

JESUS is Good News

*Valerie
Anderson
Wynalda*



DEDICATION

This booklet is the result of a series of thankful thoughts I posted on Facebook in November 2020. My husband, Pete, and several friends urged me to compile and print them, so I dedicate this to them.

I hope you will find these daily reflections as meaningful to read as they were for me in writing them.



PREFACE

Although I've known Jesus Christ as my Savior since I was 4 years old, over the past few months I have gained a tremendous awe and deep appreciation for the GOOD NEWS (also known as the "GOSPEL") and all that it means to be IN CHRIST. This booklet expresses some of the discoveries I've made as to why the gospel is *indeed* good news.

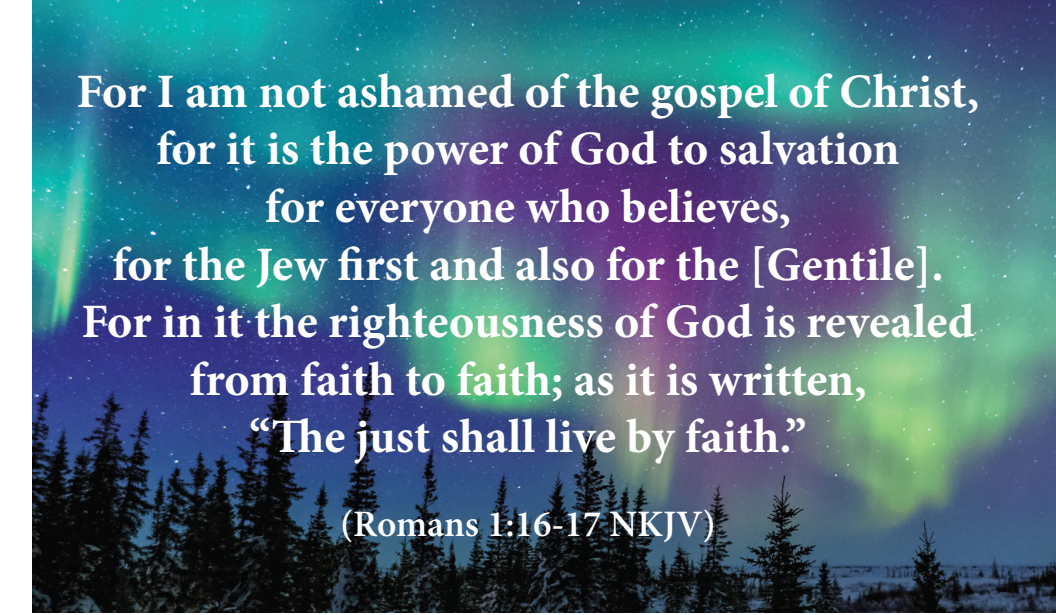
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A vibrant aurora borealis (northern lights) display in shades of green and blue against a dark night sky. Below the lights, a dense forest of evergreen trees is visible, their branches dusted with snow. The scene is serene and majestic.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ,
for it is the power of God to salvation
for everyone who believes,
for the Jew first and also for the [Gentile].
For in it the righteousness of God is revealed
from faith to faith; as it is written,
“The just shall live by faith.”

(Romans 1:16-17 NKJV)


GOOD NEWS / GOSPEL 101: SALVATION

God created human beings in His image, so every human being is inherently valuable. God uniquely designed each and every one of us to be a reflection of His perfection.

The bad news is that all human beings are sinful (disobedient to God) because we're all descendants of the first human who sinned, and because of our own sins. We suffer from "systemic sin," and the consequence of sin is eternal death.

What's the solution? Jesus Christ, the sinless God-man, made a way for us to be saved. He paid for our sins by sacrificing His life for ours. He took on Himself all that was wrong with us and gave us all that was right with Him in exchange. What a trade! Then He rose from the dead to offer us a new, eternal life in Him.

The salvation God offers is for everyone, and He offers it freely to each of us regardless of our past or what we've done or who we are now! All we have to do is believe it by faith. Is that good news, or what?!



**If anyone is in Christ,
he is a new creation;
old things have passed away;
behold, all things
have become new.**

(2 Corinthians 5:17 NKJV)

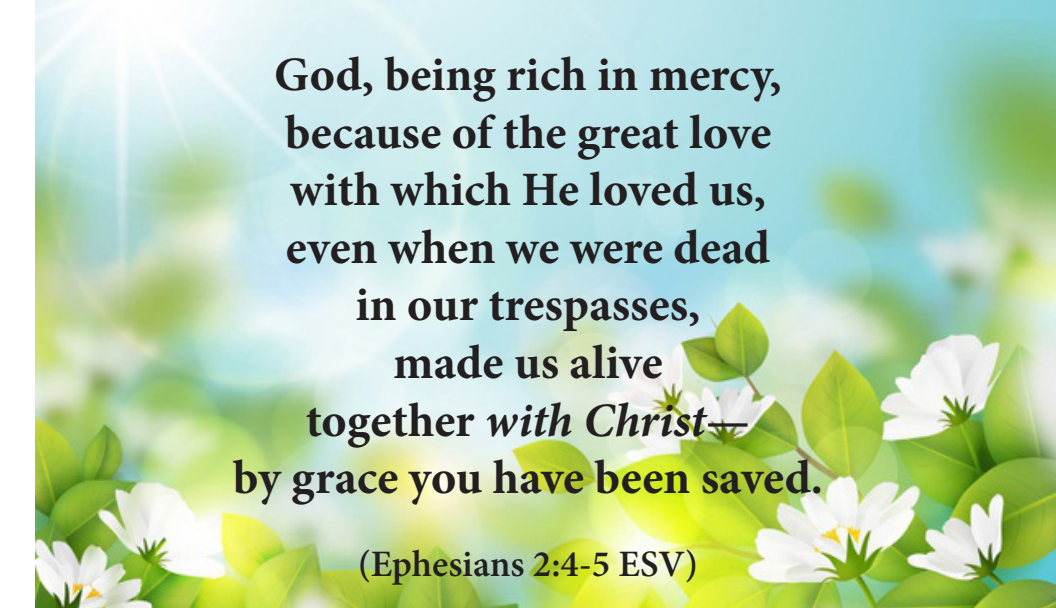
GOOD NEWS / GOSPEL 201: IDENTITY

Believing in Jesus for salvation is not just a "fire escape" to eternal life. When we are in Christ, we are given a completely new identity.

We hear so much today about identity and identifying with or as something. When we're saved, we receive the identity of Jesus. And when we understand Who Jesus is, identifying with Him is truly transformational! We are no longer defined by who others say we are or how they treat us, or even by how we think of ourselves. Instead, we're defined by who God says we are: loved, forgiven, justified, accepted, blameless, righteous, and the list goes on.

That's why Jesus could say He was sent *"to proclaim good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

Those of us who have been saved, are compelled by Jesus' love to be His ambassadors and share this truly good news with the world.



**God, being rich in mercy,
because of the great love
with which He loved us,
even when we were dead
in our trespasses,
made us alive
together *with Christ*—
by grace you have been saved.**

(Ephesians 2:4-5 ESV)

ALIVE

There was a dead raccoon right in the middle of the driveway to my office the other day. I inched around it, parked and went for a snow shovel. With a lot of cringing, grimacing and “Eww’s” I shoveled the stinky stiff raccoon, with its entrails hanging out, to the field on the other side of the road.

This verse says that’s what we are in our sin—dead, bloated, putrid roadkill. If I’m grossed out by that thought, how repulsive must we be in our sinfulness to a holy God! And yet, astonishingly, He doesn’t just shovel us off to the side of the road and leave us to rot.

What makes the difference? God created us to be in relationship with Him. We ran away and were overrun by sin—hence, roadkill. Yet God loves us with such an immense love that He raises us to life out of the deadness of our sins. I’m so thankful He didn’t abandon me to the deadly, disgusting consequences of sin, and I’m amazed by His love that restored me to life!

**For the wages of sin is death,
but the free gift of God is
eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

(Romans 6:23 ESV)

ETERNAL LIFE

I have a hard time wrapping my finite mind around the concept of **eternal** life. This line from the well-known hymn, *Amazing Grace*, gives me a glimmer of insight, though:

*When we've been there 10,000 years . . .
We've no less days to sing God's praise
than when we first begun.*

Think about that. I probably started singing God's praise around age 2, so that means I've sung His praise for roughly 20,512 days now . . . and yet I don't have any less days left to praise Him than when I first started. That's eternity!

God offers us the free gift—bought and paid for by Jesus—of *eternal* life. Talk about a gift that keeps on giving! Since I still can't fully grasp how amazing that is, all I can do is echo Paul in exclaiming, "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!"

**In Him we have redemption
through His blood,
the forgiveness of sins,
according to the riches
of His grace.**

(Ephesians 1:7 NKJV)




FORGIVEN

I remember vividly the first time I experienced what it really meant to be forgiven. I'd committed "minor" sins before, but this time I'd really blown it. I avoided reading my Bible because I knew it would only point out my sin and pile on the guilt when I already felt miserable.

When I finally plucked up my courage and surreptitiously opened my Bible . . . verse after verse about God's love jumped out at me. I wasn't expecting that, and it totally undid me. As it says in Romans, the kindness of God leads us to repentance.

I knew Jesus had forgiven my sins when I received Him as my Savior, but now I knew—really knew in a deeply personal way—the teary-eyed, heart-torn wonder of God's grace and forgiveness.

The words of an old song express it well: *I felt every teardrop, when in darkness you cried, and I strove to remind you, that for those tears I died.*



[God] seated us with Him
in the heavenly places
in Christ Jesus.

(Ephesians 2:6 ESV)

SEATED

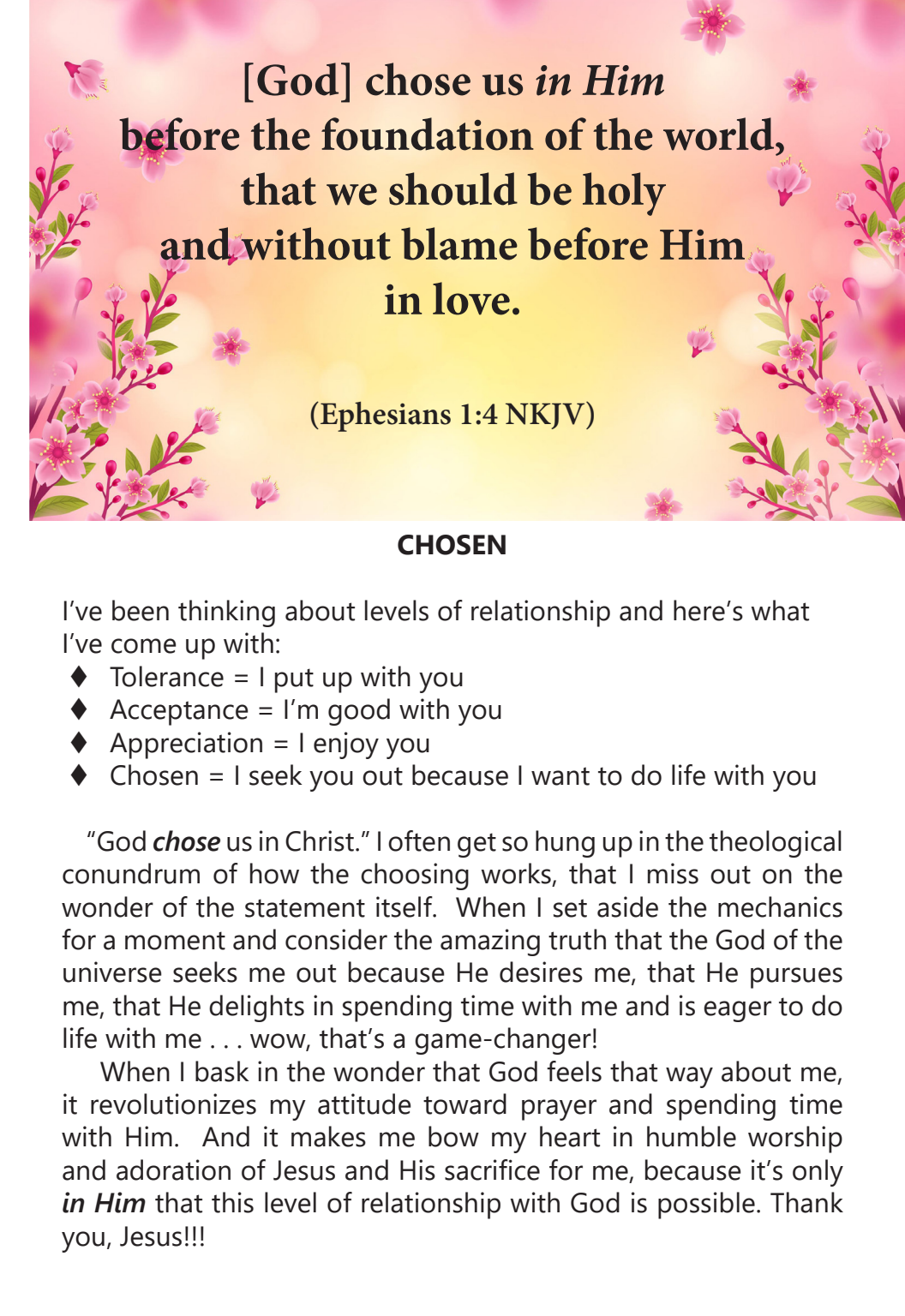
How many times have I walked into a dining room and stood awkwardly, searching for a place to sit with (dare I hope) friendly people?

Only this time someone rushes up to me exclaiming, "You're here! We saved a seat for you with us over there!" When I turn to look, a beloved friend is waving his arms and excitedly pointing to an empty seat beside him.

That would be a nice "How do you spell relief?" kind of story, but it's so much better than that!

Because the dining room is not some school cafeteria, it's a royal banquet hall, and the Someone who meets me at the door is God Himself!!! And the beloved Friend excitedly motioning me over to sit beside Him at the head table? That's JESUS!!! (Stop for a moment and make a mental list of the most powerful and influential people ever in the world, whether good or bad. Got a list? Jesus is far and away above all of them!) Yes, I am seated with *that* Jesus, whose Name is above every name-drop imaginable!

Wow! Thank you, Almighty God and awesome, amazing, beloved Jesus, for making me welcome and saving me a seat next to You! As I go about my day today, I want to live out of that reality.

The image features a decorative border of pink cherry blossoms and green leaves framing the central text. The background is a soft, warm gradient of pink and yellow.

**[God] chose us *in Him*
before the foundation of the world,
that we should be holy
and without blame before Him
in love.**

(Ephesians 1:4 NKJV)

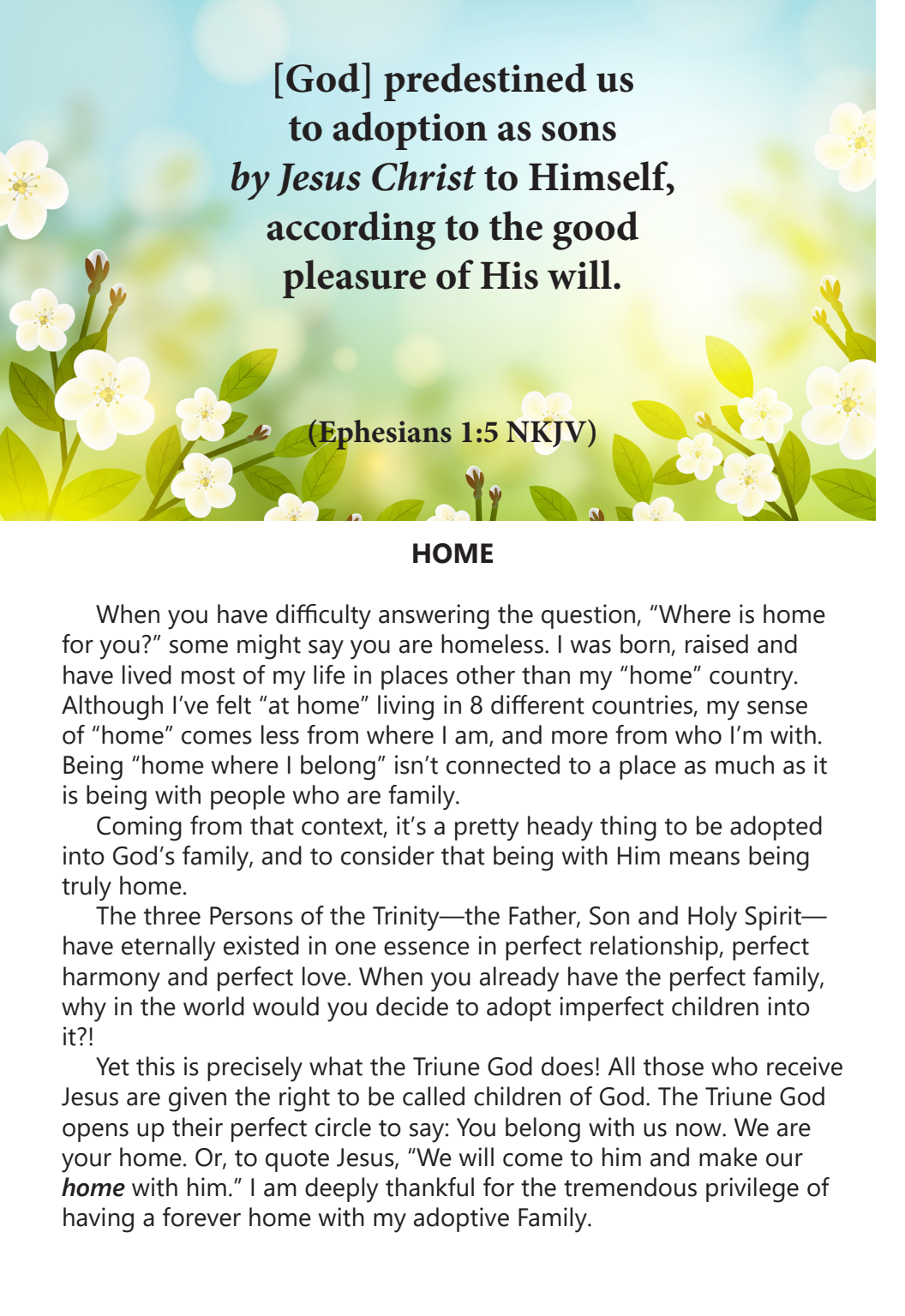
CHOSEN

I've been thinking about levels of relationship and here's what I've come up with:

- ◆ Tolerance = I put up with you
- ◆ Acceptance = I'm good with you
- ◆ Appreciation = I enjoy you
- ◆ Chosen = I seek you out because I want to do life with you

"God **chose** us in Christ." I often get so hung up in the theological conundrum of how the choosing works, that I miss out on the wonder of the statement itself. When I set aside the mechanics for a moment and consider the amazing truth that the God of the universe seeks me out because He desires me, that He pursues me, that He delights in spending time with me and is eager to do life with me . . . wow, that's a game-changer!

When I bask in the wonder that God feels that way about me, it revolutionizes my attitude toward prayer and spending time with Him. And it makes me bow my heart in humble worship and adoration of Jesus and His sacrifice for me, because it's only ***in Him*** that this level of relationship with God is possible. Thank you, Jesus!!!



**[God] predestined us
to adoption as sons
by *Jesus Christ* to Himself,
according to the good
pleasure of His will.**

(Ephesians 1:5 NKJV)

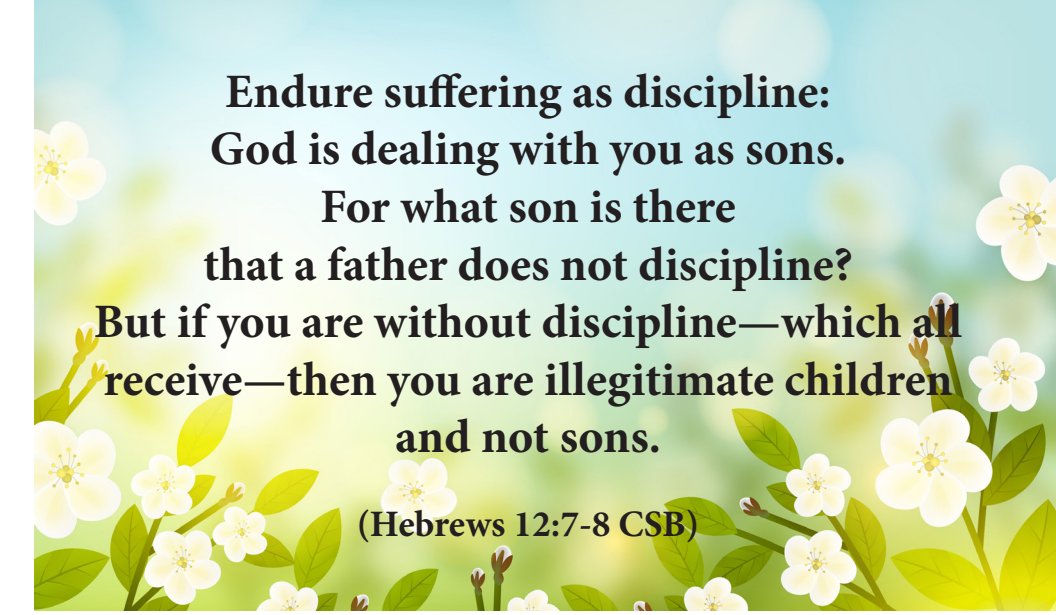
HOME

When you have difficulty answering the question, “Where is home for you?” some might say you are homeless. I was born, raised and have lived most of my life in places other than my “home” country. Although I’ve felt “at home” living in 8 different countries, my sense of “home” comes less from where I am, and more from who I’m with. Being “home where I belong” isn’t connected to a place as much as it is being with people who are family.

Coming from that context, it’s a pretty heady thing to be adopted into God’s family, and to consider that being with Him means being truly home.

The three Persons of the Trinity—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit—have eternally existed in one essence in perfect relationship, perfect harmony and perfect love. When you already have the perfect family, why in the world would you decide to adopt imperfect children into it?!

Yet this is precisely what the Triune God does! All those who receive Jesus are given the right to be called children of God. The Triune God opens up their perfect circle to say: You belong with us now. We are your home. Or, to quote Jesus, “We will come to him and make our **home** with him.” I am deeply thankful for the tremendous privilege of having a forever home with my adoptive Family.



**Endure suffering as discipline:
God is dealing with you as sons.**

**For what son is there
that a father does not discipline?**

**But if you are without discipline—which all
receive—then you are illegitimate children
and not sons.**

(Hebrews 12:7-8 CSB)

LEGITIMATE

A witty poster entitled ***Mother's House Rules*** used to hang in my parents' house, enumerating the following:

- I. Mother is right.
- II. Mother is always right.
- III. Even if an underling is right, Article I applies.


◆ ◆ ◆

- X. Mother has to think for everyone else.

I confess, I often appropriate those rules in my own life, substituting myself for Mother. I pretty much always think I'm right, and it takes a lot to persuade me I'm not!

The verse today is an extension of what being adopted entails. Although I don't like being corrected, the Lord has saved me from myself so many times, that I've learned to be sensitive to the conviction of His Spirit. In fact—after I've had my hissy fit—I've gotten in the habit of listening for that still, small voice . . . and if I don't hear it, of asking: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: see if there be some wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

When all is said and done, I'd much rather be disciplined by my loving Father as His legitimate child, than left to go my own way.



**In Him you also trusted,
after you heard the word of truth, the gospel
of your salvation;
in whom also, having believed, you were
sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.**

(Ephesians 1:13 NKJV)

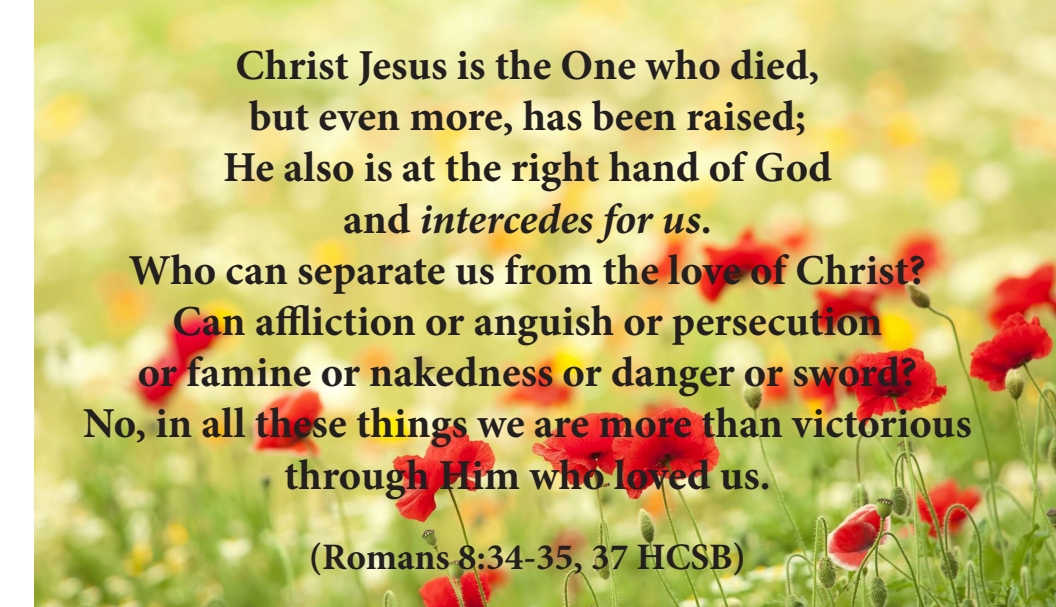
SEALED

Do you know what an ***apostille*** is (not to be confused with an *apostle*)? I certainly didn't, until the Turkish government required it to get a work permit for a Bahamian citizen we were hiring to teach at our school. I discovered an apostille is a special type of international notarization—a seal that can only be obtained from the State Department, certifying that someone's personal documents are legitimate.

It's amazing to think that the Holy Spirit is my apostille, certifying that my belief in the gospel and the trust I have placed in Jesus is legitimate.

My Holy Spirit apostille validates my adoption certificate into God's family: "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God." (Romans 8:16) On the flip-side, without the Holy Spirit apostille, there's no proof of my identity in Christ: "Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His." (Romans 8:9)

Thank you, God for stamping me with Your Holy Spirit!



Christ Jesus is the One who died,
but even more, has been raised;
He also is at the right hand of God
and *intercedes* for us.

Who can separate us from the love of Christ?

Can affliction or anguish or persecution
or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

No, in all these things we are more than victorious
through Him who loved us.

(Romans 8:34-35, 37 HCSB)

FAITH

Jesus intercedes for me . . . but what is He praying for on my behalf? I know He's not putting in a good word for me so my salvation remains intact. He already secured that through His death and resurrection.

I think He's praying the same thing He prayed for Peter: "Satan has asked to sift you like wheat. But I have prayed for you that your *faith* may not fail."

Why is *faith* such a big deal?

◆ Because when our prayers aren't answered the way we expected—*faith* is the substance of what we hope for, the evidence of things not yet seen. (Heb. 11:1)

◆ Because when Satan attacks—the shield of *faith* enables us to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. (Eph. 6:16)

◆ Because when troubles in this world threaten to overwhelm us—this is the victory that has conquered the world: our *faith*. (1 John 5:4)
In fact, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

It's not the amount of our faith that matters—a mustard seed is pretty small—it's Who our faith is in. Bottom line: If Jesus could rise from the dead, He's got this. He's just praying for us to keep the faith.

**To the praise of the glory of His grace,
wherein He hath made us accepted
in the Beloved.**

(Ephesians 1:6 KJV)

ACCEPTED

Growing up as a missionary kid, I was regularly reminded by my parents of the need to “be a good testimony.” I can appreciate that because as humans, we judge people by outward appearances. How a person behaves—and potentially how their children behave—typically shapes the impression we form of their character and, by extension, their message. It made sense that how I acted could influence how people perceived my parents, and in turn, the gospel message they sought to convey.

Over time however, I twisted “being a good testimony” so as to give people a positive impression of *the gospel*, into needing to “be a good testimony” so as to give *God* a positive impression of *me*! I understood that God had saved me on the basis of His grace, not because of any righteous works I’d done. But after that, I developed a performance-based relationship with Him in order to stay in His good graces.

God’s response: “Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh, i.e. through human effort?” (Galatians 3:3)



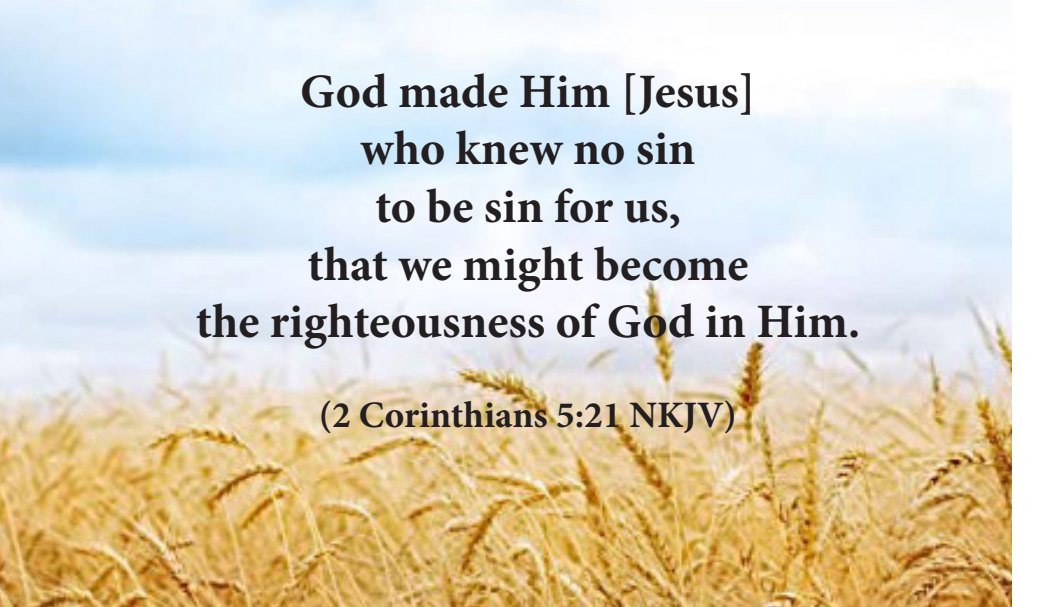
**Are you so foolish?
Having begun in the Spirit,
are you now being made perfect
by the flesh?**

(Galatians 3:3 NKJV)

It's taken a while for me to internalize the full message of the gospel—that God accepted me completely in the Beloved (aka Jesus) when I was saved, and there's nothing I can do now to make myself more acceptable to Him.

My M.O. is slowly transitioning from the erroneous idea that I need to "be a good testimony" in order to maintain God's acceptance, to starting every day with the assurance that I am *already* fully accepted by God and walking worthy of that identity.

I want my life to "be a good testimony" of what Jesus has done for me, not of what I am doing for Him.



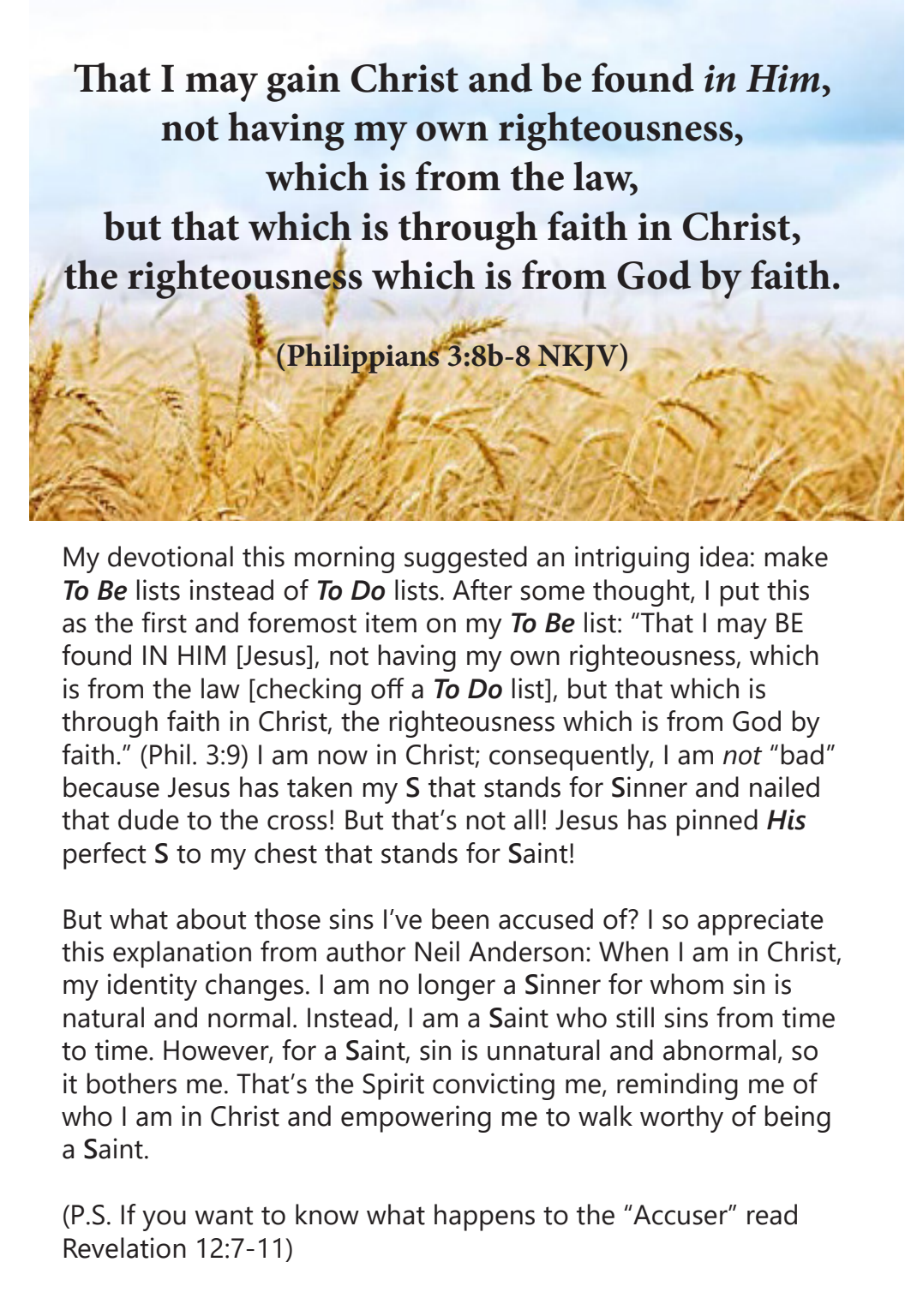
God made Him [Jesus]
who knew no sin
to be sin for us,
that we might become
the righteousness of God in Him.

(2 Corinthians 5:21 NKJV)

SAINT

I am a **To Do** list kind of girl. In fact, **To Do** lists are my preferred method of stress management because they're a way of giving me confidence that I've got my world under control. They ensure that tasks don't fall through the cracks, and checking things off my **To Do** list gives me a sense of accomplishment. The downside is that I easily become OCD about completing my **To Do** lists, and I ignore, run over or get irritated with people who get in my way.

The "Accuser" has a heyday with this: "You spoke harshly to your mother when she called for your help—you are bad! You honked at the driver who waited at the light instead of turning right on red—you are bad! You only pretended to listen when your co-worker needed to talk—you are bad! You neglected to ask your friend how her medical procedure went—you are bad! Let me just pin this **S** to your chest because you're a Sinner, not Superwoman." Ouch!



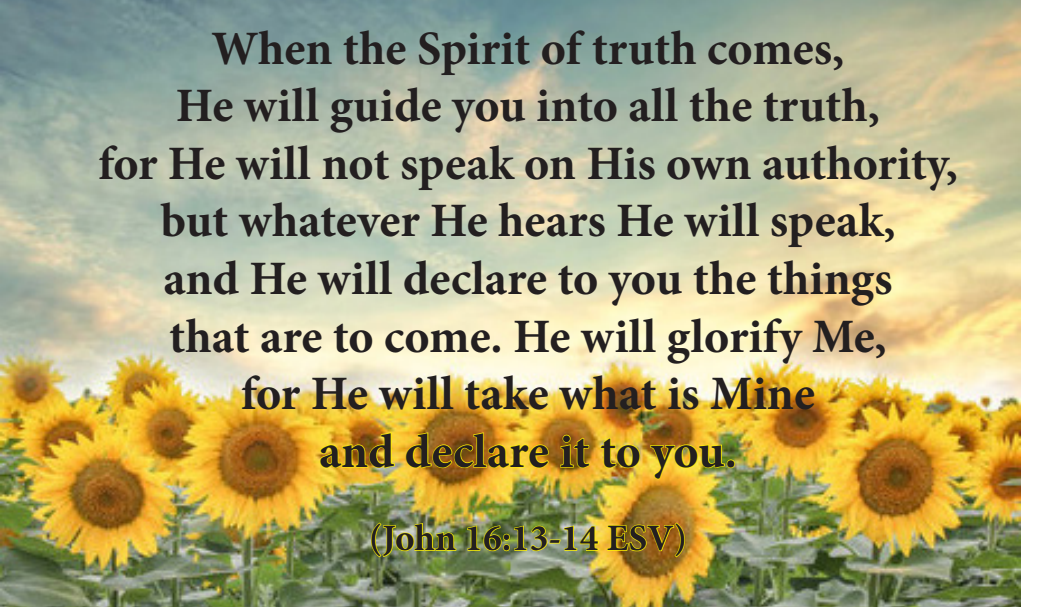
**That I may gain Christ and be found *in Him*,
not having my own righteousness,
which is from the law,
but that which is through faith in Christ,
the righteousness which is from God by faith.**

(Philippians 3:8b-8 NKJV)

My devotional this morning suggested an intriguing idea: make ***To Be*** lists instead of ***To Do*** lists. After some thought, I put this as the first and foremost item on my ***To Be*** list: "That I may BE found IN HIM [Jesus], not having my own righteousness, which is from the law [checking off a ***To Do*** list], but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith." (Phil. 3:9) I am now in Christ; consequently, I am *not* "bad" because Jesus has taken my **S** that stands for **Sinner** and nailed that dude to the cross! But that's not all! Jesus has pinned ***His*** perfect **S** to my chest that stands for **Saint**!

But what about those sins I've been accused of? I so appreciate this explanation from author Neil Anderson: When I am in Christ, my identity changes. I am no longer a **Sinner** for whom sin is natural and normal. Instead, I am a **Saint** who still sins from time to time. However, for a **Saint**, sin is unnatural and abnormal, so it bothers me. That's the Spirit convicting me, reminding me of who I am in Christ and empowering me to walk worthy of being a **Saint**.

(P.S. If you want to know what happens to the "Accuser" read Revelation 12:7-11)



When the Spirit of truth comes,
He will guide you into all the truth,
for He will not speak on His own authority,
but whatever He hears He will speak,
and He will declare to you the things
that are to come. He will glorify Me,
for He will take what is Mine
and declare it to you.

(John 16:13-14 ESV)

TRUTH

Do you find yourself saying, “I just don’t know who or what to believe anymore!”? I’ve said that so many times in recent months, it’s almost become a mantra.

But I stop saying it when I pray. Because when I pray, I’m praying to Jesus who declared Himself to be the **Truth** (I believe Him, though whether I believe or not, He remains the **Truth**). I have also received the indwelling Spirit of **Truth**. (You can’t be the Spirit of **Truth** and lie, so I believe Him.) Jesus promised that the Spirit of Truth will guide me into all the **Truth**. He won’t speak on His own; rather, He will take the **Truth** of Jesus and make it known to me. Wow! That’s a lot of **Truth**!

I appreciate this additional insight from Charles Spurgeon: “Discernment is not a matter of simply telling the difference between right and wrong; rather it is the difference between right and *almost* right.” If I need discernment to know what is **Truth**, I just need to make sure I’m listening to the right Person—the 3rd Person of the Trinity, the Spirit of **Truth**!

**Christ,
in whom are hidden
all the treasures of wisdom
and knowledge.**

(Colossians 2:3 NKJV)

KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM


My sister recently gifted us with an Echo Show device, and we've been quite entertained by asking Alexa all sorts of questions. (You've probably done this with Siri or OK Google on your phone.) It's impressive that within moments, she can research a question and produce an answer based on the information available to her.

In Christ, we have a way better source of information than Alexa! ***In Christ*** are stored **all** the treasures of knowledge . . . as in unlimited and infinite! Far more than the Internet!

However, information by itself is lacking, unless we have the ability to use and apply it. I've watched a lot of YouTube tutorials, but unless I can figure out how to apply that information to the task at hand, it's not terribly helpful. Along with knowledge we need wisdom.

And here's the awesome thing . . . ***in Christ*** are also stored **all** the treasures of wisdom! In Him we get the whole package.

What a gift! Thank you, Jesus, that You have the answers to **all** our questions. I want my default to become: Ask Jesus!



**For the Spirit searches all things,
yes, the deep things of God.
No one knows the things of God
except the Spirit of God.
Now we have received . . .
the Spirit who is from God,
that we might know the things
that have been freely given to us by God.**

(1 Corinthians 2:10-12 NKJV)

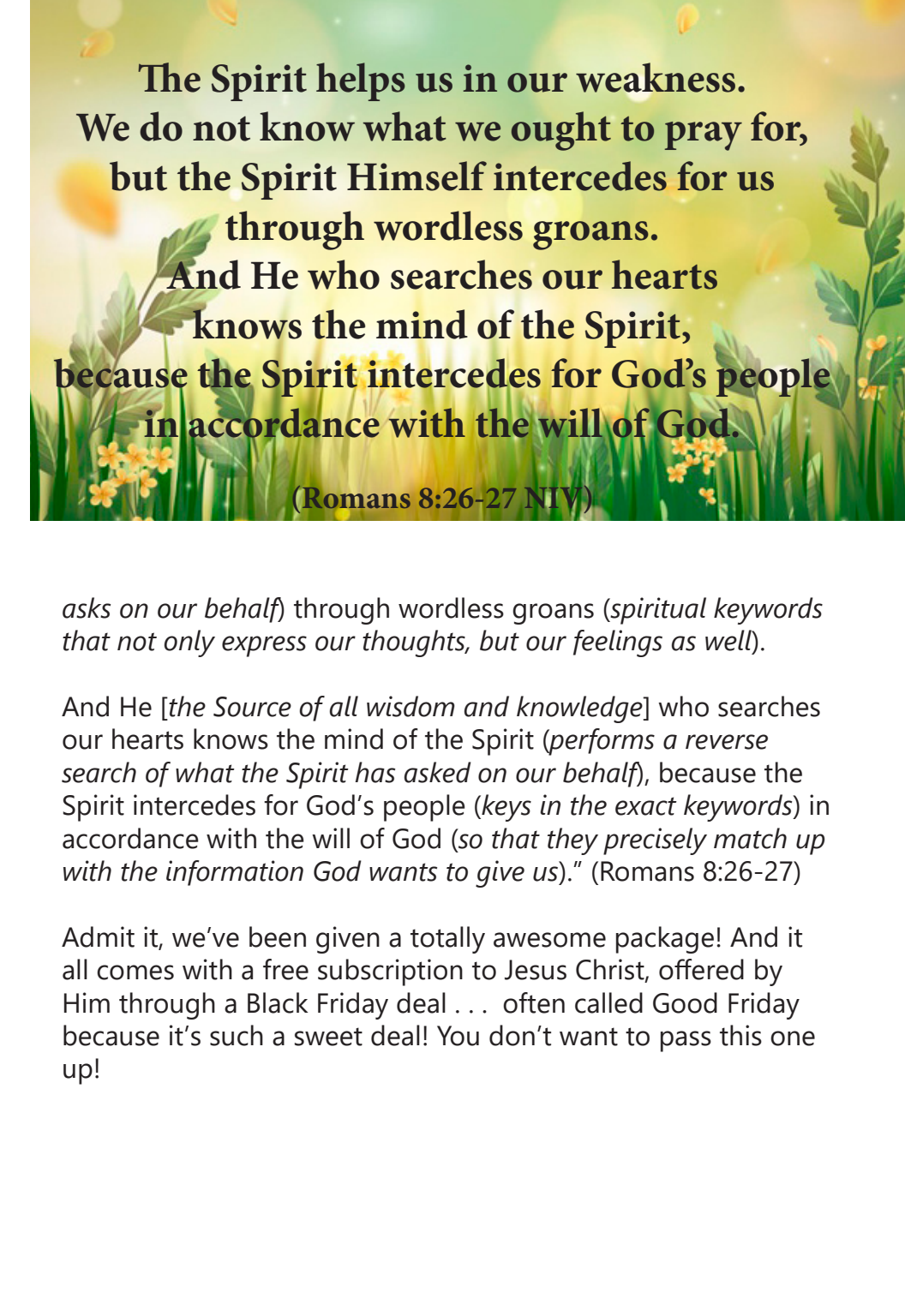
BEST. SEARCH-ENGINE. EVER.

Hands down, better than Google, Yahoo, Bing or whatever other search-engines are out there. What is it? The Holy Spirit! Seriously?? Absolutely! Here's why.

All the knowledge and wisdom possible are hidden in Christ (Colossians 2:3). If we're in Christ, we have free access, but we need a powerful search-engine that can search the depths of Christ and find the information we need. That's why God gives us the Spirit who is capable of searching all things, yes, the deep things of God!

We all know that in order to perform an efficient and effective search, you need to use keywords that will guide you to the exact and thorough answers you're looking for.

Here's what's so cool—the Spirit is able to do something powerful that no other search-engine can offer: “The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray (*ask*) for. But the Spirit himself intercedes for us (*intervenes and*



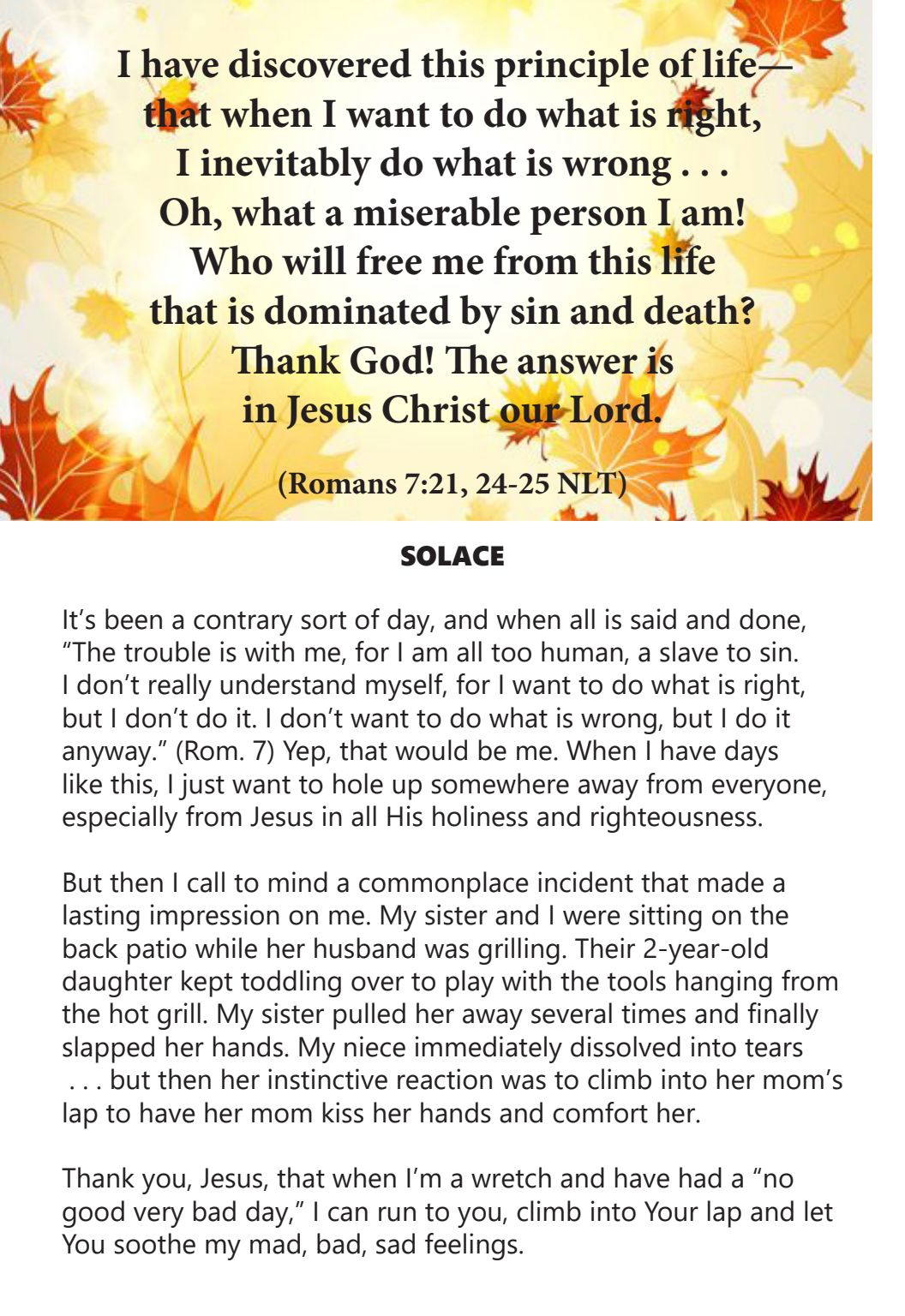
**The Spirit helps us in our weakness.
We do not know what we ought to pray for,
but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us
through wordless groans.
And He who searches our hearts
knows the mind of the Spirit,
because the Spirit intercedes for God's people
in accordance with the will of God.**

(Romans 8:26-27 NIV)

asks on our behalf) through wordless groans (spiritual keywords that not only express our thoughts, but our feelings as well).

And He [*the Source of all wisdom and knowledge*] who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit (*performs a reverse search of what the Spirit has asked on our behalf*), because the Spirit intercedes for God's people (*keys in the exact keywords*) in accordance with the will of God (*so that they precisely match up with the information God wants to give us*)."
(Romans 8:26-27)

Admit it, we've been given a totally awesome package! And it all comes with a free subscription to Jesus Christ, offered by Him through a Black Friday deal . . . often called Good Friday because it's such a sweet deal! You don't want to pass this one up!



**I have discovered this principle of life—
that when I want to do what is right,
I inevitably do what is wrong . . .
Oh, what a miserable person I am!
Who will free me from this life
that is dominated by sin and death?
Thank God! The answer is
in Jesus Christ our Lord.**


(Romans 7:21, 24-25 NLT)

SOLACE

It's been a contrary sort of day, and when all is said and done, "The trouble is with me, for I am all too human, a slave to sin. I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway." (Rom. 7) Yep, that would be me. When I have days like this, I just want to hole up somewhere away from everyone, especially from Jesus in all His holiness and righteousness.

But then I call to mind a commonplace incident that made a lasting impression on me. My sister and I were sitting on the back patio while her husband was grilling. Their 2-year-old daughter kept toddling over to play with the tools hanging from the hot grill. My sister pulled her away several times and finally slapped her hands. My niece immediately dissolved into tears . . . but then her instinctive reaction was to climb into her mom's lap to have her mom kiss her hands and comfort her.

Thank you, Jesus, that when I'm a wretch and have had a "no good very bad day," I can run to you, climb into Your lap and let You soothe my mad, bad, sad feelings.



**Strengthened with all might,
according to His glorious power,
for all patience and longsuffering
with joy.**

(Colossians 1:11 NKJV)

DYNAMIGHT


The word ***might*** in this verse is the Greek word *dunamis*, from which we get our English word *dynamite*. Why would we need maximum dynamite strength from being plugged into glorious God-power for . . . (wait for it)

patience and longsuffering with joy?!

I have a better understanding of the reason why, now that I'm a care-giver for my 90+ year-old mother. She suffers with chronic, severe pain, so it takes tremendous power for her to push through the pain to do simple everyday things like walking or lying down in her bed. For myself, it has taken God-power just to maintain a reasonable level of patience and endurance in constantly picking things up for her and cleaning up after her.

But to have patience and longsuffering ***WITH JOY?!*** That really does take maximum ***dynamight*** strength from God!

I know for a fact, neither my mom nor I has the power in and of ourselves to be ***JOYFULLY*** patient and longsuffering. I am thankful God is not troubled by our limitations, because our weakness serves to showcase His power.



**Can a mother forget the baby at her breast
and have no compassion on the child
she has borne?**

**Though she may forget,
I will not forget you!
See, I have engraved you
on the palms of my hands.**

(Isaiah 49:15-16 NIV)

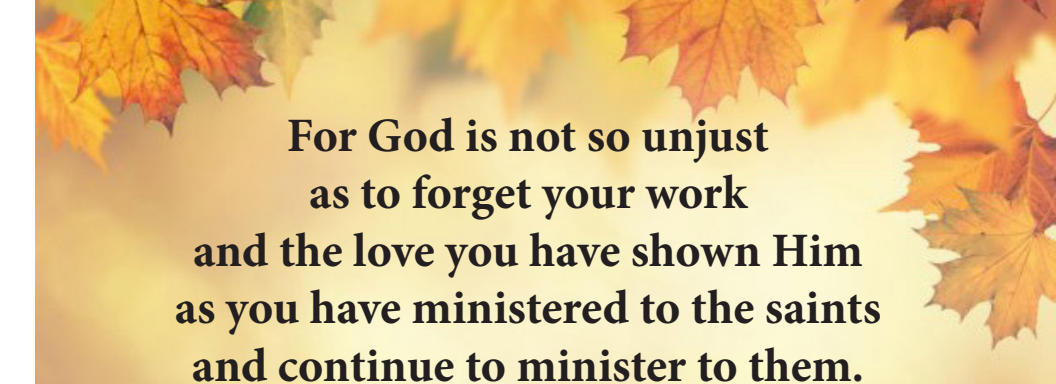
UNFORGETTABLE

"Unforgettable, that's what you are." NOT. People remember my husband, Pete; me, not so much. That's nothing new.

I once traveled with a group of colleagues to spend a week in a neighboring country. Someone who'd entertained us during that trip, paid us a return visit a month later. He shared lively reminiscences with my colleagues but didn't recall ever having met me.

In another example, I shed a lot of "blood, sweat and tears" leading and developing a school over 12 years; yet, when I spoke with the new director last fall, he'd never heard of me.

As a sermon illustration, the pastor asked our congregation to raise our hands if we could remember the first names of all our great-grandparents. Only 2 or 3 hands went up, and he made the point that within 3 generations people in your own family won't even remember your name!

A decorative border of autumn leaves in shades of orange, yellow, and red frames the top of the page.

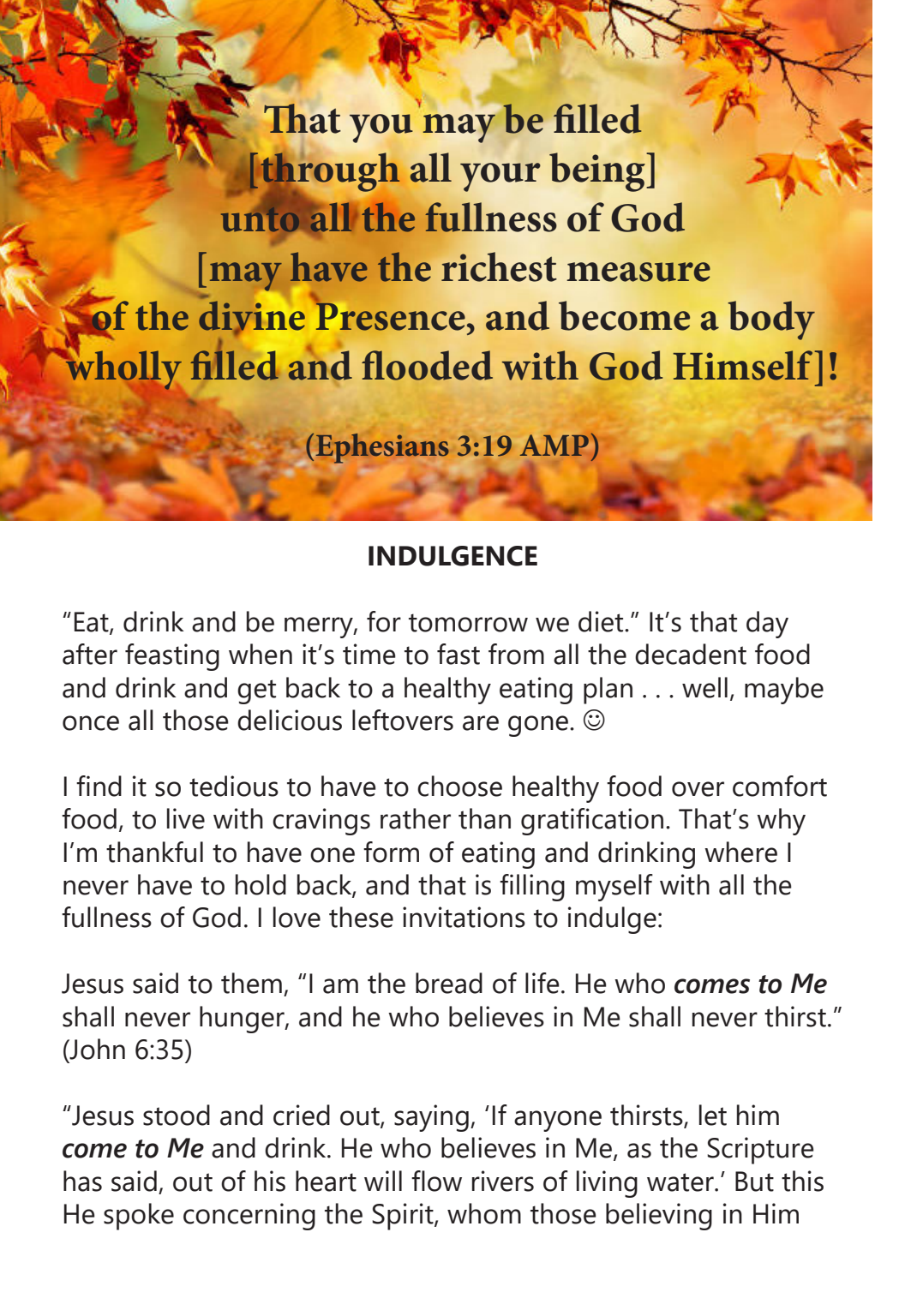
**For God is not so unjust
as to forget your work
and the love you have shown Him
as you have ministered to the saints
and continue to minister to them.**

(Hebrews 6:10 ISV)

But to Jesus, I am unforgettable! The proof Isaiah prophetically gave to God's people to show they were unforgettable to Him, is a literal truth for me. To this day, Jesus has scars in His hands that remind Him of me. Thankfully, they don't remind Him of my sins; in fact, in Hebrews 10 He assures, "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more. And where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary." Instead, they're engravings that serve as reminders that "because of and in order to satisfy the great and wonderful and intense love with which He loved us," (Ephesians 2:4 AMP) He willingly took those nails for me.

And not only that, He remembers the things I do for Him (though they're measly in comparison)! "For God is not so unjust as to forget your work and the labor of love you have shown Him as you have ministered to the saints and continue to minister to them."

"Unforgettable, that's what you are." Yes, astonishingly enough, that is what I am to Jesus. And so are you.



**That you may be filled
[through all your being]
unto all the fullness of God
[may have the richest measure
of the divine Presence, and become a body
wholly filled and flooded with God Himself]!**

(Ephesians 3:19 AMP)

INDULGENCE

"Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we diet." It's that day after feasting when it's time to fast from all the decadent food and drink and get back to a healthy eating plan . . . well, maybe once all those delicious leftovers are gone. ☺

I find it so tedious to have to choose healthy food over comfort food, to live with cravings rather than gratification. That's why I'm thankful to have one form of eating and drinking where I never have to hold back, and that is filling myself with all the fullness of God. I love these invitations to indulge:

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who **comes to Me** shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst." (John 6:35)

"Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him **come to Me** and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him



Ho! Everyone who thirsts,

Come to the waters . . .

Why do you spend money for what is not bread,

And your wages for what does not satisfy?

Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good,

And let your soul delight itself in abundance.

Incline your ear, and *come to Me*.

Hear, and your soul shall live.

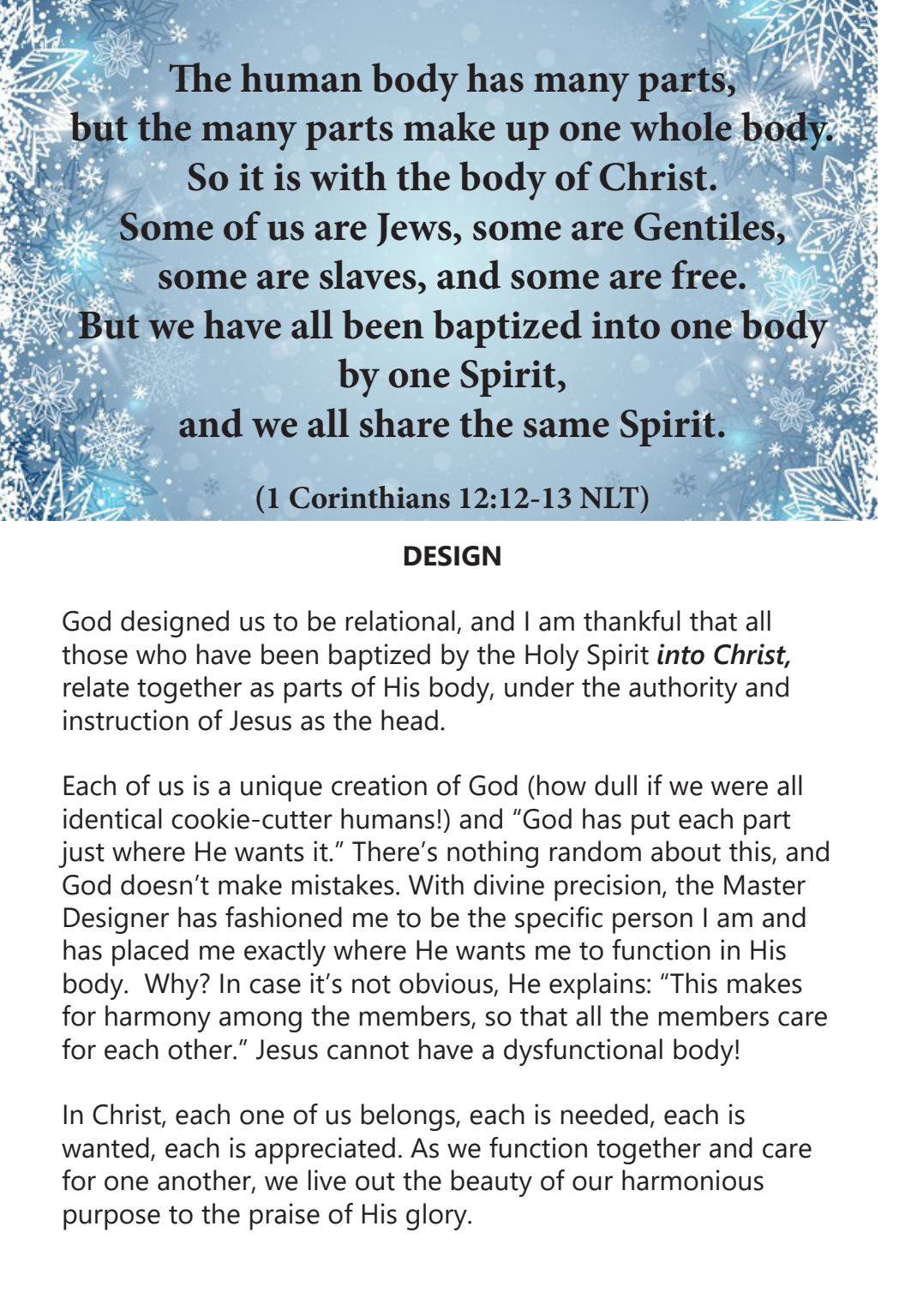
(Isaiah 55:1,3 NKJV)

would receive." (John 7:37-39) I don't think it's sacrilegious to say Jesus is running an open bar—not of spirits—but of ***the Spirit***. Ephesians 5:18 uses the same metaphor: "Do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit."

Jesus even offers that healthy balance—here's your fill of fruit: "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God." (Phil. 1:11)

And here's the result of all that indulgence: "That you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God." Col. 1:9-10

Best feast ever! Now I need a nap. (Wait, I think Jesus offers rest, too! 😊)



**The human body has many parts,
but the many parts make up one whole body.
So it is with the body of Christ.
Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles,
some are slaves, and some are free.
But we have all been baptized into one body
by one Spirit,
and we all share the same Spirit.**

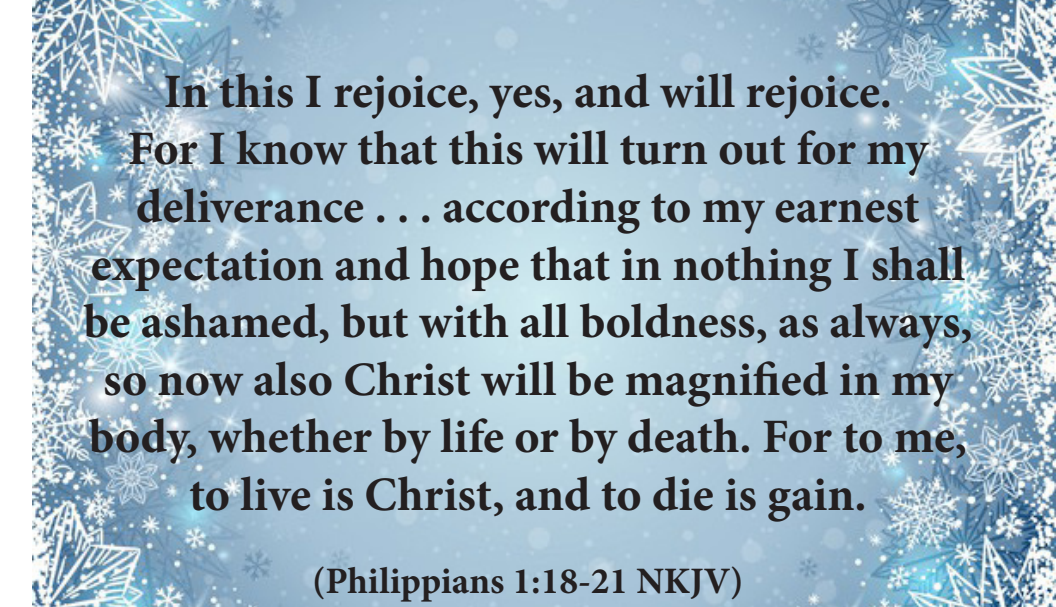
(1 Corinthians 12:12-13 NLT)

DESIGN

God designed us to be relational, and I am thankful that all those who have been baptized by the Holy Spirit *into Christ*, relate together as parts of His body, under the authority and instruction of Jesus as the head.

Each of us is a unique creation of God (how dull if we were all identical cookie-cutter humans!) and "God has put each part just where He wants it." There's nothing random about this, and God doesn't make mistakes. With divine precision, the Master Designer has fashioned me to be the specific person I am and has placed me exactly where He wants me to function in His body. Why? In case it's not obvious, He explains: "This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other." Jesus cannot have a dysfunctional body!

In Christ, each one of us belongs, each is needed, each is wanted, each is appreciated. As we function together and care for one another, we live out the beauty of our harmonious purpose to the praise of His glory.



**In this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.
For I know that this will turn out for my
deliverance . . . according to my earnest
expectation and hope that in nothing I shall
be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always,
so now also Christ will be magnified in my
body, whether by life or by death. For to me,
to live is Christ, and to die is gain.**

(Philippians 1:18-21 NKJV)

GLORY

I've been closing my emails lately with a reminder, "Eyes on Jesus." As my country takes what I describe as a hard Left turn, I'm looking to Jesus for perspective.

Here's what Jesus says: "Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour?' But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name!" (John 12:28)

As believers in Christ, our purpose in life is the same as His: to glorify God. (Fact-check Isaiah 43:7, Ephesians 1:6,12,14)

Paul told believers living under immoral, corrupt and vicious Roman rule that they could rejoice in hope (confident anticipation) of God's glory. How would that play out? Tribulations (things that troubled their souls) would grow their perseverance. Perseverance would grow their character. Character would grow their hope (confident expectation) of God being glorified . . . which meant they would achieve their purpose for existence.

Instead of clinging desperately to what's comfortable, I need to adopt Jesus' perspective: I have been brought to "this hour" for the purpose of glorifying God. Instead of praying earnestly, "Father save me from this!" I pray to be able to genuinely "Rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Romans 5:2)

**Abide in Me.
Abide in My love.
These things I have spoken to you,
that My joy may remain in you,
and that your joy may be full.**

(John 15:4, 9, 11 NKJV)

ABIDE

"Stop the world—I want to get off!" is something I've said occasionally in the past, and I have a hankering to say it again now. Apparently the desire to run away from trouble is nothing new. Listen to this exchange between the LORD and His people recorded by Isaiah 2700 years ago:

LORD: In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength.

People: No, for we will flee on horses!

LORD: Therefore you shall flee!


People: We will ride on swift horses!

LORD: Therefore those who pursue you shall be swift!

Clearly, fleeing is not the answer. Instead, Jesus instructs His people to do the opposite: **Abide**.

Notice though, that He doesn't just say: "Abide." "Stick it out." "Grin and bear it." No. He says: **Abide in Me. Abide in My love.**

Jesus makes all the difference. As we abide **in Him**, Jesus promises that His joy will abide in us, and we will be so full of His joy that panic will be pushed out because there won't be any space left. I'm daring myself to abide in Jesus, and I'm double-daring you to do it, too! ☺



**Blessed be the God and Father
of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who has blessed us
with every spiritual blessing
in the heavenly places *in Christ*.**

(Ephesians 1:3 NKJV)

BLESSINGS

There are many more blessings *in Christ* than the ones I have highlighted here, but I hope this sampling has helped to expand your awareness of the gospel—the good news of all that Jesus becomes to us when we put our trust in Him. His death, burial and resurrection provide so much more than a “fire-escape” to heaven when we die.

We can't earn these amazing blessings—in fact, this is one time when telling ourselves, “I think I can, I think I can,” is the biggest mistake we can make. Instead, we have to admit, “I know I can't,” and acknowledge that these blessings are gifts that come to us solely by His grace.

I often see cards, knickknacks and wall-hangings that say, “**Believe.**” It's a fine sentiment, but on its own, it's actually meaningless. However, if we attach *Jesus* to **Believe**, the combination is transformational!

I am so thankful for the good news of Jesus—the gospel! I want to walk daily, believing who He is, and believing who I am *in Him* because of what He's done for me!

