



# New Covenant Life

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Grace Christian Fellowship

# The New Covenant

## Jeremiah 31:31-34

31 *“Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord. 33 “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the Lord, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the Lord, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”* (NASB)



Sea of Galilee (This was very close to where our Lord gave the greatest sermon ever preached on New Covent living)

It has been our experience that there is a great need within the Church (the Body of Christ) to receive a fresh and powerful revelation of the glory, might and promises of the New Covenant. So many believers are trying to live in the New Covenant with Old Covenant thinking, principles and practices. However, it is our prayer that God might use this newsletter to shed light on aspects of New Covent living for believers so that we all might enter into the fullness of what God has for us in this side of eternity.

# Holy Ground: The Only Way To Become Holy

Written by David Wilkerson<sup>1</sup>

God can't use a man until He gets him on holy ground. A holy God must have a holy man on holy ground.

Holy ground is not a physical place, but a spiritual one. When God commanded Moses to take off his shoes because he was on holy ground, He was not referring to a two-by-four piece of real estate. He was talking about a spiritual state.

God called Moses from the burning bush, commanding him:

"Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. . ." (Exodus 3:5).

The place was holy! What place? The spiritual condition he had finally come to. Moses had arrived at a place in his growth where God could get through to him. He was now at the place of reception, ready to listen. He was mature and ready to be dealt with by a holy God.

Please don't think for a moment that Moses alone was on holy ground. So was all of Israel, even though they were at the end of their hope. I have never believed God would keep an entire nation under slavery just to give Moses time to mature into a gracious leader. Our Lord is no respecter of persons. God, in those 40 trying years, was preparing Israel as well as Moses. By way of loving judgment, the Lord was driving Israel back to holy ground - back to a hunger for Jehovah.

While Moses was on the mountain being stripped of all his rights - because that is what was meant by the removal of his shoes - Israel was in the valley being stripped of all human strength. Moses would have no rights; Israel, no strength. God could prove Himself strong on their behalf in no other way. The great "I AM" was being revealed!

What is "Holy Ground"?

Let me list at least three descriptions of this spiritual condition.



## **I. It Is A Place Where All Hidden Leprosy Is Exposed.**

Moses was truly a man touched by God. He was supernaturally called and was full of revelation about who God was. He was permitted to know guidance as few other men have known. He was humble, pious, and burdened for the honor of God. He loved God and grieved over the sins of the people.

In spite of all this, Moses did not know of the leprosy in his own bosom:

"And the Lord said unto him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom; and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous as snow. . ." (Exodus 4:6).

What terror - to reach into your own bosom and touch leprosy! What an object lesson on the utter depravity of the flesh. There is nothing but disease and death in the old man. How can Moses stretch forth a leprous hand to bring about deliverance? Impossible!

Was God indulging in a little magic with Moses? No! He has no time for tricks and pranks. This was a powerful lesson the man of

<sup>1</sup> Wilkerson, David. "Holy Ground: The Only Way To Become Holy." No pages. Cited 7 June 2018. Online: [http://sentinellenehemie.free.fr/wilkersondavidw1\\_gb.html](http://sentinellenehemie.free.fr/wilkersondavidw1_gb.html)

God must learn. It was God's way of saying to His man,

"When self is in control, you end up hurting people, bringing reproach on My work. When you attempt to do My work in spectacular, fleshly ways - you minister death, and not life.

"I cannot use that old nature from Egypt - it can't be transformed - it will always be leprous. There must be a new man, one caught up in the glory and power of the 'I AM'!"

Moses was commanded to put his leprous hand back into his bosom. "And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his other flesh. . ." (Exodus 4:7).

He would do it again in the sight of all Israel. God's people would see with their own eyes not only the miraculous anointing on the Lord's servant, but also his potential for horrible evil. They were not to get their eyes on Moses, but rather on the great "I AM." Did any in Israel that day dare to put their hand in their bosom - fearing the leprosy that lay hidden in themselves? The flesh was exposed that day, in all its ugliness and corruption.

Stretching forth the hand represents ministry. By it the seas opened, fire fell, and miracles were performed. Who among us today dares to stretch forth a leprous hand? Who will attempt to do God's work with a bosom filled with unexposed leprosy?

It will always be there, latent in the old man - the sin nature. And God wants it exposed to our spiritual eyes. Not only is there "no good thing" in us - there is a leprous thing in us! It is that horrible thing that lusts against the Spirit, that deadly thing that one must die to, at the Cross.

What a grief it must be to the heart of God to reject so many works done in His name, because they have leprosy in them. The leprosy of ego. The leprosy of human success - competition - self motivation.

The leprosy of a worker permeates everything he touches. One may create a great, even spectacular, work for God. All may praise its bigness, its grandeur. But the truth will out. If it has in it the seed of leprosy, it will spread until it finally kills.

What is leprosy, but sin? Hidden, unexposed, unforsaken sin! What happens when a man of God gets on holy ground? His inner soul is exposed! His deepest, hidden sins are brought

to light. You can't lie with a leprous hand staring you in the face. No longer are you telling people what you've done for God - you are not glorying in your service to Him. You are too humbled by the exposure of what is in your flesh. Never again will you take lightly the potential for evil, latent in the flesh.

Thank God for that second, sanctifying touch! That cleansing moment, when by faith the old flesh is done away with and the hand of ministry is purified. When we are once again clothed in the proper flesh - His flesh.

## II. Holy Ground Is A Place Of No Reputation

Moses had decreased to zero point. Once he had been held in high esteem, respected in high government places, great in reputation and prestige. He moved among the wealthy and the influential, probably the best known man of his time. He was counselor to potentates.

But God couldn't use him until He tore him away from his popularity and esteem. Who knew him now? Hidden away, out of sight - silenced and without influence. He had no outlet for his great energy. No one now hung on his every word. What world leader would listen to such a man - an isolated shepherd, a has-been?

But the very moment Moses reached zero point - when his reputation was totally lost and there was nothing left of the old, self-promoting Moses - he was on holy ground!

How long did God wait by that bush, ready to break forth in a glorious new revelation? Only until that final, breaking moment when Moses truly no longer cared about his work or his reputation. When he gave up the last scraps of reputation, he found revelation.

The Lord Jesus stood on this same holy ground. The scriptures say, "He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant..." (Philippians 2:7).

It was a willful choice - to shun reputation and become a servant. Thank God for those who once again are being called to such holy ground, seeking to decrease that He may increase.

One great man of God wrote,  
*"The man of God who truly preaches the Word will finally give up the idea of being known. If*

*he preaches Christ, his reputation will constantly decrease; Christ will increase. True prophets die unknown. God gives them their dues only after they die."*

I believe that! If I as a minister am gaining a larger, more widespread reputation, something is missing in my message. Self is too prominent. Christ should be gaining, I should be losing recognition. I should begin to be less known as the years go by until, like Paul, I end up shut in with God.

Recently I wrote to the brethren who manage Kingston Trust in England. These godly men have given their lives to the distribution of books written by J. B. Stoney, Darby, Coates, and other pious English men of God who are now with the Lord. These men have stirred my soul. Their knowledge of Christ is awesome. I am reprinting some of their messages, and I asked Kingston Trust to supply me with biographical backgrounds on them. I was deeply moved by the answer I received.

"Dear David - These men labored mostly unknown and unrecognized in their time. They allowed little to be written about themselves; consequently, there is nothing to send you. They were concerned only with the glory of Christ and cared nothing for reputation or recognition."

No pictures! No brochures describing how or what they preach! No press clippings; no glamour, no flowery recommendations from well-known personalities. Nothing left of their work or reputation but the glorious message of Christ the Lord. Most of the time they signed only their initials to their messages. They fretted that someone might praise them and rob Christ of all the glory. No wonder they had an open heaven!

T. Austin-Sparks didn't even want his book covers to be in color - lest people be distracted from the message. Plain wrappers for great revelations. I can't find a picture of these pious men anywhere. They all died in faith, rejected by organized religion and mostly unknown in their time. Yet today, they speak louder than ever.

How many evangelists today would submit to the kind of ministry shutdown placed upon Paul? One day he is the busy shepherd of churches worldwide. He is a fruitful evangelist, teacher - shaking nations. He travels, he trains

workers, he heals the multitudes in the power of God. The next picture is one of total isolation. He is put out of sight, in a dark prison.

But thank God for that shutdown! Out of it came the epistles to the body of Christ. It was a time of no reputation - but glorious revelation.

Let me tell you honestly what I believe a number of well-known ministers ought to do. Shut it all down for a while and get alone with God. Enter into a time and place of no reputation. Decrease! Shut down all the machinery - turn off all the cameras - silence all the publicity. Let all the promotion grind to a halt. Let the dear man of God isolate himself from the public eye, and let him touch God for a new revelation of Christ. Then bring back what is of God, in a purified form.

What is to be lost? Souls? How can a man of God please Him more than by being shut up alone with Him, decreasing and getting true revelation? God's kingdom does not depend on any one man or ministry. God is more interested in winning all of me, than in me winning all the world for Him. Furthermore, the world cannot be saved by men who refuse to decrease.

May we all decrease! May He alone increase! God help us to get back to this holy ground.

### **III. Holy Ground Is A Condition Of Freedom From Materialism.**

"He forsook Egypt. . . choosing rather to suffer with God's people than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. . ." (Hebrews 11:25-27).

Nothing saps the power and authority of a man of God quicker than materialism. A true servant cannot set his heart on God and the things of this world simultaneously.

Materialism is not "things" in themselves, but the pursuit of things. Material things are the fuel that fires our lust.

Christ stands before us as a rebuke we cannot shut our eyes and ears to. He is set before us in the gospel as poor, despised, reproached, persecuted, without a place to lay his head. Jesus never enjoyed the things of this world - not its property, its wealth, its pleasures, or its success. He was satisfied with daily bread. And that is all He asks us to pray for also.

If there were any worth to the things of this world, certainly He would have partaken of

them. He denied these things because He knew they had no value or virtue. He knew how the things of this world can become the object of man's affections, consuming all his time and energy. He knew how material things woo souls away from His own love. That is why our Lord poured contempt on the things of this world.

Christ wanted us to be so detached from this world and its things, that we would be ready to depart and be with Him momentarily. What a shame we prefer the physical blessings of the old covenant to the spiritual ones promised by Christ!

God is calling the church off from this covetous chase for the things of this world, because He knows the vanity and vexation it causes. What a sad day, when our Lord shows us how contemptible the things are that we struggle for, pray for, and worry about.

We excuse the poverty of Jesus as necessary to His work of redemption. Since we are not redeemers, we don't think we should suffer the same kind of lifestyle. Certainly Christ does not expect all to live as He did, but in trampling the things of this world and despising them, our Lord is trying to tell us they are not worth setting our affections upon.

It was Christ's gospel that brought to light a new way of living. A new way of waking humbly with the Lord as strangers having no love for this world. The apostles lived as did our Lord, and they died in a condition of poverty, persecution, and distress. They were set forth as examples of suffering and shame so that God's grace and love could be revealed through heavenly things.

Paul said:

"Even to this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place... being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it - we are made as the filth of this world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day..." (1 Corinthians 4:9, 11-13).

Why is it that God gives so much of worldly success and riches to the vilest and most wicked of men? God pours riches and fame even upon His worst enemies. The ungodly get the greatest portion of this world's goods. Dictators have had more wealth poured upon them than they knew what to do with. You can

tell how little God values worldly things by the way He gives them so freely to the damned. The Arabs today have most of this earth's wealth. The despisers of God have been inundated with so much money, they can't enjoy or use it all.

If property, money, and success were in any way godly or sanctified, would the Lord be so generous in giving them away to the worst of sinners? When Christ and His disciples walked this earth, they were surrounded by the wealth and opulence of the Roman potentates. But that which these reprobates so coveted, Christ totally rejected. He looked upon it as a snare. He preached and taught that it could destroy a man's soul. He exalted the excellence and superiority of spiritual values over physical. Christ also knew the total dissatisfaction and disappointment of those who had all their hearts could want. It left them empty and unfulfilled. Too, He knew the stupidity of men who had their security in material things.

We talk about the riches of our biblical patriarchs. Some of our godly ancestors lived to be hundreds of years old, and it gave them time to enjoy great earthly prosperity, huge estates, unparalleled riches. But it also brought on the violence and godlessness that ended in a flood.

To get on holy ground, one must cut the cord of materialism. I have not yet come to that place, but that is my goal. To have no place here on earth, but to give all time and energy in pursuing the revelation of Christ. Then perhaps we can say with our fathers, "Take this whole world, but give me Jesus."

God - get us back on holy ground.

The Old Testament is full of types and shadows of New Testament truth. Whenever I have a difficult time trying to understand a truth from the New Testament, I turn back to its foreshadowing in the Old. In fact, I believe there isn't a single episode or story in the Old Testament that is not full of ripe truth for New Testament believers.

My preacher grandfather once told me, "David, if you're going to teach about character, you have to go to the Old Testament. That's where all the character teaching is." I believe he was right.

One such example is the passage concerning

Moses at the burning bush. I'd like to explore that particular story in some depth - because I see it as being full of profound New Testament truth on the subject of holiness.

First, we need to ask - how are we made holy in the sight of God? The New Testament tells us we are called to be holy "even as God is holy": "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15-16). In other words, "It is written, recorded, settled once and for all: We are to be holy, as our God is holy!"

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Ephesians 1:4). Paul is saying, "Since the very beginning of creation, we have been called to live holy and blameless!"

"Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints..." (1 Corinthians 1:2). The Greek word for "saints" here is "holy." So, the literal meaning of this phrase is, "If you're in Christ, then you are called to be holy!"

"God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness" (1 Thessalonians 4:7). God hasn't called us just to salvation, or to heaven, or to receive his pardon. Rather, these things are benefits of our one true call - which is to be holy as he is holy!

Every single believer in the church of Jesus Christ is called to be holy, even as Christ is holy - to be pure and blameless in God's sight. So, if you have been born again, holiness must be the cry of your heart: "God, I want to be like Jesus. I want to walk holy before you, all the days of my life!"

Now, as you read these New Testament verses, you may be alarmed: "You mean, I'm to be as holy as Jesus was? Impossible! He was spotless, blameless, perfect. How on earth could anyone live up to that standard? Besides, doesn't the Bible say, 'There is none holy as the Lord'?"

That was the very purpose of the law - to show us it is impossible for us to measure up to God's standard of holiness. No amount of human willpower, strength or ability could ever make us holy.

Therefore, if there is none holy but the Lord, there can only be one way for us to become holy:

## **We Must Be in Christ - and His Holiness Must Become Our Holiness!**

"...if the root be holy, so are the branches" (Romans 11:16). Paul says that because Jesus, the root, is holy, then we, the branches, are holy also. And John writes, "I am the vine, ye are the branches...." (John 15:5). In other words, because we are in Christ, we are made holy by virtue of his holiness.

That fact is, God recognizes only one man as holy - Jesus Christ. And in God's eyes, there have been only two representative men throughout history - the first, literal Adam, and the second Adam, which is Jesus. All of humankind was wrapped up in the first Adam - and when he sinned, we all became sinners. Then Jesus came forth as a new man - and, through his reconciliation on the cross, all of humankind potentially became gathered up in him. Today God recognizes only this one man, Jesus - and he is holy.

Like Adam, apart from Christ's redemption of us, we can never be holy. No matter how long we live or how hard we try - not matter how many prayers we utter, how often we read the Bible, or how many lusts we conquer - we will never be perfectly holy. The Bible says if we haven't fulfilled all the law - if we've had even one evil thought - then we've missed the whole law. And we cannot be holy.

Jesus stands alone in perfect holiness. And if any person is ever to stand before the heavenly father and be received by him, that person must be in Christ. God won't recognize any other man. (Thankfully, that includes our "old man" - the dead sinner in us!) We stand before the father without any merits or claims of our own - but only the grace of Christ.

Every time we go to our secret closet, our prayer should be: "Lord, I have no plea but Christ. I have nothing to bring to you - no good works, no holiness of my own. I come to you only because I am in Christ. And I claim his holiness. I know I stand before you uncondemned, because I am in him!"

## **This One Man, Jesus, Who Is Holy and Blameless, Has a Body - and We Are That Body!**

"Ye are the body of Christ, and members in

particular" (1 Corinthians 12:27). We are the very members of Christ's body! By faith, we are made bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh.

And now we all have been adopted into one family, as part of the one man: "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (Romans 12:5).

You see, out of the grave came a new man. And from the time of the cross, all who repent and believe in this new man are gathered up in him: "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many" (1 Corinthians 12:13-14).

There is no longer any black, white, yellow, brown, Jew, Muslim or Gentile. We are all of one blood - one new man - in Christ Jesus!

And because of Christ's work on the cross, man could no longer attempt to be holy by keeping the law and the commandments. He couldn't become holy by good works, righteous deeds, human effort or strivings of the flesh:

"That he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (Ephesians 2:16). "Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain [two] one new man, so making peace" (verse 15).

Only one man would be accepted by the father - the new, resurrected man! And when this new man presented to his father all who had faith in him, the father responded, "I receive you all as holy - because you are in my holy son!" "...he hath made us accepted in the beloved" (1:6).

Moreover, we have been sealed by the Holy Spirit: "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ...in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise" (verses 10, 13).

So, you see, holiness is not something we do, or attain, or work up. Rather, it is something we believe! God accepts us as holy only as we have faith in Christ and abide in him. The path to holiness is not through human ability, but through faith!

This is God's wonderful answer to the anxious cries of multitudes of Christians, who thirst for an understanding of how to be holy. We are

holy only as we rest in Christ's holiness! Our holiness is his holiness - flowing to us, the branches, from the root.

Yet, at times, this biblical doctrine of holiness hasn't always been the practice of the church. Often holiness has been thought of only in terms of outward behavior.

My preacher grandfather is an example of this. He was a Nazarene minister in the early holiness movement, and he didn't allow Christians to wear feathers in their hats. He kept a little pair of gold scissors in his pocket - and whenever someone came to the altar and bowed her head, he would snip off any feathers!

Yet my grandfather chewed tobacco, because there was no "holiness prohibition" against it. He even kept a spittoon near him on the pulpit, so he could chew while he preached. He would turn his head and spit out the juice - all while preaching against women who wore lipstick!

I have heard holiness preachers rail for hours against women's makeup, certain types of dress, length of hair and other things, calling them matters of holiness. Yet these same men were the worst gossipers ever!

Beloved, God's message to us about holiness isn't about outward things. It is about faith - and he makes it very clear and simple! Yes, the Holy Spirit will deal with the outward man, teaching us to be adorned in simplicity and decency. But he does it through conviction - in his time and in his way.

### **To Better Understand How to Be Holy, We Must Go Back to The Old Testament - to the Account of Moses at the Burning Bush!**

You probably have read this passage. Moses was all alone on Mount Horeb, herding his father-in-law's sheep, when suddenly a strange sight grabbed his attention: A bush was burning brightly, as if on fire - yet it was not consumed!

Moses decided to go for a closer look - and as he stepped nearer, God called to him out of the bush: "Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush..." (Exodus 3:3-4).

God was present in the bush. That's why it was

burning, yet not consumed. It was a visual representation of God's holiness. Indeed, wherever he is present, that place is holy!

Then the Lord told Moses, "...Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (verse 5). Most of us skip over this verse without understanding the tremendous depth of its meaning. I've heard many conflicting opinions of what God means in commanding Moses, "Take off your shoes." Some scholars say this means, "Take off your pride." Others say it means, "Take off your arrogance."

I believe the phrase goes much deeper than either of these things. I suggest it has to do with the subject of this message - how to be holy!

Think about it: Moses was about to be called into God's eternal purpose for him - to deliver Israel out of bondage. Yet, first God had to show Moses the ground upon which he, the Lord, was to be approached: It had to be holy ground. In short, Moses was being called to a face-to-face communion with a holy God - and he had to be prepared for it!

Of course, Moses was afraid when God spoke to him: "...And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God" (verse 6). Yet scripture says this was the same man who "talked face-to-face with God."

So, how was Moses dramatically changed? What transformed him from being someone who hid his face in God's presence, to a man whose face shone brightly after conversing freely with the Lord face-to-face?

It was because Moses had a revelation of the kind of ground upon which God must be approached!

### **The New Testament Truth Corresponding to This Passage Is, ". . .No Flesh Should Glory In His Presence" (1 Corinthians 1:29).**

This verse is not just a New Testament truth. It was true in Moses' day! Moses couldn't deliver God's people in his own strength. He had to be taught, once and for all, that God's work is done not through any human ability - but by total trust and dependence on the Lord!

This is true for every Christian today. There has to be a putting off of all that the flesh tries to bring to God. Indeed, God says to us as he did to Moses, "There is only one ground upon

which you can approach me, and that is holy ground. You can have no confidence in your flesh - because no flesh will stand in my presence!"

Yet, why did God focus on shoes in this passage? What does that have to do with putting off the flesh? First, our feet are two of the most tender parts of our body. And what are shoes, but a protection of our flesh? They protect us from the elements, from stones, from snakes, from filth and dust, from the hot pavement.

Do you see what God was saying to Moses here? He was using an everyday, ordinary thing to teach a spiritual lesson - just as Jesus later did, using coins, pearls, camels and mustard seeds. God was saying, "Moses, you wear protective garb to keep your flesh from injury. But no amount of fleshly protection will be able to keep you, because of where I am about to send you. You'll need a miracle of deliverance!"

"I am sending you into Egypt - that den of iniquity - to face a hardened dictator. And you'll be put in a situation that only I can deliver you from. So, unless you set aside all reliance on your flesh - your meekness, zeal and humility - you won't be able to do what I'm calling you to do. All your abilities will be worthless, unless I sanctify them. You have to put your total trust in my name and power!"

Indeed, Moses would face all kinds of tests and trials. He was about to lead some three million people into the desert, where there were no grocery stores, no malls, not even a well of water. He would have to depend wholly on God for everything!

You have to understand - Moses had already tried to act as a deliverer in the power of his flesh. Forty years before, he had taken sword in hand and killed a cruel Egyptian slave driver. And now God was saying, "Moses, your zeal has to be sanctified - or it will destroy you! Are you willing to put down your sword, and trust in my sword? Will you put off all hope of being a deliverer in your own power and ability? Will you put off all confidence in your flesh to do my will?"

### **The Holiness God Demands Is Utterly Above and Beyond All Human Power to Achieve!**

It is impossible for any of us to achieve holiness in God's sight by our own strength or willpower. There is only one way to be holy - and one principle by which to approach the Lord in our Christian service. We must come to him saying, "Lord, I have nothing to give you. You have to do it all!"

You can be free of all lusts, of every evil desire, and still not be holy. You can be a wonderful person, a loving mate, an upright and honest person, and still not be holy. On the contrary, all of our human goodness is as filthy rags in God's sight!

Yet we remain convinced, "If I could just get victory over this one last, remaining sin, I'd be able to live holy." So we take sword in hand - the sword of willpower, promises, good intentions - and we set out to kill the enemy in our hearts, in an attempt to gain victory.

But it will never happen! We can never be holy while standing on the ground of self-righteousness. The shoes of flesh have to be put off!

Years ago, many evangelical churches sang a gospel song that I absolutely hated. It says, "Forgive me, Lord, and try me one more time." No - that is theologically incorrect! God would never put our eternal future at such a great risk. If our salvation depended on such trial and error, none of us would ever make it to heaven!

Beloved, you and I face the same burning bush Moses did. And that bush is a type of God's fiery zeal against all flesh brought into his presence masquerading as holiness. He says to us, "You can't stand before me on that kind of fleshly ground. There is only one holy ground - and that is faith in my son and his work on the cross!"

This is the only way God ever could have saved and reconciled a whole world. If our works merited our salvation, only a select number would be candidates for salvation. But I believe in the doctrine of unlimited atonement - that Christ died potentially for all of humankind.

Many of my favorite Puritan writers, such as John Owen, believed the opposite. Their doctrine taught that "election" means God has chosen certain people for his kingdom, and that all others are damned. But I personally do not believe this teaching is supported in

scripture. On the contrary, I believe that through Jesus' work on the cross, the whole world is potentially reconciled to God. Anyone who hears his word, repents of sin, and turns to him in faith, becomes in him - a part and member of his body!

This means God can save even the worst of humankind. We can behold the worst thief, rapist, murderer, drug addict or alcoholic - people who have no good works at all - and testify, "By repentance and faith, they can be presented righteous in Christ Jesus!"

That is the true, saving power of God. Yet many Christians live as if their works are sufficient. On judgment day, they'll stand before God in their flesh, saying, "Look at everything I've done for you, Lord. I've striven to stay clean and holy. I've prophesied, fed the poor, healed the sick, cast out demons. And I've done it all to please you!"

But God will answer, "I never knew you - because you were never on the proper ground! You never took your shoes off, setting aside your confidence in the flesh.

"You didn't do any of these things through the power of my Spirit. You did them all in your own strength. And they are a stench in my nostrils! I accept the righteousness of only one man - my son. And I do not see my son in you. You are not in Christ!"

"Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorifieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:30-31). In other words: "I won't allow any human beings to glory in my presence. They will glorify me only through my son - who each day is becoming their wisdom, righteousness and holiness!"

### **There Is Only One Ground Upon Which You Can Be Made Holy – and That Is Total and Complete Trust in Christ!**

When I speak of total trust in Christ, I mean not only trust in his saving power, but trust in his keeping power as well. We have to trust his Spirit to make our life conform to his - that is, to keep us in Christ!

Think about it for a moment. At one time you were alienated, cut off from God by wicked works. So, what good work did you do to make things right with him? None! No one has ever

been able to make himself holy. Rather, we are brought into Christ's holiness by faith alone - by accepting what God's word says: "If you are in Christ, you are holy, as he is holy!"

Yes, he wants your practical, daily walk to measure up to your faith walk. But the fact is, we have to believe him even for that. We must trust in his promise to give us the Holy Ghost, who will conform us to Christ's likeness in our daily walk:

"And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight: if ye continue in the faith..." (Colossians 1:21-23).

Note the phrase - "If you continue in faith..." Jesus is saying, "Just continue trusting in me, living by faith. And I will present you as clean, faultless, unblamable - holy before the father!" That is the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost: As the Spirit empowers you to mortify the deeds of the flesh, he will lead you by both his conviction and his comfort.

There is but one holiness - Christ's! And no

one Christian is "holier than thou." There are no degrees of holiness - only degrees of maturity in Christ. You can be a baby Christian and still be absolutely holy in Jesus. So it is foolish to measure yourself against someone you picture as being "holy." No! We are all measured by one standard - the holiness of Christ. And if we are in Christ, his holiness is ours in equal measure!

You can never again look at another Christian leader or layperson and say, "Oh, I wish I were as holy as he is!" You may not have that person's discipline; you may not have his prayer life; you may struggle more often and make more mistakes than he does; but he is no more accepted by the father than you are. You are to compare yourself to no one - because no one is more loved in the eyes of the father than you!

Dear saint, take your shoes off - put off all reliance on the flesh. Here is the ground upon which you're to live: "I claim my holiness that is in Christ Jesus. I'm a part of his body. And my father sees me as holy - because I am in Christ!"

# Testimonies for Jesus

Phillip Mahs

I grew up in much the same environment as my friends around me, that is, a Christian environment. Since I can remember, I have been attending church and Sunday school weekly as well as a Christian school for both my primary and secondary education. I still remember listening to my parents reading my sister and I Bible stories before bed, and us all praying together. Often Mum also shared with us about the struggles other Christians are enduring in some parts of the world, encouraging us to pray for them. With this upbringing, I had no doubt in my mind about God's existence. I firmly believed that Jesus died for me, and as long as I acknowledged that truth, I was sure to go to Heaven.

I went on to secondary school, still surrounded by friends of similar beliefs. However, with age and a growing awareness of the attractions and pleasures of sin, my conscience and moral boundaries were gradually yet continually weakened. The entertainment and pastimes of the world became more and more appealing. I knew from a moral perspective what was right and what was wrong, yet sin did not seem so evil. I knew these deeds were not technically "good" or "right", but done in secret, there seemed to be little consequence. Subconsciously, thousands of years later, Satan's first lie about the consequence of sin was still believed in my heart: "You will not surely die." After all, I believed Jesus died for me, so I was safely on my way to Heaven.

Having finished school, I went to University, separating from most of my school friends and influences. With more time on my hands, and having become good friends with my sister's boyfriend, I naturally accompanied them to a weekly Bible study. In due time we started looking more deeply into the scriptures, studying various books, passages and topics. Participating in the group out of interest, I learnt many things, yet it seemed the

personal application of the Gospel was rarely our focus. My life reflected this in various ways and addictions, of which TV Shows was not the least.

This addiction accounted for many hours of my day, every day. It was during such a night when I heard a knock on my bedroom door - it was my sister's boyfriend. Reluctantly I paused the show I was watching on my computer and listened to what he had to say. The conversation did not last too long, he again left my room and I resumed my watching of the show. To this day I cannot remember what the conversation was about, but I know the topic of the persecuted church must have surfaced to some extent. This topic which I had been no stranger to, thanks to Mum's regular sharing, struck me deeply that night.

Being unable to ignore the conviction, I again stopped the show I was watching, kneeled at the side of my bed and started crying before God. "Why am I living life so comfortably, considering what I have done against You, and others much more righteous than I suffer for Your name? Why have You had such mercy upon me? I should be the one suffering for what I have done against You!" For the first time I found myself standing before God, unable to hide any part of my past. The things once done in secret, running freshly through my mind, no longer felt so secret for they were all known by God. The words of Hebrew 4:13 had never been more true: "And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account." I could see for the first time that God would be just in sentencing me to hell, how unworthy I am of God's salvation and the immeasurable love and mercy God displayed by taking my place on the cross.

It was not long before I decided to get baptised and commit to following my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

# Wisdom From Saints

## My Conversion to God by Harry A. Ironside (Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.)

Written by Harry A. Ironside<sup>2</sup>

From a very early age, God began to speak to me through His Word. I doubt if I could go back to the first time when, to my recollection, I felt something of the reality of eternal things.

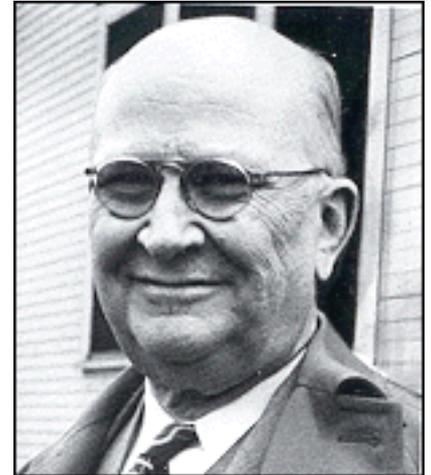
My father was taken from me, ere his features were impressed upon my infant mind. But I never have heard him spoken of other than as a man of God. He was known in Toronto (my birthplace) to many as “The Eternity Man.” His Bible, marked in many places, was a precious legacy to me; and from it, I learned to recite my first verse of Scripture at the age of four. I distinctly recall learning the blessed words of Luke 19:10, “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” That I was lost and that Christ Jesus came from heaven to save me were the first divine truths impressed on my young heart.

My widowed mother was, it seems to me, one of a thousand. I remember yet how I would be thrilled as she knelt with me as a child and prayed, “Father, keep my boy from ever desiring anything greater than to live for Thee. Save him early, and make him a devoted street-preacher as his father was. Make him willing to suffer for Jesus’ sake, to gladly endure persecution and rejection by the world that cast out Thy Son, and keep him from what would dishonor Thee.” The words were not always the same, but I have heard the sentiment times without number.

To our home there often came servants of Christ—plain, godly men, who seemed to me to carry with them the atmosphere of eternity. Yet in a very real sense, they were the bane of my boyhood. Their searching, “Henry, lad, are you born again yet?” or the equally impressive, “Are you certain that your soul is saved?” often brought me to a standstill; but I knew not how

to reply.

California had become my home ere I was clear as to being a child of God. In Los Angeles, I first began to learn the love of the world and was impatient of restraint. Yet I had almost continual concern as



to the great matter of my salvation.

I was but twelve years old when I began a Sunday-school and set up to try to help the boys and girls of the neighborhood to a knowledge of the Book I had read ten times through, but which had still left me without assurance of salvation.

To Timothy, Paul wrote, “From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:15). It was this latter that I lacked. I had, it seemed to me, always believed, yet I dared not say I was saved. I know now that I had always believed about Jesus. I had not really believed in Him as my personal Savior. Between the two, there is all the difference that there is between being saved and lost, between an eternity in heaven and endless ages in the lake of fire.

As I have said, I was not without considerable anxiety as to my soul; and though I longed to break into the world, and was indeed guilty of much that was vile and wicked, I ever felt a restraining hand upon me, keeping me from many things that I would otherwise have gone

<sup>2</sup> Ironside, Harry A. “My Conversion to God by Harry A. Ironside (Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.)” No pages. Cited 5 June 2018. Online: <https://www.lighthouse Trailsresearch.com/blog/?p=17001>

into; and a certain religiousness became, I suppose, characteristic. But religion is not salvation.

I was nearly fourteen years old when, upon returning one day from school, I learned that a servant of Christ from Canada, well known to me, had arrived for meetings. I knew, ere I saw him, how he would greet me; for I remembered him well and his searching questions, when I was younger. Therefore I was not surprised but embarrassed nevertheless when he exclaimed, "Well, Harry, lad, I am glad to see you. And are you born again yet?"

The blood mantled my face; I hung my head and could find no words to reply. An uncle present said, "You know, Mr. M—, he preaches himself now a bit and conducts a Sunday-school!"

"Indeed!" was the answer. "Will you get your Bible, Harry?"

I was glad to get out of the room and so went at once for my Bible and returned after remaining out as long as seemed decent, hoping thereby to recover myself. Upon my reentering the room, he said kindly, but seriously, "Will you turn to Romans 3:19 and read it aloud?"

Slowly I read, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." I felt the application and was at a loss for words. The evangelist went on to tell me that he too had been once a religious sinner till God stopped his mouth and then gave him a sight of Christ. He pressed on me the importance of getting to the same place before I tried to teach others.

The words had their effect. From that time till I was sure I was saved, I refrained from talking of these things, and I gave up my Sunday-school work. But now Satan, who was seeking my soul's destruction, suggested to me, "If lost and unfit to speak of religious things to others, why not enjoy all the world has to offer, so far as you are able to avail yourself of it?"

I listened only too eagerly to his words, and for the next six months or thereabouts no one was more anxious for folly than I, though always with a smarting conscience.

At last, on a Thursday evening in February 1890, God spoke to me in tremendous power while out at a party with a lot of other young people, mostly older than myself, intent only on an evening's amusement. I remember now that I had withdrawn from the parlor for a few moments to obtain a cooling drink in the next room. Standing alone by a refreshment table, there came home to my inmost soul, in startling clearness, some verses of Scripture I had learned months before. They are found in the first chapter of Proverbs, beginning with verse 24 and going on to verse 32. Here wisdom is represented as laughing at the calamity of the one who refused to heed instruction, and mocking when his fear cometh. Every word seemed to burn its way into my heart. I saw as never before my dreadful guilt in having so long refused to trust Christ for myself and in having preferred my own willful way to that of Him who had died for me.

I went back to the parlor and tried to join with the rest in their empty follies. But all seemed utterly hollow, and the tinsel was gone. The light of eternity was shining into the room, and I wondered how any could laugh with God's judgment hanging over us like a Damocles' sword suspended by a hair. We seemed like people sporting with closed eyes on the edge of a precipice, and I the most careless of all, till grace had made me see.

That night, when all was over, I hurried home and crept upstairs to my room. There, after lighting a lamp, I took my Bible, and with it before me, fell upon my knees.

I had an undefined feeling that I had better pray. But the thought came, "What shall I pray for?" Clearly and distinctly came back the answer, "For what God has been offering me for years. Why not then receive it, and thank Him?"

My dear mother had often said, "The place to begin with God is at Romans 3 or John 3." To both these Scriptures, I turned and read them carefully. Clearly, I saw I was a helpless sinner, but that for me Christ had died and that salvation was offered freely to all who trusted in Him. Reading John 3:16 the second time, I said, "That will do. "O God, I thank Thee that Thou hast loved me, and given Thy Son for me. I trust Him now as my Savior, and I rest on

Thy Word, which tells me I have everlasting life.”

Then I expected to feel a thrill of joy. It did not come. I wondered if I could be mistaken. I expected a sudden rush of love for Christ. It did not come either. I feared I could not be really saved with so little emotion.

I read the words again. There could be no mistake. God loved the world of which I formed a part. God gave His Son to save all believers. I believed in Him as my Savior. Therefore, I must have everlasting life. Again, I thanked Him and rose from my knees to begin the walk of faith. God could not lie. I knew I must be saved.

# For the Disciples of Jesus

## Tozer Devotional: Growing Up in Christ

Written by A. W. Tozer<sup>3</sup>

The true Christian is a saint in embryo. The heavenly genes are in him and the Holy Spirit is working to bring him on into a spiritual development that accords with the nature of the heavenly Father from whom he received the deposit of divine life. Yet he is here in this mortal body subject to weakness and temptation, and his warfare with the flesh sometimes leads him to do extreme things. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. 5:17). The work of the Spirit in the human heart is not an unconscious or automatic thing. Human will and intelligence must yield to and cooperate with the benign

intentions of God. I think it is here that many of us go astray. Either we try to make ourselves holy and fail miserably, as we certainly must; or we seek to achieve a state of spiritual passivity and wait for God to perfect our natures in holiness as one might sit down and wait for a robin egg to hatch or a rose to burst into bloom. So we work feverishly to do the impossible or we do not work at all; and there lies the asymmetry about which I write. The New Testament knows nothing of the working of the Spirit in us apart from our own moral responses. Watchfulness, prayer, self-discipline and intelligent acquiescence in the purposes of God are indispensable to any real progress in holiness.

<sup>3</sup> Tozer, A. W. "Tozer Devotional: Growing Up in Christ." No pages. Cited 7 June 2018. Online: <https://www.cmalliance.org/devotions/tozer?id=527>

# A Word For Families

## The Non-Negotiable First Step to Build a Happy Home

Written by Rick Thomas<sup>4</sup>

A happy home does not just happen. Like all good things, you must have a plan and be willing to execute hard work (Luke 14:27).

The good news is that Christians have the “schematic” for happiness, which begins with forgiveness. The question for us centers on whether we’ll do the hard work of forgiving each other.

Christians enjoy and benefit from the gospel because God forgave us (Romans 10:9, 13). We confessed our sins, requested God’s forgiveness, and our kind and generous Father forgave us.

Confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation are parts that lead you down the path to happiness (Deuteronomy 33:29). If you want a happy home, you must imitate our imitate-able God at this crucial point (Ephesians 5:1).

### No Confession – No Happiness

During the first five years of our marriage, I never asked my wife to forgive me for any of the sins that I committed against her. Think about it. What I just said is staggering. Let me state the obvious here:

My view of God, humanity, and the doctrine of sin were dysfunctional. My gospel understanding and practices suffered from a “failure to thrive” (Hebrews 5:12-14; 1 Peter 2:2-3).

Yikes!

I’m not going to rationalize or provide a weak attempt to minimize the contradiction of my life back then. But I have observed through counseling many Christians that after I ask them about their forgiveness practices in the home, nearly all of them have said they do not regularly do it.

They do not pursue each other in humility, which is affirmed by their lack of reciprocal ownership of sin, mutual confession, and selfless forgiveness.

The oddity of this unchristian behavior is

stunning when viewed through the lens of our imitate-able gospel (1 Corinthians 11:1). The Lord’s gospel loudly proclaims a “not guilty” verdict to all regenerated people (John 3:7). It is sad that I could not perceive and apply the benefits of His grace (Psalm 103:1-2) during the early part of our marriage (James 4:6). Do a quick temperature check of your home and closest relationships.

1. How often do you ask your family members to forgive you for things you’ve done wrong?
2. Would you characterize your home as a place where confession and forgiveness regularly happen?
3. Are all the members of your home committed to practicing forgiveness?
4. Are you more aware of what you do wrong or what other family members do wrong (Matthew 7:3-5)?

### Will You Forgive Me?

The most radical, life-changing, relationship building question you will ever ask another person is, “Will you forgive me?” That is how our radical, life-changing, relationship building experience with God began. And the process is no different for His image bearers (Genesis 1:27; Ephesians 5:1).

A Christian who is not regularly asking for forgiveness is like the son of a millionaire who has no awareness of his daddy’s fortune. Or even worse, he is aware of his daddy’s wealth but refuses to benefit from the riches (1 Peter 1:4).

Forgiveness is free and unlimited from the Lord, but it requires humility to access it, whether you are on the asking or granting side of things.

“Will you forgive me?” is not a hard question, but it is not one of the more common questions asked within the Christian community—especially in our homes and local churches.

You should be able to easily discern why this is

<sup>4</sup> Thomas, Rick. “The Non-Negotiable First Step to Build a Happy Home.” No pages. Cited 5 June 2018. Online: <https://rickthomas.net/the-non-negotiable-first-step-to-build-a-happy-home/>

so: humility is the prerequisite to forgiveness. The person who is not regularly asking for forgiveness is either self-deceived, a pretender, or living in denial of the doctrine of sin. A forgiven person—who is authentically living in the grace of that forgiveness—is ready, willing, and able to ask for forgiveness (or grant it—attitudinally or transactionally).

### **Seven Simple Steps**

**1 – Be Honest.** You know when you sin (1 John 1:7-10; Romans 2:14-15; Hebrews 4:7-8).

**2 – Walk in the Spirit.** When you sense God’s illumination step into it; don’t run from it. Pray for a heightened sensitivity to the Spirit of God and obey Him in all things. Practice a life of honesty and integrity. When He speaks, listen and act.

**3 – Practice Forgiveness.** Don’t say I’m sorry or apologize. Push the “biblical envelope” by pursuing radical reconciliation. Ask for forgiveness.

**4 – Begin with God.** Don’t ask others to forgive you while not asking God to forgive you. All sin is a sin against God. Sometimes we sin against others too. If you sin against others, you must ask two people for forgiveness: The Lord and the other person you’ve offended.

**5 – Be Specific.** “Will you forgive me for (name it, claim it)?” Let them know that you know how you have sinned. Convince them that you have sinned. Do not let them let you off the hook. “Make” them forgive you, as you bring a compelling argument against yourself. Be

convincing, persuasive, and unrelenting in your pursuit of forgiveness.

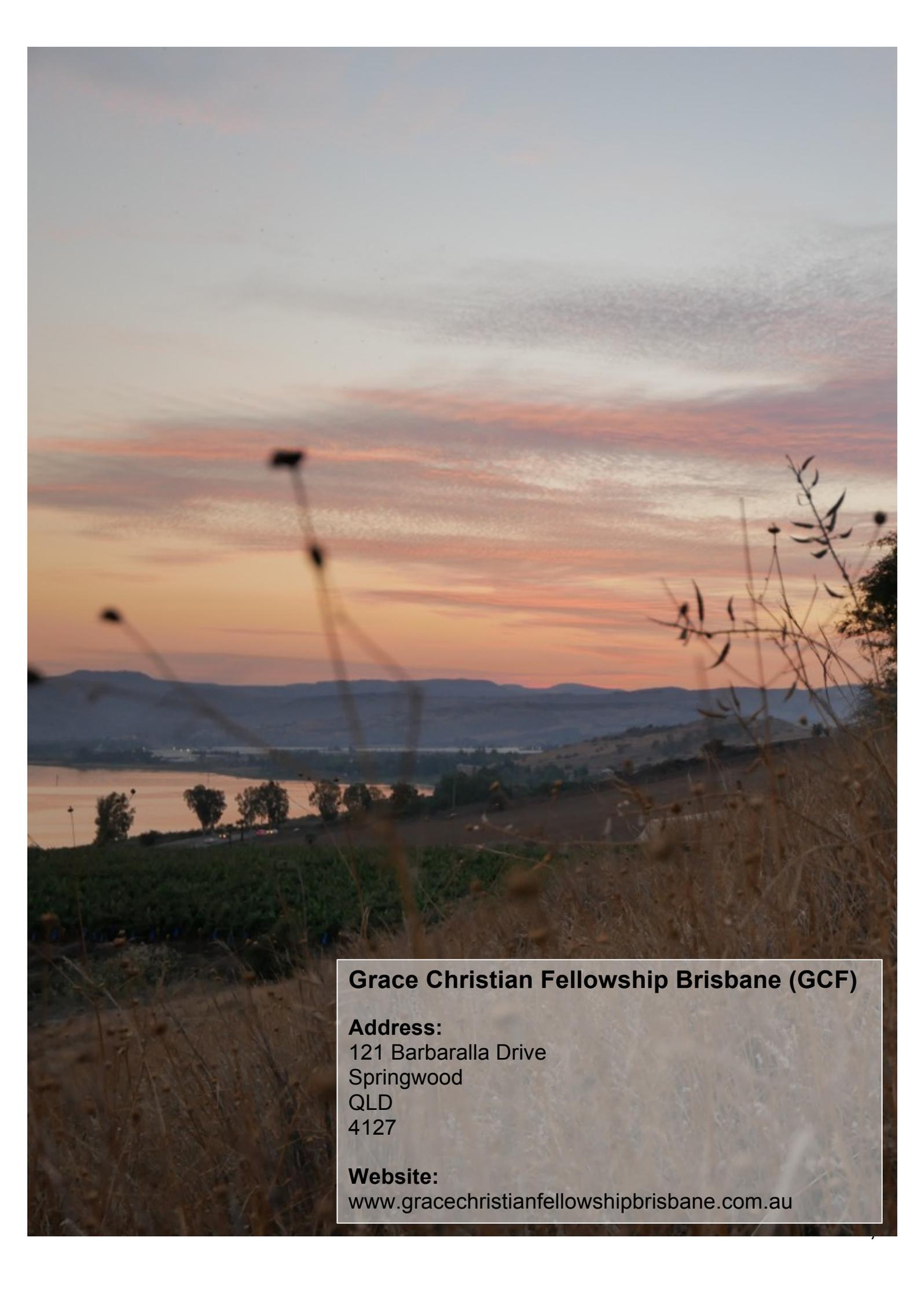
**6 – Surrender.** Give up your rights by submitting yourself to the authority of God and His Word. Choose brokenness until you are released from your sins and restored to those you offended. (Read Psalm 51) Do not settle for anything less.

**7 – Remember.** There is power in forgiveness. After the Father executed His Son on the cross (Isaiah 53:10) for your sin and mine, He made it possible for any person to experience release from the guilt and punishment that all sin deserves (Romans 6:23).

As a Christian, you and I have the grace-empowered privilege to live daily in a guilt-free environment if we will choose to be honest with ourselves, with God, and with others.

After Lucia and I began to see the gospel with more practical clarity, we started to live in the “restored sanctification sweet spot” that radically changed our home. We replaced the guilt, burden, shame, unresolved conflict, and proverbial “pink elephants” flying around the room with love, joy, peace, hope, and mercy that Christ offers through His gospel.

Do not be like the rich kid who is clueless about or resistant to what his daddy possesses. Step up to your inheritance by asking your family members to forgive you every time you sin against them. Be radical. Step into the enjoyment of your Christian experience with others.



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