

- **Reconciliation** – the restoration of relationship of mankind to God, *“Christ reconciled us to God and repaired the alienation we once had with Him.”*

Now through our Lord Jesus we have had our relationship with God restored! Not only this but we stand in God’s favor because of Him. We now stand in Christ’s perfect righteousness, holy blameless and beyond any reproach!

Colossians 1:22 -22 yet **He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death**, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach NASB

Consider then, that since God has loved us with such an amazing love, how we should embrace His love and return it to Him! Since God has reached out to us and embraced us, shall we not embrace Him back? Indeed we should! Let us consider how profound God’s grace is in forgiving and reconciling us to Himself and cherish His love with a devoted life or worship and thanksgiving!

His Grace is greater than all of our sin

Dear reader, consider that if in fact you are a Christian having trusted Christ as Savior and Lord, then the reality of God’s forgiveness for your sins is true, objective and eternal. This means that the FACT is your sin IS forgiven by God, and you are free from it completely. Consider that no matter how great your sin may have been in the past, or how great it is now in the present, if you believe in the Lord Jesus and His atoning death, and this with a repentant heart, God’s grace is much greater to forgive you than His Law is to condemn you! This is because Jesus’ atonement for your sin is absolutely perfect and complete!

Romans 5:19-21 - 19 For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so **through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous**. 20 And **the Law came in that the transgression might increase**; but where sin increased, **grace abounded all the more**, 21 that, as sin reigned in death, even so **grace might reign** through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. NASB

“Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.” The mountain of God’s grace **“abounds all the more”** over the mole hill of our sin! Sin is serious. More than that it is dangerously deadly, but God’s provision for our sin in Jesus is more powerful to forgive than His Law is to condemn. This is because Jesus has met both the penal sanctions and the perceptive requirements of the Law. It is fulfilled in Christ and we are in Him! The Gospel tells us that there is **“no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”** (Romans 8:1). So the question becomes will we believe our feelings and emotions or will we believe Christ Jesus and His Gospel? CJ Mahaney in his book, *“The Cross Centered Life”* gives a word about how to beat condemnation.... *“Here’s how to beat condemnation. **Confess your sin to God. Then believe in Him.** Exercise the gift of faith that God has given you to believe that Jesus died for the very sins you’re being condemned for. The punishment He received was for you. His resurrection is proof that God accepted Jesus’ sacrifice. The sins of your past and the sin you just committed were all atoned for; you need carry their weight no more. You can’t do it. That’s why Jesus did it for you. Being freed from condemnation doesn’t require that we forget or deny the depth and depravity of our sins, whether they are sins committed prior to our conversion or sins committed since our conversion. In fact, if we want to know the joy and gratitude that the woman at Jesus’ feet experienced, we must start by acknowledging and owning up to our many sins. Paul called himself the worst of sinners (1 Tim 1:16). He wasn’t paralyzed by condemnation. He was exalting God’s grace by recognizing his own unworthiness and sin as he marveled at the mercy of God.”* Now friends, this is where we should be in our struggle against sin. We should be marveling at the grace of God. Our sin is real, and it is deplorable. But God’s grace in Christ is greater than all of it! Therefore let us come clean and acknowledge our sins, and then let us remind ourselves of the glorious truth of the Gospel, **“sin increased, grace abounded.”**

Preaching the Gospel to yourself daily

Dear friends, if the Cross and Atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ is the central event in all of human history, and it is, then shouldn't it also be the central theme of our daily lives? Yes indeed! As we seek to glorify and enjoy God all the days of our life, we will never see and appreciate the glory of God as clearly as we do when we reflect on Calvary's Cross. There is the blazing center of the glory of God! There we see the attributes of God with piercing clarity! There is cause for worship and adoration toward God and His Son, our blessed Savior Jesus Christ! Consider how Paul saw his life as defined by the very Gospel itself.

Galatians 2:20 - 20 "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and **the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.** NASB

To Paul, the cross was very personal, and it should be to us. ***"I have been crucified with Christ,"*** exclaims Paul, and ***"I no longer live!"*** These are powerful words indeed, but he goes on, ***"the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me."*** Paul's life is defined by the Gospel. The ***"life I live"***, he says, is defined by what Jesus did for me! Oh dear reader, how we need to be reminded of this everyday! Each and everyday we need to come to God through the cross, and see all of His beauty and the design of our lives as fulfilled in and through our Lord Jesus and what He has done for us! CJ Mahaney outlines in his book, five ways that we can keep the cross central in our daily lives. Here they are with a few comments both from him and myself.

1. **Memorize the Gospel** – Memorizing Scripture about God's grace and forgiveness in Christ is a powerful way to be always and continually reminded of what he has done! (Gal 2:20-21, Isa 53:3-6, Rom 3:21-26, 5:6-11, 8:32-39, 1 Cor 15:3-4, 2 Cor 5:21)
2. **Pray the Gospel** – As we approach God in prayer, let us be reminded just how heinous our sin is and how glorious is the life and death of Christ to overcome it. This will surely enrich our prayer life like no other thing can.
3. **Sing the Gospel** – Each day is another opportunity to celebrate and relish in the goodness of God's grace to us in Christ Jesus! Dear Christian, has God given you a voice? Then employ it for that which it was created, to sing the high praises of God and His Christ! Make sure your songs are centered on the cross and the atonement.
4. **Review how the Gospel has changed you** – Consider that you are not the same person you used to be! You have come a long way in Christ! It is a very helpful and encouraging thing to remember all that Christ has done to change us and how far we have come! It is important for us to consider what pitiful sinners we were, and how deplorable our sin was. More than this, we glorify God for His grace when we see how the power of the cross has literally changed our life! Amazing grace, how sweet the sound!
5. **Study the Gospel** – Oh so much to learn about our glorious God and all that He has done for us in Christ. Surely the deeper our knowledge and understanding of the cross, the deeper and more profound our worship and appreciation to God for what He has done. Below is a list of good books which will help you in your understanding of the Bible concerning the cross and the Gospel. There is also a web link to some great material.

John Stott – *The Cross of Christ*

Leon Morris – *The Atonement*

Jerry Bridges – *The Discipline of Grace*

The Power of the Cross – *CH Spurgeon*

The Cross and Christian Ministry – *DA Carson*

Living the Cross Centered Life – *CJ Mahaney*

The Cross and Salvation – *Bruce Demarest*

<http://firstimportance.org/the-heart-of-the-gospel/>

The Cross – The Work of Jesus Christ

The Atonement – Seeing and acting as if Christ is our Righteousness

The Gospel is Objective Reality

This is to say that the righteousness which was merited by the life and death of Christ is *outside* of us, immutable and fixed. Our right standing with God does not change or shift with our feelings, circumstances or performance, but is that which rests solely on the merits of Christ and His perfect righteousness. He Himself is our righteousness and sanctification, therefore our right standing with God is **“in Christ”** and always steadfast, unchanging and adequate.

1 Corinthians 1:30 - 30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, **who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,** NASB

If you are **“in Christ,”** you have trusted in what He has done by His perfect life and death, and not in your own works or performance. On the contrary, our performance was a huge failure and by it we merited God’s holy wrath and deserve to die as a rebel and enemy of God. But Christ is our righteousness and we have believed in Him. Therefore our faith has laid hold of Jesus and His perfection and our righteousness before God is not subject to anything except that fixed reality that Christ IS righteous. The righteousness which we possess is a foreign righteousness, which is NOT our own, but is Christ’s and is complete and adequate.

Philippians 3:9 - 9 and **may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ,** the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith, NASB

Our faith is placed in an *historical* fact which has happened and is accomplished. That is, that Jesus Christ lived a perfectly righteous life in my place, and that He died to absorb the wrath of God for me and these He both accomplished completely and perfectly. The resurrection is proof of the fact that it was accepted by the Father and that He did indeed triumph over sin and death. The grave could not hold Him because the effectual power of His life and death does **“much more abound”** over sin and death. Therefore the life and death of our Lord is an historical fact which is then outside of us and *objective*. It is not *subject* to any other thing which can change its merit or value, but is in fact a reality which stands, fixed in the heavens, unmovable and complete. Because of this objective reality we confess that our salvation is by God’s grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. This is to say that we are saved because God is rich love toward us and gives us favor which we have not merited, but rather in Christ ONLY we have favor with God and this is applied to us by simply trusting in what He has done for us!

Ephesians 2:8-9 – 8 For **by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves,** *it is* the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, that no one should boast. NASB

Therefore we can derive from this objective reality a sound and tremendous *assurance* of God’s love and favor for us. God only designs that which is good for the Christian and tends to our benefit and blessing. Even the worst circumstances of our lives work together for our good because God **“causes all things to work together for good.”** If God would not spare His own Son, but would give Him in sacrifice to justify us, will He not also graciously give us all things? What more could God do to prove His love and favor for us?

Romans 8:31-34 - 31 What then shall we say to these things? **If God is for us, who is against us?** 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? 33 **Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; 34 who is the one who condemns?** NASB

What then shall we say in response to this? How should we face our daily life in regard to this reality of God’s love and favor for us! We should live our life in view of what God *has* done, and live in the fullness of the blessing He has worked with a devoted life of love toward God and thanksgiving for His marvelous grace!

A response worthy of Christ

When we live our life in view of the cross, and allow it to define our lives, it changes the whole context in which we respond to the circumstances and relationships in our life. Consider once again the words of the apostle Paul in Galatians....

Galatians 2:20 - 20 "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me. NASB

"I have been crucified with Christ" says Paul. What he means to say is that just as Jesus died to put away sins, we die to sins in regard to our behavior and live in the resurrection of Jesus life by faith. We are to consider the heavenly reality of our death to sin and our life is now purchased and defined by Christ's death to sin and righteous obedience to God. In Colossians he tells us then to seek this heavenly reality in our thinking and be transformed in our behavior because of the reality of what Christ has done.

Colossians 3:1-4 – 1 If then you have been raised up with Christ, **keep seeking the things above**, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 **Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.** 3 **For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.** 4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

"Seek the things which are above." That is, allow the heavenly purpose of God's love in Christ to change the way we view our life, relationships and circumstances. We do this because, he says, **"we died and our life is hidden with Christ in God."** We died to sin when we embraced Christ and His cross, therefore Paul tells us, to consider ourselves dead to sinful behavior.

Colossians 3:5-11 - 5 Therefore **consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.** 6 For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come, 7 and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. 8 **But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth.** 9 **Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices,** 10 and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him 11 — *a renewal* in which there is no *distinction between* Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all. NASB

He then goes on to describe how this knowledge of what Christ has done should change the way we view our relationships and it defines the context of how we respond to others in light of the knowledge of the cross.

Colossians 3:12-4 - 12 And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, **put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;** 13 **bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.** 14 And beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity. 15 And **let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,** to which indeed you were called in one body; and **be thankful.** 16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Here Paul describes how the knowledge of the **"things above v-2,"** changes the context in which we view our relationship to others. If Jesus died to give His life as a sacrifice for us, surely we can view others with **"compassion, kindness, humility gentleness and patience!"** If Jesus bore our sins in His body on the cross for our forgiveness, surely we can now **"bear with one another and forgive each other."** This, he says, is **"just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you!"** In other words, Jesus life and death on the cross becomes an **example** to us of how we treat others and express His heavenly love and virtue through our relationships now in our daily life. He describes Christ's love as if it were a garment to **"put on"** and tells how we are to let His peace **"rule in our hearts"** and to do this while being **"thankful!"** Further we are to teach and admonish one another along with songs of praise and this also with **"thankfulness in your hearts to God!"** Our entire life, all our actions he says, are to be done **"giving thanks through Him!"** Let us therefore see how Christ's cross is the wellspring of God's virtue in our daily life!