

My Personal Testimony of God's Grace

MY STORY OF GOD'S REDEEMING, TRANSFORMING GRACE

Who is humanly responsible for preceptaustin.org? This is a question I have received frequently over the past 15 years, so first let me say that I have no affiliation with any other ministry. By God's grace and the enablement of His Spirit, humanly speaking, **preceptaustin.org** is a solo project. To better help you understand what impels me to continually work on this website, I think it is appropriate to summarize my "life journey" or testimony to God's amazing grace that saved a wretch like me ([Amazing Grace](#)) freeing me forever to sing out these simple but infinitely precious lyrics...

My chains are gone. I've been set free,
My God my Savior has ransomed me
And like a flood His mercy rains,
Unending love, amazing grace

[Chris Tomlin's Amazing Grace](#)

The psalmist summarizes best why I (and all the redeemed) should share how God's long arm of redemption rescued me from darkness (Acts 26:18+) and death (Ephesians 2:1+) (**NOTE:** All underlined Scriptures will pop up the specific verse and can also be clicked to read the passage in context - I would strongly encourage you to read **God's Living Word** which amplifies and/or explains **God's Life Giving Work** in my heart and soul. The "+" goes to in depth commentary)...

Let the redeemed of the LORD say so,
Whom He has redeemed from trouble.
(Psalm 107:2ESV+)

Let me ask you at the outset... have you shared your testimony of God's miracle of rebirth, of new life, of new hope, of a certain future forever with Christ in glory? If not, let me encourage you to first pray, asking our Father to graciously give you an open door of opportunity (Colossians 4:3+) and then to embolden you to speak forth the power of "the Gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24+) in your life (cp Romans 1:16+). There is no greater joy, then having the opportunity to tell others what great things God has done in your life (1Jn 1:4+). See also the Statement of Faith - What I Believe.

A Chronology of God's Amazing Grace, His Supernatural Sovereignty and His Perfect Providence

1) Born - Austin, Texas - 1946 - My name is Bruce Hurt. My father, Wilson, deserted my mother Ruth and her infant son (yours truly), before I was one year old. My father was an alcoholic, a gambler and a womanizer. Thus, I had my first experience with rejection by an earthly father. I was baptized as many infants are during this time.

2) 10 years old -

a) My mother remarried and one result was my second rejection by an earthly father. The words that I most clearly remember my stepfather pronouncing on me were...

"That boy ain't gonna amount to anything any good."

Fathers, take heed and practice pronouncing blessings not cursings upon your sons and daughters. Thereafter my stepfather never called me by my given name, "Bruce". It was always "That boy" (or at least that's what sticks in my memory some 50 years later -- thus my encouragement to we who are dads [and husbands] to continually beg God to set a guard over our mouths and to let no "rotten" pronouncement be spoken over our children... or our wife! Jas 3:8, 9, 10+, Ps 141:3+, Ep 4:29+) During this time we attended a Lutheran church and I matriculated through their catechism program and was baptized for a second time with sprinkling of water, but not yet by the Spirit of Christ by grace through faith (Ep 2:8 9+, Ro 6:3+, 1Co 12:13). I was still a totally depraved,

unregenerate, "young" old man (old self) in Adam (Ro 5:12+, Ps 51:5±) and outside of the "Ark" of Christ, without hope and without God in the world (Ep 2:11, 12+).

It was also during this period of my life that I narrowly escaped death on two separate occasions (cp Ps 23:6NLT±, Ps 119:109NLT+), once when a huge semi-trailer truck was passing another car on a very narrow two lane bridge and was in our lane headed straight at my mother (who at that time also was as still unsaved) and myself (also not regenerate). To this day I cannot explain how we were able to avoid what would surely have been a head on, fatal impact with that big "semi" (cp Ps 34:7±). The upshot is that "I can't but God can". This simple truth/aphorism has become one of God's most frequent reminders of my weakness and His all sufficient grace now that I am in Christ and even **before** I was safe in Christ! (2Co 12:9+; 2Co 12:10+). He is infinitely, eternally, omnipotently **sovereign** and in His perfect omniscience He knew before the foundation of the world (Ep 1:4+, cp 2Ti 1:9NLT+) the plan of salvation He had laid out for both my mother and myself (cp Ep 2:10+).

On another occasion I was literally drowning under the weight of water pouring through a small opening in a dam on the Guadalupe River in central Texas, the weight of the onrushing water being so heavy that it prevented me from standing until someone saw my hand project out of the water and pulled me aside (cp Ps 69:1NLT±, Ps 69:2NLT±), in effect **rescuing** me from almost certain drowning (Ps 18:16±). My Father's provision of physical salvation beautifully foreshadowed the spiritual salvation I would experience almost 30 years later when, at just the right time, when I was "drowning" spiritually, God's hand reached down (Isa 59:1, 50:2) and **rescued** me from eternal death and unto eternal life (Col 1:13NLT+; see also word study of the great Greek verb for **rescue** = *rhuomai*). These two recollections of God's physical rescues from danger are some of my spiritual **'Eben-ezers** " so beautifully expressed in the hymn...

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

Here I raise my Ebenezer
(**Eben** = **Stone** + **Ezer** = help)
Here by Thy great **help** I've come;
And I **hope**, by Thy good pleasure,
Safely to arrive at home.

Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger,
Interposed His precious blood
(1Pe 1:18, 19+)

b) I became very motivated to disprove my step father's "prophetic pronouncement" and worked like **aself** "possessed" young man to perfect my skills in basketball, which (by God's grace, even in the face of my wrong attitude) landed me a college athletic scholarship. No one in my family had ever graduated from college and my mother did not have the funds to send me. So once again I experienced God's provision of amazing, abundant grace, even while I was still unregenerate and hostile to His love (Col 1:21+)! God was **sovereignly** at work in my life and all the while I was completely unaware of His guiding, protecting hand.

TWO CHANCE OCCURRENCES **(God's Providence)**

3) 20 years old - The first "Chance" Occurrence - My Texas basketball abilities in college were considerably inferior to my teammates who were from well known basketball centers like the Bronx in New York (where street ball was something everyone did -- and they were good!) and Indiana (America's basketball capital at the time) and so there were times when I would not even log a minute of playing time, much less score a point. One game (**one providential game**) we were playing the Houston Cougars and I just happened (see Ru 2:3-note on God's **providence**) to log some playing time and scored a bucket or two. Just enough for my name to make the Houston Chronicle's score column on the sports page the next day. Now I haven't told you, but I had not seen nor heard from my real father since he deserted my mom in 1946 and so I did not know whether he was dead or alive. Little did I know that in the providential working of the **omniscient** God my real father would read the Houston Chronicle the next day and see my name in the scoring column and ask himself "Could this be my son I have not seen nor spoken with for almost 20 years?" As "fate" (God's providence) would have it, I got a phone call the next day at the athletic dorm and in response to my "Hello", the voice on the other end of the line said "This is your father"! Talk about a providential moment in time! You could have picked me up off of the floor! Twenty years, not even a whisper, not even knowing if he was still alive, and then the first time I hear his voice to hear the words "This is your father"!

As they say, "I'll make a long story short" - I went to meet my true father and even to stay with him in Houston that next summer (to help me save money while I worked a summer job). But Wilson was not the same man who had deserted my mom in 1946, but a changed person. He had gone to AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) and from there had met a devout Baptist lady named Louise who was fervently in love with Jesus Christ (cp Acts 9:36+, Php 1:11+), and it was her Jesus Who opened my father's heart (Lk 24:45+, Jn 6:44, 65) and brought him new life in Christ (1Jn 5:11, 12+, Col 3:4+). And that new life in Christ (see in Christ or in Christ Jesus) brought with it a new freedom for as our Lord promised...

**When the Son sets you free,
you shall be free indeed (Jn 8:36)**

(See word study set free... shall be free = eleutheroo)

And that's exactly what had happened to my father - he had been set free from enslavement to alcohol, gambling and womanizing (Ro 8:2NLT+)! Amazing grace indeed. And yet all was not "rosy" for he tried diligently to coerce me to become a believer, but I would have none of his Jesus, thinking his fanaticism was nothing but foolishness (1Cor 2:14+). I left after that Summer and had only a few contacts with him over the next 20 years. What I did not know until after I became a believer was that both he and his wife prayed continuously for my salvation over those 20 years! (1Th 5:17+, Col 4:2, 3+) **Beloved, do you have a dear one who is unsaved, lost and potentially on the way to a Christless eternity?** (2Th 1:9NLT+) Then take heart and persist in pleading prayer for the Spirit of God to sweep in like a wind (Jn 3:7, 8+) and cause them to be born again from above (Jn 3:3+). I have little doubt that my born again father and his sweet devout wife's twenty years of faithful, persistent prayers for my salvation played some part in the events that transpired 20 years later (see below).

4) About 22 years old - The Second "Chance" Occurrence - I was a senior at the University of Texas at Austin and had been accepted to UT Southwestern Medical School in Dallas, Texas. I had dated a few girls at UT but basically spent most of my time "dating" the books to keep my grade point average high. So in the Spring of 1969, my mind was already contemplating the excitement of the first year of medical school and I had no desire whatsoever to date a girl seriously much less get married.

Enter the Father's second providential intervention in my life (I say "second" but know full well that there were countless other "chance encounters" orchestrated by my gracious heavenly Father - Pr 16:9, 20:24, Eph 1:11NLT+, Ps 37:23+, Ps 40:2+) - Someone set up a blind date to go roller skating (that's what we did for fun at the University of Texas in 1969! My, how times have changed!) with a tall, incredibly beautiful UT Senior named Martha (Marty) Franklin Wilkes. Something very unusual **just happened to happen** that night (although it didn't catch God by surprise!). Marty and I stayed up that night until about 3AM just talking about life, just like college students are prone to do (no significant physical contact was involved), and before the night was over we decided that we should go through life together! Prior to this "chance encounter", as I stated above, I had **absolutely no intention** of getting married and no desire to take someone through what I knew would be a grueling four years of medical school. And yet the omniscient God saw (and provided for) my need of a **helper suitable** (Ge 2:18) and orchestrated a "blind date" to bring her to me (Ge 2:22)! (Young folks - a longer courtship is recommended!) About 4 months later, we entered the **covenant of marriage** with only a vague (if any) understanding of Ge 2:23, 24 and also with very bad timing, for our wedding was only one week before we began the first year of medical school. (My advice to medical students to be - Do not get married a week before med school begins!) Little did I know that God would use my wife in a strategic way to bring about my salvation (Pr 31:10) and that once again **prayer** would play a major role in His redemptive plan for my life.

That first year of med school was difficult, but we weathered the intense pressure brought on by the incredible competition to be "Number One". However as they say "it was not pretty" and for the most part I essentially neglected my new bride for the next 9 months! And when she decided that a baby might provide comfort in her marital loneliness (desertion by a husband might be a more accurate description - my **flesh** is an ugly thing!), we discovered to our sadness and chagrin that we had significant infertility issues and according to the experts the chances of us ever conceiving were nil to none! We were both shattered, but Marty of course was more so, as she was in dire need of interpersonal relationship and was counting on a new baby to give her a sense of fulfillment in our marriage. Again, enter God's amazing grace to two unsaved, undeserving souls, and before we knew it, miraculously (Ge 18:14) God had given us not just one child (even after we suffered a hope deflating miscarriage after the first unlikely conception), but four healthy children, two boys and two girls (Ps 127:3, 4, 5+, Jas 1:17+)

THE LORD OPENED MY HEART TO RESPOND TO HIS WORD

(Acts 16:14+)

5) About 39 years old - Fast forward to (in the world's eyes) a prospering, successful medical practice, back in Austin, Texas where I had begun my life journey and met my life partner. And although I had no idea of the grave danger I was in at the time, the words of Jesus to His disciples (in the context of the rich young ruler - Mt 19:16-22) have become very precious to me for they so well

describe my precarious human prosperity...

Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly (Amen) I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. "And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." (When Jesus says something ONE time it's important! But here not only does He begin His declaration with the attention grabbing "**Amen**", He repeats the message emphasizing the grave danger that is the lot of all those who are rich with worldly goods and fame!) And when the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, "Then who can be saved?" And looking upon them Jesus said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matthew 19:23, 24, 25, 26)

In the world's eyes I would have been classified as rich and in my own eyes I was totally self absorbed, running some 100-120 miles a week in my marathon preparation. Largely ignoring my wife and my children, I pursued my will on earth not God's (contrast Jesus Lk 22:42+). But by the grace of God, He had (**providentially**) caused me to be born with a less than spherical femoral head (referring to my left hip bone) (Ps 139:13±, cp Jer 1:5) which predisposed me to premature traumatic arthritis. And so unaware of this divinely ordained predisposition, I religiously continued my insane running schedule and like an addict seeking to maintain the [endorphin high](#) to which I had grown accustomed, but I soon began to experience intractable pain in my left hip which increased to the point that I would awaken at night and cry out for relief (although sadly I never thought of crying out to Jehovah Rapha, the Lord, the Healer). Finally, a local orthopedic surgeon virtually dragged me to his office after hearing my story. When he put the radiographs of my left and right hip on the view box (and I am not a radiologist but it did not take a radiologist to interpret the pathology), I literally began to sweat and felt like I was going to faint, because I saw virtually no cartilage remaining in my left hip joint (cp Jacob's "hip encounter" with God at Peniel or [Penuel](#)- Ge 32:24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32). I knew instantly this meant an end to long distance running, basketball, soccer on Sundays (while my wife was at church) and any other weight bearing sport! I was devastated. For the first time in my life I had come against a major obstacle that I could not hurdle with self effort! God was well on His way to bringing me to the end of myself (Mk 8:35, 36, 37+). These life changing events occurred in September, 1984 and for Christmas that year my wife (who had begun attending [Women's Bible Study Fellowship](#) and had been born again by studying the imperishable seed of the living and enduring Word of God - 1Pe 1:3+, 1Pe 1:23, 24, 25+) gave me an [NIV Study Bible](#) (Isa 55:10, 11) which prompted me to quip "What's this for? I'm a good person!" (Ro 3:10+, Ro 3:12+). She sat unfazed by my inaccurate theological "side step", for unbeknownst to me my Father was clearly working out His plan of redemption through Marty's chaste and respectful behavior (1Pe 3:1, 2+)

Now remember that for 20 years my real (born again) father and his wife had been faithfully interceding with God to grant me the **repentance** that leads to **salvation** (Acts 11:18+, cp Acts 5:31+, Acts 20:20, 21, 26:18, 19, 20+). And remember that this is the same father who started life as a "loser", but ended a winner in Christ (Mt 10:39, 16:26, Lk 9:24+, Lk 17:33+, Jn 12:25). Not only were they fervently and continuously praying for my salvation, but Marty, my wife for 15 years, and her entire leadership team at Women's Bible Study Fellowship in Austin, Texas were also praying for my salvation on a weekly basis.

On this backdrop of 20 years of prevailing prayer productive of a pleasing aroma to God (Ps 141:2, Re 8:3±, Re 8:4±), that following Spring, Dr Ralph Bailey, a well known colorectal surgeon and the Lord's bondservant, began to visit my office at Seton Medical Center, where I was chief of pathology at the time, and he persisted in gently, non-aggressively "pestering" me about this Man named Jesus asking me what was I going to do with Him (2Ti 2:24, 25, 26+). One fateful day, he invited me to [Men's Bible Study Fellowship](#) and I told him I would go on the condition he never talk to me about Jesus again (it did not hurt that they were offering free barbeque at this invitational session!) I went and he kept his word and never asked me again! He didn't have to, for as I began to read the Word of Truth (Jas 1:18+), the Gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24+), I encountered the power of God to save (Ro 1:16+) and that following Fall semester in the Bible Study Fellowship study of the "**Minor**" **Prophets of Israel**, I received my **Goel** (Jn 1:11, 12, 13+), my **Kinsman Redeemer** (Isa 47:4, Job 19:25, Ps 19:14±), **Messiah the Prince** of the Old Testament (Da 9:24+, Da 9:25+, Da 9:26+, Da 9:27+)! To my amazement (and joy) I discovered that the Messiah about Whom the Old Testament so clearly prophesied (see Messianic Prophecies) was perfectly fulfilled in the New Testament in the Person of Jesus Christ (cp Jn 1:1± and Jn 1:14, 15, 16±), the Messenger of the Covenant (Malachi 3:1+) Who paid the price of redemption (ransom payment - Mk 10:45+, Titus 2:14+; cp word studies related to redeem, redemption - apolutrosis; lutrosis; exagorazo; lutroo - see also How to perform a Greek Word Study) to set **this** captive free from enslavement to **Sin**, (Ro 6:11+, Ro 6:17+, Ro 6:18+) Satan (1Jn 5:19NLT±, Acts 26:18NLT+) and this godless world system (Gal 6:14+, 1Jn 2:17+). I came to understand the vital importance of the full gospel as Paul explained to the Corinthians...

Now I make known to you, brethren, the **gospel** which I preached (euangelizo - source of English "evangelist") to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2 by which also you are **saved**, if you hold fast the word (the **gospel**) which I preached to you, unless you **believed** in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that **Christ died for our sins** according to the Scriptures, 4 and that **He was buried**, and that **He was raised on the third day** according to the Scriptures, 5 and that **He appeared** to Cephas, then to the twelve. (1Co 15:1+, 1Co 15:2+, 1Co 15:3, 4, 5+; and He ascended and will return Acts 1:9,

I immediately sought out a local Bible church where the Word of God was being preached (2Ti 4:2+, 2Ti 4:3, 4+), took my family, all 6 of us, and within a short time asked the church elders to baptize me (for the third time, but the only one where I understood the symbolism of water baptism). As my wife likes to say now, "the Holy Spirit" moved into our house that year, one year after my left hip was diagnosed as severe osteoarthritis (by the grace of God!). And although I was not a perfect believer, the change was so radical that my two oldest children, Joel and Meredith, soon came to faith in Christ and the four of us were baptized together (cp the Philippian Jailer to Paul and Silas - Acts 16:30, 31+, cp the Ethiopian eunuch - Acts 8:26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39+). Just before Pastor Rob Harrell baptized me under the water, I testified to God's truth regarding the miracle that I had experienced declaring...

Therefore if any man is **in Christ**, he is a **new** creature; the old things passed away; behold, **new** things have come. (2Cor 5:17+)

Shortly thereafter God placed the following passage on my heart which was important in my early Christian life and to this day still forms a framework for my walk in Christ...

Thy words were found and I ate them and Thy words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; for I have been called by Thy name, O [LORD God of hosts](#). (Jeremiah 15:16±)

THE REFINER'S FIRE

(Ps 26:2±, Ps 139:23±, Ps 139:24±)

6) About 50 years old - And so for first 11 years of my new life in Christ I was as they say "on fire" and zealous for the Lord, witnessing to both Jewish and Gentile doctors at the hospital, finishing up the [Men's Bible Study Fellowship's](#) 4 year program (it has a longer curriculum today), becoming actively involved in missions activities especially directed toward the world's unreached people groups (having been significantly impacted by the 15 week course entitled [Perspectives on World Missions](#) [which I highly recommend] and then in the late 1980's by exposure to the Global Prayer Digest (now replaced by the [Joshua Project](#)) which is a guide facilitating daily prayer for the world's unreached people groups - I can highly recommend this guide and cannot wait to meet those in heaven who I have never met face to face [down here] but for whom I have had the incredible privilege to pray! See Col 4:2, 3+, 1Th 2:19, 20+) and teaching God's Word in home Bible studies and in church Sunday School classes.

And once again as I looked back on my life before Christ, I came to understand something of how God in His providence could use my background in medicine and pathology to fulfill His call for me to be His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which He had prepared for me beforehand that I should walk in them (Ep 2:10+). As a specialist in pathology I received unique training regarding the importance of making careful, detailed (microscopic) observations in order to render a correct diagnosis in diseases which many times were life threatening. Obviously, accuracy was a parameter that could not be compromised without potentially serious consequences. As I began to read, memorize and meditate on God's Word, I came to realize how my medical training at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School in Dallas, especially regarding minute attention to detail could be applied to rightly divide the Word of truth (2Ti 2:15+). Specifically, my training in medicine and pathology gave me a clear understanding of the vital relationship between accurate observation (cp **observation** in study of the Bible), in order to achieve an accurate diagnosis (cp **interpretation** of the Bible) which could then be used to guide the most effective treatment whether it was surgery and/or drug therapy (cp appropriate **application** of God's Word). And so it was with this same "life and death" mindset (even more so considering the eternal ramifications of eternal truth and spiritual life versus temporal truth and physical life - cp Jesus' words Jn 8:24, 5:24), that I began (and continue) to approach the handling of God's Word of life (cp Php 2:16+, 1Jn 1:1+). Although, I have not had the privilege of formal seminary training, I have diligently studied the pure milk of God's Word (1Pe 2:2+) for 25 years under the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit (cp 1Jn 2:20, 27±, Jn 14:26, 16:13, 14, 1Co 2:10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16+), and by His grace have gleaned a working knowledge of the original languages, especially Greek and less so in Hebrew, and have been given a strong desire to provide a website which feeds our Lord's sheep **solid food** (Jn 21:15, 16, 17, He 5:13, 14+, see the Power of God's Word) and which edifies His saints for the work of making disciples (Ep 4:12+, Mt 28:18, 19, 20), to the end that the lost (and saved) might observe the saints' good works and because of their supernatural works (which point unequivocally to a Supernatural Source!), they would all be led to glorify (give a proper opinion of) our Father in heaven (Mt 5:16+, cp Php 2:14, 15+, Isa 43:7). The prayer I frequently pray for all who come to the website (and would ask you to pray as the Spirit leads) is that each one would

"grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.." (2 Peter 3:18+)

But not all was well in "River City" (my affectionate name for my hometown, Austin, Texas), for it was about this time that my wife of 26 years came to me one evening and "out of the blue" (which shows how out of touch I was with her needs!) and declared "I don't love you anymore!" To say that I was "dazed and confused" would be an understatement. After all, God had given us four beautiful

children. We were active in a local Bible church. Financially we had no concerns. There was not "another woman" at the hospital! And yet clearly something was sadly missing in our marriage! I began to plead with God to change Marty (especially as I read verses like Pr 21:9, 19, 25:24, 27:15 - it's always the other person's fault isn't it?), but He began to show me from His Word that I was the spiritual leader who was not leading and I was the one who needed to change, not my wife. I fell far short of Paul's charge for husbands to love their wives **as Christ loved the church**, to love them even enough to die (cp Jn 12:24) for them. (Ep 5:23, Ep 5:25+, Ep 5:28, 29, 30+, Col 3:19+). I knew intellectually that **agape love** is that unconditional, sacrificial love that God is (1Jn 4:16), that God demonstrates (Ro 5:8+, Jn 3:16, 1Jn 4:9+) and that God enables (fruit of the Spirit - Gal 5:22+, this fruit being borne as we learn to walk by the Spirit - Gal 5:16+; Gal 5:25NIV+) but I was not continually (Paul's commands in Ep 5:25, Col 3:19 are both present imperative = "Husbands, make this your habitual practice!" It speaks of general direction, not perfection! It's a call to continually yield "my rights" to the Spirit's control - Ep 5:18+, where "be filled" = "be controlled by" = present imperative) practicing agape love toward my wife, Marty.

Unfortunately, after salvation, I had not been disciplined by anyone (cp Timothy by Paul = 2Ti 3:10+) and I had a poor understanding at best of the process of progressive sanctification or growth in holiness and Christ-likeness. And so I failed to recognize this **obstacle** (the "deadness" of my wife's feelings toward me) in our marriage as an **"opportunity"** allowed by or sent from God's loving hand of discipline that I might share His holiness and bring forth His peaceful fruit of righteousness in our marriage (Heb 12:5, 6+, He 12:7, 8, 9, 10+, He 12:11+). Sometimes as believers we can become so involved in the *"Martha like doing"* of Christian things (Lk 10:38, 39, 40+) that we forget the most important aspect of Christianity is *"Mary like being"*... sitting at the Master's feet, listening, obeying, becoming more like the Master (Lk 10:41, 42+! cp Ps 46:10NIV+) And so God mercifully and graciously used this crisis in our marriage to bring me to a point of brokenness (Mt 12:20, Ps 34:18+, Ps 51:17+) and repentance (2Co 7:9, 10, Ro 2:4+). For me this was not the repentance of "past tense salvation" (justification), but of "present tense" salvation (sanctification [cp "being present tense = continually" saved" - 1Co 1:18+] - see Three Tenses of Salvation), the repentance which is such an important component in the process our heavenly Refiner uses to bring us forth as pure gold (1Pe 1:6+, 1Pe 1:7+, cp Job 23:10+; with Job 42:5, 6, Job 19:25) as He conforms us to the image of His Son (Ro 8:28+, Ro 8:29+).

Thus afraid to trust His grace,
Long time did I rebel;
Till despairing of my case,
Down at His feet I fell.
--[William Cowper](#)

It is one thing to be **broken** and **"emptied"** by the Almighty (as Naomi experienced in Ruth 1:20, 21+), but it quite another to be **revived** and **restored** by Him (Ps 119:25+). And so, ignoring Jesus' teaching in (Jn 15:5), although I continued to plead with God for **revival of our marriage**, like most men I thought it wouldn't hurt if I helped God out by trying to "fix" what was broken (failing to heed Jesus' words that **"Apart from Me you can do NOTHING!"**). And so I began to attend Christian marriage conferences (but not with my wife, for she refused to go). By this point in our Christian life, we really did not believe that divorce was an option, but the alternative seemed just as miserable - living the rest of our married lives without phileo or agape love and thus living a hypocritical charade with the constant fear of having our lack of authenticity exposed for all to see! I soon became well known at all 5 local Christian bookstores, as I managed to purchase virtually every Christian book available on marriage and poured through them just like I had done before my big exams in medical school (what a picture of my old fallen flesh at work trying to fix things!). I simply could not understand why all this wonderful information was not "fixing" what was broken (cp Eccl 12:12). Because of **pride** (cp Jas 4:6+, 1Pe 5:5+, Pr 3:34NIV), I had been resistant to counseling, but finally agreed that Christian counseling was our last hope for reconciliation and peace. And so we began seeing a local, well respected Christian counselor, but there was still very little improvement in our relationship. Perhaps we became a little more amicable, but there was no repentance and no heart healing.

And then it **"just so happened"** (providentially, as when Ruth just happened to arrive at Boaz's [the kinsman redeemer's] barley field in Ru 2:3+) that my wife began to attend a daytime class that was using Precept Ministries 10 week course on the study of [Covenant \(preview lesson 1 - opens in Pdf\)](#) - even though this study is not advertised as a "marriage course," I cannot recommend this study highly enough as both "preventive maintenance" and "damage repair" for Christian marriages). And, once again in the amazing providence of God, this same course on [Covenant just happened](#) to be offered during the evening hours at the Baptist church we were attending at the time, so I began the evening study on [Covenant](#). I was still praying, but was beginning to lose hope that our marriage could or would ever be restored. In retrospect, I did not know it at the time but our marital struggles were very similar to the woes of the rebellious Israelites in their wilderness wandering, the psalmist recording...

Then (When? Ps 107:18) they cried out to the LORD in their trouble (Hebrew = [tsar](#) - A narrow; tight place and then figuratively distress, trouble, anguish, confinement to a state of unfavorable circumstances, implying emotional distress). He saved (Hebrew = [yasha'](#) = delivered, root of Jesus' OT name [Yeshua \[Jehovah is salvation\]](#); Septuagint - Lxx = sozo - rescue from great peril, keep alive, deliver, **heal, make whole**) them out of their distresses. **He sent His word and healed them, and delivered** (Lxx = rhuomai = drew or snatched to

Himself) them from their destructions (Lxx = diaphthora = **decay, corruption - a good description of our marriage!**). (Ps 107:19⁺, Ps 107:20⁺)

And so as Marty and I began our separate studies on His Word of truth regarding covenant, **Jehovah Rapha: (Jehovah Rophe) The LORD our Healer** began to apply His truth to our minds like the balm of Gilead (Jer 8:22). It took only 2-3 weeks of the 10 week study on Covenant for God to perform what can only be described as a **miracle** (Jer 32:17, 18, 19⁺). Marty came to me one day and to my amazement suggested that we stop seeing the Christian counselor. When I asked why, she replied that the study of God's [Covenant](#) had given her a new perspective on our relationship (Ps 30:11, 12⁺), our marriage and His ministry in and through us as a couple (see **Covenant: As It Relates to Marriage**). She went on to relate how God Almighty (El Shaddai) had given her a desire to come alongside me into whatever ministry He was calling me. **In short, the Spirit of the Living God resurrected and revived a totally "dead" marriage using His Word of truth to renew our minds and transform our thinking** (cp Ro 12:2⁺, 2Co 3:18⁺). And so Marty and I began to lead women's and men's Precept Bible Studies over the next 10-15 years. More importantly, we experienced the truth of God's promise in Joel 2:25 (addressed to Israel but applicable to the revival He brought about in our marriage)...

Then I will make up to (KJV = "restore to) you for the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the creeping locust, the stripping locust, and the gnawing locust, My great army which I sent among you." (Joel 2:25, Joel 2:25KJV⁺)

Dear reader, I don't know what the **locusts** are in your life, your marriage, your family, etc, but I can testify that God's redeeming and transforming grace is truly sufficient and that His power (dunamis/dyanmis) is perfected in our weakness (2Cor 12:9⁺, 2Cor 12:10⁺). And though this was a painful time in our relationship, I can look back and see God's sovereign handiwork and with genuine gratitude declare that **it was good that I was afflicted/disciplined** (Ps 119:71⁺, Ps 119:67⁺, Job 5:17NIV, Pr 6:23b). Marty and I both came to understand and experience the reality of Peter's declaration that God's

divine power has **granted** to us **everything** (Greek word = all, **everything without exception!**) pertaining to life and godliness, through the **true knowledge** (Observe that while the provision of grace is a divine gift, our part is to diligently seek the true, intimate [not just "head" but "heart"] knowledge of our Lord as revealed in His Holy Word - **Beloved, are you daily [Mt 4:4⁺, Lk 4:4⁺] immersing yourself in the cleansing water of His sanctifying Word [Jn 17:17, cp Ep 5:26b⁺, Jn 13:10], doing so not out of a sense of duty but out of a sense of delight [Ps 1:2⁺, Ps 1:3⁺, Jer 17:7, 8] and loving, grace enabled, obedience? [2Co 5:14NIV⁺]) of Him Who called us by His own glory and excellence (2Peter 1:3⁺).**

So no matter what "**species of locusts**" is gnawing away at your Christian life (or marriage), dear brother and sister in Christ, you can know that the Father's desire is always and only to remove the **dross**, that He might send His Word (Ps 107:20⁺) which is filled with everything necessary for life and godliness (2Pe 1:3⁺), and that He might bring you forth as pure gold (Job 23:10⁺, cp Job 42:5, 6, 12), more like His Son Jesus Christ. So do not despair, but instead wait upon the Lord, seeking Him in prayer and trusting in His eternal Word, acknowledging that the **faithful** God is the only One Who can give you hind's feet to walk on high places (Hab 3:17, 18, 19⁺). He alone, through His indwelling Spirit, can give you the strength you need to live the Christian (Christ) life (Col 3:4, cf Jn 6:63, 2 Cor 3:5-6⁺).

Yet those who **wait** (Hebrew = qavah = wait with eager expectation, hope and confidence; Lxx = hupomeno = remain under not simply with resignation, but with vibrant hope) for the LORD (Jehovah) **will gain** (Hebrew = chalaph = change or renew, Lxx = allasso = change the nature of something for the better so here exchange **our** weakness for **His** strength! [play and really listen to the words of Steven Curtis Chapman's His Strength is Perfect](#)) new strength. They will mount up with wings like eagles. They will run and not get tired. They will walk and not become weary. (Isaiah 40:31⁺).

And so after 24 years of experiencing His **sanctifying, transforming grace**, I am beginning to understand the liberating truth that it is no longer I who live, but Christ Who lives in me and the life I now live in this mortal flesh, I live by faith in the Word of Christ, Who gave Himself up that I might live forever in freedom from sin, Satan and the world system (cp Galatians 2:20⁺). And then He sent His Spirit that I might have the supernatural power to live this new, supernatural life in Christ (Ep 5:18⁺, Gal 5:16⁺). And His Spirit illuminated His Word that I might be nourished to live as more than a conqueror in Christ Jesus my Lord (Ro 8:37KJV⁺). And through His imperishable (1 Pe 1:23⁺), living and active Word (Hebrews 4:12⁺), He has given me a prayer and a promise as I at age 66 years (2012), begin the last lap of my race of grace (He 12:1⁺). The first passage is an Old Testament version of 2 Timothy 2:2⁺ calling on Him to give me the power to fulfill His great command to **make disciples** (cp Mt 28:18, 19, 20⁺) and in the second passage He gives His promise of fruitfulness in old age...

THE PRAYER

And even when I am old and gray,
O God, do not forsake me,
until I declare Thy strength to this generation,
Thy power to all who are to come (after me).
(Ps 71:18[±])

THE PROMISE

They will still yield fruit in old age.
They shall be full of sap and very green.
To declare that the LORD is upright.
He is my Rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.
(Ps 92:14[±], Ps 92:15[±])

And when all is said and done ([Play Robin Mark's poignant praise song - When its all been said and done](#)), the psalmist best summarizes my thoughts regarding Jehovah's work of amazing, redeeming, transforming grace in my life, my marriage, my (His) ministry...

Not to us, O LORD, not to us,
but to Thy name give glory
because of Thy lovingkindness,
because of Thy truth.
(Psalm 115:1[±])

And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Savior's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain—
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be,
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?
Amazing love! How can it be,
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray—
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
**My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.**
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine;
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach th'eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.
Bold I approach th'eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

Play

[And Can It Be That I Should Gain](#)

Charles Wesley

- See also Statement of Faith - What I Believe.

GOD IS ABLE!

Fast forward 15 years and it is now March, 2026. What I had failed to tell you in the preceding testimony was the long struggle my wife Marty and I had with our two youngest children, Wesley and Lauren. In their late teens both began to abuse alcohol and then many other illicit drugs and have continued to do so for almost 30 years. Marty and I were devastated and felt utterly powerless to fight against their addictions. I could give you a lot of detail about the painful phone calls in the middle of the night, the numerous unsuccessful admissions to rehab units in Texas and California, the cost in terms of money spent seeking help, etc. But the most devastating cost personally was emotional, with continued anxiety, fear and broken hearts we experienced virtually every day over the last 30 years. Every time the phone would ring, my heart felt like it would stop, because I feared the worst. One day Wesley called from a cemetery and had a rope he was going to use to take his own life -- he was just calling to tell me he loved me one last time. That was probably one of the low points of the last 30 years. I felt helpless, hopeless and powerless. I did not even know which cemetery he was at so I could do nothing but wait. He survived, but recently his addictions have taken a turn for the worse as he has begun injecting drugs. Only God knows how this story will end!

But remember I told you about my father praying for me for 20 years to come to a knowledge of Jesus as my Savior and Lord. And so that is what we have been doing for 30 years. While there have been some hopeful signs with our two youngest children (they are in their late 40's now), they have not yet experienced the freedom found in Christ (cf Jn 8:34-36+). In other words, we do not know if they are genuine believers. Sadly, they know a lot of Bible and can speak good "Christianeze" but we have yet to see any genuine fruit in keeping with repentance (Mt 3:8+). Here is the point -- if you have prodigals, don't stop praying, even if you have to pray 30 years (or longer). Why keep praying? Because time is short and eternity is long and...

OUR GOD IS ABLE!

Now to Him Who is able
to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think,
according to the power that works within us
to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus
to all generations
forever and ever.
Amen.
(Eph 3:20-21+)
(Play and praise Him for [God is Able](#))

What is Biblical Salvation?

To answer this question we need to see what God says in the Bible.

John 1:11-12+ He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become **children of God**, even to those who **believe** in His name,

Comment: There is a common belief, even by many in the church, that everyone born into this world is automatically in the family of God. But that false belief is not what the Bible teaches. In fact even in this verse John states that the only individuals who are actually "**children of God**" and can truly address God as their Father are those who have been born into His family, and this is a spiritual "birth" that occurs when one believes in Jesus, where "His name" equates with all that Jesus is (Savior, Redeemer, Lord, etc).

John 3:3+ Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born again** he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Comment: Jesus could not have been clearer. **Cannot** is the strongest way one can state the negative in the Greek language. And so one could translate it "**absolutely cannot see the Kingdom of God.**" Clearly "**see**" is another way of saying one cannot enter the **Kingdom of God**. In the world there are ONLY two kingdoms, the **Kingdom of God** ("Kingdom of Heaven") and the Kingdom of darkness, ruled by Satan. When one places their faith in Jesus, they are supernaturally "delivered us from the domain (kingdom) of darkness, and transferred to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom he has redemption, the forgiveness of sins." (Col 1:13-14). In Acts 26:18 Luke is quoting the words of Jesus given to the apostle

Paul to explain that his mission now that he was a believer in Messiah was "to open the eyes (of the Gentiles) so that they may turn from darkness to light (from Kingdom of darkness to Kingdom of light) and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me (Jesus)." In short, to use a common phrase, they are "saved" or "born again." There is a common saying "Once saved, always saved ([see below](#))." While this is true, it can be very deceptive, because there are many who think they are "Christians" and may even claim to be "born again," saying I prayed to ask Jesus into my heart, but they are still spiritually dead in their trespasses and sins! So how can one be certain they are truly saved? The best evidence is that they have experienced a definite change in the direction of their life, a direction (not perfection) toward Heaven rather than Hell. Their godward life gives evidence that they have genuinely believed and been born again by the Spirit of God. And now the Spirit lives in them and gives them both the desire and power to live a life directed toward Heaven. Stated another, if a person tells me they are a believer and they have never experienced a time in their life when they went from being focused on this world to being focused on the world to come, then their claim is at the least questionable and at the worst is false. And they may find themselves utterly shocked one minute after they die!

For more on this eternally important question see:

- [What does it mean to be a born again Christian?](#)
- [It is Biblical to ask Jesus into your heart?](#)
- [How can I become a child of God?](#)
- [What does it mean to be born of God?](#)
- [How Can You Be Sure that You Will Spend Eternity with God?](#)
- [What was the Old Testament way of salvation?](#)
- [How were people saved before Jesus died for our sins?](#)

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever **believes** in Him shall not perish (Not annihilation, loss of one's being but loss of well-being - Into Eternal Punishment), but **have eternal life**. 17 "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. 18 "He who **believes** in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Comment: Some say the Greek word for eternal does not mean eternal or everlasting. However the words of Jesus Himself clearly refute this false belief for in Matthew 25:46 Jesus declared "And these will go away into **eternal punishment**, but the righteous into **eternal life**." The implication is clear -- if there is eternal life, then there must also be eternal punishment.

John 3:36 "He who **believes** in the Son has **eternal life**; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

John 5:24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and **believes** Him who sent Me, has **eternal life**, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

John 6:40 "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and **believes** in Him will have **eternal life**, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

John 8:24 Jesus was very clear in this double warning - ""Therefore I said to you that **you will die in your sins**; for unless you **believe** that I am He (Messiah), **you will die in your sins**."

Comment: One might ask why did Jesus repeatedly call for His hearers to **believe** in Him? The answer is that the Lord does not want "any to perish but for all to come to repentance (Which includes belief in Him)." (2 Peter 3:9). Paul echoes God's heart writing that He "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (1 Ti 2:4). Sadly,

John 11:25-26 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who **believes** in Me will live even if he dies, 26 and everyone who lives and **believes** in Me will never die (Speaking of the Second Death). Do you believe this?"

Comment: Someone has well said "Born once, die twice. Born twice, die once." Every person is physically born once but only those who are born again will die only once (speaking of their physical death). If one is also spiritual born again, then they will not die spiritually (see John 5:24 above). But if they are not born again, they will die once in time physically, and once for eternity spiritually.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am **the** way, and **the** truth, and **the** life; **no one** comes to the Father but **through Me**.

Comment: If you know Greek, you understand that Jesus' use of the definite article "the" preceding each attribute (way...truth...life), you know that Jesus left no other option. The definite article means in essence He is the **ONLY** way, the **ONLY** truth, the **ONLY** life. And then He amplifies the exclusivity of His statement but using the Greek word for "no one" which signifies absolutely no exceptions. In other words, the only human beings that will ever gain access to God the Father are those who "enter" through His Son. He stated this principle clearly in John 10:9 declaring "I am the door (a metaphor); **if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved**, and will go in and out and find pasture." Peter adds that "there is salvation in **no one** (in Greek = "absolutely no one") else; for there is **no** (in Greek "absolutely no") other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we **must** (Greek speaks of that which is absolutely necessary to) be saved." (Acts 4:12+) We see the same idea in Isaiah 45:22 where God says "**Turn to Me and be saved**, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other."

John 20:31 but these have been written (Speaking of the words in the Gospel of John) so that you may **believe** that Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah), the Son of God; and **that believing you may have life in His name**.

Why do I need Salvation?

For the answer take a walk down the "Romans Road." In short, we first need to acknowledge the "bad news" that faces every person before we can truly understand our need for the "Good News" or the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

- Romans 1:16[±] (the basic principle) For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
- Romans 3:10[±] as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE. (**Note:** No there are no exception clauses. Every human has a major problem! This is "bad news!")
- Romans 3:23[±] for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (More "bad news")
- Romans 6:23[±] For the wages of sin is (spiritual) death, but the free gift of God is **eternal life** in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- Romans 5:8[±] God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that **while we were yet sinners**, Christ died for us ("for us" means "in our place" as our "Substitute!").
- Romans 10:9-10[±] If you **confess** with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and **believe** in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; 10 for with the heart a person **believes**, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he **confesses**, resulting in salvation.
- Romans 8:1[±] Therefore there is now **no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus.
- Romans 12:1-2[±] Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice**, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be ("stop being") conformed to this world, but be ("now keep on being") transformed by the renewing of your mind (with the Word of God and by the Spirit of God - 2 Cor 3:18[±]), so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

See also - An illustration of this **Romans Road** in the Old and New Testaments. Salvation in the Old and New is by grace through faith, never by works!

Would you go to heaven if you died tonight?

Don't answer this question too quickly! It is the most important answer you will ever give! And you will not fully understand the critical importance of your answer until ONE MINUTE AFTER YOU DIE! This is not a "scare tactic" but is a statement of absolute truth. This is not a question you want to ignore or even worse to scoff at! So let me ask you again, where will you wake up one minute after you die? You will have to live with your answer forever!

- Do you want to go to heaven?
- Do you want to know the way?

Take a moment and read the story of a rich man who discovered what happens when one dies without Christ as Savior - Luke 16:19-31 (Commentary)

Here are two classic books by Dwight Lyman Moody if you desire to ponder some more the most important question you will ever answer in your life:

- [The Way to God & How to Find It](#)
- [Heaven: Where It Is, Its Inhabitants & How To Get There](#)

Are you skeptical? Do you have questions about salvation?

Take a moment and read (or watch) ...

- If you are Jewish (or even if you are not Jewish), don't check out on me! [See the testimonies of many Jewish men and women](#) who have met the Jewish Messiah Whose Name is Yeshua! **Some of these personal testimonies are "mind blowing!"**
- [Questions Skeptics Ask About Messianic Prophecy](#)
- [Why do most Jews reject Jesus as the Messiah?](#)
- [The Jewish Tradition Of Two Messiahs](#)
- [Do I Have The Right Kind Of Faith? - Examining eight wrong objects of faith](#)
- [The Way to God & How to Find It](#)
- [Can I Really Trust The Bible?](#)
- [Questions Skeptics Ask About The God Of The Old Testament](#)
- [How Can I Know There Is A God?](#)
- [Does God Grade On A Curve? Passing Life's Final Exam](#)
- [Safe & Secure - The Permanence Of Salvation](#)
- [Heaven: Where It Is, Its Inhabitants & How To Get There](#) - classic by Dwight L Moody
- [The Permanence of Salvation - 12 Reasons Why "Once Saved, Always Saved" is True](#) (23 page booklet)
- [Once saved always saved?](#)
- [Eternal security - is it biblical?](#)
- [The Assurance Of Salvation - Study in 1 John on assurance of salvation](#)
- [Is eternal security a "license" to sin?](#)
- [Can a Christian lose salvation?](#)
- [What is the relationship of faith, works, and security in salvation?](#)
- [Accepted By God: Our Justification Through Christ](#)
- [God's Choice Or Ours? - Predestination & Election](#) (Related questions from Gotquestions.org)
 1. [Who are the elect of God?](#)
 2. [How can I know if I am one of the elect?](#)
 3. [How are predestination and election connected with foreknowledge?](#)
 4. [What is predestination? Is predestination biblical?](#)
- [What About Those Who Have Never Heard the Gospel?](#)
- [What Is A Personal Relationship With God? Conditions for knowing God](#)
- [Why Does It Make Sense To Believe In Christ? - Evidence for the reasonableness of Christian faith](#)
- [What If It's True? Examining Four Important Spiritual Questions](#)
- [Why We Believe - Evidences for Christian Faith](#)
- [The Forgiveness Of God - The depth of God's mercy](#)
- [What happens to those who have never heard about Jesus?](#)
- [Can a person be saved through general revelation?](#)
- [Is it necessary to fully understand the Gospel to go to heaven? Is it enough to believe it, even if we do not fully understand it?](#)
- [Will there be a second chance for salvation after the Rapture?](#)
- [How were people saved before Jesus died for our sins?](#)
- [What happens to babies and young children when they die?](#)
- [Do mentally ill people go to heaven?](#)

- [Inclusivism vs. exclusivism - what does the Bible say?](#)
- If you enjoy reading stories of the redeeming work of God's grace than bookmark this short (71 page) book by [Hy Pickering](#) entitled "[TWICE BORN MEN.](#)" Therein you find the testimonies of some men you have heard of and some you have not, but your soul will be blessed as you are reminded of our great God Who is always "Mighty to Save." (Isaiah 63:1-note). [Borrow the full 150 page book from archive.org](#)