

# WASHING



# OF REGENERATION

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## Table of Contents

Forward	3
Chapter 1 Saved according to his mercy	4
Chapter 2 The baptism of Jesus with Holy Spirit and fire	6
Chapter 3 Washing with water through the word	9
Chapter 4 He has given us a living hope	11
Chapter 5 I will declare the works of the Lord	14
Chapter 6 We are made right through faith	19
Chapter 7 Keeping the law will never save us	21
Chapter 8 Receive rewards according to works	23
Chapter 9 God's covenant will never save us	26
Chapter 10 Renew a right spirit within us	29

## Forward

### Titus 3:5

Not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

He saved us, not because of the good things we did, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins and gave us a new life through the Holy Spirit

Following a life of pleasure and giving in to every sensual desire leads to slavery. Many think freedom consists in doing anything they want.

But this path leads to a slavish addiction to sensual gratification. A person is no longer free but is a slave to what his or her body dictates (2 Peter 2:19). Christ frees us from the desires and control of sin.

Paul summarized what Christ does for us when he saves us. We move from a life full of sin to one where God's Holy Spirit leads us. *All* our sins, not merely some of our sins, are washed away.

Washing refers to the water of baptism, which is a sign we have received salvation.

In becoming a Christian, the believer acknowledges Christ as Lord and recognizes Christ's saving work.

We gain eternal life with *all* its treasures. We have *renewal* by the Holy Spirit, and he continually renews our hearts. None of this occurs because we earned or deserved it; it is all God's gift.

# Chapter 1

## We are saved according to His mercy.

### God's Mercy to Us

#### Titus 3:4-6

But after that, the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; that he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;

When the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, he saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.

### God's Mercy is from Everlasting to Everlasting:

#### Deuteronomy 9:5

Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

### God showed mercy upon Israel by sending David to kill the giant Goliath.

The Anakites were enormous people, some seven to nine feet tall. Goliath, probably a descendant of this race, was over nine feet tall (1 Samuel 17:4-7). Unfortunately, these great men used their stature as a means of intimidation rather than for noble causes.

Their appearance alone frightened the Israelite spies (Numbers 13:28), and their bad reputation may have been the deciding factor that kept the Israelites out of the land 40 years earlier (Numbers 13-14).

Moses used all his persuasive power to convince his people that God could

handle these bullies. He used the illustration of God as a devouring fire, for not even a giant could stand up to that.

**All impurities will be cleansed.**

**Ezekiel 36:25**

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols.

God promised to restore Israel not only physically, but also spiritually. To accomplish this, God would give them a new heart for following him and put his Spirit within them.

No matter how impure your life is right now, God offers you a fresh start. You can have your sins washed away, receive a new heart for God, and have his Spirit within you—if you accept God’s promise. No need to patch up your old life when you can have a new one? God’s mercy endures forever.

## Chapter 2

### The baptism of Jesus is with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

#### Matthew 3:11

"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

John baptized people as a sign that they had asked God to forgive their sins and had decided to live as he wanted them to live. Baptism was an *outward* sign of commitment.

To be effective, it had to be accompanied by an *inward* change of attitude leading to a changed life—the work of the Holy Spirit. John said that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. This looked ahead to Pentecost (Acts 2).

John's statement also symbolizes the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing God's judgment on those who refuse to repent.

Everyone will one day be baptized—either now by God's Holy Spirit, or later by the fire of his judgment.

The Holy Spirit, in the form of tongues of fire, would empower his followers to preach the gospel.

#### The Mind must be renewed.

#### Romans 12:2

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

God has good, pleasing, and perfect plans for his children.

He wants us to be transformed people with renewed minds, living to honor and obey him. Because he wants only what is best for us, and because he gave his Son to make our new lives possible, we should joyfully give ourselves as living sacrifices for his service.

Christians are called to “not conform any longer to the pattern of this world,” with its behavior and customs that are usually selfish and often corrupt.

Many Christians wisely decide that much worldly behavior is off limits for them.

Our refusal to conform to this world’s values, however, must go even deeper than the level of behavior and customs—it must be firmly planted in our minds. “be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

It is possible to avoid most worldly customs and still be

Proud, Covetous, Selfish, Stubborn, and Arrogant.

Only when the Holy Spirit renews, reeducates, and redirects our minds are we truly transformed (see Romans 8:5).

### **Ephesians 2:4**

But because of his great love for us, God is rich in mercy.

Here Paul emphasizes that we do not need to live any longer under sin’s power. Christ miraculously destroyed the penalty of sin and its power over us on the cross.

Through faith in Christ, we stand acquitted, or not guilty, before God (Romans 3:21-22).

God does not take us out of the world or make us robots—we will still feel like sinning, and sometimes we will sin.

The difference is that before we became Christians, we were dead in sin and were slaves to our sinful nature. But now we are alive with Christ.

### **Works lead to boasting.**

### **Ephesians 2:9**

Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

When someone gives you a gift, do you say, “That’s very nice—now how

much do I owe you?” No, the appropriate response to a gift is “Thank you.” Yet how often Christians, even after they have been given the gift of salvation, feel obligated to try to work their way to God.

Because our salvation and even our faith are gifts, we should respond with gratitude, praise, and joy.

We become Christians through God’s unmerited grace, not as the result of any effort, ability, intelligent choice, or act of service on our part.

However, out of gratitude for this free gift, we will seek to help and serve others with kindness, love, and gentleness, and not merely to please ourselves.

While no action or work we do can help us obtain salvation, God’s intention is that our salvation will result in acts of service.

We are not saved merely for our own benefit but to serve Christ and build up the church (Ephesians 4:12).

We are God’s workmanship (work of art, masterpiece). Our salvation is something only God can do. It is his powerful, creative work in us.

If God considers us his works of art, we dare not treat ourselves or others with disrespect or as inferior work, for we are God’s creation.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Washing with water through the word**

#### **Ephesians 5:26**

To make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word.

Christ's death sanctifies and cleanses the church. He cleanses us from the old ways of sin and sets us apart for his special sacred service (Hebrews 10:29; Hebrews 13:12).

Christ cleansed the church by the "washing" of baptism. Through baptism, we are prepared for entrance into the work of the Lord, just as ancient Near Eastern brides were prepared for marriage by a ceremonial bath. It is God's Word that cleanses us (John 17:17; Titus 3:5).

#### **Grace in Jesus Christ**

#### **2 Timothy 1:9**

He has saved us and called us to a holy life--not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,

Stay away from religious speculation and pointless theological arguments. Such exercises may seem harmless at first, but they have a way of sidetracking us from the central message of the gospel—the person and work of Jesus Christ.

There are many leaders and authorities today that demand allegiance, some of who would even have us turn from Christ to follow them.

When they seem to know the Bible, their influence can be dangerously subtle. How can you recognize false teaching?

- (1) It promotes controversies instead of helping people come to Jesus (1 Timothy 1:4).
- (2) Those often initiate it whose motivation is to make a name for themselves (1 Timothy 1:7).
- (3) It will be contrary to the true teaching of the Scriptures (1 Timothy 1:6-7; 1 Timothy 4:1-3).

To protect yourself from the deception of false teachers, you should learn what the Bible teaches and remain steadfast in your faith in Christ alone.

### **Only a sincere heart will be rewarded**

#### **Hebrews 10:22**

Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

We have significant privileges associated with our new life in Christ:

- (1) We have personal access to God through Christ and can draw near to him without an elaborate system (Hebrews 10:22);
- (2) We may grow in faith, overcome doubts and questions, and deepen our relationship with God (Hebrews 10:23);
- (3) We may enjoy encouragement from one another (Hebrews 10:24);
- (4) We may worship together (Hebrews 10:25).

### **Bless and receive a blessing.**

#### **Hebrews 10:25**

To neglect Christian meetings is to give up the encouragement and help of other Christians. We gather together to share our faith and to strengthen one another in the Lord.

As we get closer to the “Day” when Christ will return, we will face many spiritual struggles and even times of persecution.

Anti-Christian forces will grow in strength. Difficulties should never be excuses for missing church services. Rather, as difficulties arise, we should make an even greater effort to be faithful in attendance.

## **Chapter 4**

### **He has given us a living hope.**

#### **1 Peter 1:3**

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy, he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

The term *new birth* refers to spiritual birth (regeneration)—the Holy Spirit’s act of bringing believers into God’s family. Jesus used this concept of new birth when he explained salvation to Nicodemus (see John 3).

Do you need encouragement? Peter’s words offer joy and hope in times of trouble, and he bases his confidence on what God has done for us in Christ Jesus. We’re called into a *living* hope of eternal life (1 Peter 1:3).

Our hope is not only for the future; eternal life begins when we trust Christ and join God’s family. No matter what pain or trial we face in this life, we know that it is not our final experience.

#### **We will live with Christ forever.**

The Jews had looked forward to an inheritance in the promised land of Canaan (Numbers 32:19; Deuteronomy 2:12; Deuteronomy 19:9).

Christians now look forward to a family inheritance in the eternal city of God. God has reserved the inheritance; it will never fade or decay; it will be unstained by sin.

The best part is that *you* have an inheritance if you have trusted Christ as your Savior.

God will help us remain true to our faith through whatever difficult times we must face. The “last time” is the judgment day of Christ described in Romans 14:10 and Revelation 20:11-15.

We may have to endure trials, persecution, or violent death, but our souls cannot be harmed if we have accepted Christ’s gift of salvation. We know we will receive the promised rewards.

## Why were Christians the target of persecution?

- (1) They refused to worship the emperor as a god and thus were viewed as atheists and traitors.
- (2) They refused to worship at pagan temples, so business for these moneymaking enterprises dropped wherever Christianity took hold.
- (3) They didn't support the Roman ideals of self, power, and conquest; and the Romans scorned the Christian ideal of self-sacrificing service.
- (4) They exposed and rejected the horrible immorality of pagan culture.

When Peter speaks of trials, he is not talking about natural disasters or the experience of God's punishments, but the response of an unbelieving world to people of faith.

All believers face such trials when they let their light shine into the darkness. We must accept trials as part of the refining process that burns away impurities and prepares us to meet Christ.

Trials teach us patience (Romans 5:3-4; James 1:2-3) and help us grow to be the kind of people God wants.

As gold is heated, impurities float to the top and can be skimmed off.

Steel is tempered or strengthened by heating it in the fire. Likewise, our trials, struggles, and persecutions refine and strengthen our faith, making us useful to God.

### **1 Peter 3:21**

The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

This water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also--not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

Not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

Peter says that Noah's salvation *through water* symbolized baptism, a ceremony involving water.

In baptism, we identify with Jesus Christ, who separates us from the lost and gives us new life. It is not the ceremony that saves us, but faith in Christ's death and resurrection. Baptism is the symbol of the transformation that happens in the hearts of those who believe (Romans 6:3-5; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:12).

By identifying themselves with Christ through baptism, Peter's readers could resist turning back to their former life even under the pressure of persecution.

## Chapter 5

### I will declare the works of the Lord

#### **Job 9:20**

If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.

Though I am innocent, my own mouth would pronounce me guilty. Though I am blameless, it would prove me wicked.

Even if I were innocent, my mouth would condemn me.” Job was saying, “In spite of my good life, God is determined to condemn me.” As his suffering continued, he became more impatient. Although Job remained loyal to God, he made statements he would later regret. In times of extended sickness or prolonged pain, it is natural for people to doubt, to despair, or to become impatient. During those times, people need someone to listen to them, to help them work through their feelings and frustrations. Your patience with their impatience will help them.

#### **Who is now pure?**

#### **Job 15:14**

What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?

Can a mortal be pure? Can a human be just?

“Even the heavens are not pure in his eyes.” Eliphaz was repeating his argument that anything created, whether angels (holy ones) or man, is not a sufficient basis for trust and hope. Only in God can we be sure.

#### **Job 25:4**

How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?

How can a mere mortal stand before God and claim to be righteous? Who in all the earth is pure?

Bildad’s final reply was weak. It ignored Job’s examples of the prosperity of the wicked.

Instead of attempting to refute Job, Bildad accused Job of pride because he was claiming that his suffering was not the result of sin.

Job never claimed to be without sin, but only that his sin could not have caused his present trouble.

It is important to understand that Bildad, not God, was calling man a worm.

Human beings are created in God's image (Genesis 1:26-27). Psalm 8:5 says that man is "a little lower than the heavenly beings."

Bildad may have simply been using a poetic description to contrast our worth to the worth and power of God.

To come to God, we need not crawl like worms. We can approach him boldly in faith (Hebrews 4:16).

**Only God is perfect.**

### **Psalm 143:2**

And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.

Don't bring your servant to trial! Compared to you, no one is perfect.

David was losing hope, caught in paralyzing fear and deep depression.

At times, we feel caught in deepening depression, and we are unable to pull ourselves out.

At those times, we can come to the Lord and, like David, express our true feelings.

Then he will help us as we remember his works (Psalm 143:5), reach out to him in prayer (Psalm 143:6), trust him (Psalm 143:8), and decide to do his will (Psalm 143:10).

David's prayer was to be taught to do God's will, not his own. A prayer for guidance is self-centered if it doesn't recognize God's power to redirect our lives.

Asking God to restructure our priorities awakens our minds and stirs our wills.

**We cannot gain salvation through good deeds.**

**Isaiah 57:12**

I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works; for they shall not profit thee.

"Now I will expose your so-called good deeds that you consider so righteous. None of them will benefit or save you.

God says that he will expose their righteousness and works for what they really were.

Isaiah warned these people that their righteousness and works would not save them any more than their weak, worthless idols.

We cannot gain our salvation through good deeds because our best deeds are not good enough to outweigh our sins.

Salvation is a gift from God, received only through faith in Christ, not good deeds (Ephesians 2:8-9).

**True Love brings God approval.**

**Luke 10:27-29**

And he answering said Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. (28) And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. (29) But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

The man answered, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.' And, 'Love your neighbor as yourself. "

"Right!" Jesus told him. "Do this and you will live!"

The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

This expert in the law was quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. He correctly understood that the law demanded total devotion to God and love for one's neighbor.

The law expert treated the wounded man as a topic for discussion; The robbers, as an object to exploit;

The priest, as a problem to avoid; The Levite, as an object of curiosity. Only the Samaritan treated him as a person to love.

**From the parable we learn three principles about loving our neighbor:**

- (1) Lack of love is often easy to justify, even though it is never right;
- (2) Our neighbor is anyone of any race, creed, or social background who is in need; and
- (3) Love means acting to meet the person's need.

Wherever you live, there are needy people close by. There is no good reason for refusing to help.

**CHART: A COLLECTION OF ATTITUDES**

To the expert in the law, the wounded man was a subject to discuss. To the robbers, the wounded man was someone to use and exploit.

To the religious men, the wounded man was a problem to be avoided. To the innkeeper, the wounded man was a customer to serve for a fee.

To the Samaritan, the wounded man was a human being worth being cared for and loved.

To Jesus, all of them and all of us were worth dying for.

**Confronting the needs of others brings out various attitudes in us.**

Jesus used the story of the good but despised Samaritan to make clear what attitude was acceptable to him. If we are honest, we often will find ourselves in the place of the expert in the law, needing to learn again who our neighbor is. Note these different attitudes toward the wounded man.

### **Romans 3:20**

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

For no one can ever be made right in God's sight by doing what his law commands. For the more we know God's law, the clearer it becomes that we aren't obeying it.

In these verses, we see two functions of God's law.

**First**, it shows us where we go wrong. Because of the law, we know that we are helpless sinners and that we must come to Jesus Christ for mercy.

**Second**, the moral code revealed in the law can serve to guide our actions by holding up God's moral standards.

We do not earn salvation by keeping the law (no one except Christ ever kept or could keep God's law perfectly), but we do please God when our lives conform to his revealed will for us.

## Chapter 6

### We are made right through faith.

#### **Romans 3:28**

Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

So, we are made right with God through faith and not by obeying the law.

After all this bad news about our sinfulness and God's condemnation, Paul gives the wonderful news.

There is a way to be declared not guilty—by trusting Jesus Christ to take away our sins.

Trusting means putting our confidence in Christ to forgive our sins, to make us right with God, and to empower us to live the way he taught us. God's solution is available to all of us regardless of our background or past behavior.

#### **Righteousness Comes Through Faith**

#### **Romans 4:5**

But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

But people are declared righteous because of their faith, not because of their work.

When some people learn that they are saved by God through faith, they start to worry.

“Do I have enough faith?” they wonder,

“Is my faith strong enough to save me?”

These people miss the point. It is Jesus Christ who saves us, not *our* feelings or actions, and he is strong enough to save us no matter how weak our faith is.

Jesus offers us salvation as a gift because he loves us, not because we have earned it through our powerful faith. What, then, is the role of faith?

Faith is believing and trusting in Jesus Christ and reaching out to accept his wonderful gift of salvation. Receive and give to others the news of this great salvation.

**God's kindness is free and undeserved.**

**Romans 11:6**

And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

And if they are saved by God's kindness, then it is not by their good works. For, in that case, God's wonderful kindness would not be what it really is—free and undeserved.

Do you think it's easier for God to love you when you're good?

Do you secretly suspect that God chose you because you deserved it? Do you think some people's behavior is so bad that God couldn't possibly save them?

If you ever think this way, you don't entirely understand that salvation is by grace, a free gift. It cannot be earned, in whole or in part; it can only be accepted with thankfulness and praise.

## Chapter 7

### **No one will ever be saved by obeying the law."**

#### **Galatians 2:16**

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

And yet we Jewish Christians know that we become right with God, not by doing what the law commands, but by faith in Jesus Christ.

So, we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be accepted by God because of our faith in Christ—and not because we have obeyed the law. For no one will ever be saved by obeying the law."

If observing the Jewish laws cannot justify us, why should we still obey the Ten Commandments and other Old Testament laws?

We know that Paul was not saying the law is bad, because in another letter he wrote, "the Law is holy" (Romans 7:12).

Instead, he is saying that the law can never make us acceptable to God. The law still has an important role to play in the life of a Christian.

The law:

Guards us against sin by giving us standards for behavior;

Convicts us of sin, leaving us the opportunity to ask for God's forgiveness;

Drives us to trust in the sufficiency of Christ, because we can never keep the Ten Commandments perfectly.

The law cannot possibly save us. But after we have become Christians, it can guide us to live, as God requires.

**God shows his love and kindness to us.**

## **2 Timothy 1:9**

Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,

It is God who saved us and chose us to live a holy life. He did this not because we deserved it, but because that was his plan long before the world began—to show his love and kindness to us through Christ Jesus.

Paul briefly described some qualifications that the elders or overseers should have. Paul had given Timothy a similar set of instructions for the church in Ephesus (see 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 1 Timothy 5:22).

Most of the qualifications involve character, not knowledge or skill.

A person's lifestyle and relationships provide a window into his or her character. Consider these qualifications as you evaluate a person for a position of leadership in your church.

It is important to have leaders who can effectively preach God's Word, but it is even more important to have those who can live out God's Word and be examples for others to follow.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Receive rewards according to his work.**

**Wealth, honor or prestige add nothing of value to God's eyes.**

#### **Psalm 62:12**

Also unto thee, O Lord belongs mercy: for thou renders to every man according to his work.

It is tempting to use honor, power, wealth, or prestige to measure people. We may even think that such people are really getting ahead in life.

But on God's scales, these people are a "breath," a puff of air. What, then, can tilt the scales when God weighs us? Trusting God and working for him (Psalm 62:12).

Wealth, honor, power, or prestige add nothing to our value in God's eyes, but the faithful work we do for him has eternal value.

**God is ready to forgive.**

#### **Psalm 86:5**

For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.

Sometimes our trouble or pain is so great that all we can do is cry out to God, "Guard my life" (Psalm 86:2). And often, when there is no relief in sight, all we can do is acknowledge the greatness of God and wait for better days ahead. The conviction that God answers prayer will sustain us in such difficult times.

**God is full of unfailing love.**

#### **Psalm 86:15**

But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.

It is right to pray for a sign of God's goodness. As David found, it may be just what we need.

But let us not overlook the signs he has already given: the support of family

and friends, the fellowship of other Christians, the light of each new day. We can be confident that he knows our situation no matter how desperate it becomes, and he cares.

### **An unfailing love**

#### **Psalm 130:7**

Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.

Keeping a record of sins (or holding a grudge) is like building a wall between you and another person, and it is nearly impossible to talk openly while the wall is there.

God doesn't keep a record of our sins; when he forgives, he forgives completely, tearing down any wall between us and him.

Therefore, we fear (revere) God, yet we can talk to him about anything. When you pray, realize that God is holding nothing against you. His lines of communication are completely open.

### **The Lord delights in Mercy.**

#### **Micah 7:18**

Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger forever, because he delighteth in mercy.

### **The Mercy of the Lord endures to all generations.**

#### **Luke 1:50**

His mercy goes on from generation to generation, to all who fear him.

This song is often called the *Magnificent*, the first word in the Latin translation of this passage. Mary's song has often been used as the basis for choral music and hymns. Like Hannah, the mother of Samuel (1 Samuel 2:1-10), Mary glorified God in song for what he was going to do for the world through her.

Notice that in both songs, God is pictured as a champion of the poor, the oppressed, and the despised.

When Mary said, “From now on all generations will call me blessed,” was she being proud? No, she was recognizing and accepting the gift God had given her.

If Mary had denied her incredible position, she would have been throwing God’s blessing back at him.

Pride is refusing to accept God’s gifts or taking credit for what God has done; humility is accepting the gifts and using them to praise and serve God. Don’t deny, belittle, or ignore your gifts. Thank God for them and use them to his glory.

### **The Promise is fulfilled.**

#### **Luke 1:54**

And how he has helped his servant Israel! He has not forgotten his promise to be merciful.

God kept his promise to Abraham to be merciful to God’s people forever (Genesis 22:16-18).

Christ’s birth fulfilled the promise, and Mary understood this. She was not surprised when her special son eventually announced that he was the Messiah.

She had known Jesus’ mission from before his birth. Some of God’s promises to Israel are found in 2 Samuel 22:50-51; Psalm 89:2-4; Psalm 103:17-18; Micah 7:18-20.

## Chapter 9

### God's Covenant is Fulfilled.

He has been merciful to our ancestors by remembering his sacred covenant with them,

#### **Luke 1:78**

Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us,

Because of God's tender mercy, the light from heaven is about to break upon us, Zechariah praised God with his first words after months of silence.

In a song that is often called the *Benedictus* after the first words in the Latin translation of this passage, Zechariah prophesied the coming of a Savior who would redeem his people, and he predicted that his son John would prepare the Messiah's way.

All the Old Testament prophecies were coming true—no wonder Zechariah praised God! The Messiah would come in Zechariah's lifetime, and his son had been chosen to pave the way.

The Jews were eagerly awaiting the Messiah, but they thought he would come to save them from the powerful Roman empire. They were ready for a military Savior, but not for a peaceful Messiah who would conquer sin.

This was God's promise to Abraham to bless all peoples through him (see Genesis 12:3). It would be fulfilled through the Messiah, Abraham's descendant.

**God is rich in kindness.**

#### **Ephesians 1:6-7**

To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. (7) In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

God graciously accepts us (though we don't deserve it) now that we belong to his dearly loved Son.

To speak of Jesus' blood was an important first-century way of speaking of Christ's death.

His death points to two wonderful truths—redemption and forgiveness.

*Redemption* was the price paid to gain freedom for a slave (Leviticus 25:47-54). Through his death, Jesus paid the price to release us from slavery to sin.

*Forgiveness* was granted in Old Testament times on the basis of the shedding of animals' blood (Leviticus 17:11).

Now we are forgiven on the basis of the shedding of Jesus' blood—he died as the perfect and final sacrifice. (See also Romans 5:9; Ephesians 2:13; Colossians 1:20; Hebrews 9:22; 1 Peter 1:19.)

Grace is God's voluntary and loving favor given to those he saves. We can't earn salvation, nor do we deserve it. No religious, intellectual, or moral effort can gain it, because it comes only from God's mercy and love. Without God's grace, no person can be saved. To receive it, we must acknowledge that we cannot save ourselves, that only God can save us, and that our only way to receive this loving favor is through faith in Christ.

**We can come boldly to the throne of God.**

### **Hebrews 4:16**

So, let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it.

Prayer is our approach to God, and we are to come “with confidence.” Some Christians approach God meekly with heads hung low, afraid to ask him to meet their needs. Others pray flippantly, giving little thought to what they say. Come with reverence because he is your King. But also come with bold assurance because he is your Friend and Counselor.

**All honour belongs to God.**

**1 Peter 1:3**

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

The term *new birth* refers to spiritual birth (regeneration)—the Holy Spirit’s act of bringing believers into God’s family. Jesus used this concept of new birth when he explained salvation to Nicodemus (see John 3).

Peter’s words offer joy and hope in times of trouble, and he bases his confidence on what God has done for us in Christ Jesus. We’re called into a *living* hope of eternal life (1 Peter 1:3).

Our hope is not only for the future; eternal life begins when we trust Christ and join God’s family.

No matter what pain or trial we face in this life, we know that it is not our final experience. Eventually, we will live with Christ forever.

## **Chapter 10**

### **Renew a Right Spirit within me.**

#### **Psalm 51:10**

Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a right spirit within me.

Because we are born as sinners (Psalm 51:5), our natural inclination is to please ourselves rather than God. David followed that inclination when he took another man's wife. We also follow it when we sin in any way.

Like David, we must ask God to cleanse us from within (Psalm 51:7), clearing our hearts and spirits for new thoughts and desires. Right conduct can come only from a clean heart and spirit. Ask God to create a pure heart and spirit in you.

#### **Be Transformed by Your Thoughts.**

#### **Romans 12:2**

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is.

#### **The Mind must be Spiritually renewed.**

#### **Ephesians 4:23**

And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

Instead, there must be a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes. People should be able to see a difference between Christians and non-Christians because of the way Christians live. We are to live as children of light (Ephesians 5:8).

Paul told the Ephesians to leave behind the old life of sin since they were followers of Christ. Living the Christian life is a process. Although we have a new nature, we don't automatically think all good thoughts and express all right attitudes when we become new people in Christ.

But if we keep listening to God, we will be changing all the time. As you look back over last year, do you see a process of change for the better in your thoughts, attitudes, and actions?

Although the change may be slow, it comes as you trust God to change you. For more about our new nature as believers, see Romans 6:6; Romans 8:9; Galatians 5:16-26; Colossians 3:3-8.

Our old way of life before we believed in Christ is completely in the past. We should put it behind us like old clothes to be thrown away. This is both a once-for-all decision when we decide to accept Christ's gift of salvation (Ephesians 2:8-10) and also a daily conscious commitment.

We are not to be driven by desire and impulse. We must put on the new role, head in the new direction, and have the new way of thinking that the Holy Spirit gives.

## **You are clothed with a new nature.**

### **Colossians 3:10**

And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

In its place, you have clothed yourselves with a brand-new nature that is continually being renewed as you learn more and more about Christ, who created this new nature within you.

We must rid ourselves of all evil practices and immorality. Then we can commit ourselves to what Christ teaches. Paul was appealing to the commitment the believers had made and urging them to remain true to their confession of faith. They were to rid themselves of the old life and "put on" the new way of living given by Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit. If you have made such a commitment to Christ, are you remaining true to it?

Lying to one another disrupts unity by destroying trust. It tears down relationships and may lead to serious conflict in a church. So, don't exaggerate

statistics, pass on rumors or gossip, or say things to build up your own image. Be committed to telling the truth.

What does it mean to “put on the new self”? It means that your conduct should match your faith. If you are a Christian, you should act like it. To be a Christian means more than just making good resolutions and having good intentions; it means taking the right actions. This is a straightforward step that is as simple as putting on your clothes.

Every Christian is in a continuing education program. The more we know of Christ and his work, the more we are being changed to be like him. Because this process is lifelong, we must never stop learning and obeying. There is no justification for drifting along, but there is an incentive to find the rich treasures of growing in him. It takes practice, ongoing review, patience, and concentration to keep in line with his will.

**Honoring the Crucifixion of Christ is the only way to be redeemed.**

### **Hebrews 6:6**

If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame.

In the first century, a pagan who investigated Christianity and then went back to paganism made a clean break with the church.

But for Jewish Christians who decided to return to Judaism, the break was less obvious. Their lifestyle remained relatively unchanged.

But by deliberately turning away from Christ, they were cutting themselves off from God’s forgiveness. Those who persevere in believing are true saints; those who continue to reject Christ are unbelievers, no matter how well they behave.

### **Titus 3:5**

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

His mercy is our only hope.

**References:**

**Holy Bible: King James Translation Holy Bible: New Living Bible translation.**

**Additional comments and charts are taken from:**

***Life Application Study Bible.* Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print**