, 3) alienated from the one who could heal us, 4) carrying the guilt of having the disease, 5) experiencing cumulative effects of the disease, and 6) unable to live a purposeful life. Jesus' finished work on the cross removed all these effects of the disease so that "by His wounds you have been healed" (1 Peter 2:24)—truly healed!

An understanding of Christ's finished work on the cross is the basis for a firm knowledge of our identity in Him—a foundational truth for successful Christian living. It was totally God's work to make sinners acceptable again in His sight. Our proper response is to trust and rest in His work, and to continually offer Him thanks from grateful hearts along with our willing service.

In a way—in spite of the power and importance of the six words of the cross—it can be said that they all have been accomplished to make the seventh great word possible: "Regeneration," the restoration of spiritual life. This is what we receive as a result of Jesus' resurrection.

Reflect and Respond to God in Prayer

This 40-day devotional is adapted from the 150-day devotional, *Graceful Living Today*.
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