

The Heart of Christianity

The Biblical Gospel and the Future of the Church

5 What is the “Best” about the Gospel? Part 2

February 3, 2019

1 Peter 3:18

For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;

To the Glory of God

Now when you ask the Question, *“Why did Jesus die on the Cross?”*, how do people respond? Some say, *“Jesus died to save me from my sins”*. Others say, *“Jesus died because He loves me”*, or *“Jesus died so I could go to Heaven”*. But very few, if any, will ever quote the Apostle Peter and say:

Christ... died for sins... so that He might bring us to God...

... Peter says that Jesus died to bring us to... God! And that tells me that the *Goal* of Salvation is *not* for us to merely go to Heaven, but to bring guilty sinners to God.

Or we could ask *another* Question: *“What is the definition of ‘Eternal Life’*. And some would say, *“‘Eternal Life’ is ‘Life everlasting’”*¹. While others might say, *“Eternal Life is Life in Heaven”*. Or, *“Eternal Life is the Gift of God in Salvation whereby we live forever in Heaven”*. But I think we will be hard pressed to find *anyone* who would quote from Jesus’ Own Prayer as recorded by the Apostle John:

John 17:3

This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

¹ Seeking to answer a Question by simply using other words- is *not* answering the Question

Jesus says here that Eternal Life is "knowing" God and Jesus. And the Greek word that was translated here as "know" means: *to be intricately aware of*; or *to understand closely or intimately*. So, the correct definition of "Eternal Life" is:

- to be intricately aware of God
- to understand Jesus closely or intimately

And that means that we can also substitute the word "Salvation" here. So, "Eternal Life" or "Salvation" is unworthy rebels coming to "know" God *intricately* and *closely* and *intimately*.

And for the Knowledge of God to be classified as "Eternal Life" (Salvation) tells us that God (and Jesus) must really be important and valuable. And this must be why the Prophet Isaiah said:

Isaiah 11:6-9

**And the wolf will dwell with the lamb,
And the leopard will lie down with the young goat,
And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together;
And a little boy will lead them.
Also the cow and the bear will graze,
Their young will lie down together,
And the lion will eat straw like the ox.
The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra,
And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den.
They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain,
For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord
As the waters cover the sea.**

Now this is a Prophecy of what the earth will be like when Jesus comes back. And things are going to be wonderful then. For example, this same Prophet said:

Isaiah 2:2-4

**The mountain of the house of the Lord
Will be established as the chief of the mountains,
And will be raised above the hills;
And all the nations will stream to it.
And many peoples will come and say,**

**“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
To the house of the God of Jacob;
That He may teach us concerning His ways
And that we may walk in His paths.”
For the law will go forth from Zion
And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
And He will judge between the nations,
And will render decisions for many peoples;
And they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into
pruning hooks.
Nation will not lift up sword against nation,
And never again will they learn war.**

But *why* is the wolf going to lay down with the lamb, instead of devouring it? *Why* is the leopard going to lay down with the young goat, instead of tearing it apart and eating it? *Why* is the calf and the lion and the cow and the bear going to be given the nature they had before the Fall and cease to be carnivorous, and graze together without hostility? *Why* is the mountain of the House of the Lord going to be established at the very top of the mountains? And *why* are people and nations going to hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks? And *why* will nation never again lift their sword against another nation? And *why* will the peoples of the earth not learn war ever again?

For [Because] the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord As the waters cover the sea

... so, at the end of time, the Knowledge of God, knowing and understanding God *rightly* and *fully*, will be so multiplied and so plenteous that it will cover the entire world. And by covering the entire world, the Knowledge of God will change everything!

But this means that the future *won't* be “Good” simply because animals won't tear each other apart anymore. The promised Kingdom is *not* going to wonderful simply because people will no longer be hostile to one another. No, what makes all this to be “Good”, what makes Heaven to be unspeakably Beautiful, and what makes the Kingdom of God glorious and utterly magnificent is that God will no longer be

hidden or distant or a mystery or vague. But God will be near and close and revealed and seen and displayed in all of His infinite Perfections!

And *knowing* God like that, *seeing* God like that, *beholding* God in His full Glory, without any filters, changes us! It even changes the animals and the whole earth! And that is why *knowing* and *seeing* and *beholding* God, in His pristine Glory, is Eternal Life! Being *near* God, being *close* to God, *beholding* God in the fullness of His matchless Beauty and Power and Wisdom and Brilliance, is the Goal of Salvation!

Here is another way of understanding this. Please read what God the Holy Spirit "moved along" the Apostle John to write in **The Revelation 21:10-21:**

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper. It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west. And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall. The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements. The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass

Now we might be tempted to think that all these precious stones, or the streets of gold, or the pearly gates would be the "Glory" of that City. But, no. The very "Core" of the City of New Jerusalem, which represents God's Kingdom or Heaven, is not any of that. No, the

"Center", the "Focus", the "Goal" of all that God is and does in the earth, in the Jewish mind was *always* the "Temple". To the Jew, the Temple was everything, and it represented the Best and the Highest and the Final and the Decisive Good of all that God *is* and all that God *does* in the earth. So, at the end of time, what will be the Temple?

The Revelation 21:22

I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

God and Jesus are the Temple of God! And to the average Jew of the 1st Century, when he read what John wrote here, he would *immediately* understand that this meant that God *Himself*, and Jesus, "revealed" and "seen" and "beheld" and "understood" and "loved" and "cherished" and "valued" and "treasured" and "worshipped" is the **Best** and the **Highest** and the **Final** and the **Decisive** "Good" of all that God has ever said and done. And what is the "end result" of beholding God in His infinite Perfections?

The Revelation 4:8b-11

... and day and night they do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME." And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created."

And so, *this* is the Answer to the 3rd Question that I asked last week:

What is the *highest* and the *best* and the *final* and the *decisive* "Good" of "Good News", to which, all of the other "Good" is pointing?

All that God has ever done, *all* that God has ever created or made, *all* that God has ever carried out, and *all* that God has ever said or

performed, exists for no other reason other than *to point to* this one single, overarching Goal:

God Himself: seen, known, and enjoyed forever!

Now look what John said next:

The Revelation 21:23

And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.

... which gives us the Answer to the 2nd Question I asked last week:

What is the *highest* and the *best* and the *final* and the *decisive* “Good” of the Good News, without which, all of the other “Good” of the Gospel would *not* be “Good”?

It is God *Himself*, seen and known and enjoyed that makes all of the other “Good” things that God has said or done to be the “Good” that they are. In other words, what gives all of the things that God has ever said or done their great Value is God *Himself*, revealed in His magnificent Glory and enjoyed by wicked sinners.

Now how is all this connected to “Eternal Life” or “Salvation”? Look what John said next:

The Revelation 21:24-27

The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

So, all saved people possess Eternal Life. And Eternal Life is knowing God and Jesus intimately and intricately. And all lost people do NOT possess Eternal Life, and, therefore, do NOT know God or Jesus, and do not love Them.

Now, as we discovered last week, Sin, is *best* understood not merely in the various wicked deeds that we do, but, in the reality, that we will love *anything* or *anybody* except God. So, being “fallen” means

that we *love*, we *delight*, we take *pleasure*, we find *happiness*, and we *enjoy* the creature, the created things, rather than the Creator.

And that means that the *best* and the *highest* and the *final* and the *decisive* "Good" of the Gospel (Good News) is *God Himself!* And all the other parts, and all the other aspects, all the trappings of Salvation, like "Eternal Life" and "Heaven" and "glorified bodies" and "perfect food" and "perfect Peace" and streets of gold and pearly gates, are given and they are done and they are carried out never to be an "End" to themselves, but they are spoken and done and given and carried out to bring about the greatest Good, and that is God Himself! And this is *why* Solomon prayed like this in **1 Kings 8:57**:

May the Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers; may He not leave us or forsake us...

So, *why* did God favor Israel? And *why* did God give to them? And *why* did God fight for them and preserve them and bless them? So, they could become great in the earth? No. So, they could become "self-sufficient"? No. So, they could feel real good about themselves and be an end to themselves? No.

So, *why* did God do all that He did *to* and *for* Israel? And *what* was it that described what it looked like for God to not "leave them" or "forsake them"?

1 Kings 8:58a

... that He may incline our hearts to Himself ...

Now the word "incline" comes from a Hebrew word that means: *to bend; to stretch; to turn aside; to influence effectually; and to thrust aside*. So, God's "Love", God's "Favor", God's "Mercy", God's "Grace", and God's "Kindness" toward His people is *best* expressed, it is *best* understood, it is *best* displayed, it is *best* seen and illustrated, *not* in the tangible things that God does for them, nor in the material and temporal aspects of what God gives to them. Those are all things that *point* to what is best. But they are *not* what is best *themselves*.

So, all that God *gives*, and all that God *does*, and all that God *says*, which is all very "Good", simply *facilitates* that which is the

"Best". And so, the "Best" and the "Highest" and the "Final" and the "Decisive" GOOD that God gives us or does for us is when God will...

... incline our hearts to Himself...

And what is the *result* or the *response* of God's people when God moves to "incline", or "bend", or "influence effectually" our hearts to Himself? We will then...

1 Kings 8:58b

... walk in all His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His ordinances, which He commanded our fathers.

So, here is the way this dynamic works:

1. We see, behold, know and understand God in His Glory.
2. We love what we see.
3. We are changed into what we see.

There will be no genuine Holiness and Obedience in God's people until they have been radically transformed as a result of being truly born from above. And there will be no transformation in human beings until they begin to love Jesus more than they love anyone or anything else, including their own lives. And that deep and abiding love for Jesus grows out of an equally strong and powerful hatred and despising of who we are in our fallen state. So, without strong and profound Repentance, a "turning" based on a "mind" that has been changed by and through understanding Divine Truth, we might have a *surface* type or a *shallow* love for Jesus, but we will not possess an over-riding affection for just Jesus, as the One Whom our soul loves.

But we must understand that no one will love Jesus *Himself* more than they love all the things that Jesus *does* and that Jesus *gives* until they behold God in His Glory. So, it all starts with "seeing" with "beholding" the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ, as the Gospel is being preached and taught.

And so, Miracles and Blessings, and Gifts and Favor, and Mercy and Grace, and even Salvation itself, all of the Wonderful and Good things that God gives, and that God says and that God does for us and

to us are given to us by a Good and Kind and Gracious God, **NOT** as “Ends to themselves”, but rather as “Means” to *cause* our hearts to be *inclined to God*.

Now as we continue to explore just what the Biblical Gospel is, let's revisit what Peter said:

1 Peter 3:18

For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;

So, Jesus brings us to God. And Jesus, bringing lost sinners to God, is what we call “Salvation”. So, the Biblical Gospel involves Jesus bringing wicked rebels to God. And for the last few minutes, we have been examining the fact that the *best* and the *highest* and the *final* and the *decisive* “Good” of the Good News is that Jesus doesn't merely brings us to Heaven, but that He actually, and in reality, brings us to God. To God *Himself!*

And since this is very much a part of the Biblical Gospel, I want to ask a few more Questions about this.

Why does Jesus have to “bring” us to God? *Why* don't we just “come” to God *on our own*? *Why* do we have to be “brought”?

1 Peter 3:18a

For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God...

Now look carefully at the phrase:

... for sins...

Jesus died. The Bible says clearly and repeatedly that Jesus died. He *literally* and *physically* died. His Heart stopped beating and His Blood stopped flowing through His Veins and His Brainwaves ceased to function. So, Jesus really died. But He didn't just die. The biblical Gospel tells us that there was a very serious and important Reason *why* Jesus died. The Bible says clearly and repeatedly that the *Reason*

Jesus died was "for sins". So, the Reason or the Cause or the Purpose of Jesus' Death was Sin.

And I want the Holy Bible to tell us what we need to know about this, and not my own language. So, first, we need to look at the opening Promise given by the angel to Joseph *before* Jesus was born, in **Matthew 1:20&21:**

But when he had considered this [ending his engagement with Mary], behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.

... so the main Purpose behind *why* Jesus was born was to...

... save His people from their sins

... so, we need to be "saved". And the word "saved" has to do with a spiritual *rescuing*, or a spiritual *delivering*, or a spiritual *healing*. Okay, but what do we need to be "rescued" or "delivered" or "healed" or "saved" *from*? Well, first, we need to be "saved" from God's Wrath. Please look at **Romans 5:9:**

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

... so, we are "saved" from God's Wrath. But why is God so angry with us? I thought God was Love, so why is God so angry with sinners that we need to be "saved" from His Wrath? God is angry with sinners because our sins have *insulted* and *offended* God's Own Character and Nature. Please look at **Romans 3:23:**

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

So, the Bible says that our sins have caused us to "fall short" of God's Glory. Now to understand this, you have to first understand that God's Glory is the single most important thing to God. God values His Glory more than He values anything else. And, in the Bible, everything that God does, He does for one of three reasons:

1. For My Glory!
2. For My Name's Sake!
3. So, they will know that I am the Lord!

... which is simply three different ways to say the same thing. So, when we sin, we are telling God that the single most important aspect of Himself, His Glory, is not valuable to us at all, that it doesn't bring us happiness, it doesn't satisfy us, it doesn't fill our ongoing to be joyful and content, and so we look for other things to do that for us.

So, Sin is not only the terrible things that people do, like child molestation or mass murder. No, sin is looking to *anything* on this earth that has been made or that is passing away to bring us the fullness of Joy, *besides God*.

So, as God stands before us, in His pristine Holiness, sin is when we look full bore into God's Eyes and then tell Him, "*No thank you, I'd rather have something else besides You!*" And you simply *cannot* insult God any more than that.

And so, God's Righteousness will not allow God's Glory to be insulted and belittled and ignored like that. And so, God rises up in His Holy Anger to bring Divine Justice to the Insult that our sins have caused. And that Divine Justice is God's Wrath against our sins, which is culminated in all unrepented sinners being thrown into the Lake of Fire in Hell. So, the *first* thing that Jesus came to save us from is God's Wrath that is against us, because of our sins.

But *why* does Jesus have to "bring us" to God? Why can't we simply "choose" to love and serve God on our own? Why can't we just make a rational "decision" to come to Jesus ourselves? Why do we have to be "brought"? And to understand this, we need to next explore what God commanded from the very beginning. God said:

Deuteronomy 6:4&5

Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

So, loving God has *always* been the main focus of God. But because of the Fall, God has been robbed of our affections because we place those affections onto *other* things, things that have been made

and things which are passing away. Look how Jesus identified our problem in **John 3:19**, when He said:

This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.

The Sin of Adam *ruined* us, *not* because it made us all to be murderers or child molesters, but we are ruined because, in our fallen "State", we do not *normally* or *naturally* love God. So, we reject Jesus, we refuse to love Jesus, because our blackened hearts prefer the darkness.

So, now, human beings loving God is completely *abnormal* and entirely *unnatural*. Part of what it means to be "fallen" and a "sinner" is that we do not *love* God. We do not *enjoy* God. We do not *delight* in God. And in that condition, *nobody* will ever *initiate* a move toward God in genuine repentance unless and until God moves on them first! Nobody in that condition will ever simply "choose" or "make a decision" to start loving and enjoying God. And nobody *will* do this, because they *can't*. Adam's Sin has cursed us with what theologians call "Moral Inability".

And Moral Inability teaches that while humans have the ability to "choose" all day long, *nobody* has any true "freedom" in those choices. So, while it is true that we have a "will", Adam's Sin has rendered our will to NOT be "free". And that means that no human, who is lost, has a "free will". The Bible teaches that our "will" is in *bondage* to our nature.

So, here is how this works. Human beings choose, yes. But our choices are *predicated* on what we "love" and what we "desire" and what we "want". So, while human beings choose, we *only* choose what we *love*. And no one chooses *contrary* to what he loves, *unless forced to do so*. But what do lost people "love" and "want" and "desire"? We discovered last week that lost people only love Sin and Self. No lost person loves God or the things of the Spirit of God. But why is that? Because, Adam's Sin robbed us of that ability.

So, lost people choose all sorts of things. And they choose those things because they *want* them or because they *desire* them. But lost people *do not* and *will not*, in and of themselves, ever choose God. And that is because lost people can't manufacture a love toward God. Why?

Because, they *can't*. Lost people *do not* love God because they are not *able* to love God. But why can't they? Because, *they don't want to*. So, it is the fact that lost people love Sin and Self that makes them *unable* to love God, unless God moves on them graciously first. And that is why the Bible teaches that our love *for* God is a gift *from* God.

1 John 4:19

We love [God and the things of God] because He first loved us

So, lost people can go to Church, they can sing Hymns, they can enjoy reading the Bible, they can want a better life down here, they can want a better marriage, and better children, they can want God to heal them and bless them and protect them, and lost people can even give thanks to God for doing all of that. But lost people can't love God. Now they can certainly love what God *does* and what God *gives*, but lost people have no love at all for God *Himself*. And they *can't* love God, because they don't *want to*. But part of what it means to be saved is that God has graciously granted a love for Himself to us. So, *all* saved people love God, and they love Jesus as God in human flesh.

So, what it means to be "Born Again" is that God gives us a new "nature". And that new nature contains new "loves" and new "wants" and new "desires". And so, people, who have experienced the Miracle of the New Birth have been graced by God to love, not merely what God *does* or what God *gives*, but we have been graced to love *God*. And so, the choices that those people make reflect those new loves and new desires.

And this is why Jesus has to "bring us to God", and why we *cannot* simply come to God on our own. Look at Jesus' Own Words from **John 6:44a**:

No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him...

Now I want you to notice two words in this verse:

- **Can**
- **Draw**

The word “**can**” comes from a Greek word that means: *power or ability*. And the word “**draw**” comes from a Greek word that means: *to drag forcefully*. The word “**can**” has *nothing* to do with “*permission*”, but *ability*. And the word “**draw**” has *nothing* to do with an “*invitation*” or an “*opportunity*”, it has to do with *being dragged somewhere against your will*.

Now it wasn't Blair Bradley or John Calvin who said this, but it was Jesus the Christ, Who said that no human being has the *power* or the *ability* to come to Jesus for Salvation on his own unless God Almighty, Who sent Jesus to earth, *drags that person to Jesus, against his will*. But *why* don't we have the power or ability to simply come to Jesus on our own volition? We lost it in the Fall. And that is why we must be “brought”.

And so, left to ourselves, *no one* will voluntarily come to Jesus. That is the horrendous results of what it means to be “fallen”. The only people who come to Jesus for Forgiveness and Salvation are those who are being dragged to Jesus by God the Father. And that forceful “dragging”, that *powerful “gripping”* of a lost sinner to Jesus for Salvation, that is carried out by God the Father, *against the will of the one who is being dragged*, is called “Grace”.

Now you may not like this. This may not sit well with you. But I didn't say this. Jesus did. It is in the Bible in the “red-letter words” of Jesus Himself. And so, we must deal with it. And the *right* way to deal with it is to believe it, and include this “Moral Inability” in the Gospel that we preach.

But this Salvation is not only focused on rescuing us from the *consequences* of our sins, which is God's Wrath, but also the *poison* of sin, the *distorting, contaminating, idolatrous, ugliness* of sin that ruins everything in this life, and makes me love stuff more than I love God. I also need to be saved from all of that, too, not just freed from sin's *consequences*. I need the *disease of sin* to be taken away, not merely rescued from the consequences of its eternal Death and Wrath.

And so, *part* of Salvation is that God gives me a new nature. And this new nature is created in Righteousness and a genuine pursuit of biblical Holiness. And with this new nature, I now love God, and I love the things of the Spirit of God. And this new love and this new desire compels me to make new choices that will honor God, rather than dishonor Him.

But *part* of this Salvation is that I also now am infilled with the third Person of the Trinity. Part of what makes the New Covenant infinitely better than the Old is that God the Spirit no longer comes to me on occasion and “by times”. He doesn’t come down and then lift; He doesn’t fall on me and then depart. No, now God the Spirit abides with me forever. He dwells in me and He leads me and guides me into all Truth; He empowers and enables me to walk this world in white; He pushes me and even pulls me into God’s Word and God’s Presence.

And so, now that I am saved, I avail myself of all the various “Means of Grace”, like getting into the Bible and finding perfect Truth, and like developing effectual and fervent times of Prayer by myself and with my family and with my brothers and sisters, and like partaking of the Lord’s Table and Baptism, and like regular times of godly Fellowship, and like making myself available to serve others in the Love of God.

And all of those things “work together” to make me more and more *progressively* holy. And, while it is true that I will never become perfectly sinless in this life and on this earth, it is also true that I *will* sin *less*. And becoming *progressively* more and more godly and holy *after* I have been justified is what is called the “Process of Sanctification”. And it is *part* of what being “saved from sin” means.

But Salvation also includes even more than being saved from Sin. We must know that all unrepentant rebels, who refuse to trust in Jesus, will experience the frightening Reality of having to be punished for their own sins throughout all of Eternity. And Salvation saves us **FROM** that. But Salvation also saves us **FOR** something else. Please read **Romans 5:10&11:**

For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

The Apostle Paul was “moved along” by God the Holy Spirit to write down here that we are saved FOR Joy! Look what he said:

... we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

So, what do saved people do? **"We exult in God"**. But what does **"exult"** mean? It means: *to boast; and to joy; and to rejoice*. And we are not exulting in simply being saved or in even going to heaven and walking on streets of gold or entering through pearly gates or by being re-united with loved ones, who have gone before us. So, what are exulting in? God. Just God. And that tells us that God is *better* than anything that God gives to us and anything that God does for us. And that tells us that the *best* and the *highest* and the *final* and the *decisive* "Good" of the Gospel is God. And why is that? Because God is better than anything else.

So, when we "exult in God", we are experiencing *exuberant Joy*, the *highest form* of Joy, or we could say, "the *fullness of Joy*". Now *how* do we do this? *How* did Paul tell us here in **Romans 5** that we experience the "fullness of this Joy"? **"Through our Lord Jesus Christ"**. Which is referring to Jesus' Life, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, and ongoing Ministry in Heaven right now. But *why* do we experience the *fullness of this Joy*? **"Through whom we have now received the reconciliation"**.

Now, *Who* are we reconciled *to*? We are now reconciled to God. But why did we need to be reconciled to God? Because our sins had *separated* us from God. So, now, in Salvation, we are reconciled to God. But that means that God Himself is the *Focus* or the *Goal* of our Reconciliation. So, it isn't only all the many things that God gives *to* us or that God does *for* us that defines this Reconciliation. No, now, because we have been saved from God's Wrath, we are now reconciled to God.

And what is the result of being reconciled to God? We exult! We rejoice! We experience the fullness of Joy! And that tells us that as we are saved **FROM** God's Wrath, we are also saved **FOR** Joy! So, there are three things the biblical Gospel is designed to do:

1. The Gospel saves me from the Wrath of God.
2. The Gospel progressively cleanses me from the idolatrous, poisonous, all-distorting sin that makes me love other things more than God.
3. The Gospel opens access into, by reconciliation, a sweet, deep, ever-increasing, all-satisfying Joy in my Maker- forever.

But notice that there's not a word here about being "saved" from Poverty. There is not a word about being "saved" from Sickness. Not a word about being "saved" from Terrorism. Not a word about being "saved" from Loneliness or Obscurity. Not a word about being "saved" from Rejection or high blood pressure or arthritis. Not a word about being "saved" from having your daughter kidnapped and killed.

Now please don't misunderstand me. I absolutely believe that if you trust Jesus, many things in your life will *probably* go better. But they might not, because *none* of those things are *guaranteed*. All of those things are completely left to God's Will working individually in you. And that is why *none* of those things are part of the biblical Gospel.

Now, it is true that, eventually, *everything* will get better. And you'll have a new body and you will be able to fellowship directly with Jesus without any filters and without ever having to depart. And all sin will be taken away, and there will be perfect Justice reigning on the earth. And there will be no Injustice, anywhere, ever. And all of that is coming.

But between now and the Coming of Jesus, or our death, the biblical Gospel guarantees these three things:

1. My personal guilt and the Wrath of God will be *totally* and *immediately* removed from me, *forever*.
2. My sin will be *progressively* cleansed away, and I will become *less* sinful and *more* holy.
3. I will *personally* experience an ever-increasing Intimacy and Delight with God, my Father, and I will be ever growing in the fullness of my own Joy in God, so that my soul is completely satisfied in Him when everything else around my soul gives way.

And so, once again, I think we are safe to say that the *best*, and the *highest*, and the *final*, and the *decisive* "Good" of the Good News (Gospel), *without which* all of the other "Good" of the Gospel would NOT be "Good", and *to which* all of the other "Good" of the Gospel is pointing, is this:

The Glory of God, in the Face of Jesus Christ, revealed to us and known by us
and treasured by us, for our everlasting enjoyment

But I hope you have noticed that we seem to have a problem.
1 Peter 3:18 says, "Jesus brings us to God". And **John 6:44** says, "God draws us to Jesus". So, which one is it? Does Jesus bring us to God the Father, or does God the Father draw us to Jesus? And what about God the Holy Spirit? If God is pleased, next week, I will show you how all three Persons of the Trinity work in perfect Harmony to rescue unworthy sinners to save them, while receiving all of the Glory Himself. And I plan to demonstrate that God getting the Glory and *us* possessing the Joy is the *fullness* of the biblical Gospel.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.