

Gospel, the Five Solas and Solid Ground

Introduction

In Gal 1:8-9, Paul uses strong language against preaching a false gospel. So, we need to examine what is a false gospel.

Gal 1:8-9 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! 9 As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse!

Let us start with the Reformation that began in 1517 AD by Martin Luther.

Later,

John Calvin and others supported him. They protested against the excesses of the doctrine of salvation that the Roman Catholic Church was preaching in those days. Eventually, they left the Catholic Church and began what is now called the Protestant group of churches. The heart of this division was not merely a theological dispute. The reformers believed that the false teachings robbed the gospel of its power to save humanity. The reformers were willing to lay down

their

lives to preserve the gospel truth. They insisted that because Scripture is God's inspired word, it is the church's only inerrant, sufficient, and final authority.

And

from Scripture flows the essential doctrines of salvation. Over time, they formulated the expression known as the Five Solas: **salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, for the glory of God alone, based upon the teaching of Scripture alone.** "Sola" in Latin means "alone". The Five Solas represent a good biblical declaration of the true gospel. And any addition besides the word "alone" would be a false gospel.

Outline:

1. Sola Scriptura Scripture alone
2. Sola Fide Faith alone
3. Sola Gratia Grace alone
4. Solus Christus Christ alone
5. Soli Deo Gloria Glory of God alone
6. Solid Ground On which we stand

1. **Sola scriptura** (Scripture alone)

It emphasises that God inspired the authors of the Bible. God's word is, therefore, inerrant and sufficient. (2 Tim 3:16-17 *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work*). *Sola Scriptura* teaches us that all other authorities in the Christian life serve underneath Scripture. At the same time, Scripture alone rules over other sources. We must reject **anything taught by any Christian teacher that contradicts the Bible**.

2. **Sola gratia** (Grace alone)

It emphasises grace as the reason for our salvation. In other words, salvation comes from what God has done in Jesus Christ rather than what we do. Eph 2:8-9 *"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast."*

We cannot base our salvation on God's grace and good moral behaviour because we all sinned and need a Saviour. Rom 3:23-24 says, *"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus"*.

3. **Sola fide** (Faith alone)

It emphasises that salvation is a gift by God given to all who accept it through faith alone. (John 3:16 *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*). This faith is a repentant ~~faith in Jesus~~ as Saviour and Lord. It includes belief in the Lordship of Jesus that causes us to turn from our way and turn to Jesus as the Lord of our life. **Salvation is not based on faith and human effort, faith and good deeds, faith and water baptism, or faith and church membership (Eph 2:8-9) — but salvation is through faith alone.**

What is this type of faith, which many call saving faith? It has three vital components. (i) you must know the gospel truth, (ii) you must believe the gospel truth, (iii) you must trust your whole life in the truth.

The gospel truth is that Jesus, the eternal Son of God, became fully man to live the life we should have lived but didn't. Then Jesus died on the cross on our behalf to pay the full punishment for our sins against a Holy God, which we couldn't. Then He rose again from the dead, having satisfied the justice of a Holy God. People with faith in what Jesus did for them will stand fully justified before

the Holy God, regardless of their moral or immoral past. Being fully justified means God will completely forgive a person's past, present and future sins and see in that person the perfect life that Jesus lived on their behalf. Therefore, that believing person will have eternal life in fellowship with God. Every person believes and *trusts* (or has faith) in something that gives them security and significance. To trust in Jesus alone is to turn from what gives you security and significance and **turn only to Jesus** — to provide you with security and significance. It is also called **repentant** faith because it causes you to turn from whatever is lord in your life and turn to Jesus as your only Lord.

- The rich young man found security and significance in his great wealth, and he couldn't turn to Jesus for security and significance (Matt 19:16-24)

- Religious people find significance and prestige in their moral behaviour and social standing. They love the praise of men more than God, and it made the cost of following Jesus too much for them (John 12:43, Luke 16:15)

But when you put your trust in Jesus alone, the security Jesus gives you is

eternal

security with Him. The significance Jesus gives is that you become a child of God,

brought into His own family. It means God loves you the same as He loves His Eternal Son.

4. Solus Christus (Christ alone)

It emphasises the role of Jesus Christ alone in our salvation. We are saved by Christ alone.

Jesus alone is the King of kings — Rev 19:16 *On his robe, and on his thigh, he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*

He alone is our High Priest — Heb 4:14 *Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.*

He alone is our Redeemer — Gal 3:13 *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree").*

He alone is the sole Mediator between God and man—1 Tim 2:5 *For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,*

Any attempt to give these roles to someone else or share in those roles (such as Mary) is improper. Salvation is not in Christ and Church or not in Christ and anybody else. It is Jesus Christ alone who saves.

5. Soli Deo gloria (Glory of God alone)

God will receive all the glory only if our salvation is by grace alone. If there is something of our own that we can claim, then we no longer boast in Christ alone. But if *He is the author and perfecter of our faith* (Heb 12:2), He alone will be magnified for His sovereign grace. As Christians, these **five Solas** should help us grow in humility, dependence and trust in God. Whether we work in a secular or Church job, to God alone is the glory.

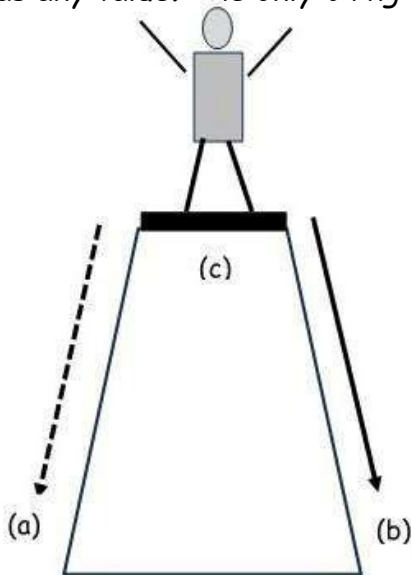
Eph 1:3-6 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

6. Standing Firm on Solid Ground.

Gal 5:1,4-6 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery...4 You who are

trying

to be justified by the Law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. 5 For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope. 6 For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.



When we know (understand) the gospel as expressed in the five Solas and believe and trust our lives on it, we stand on the unshakable ground of Jesus' love for us. Then nothing can separate us from His love. But in Gal 5:1, Paul says we must **stand firm** in the freedom that Christ has set us free. Why the necessity to stand firm? Because though we cannot lose our salvation, we can quickly move towards (a) legalism or (b) careless living. And in either case, we will fall from the grace that makes us stand firm in freedom and cause us to lose our intimacy with Jesus. God gives us grace that brings salvation and teaches

us to say "No" to unrighteousness (Titus 2:11). We stand firm in this grace — the solid ground (c) on which we stand.

Christ has set us free from the Law of sin and death (*Rom 8:2 because through Christ Jesus, the Law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the Law of sin and death*). Not obedience to any set of laws makes us more acceptable to Jesus. He accepts us only because of His grace. He died for us because He loves us. It is in this truth that we put our trust (faith). Legalistic people still think that we must do something to be more acceptable to Him, so they fall from grace.

Gal 2:15 We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles

Paul calls Christians from the Jewish background "the **circumcised**". These Jewish Christians were trained from birth to obey the Law (*Gal 2:15*). Paul was one of them, faultless in following it (*Phil 3:5-6*). However, they committed "**hidden internal sins**" like pride, arrogance, selfishness and covetousness.

Paul calls Christians who came from Gentile backgrounds "the **uncircumcised**". Most came from a loose moral lifestyle (*Gal 2:15*). They committed "**external sins**" visible to everyone, like adultery, financial corruption, etc. But whether a person commits internal or external sins—we are all sinners and fall short of the glory of God. We all need salvation. So whether you are circumcised or uncircumcised, it has no value to your salvation. And the only saviour is Jesus. And the only thing that counts is your faith in Jesus as Saviour (*Gal 5:6*).

Paul tells the circumcised Jewish Christians to stand firm in their freedom and not insist that the uncircumcised Gentile Christians must be circumcised and obey Jewish laws to have faith in Jesus. If they emphasised circumcision, their faith is not entirely in the grace of Jesus. (*Gal 5:6 In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love*).

Since we have this freedom, does it mean we can live as we please and continue in sinful ways as before? No, says Paul. Jesus has set you **free from slavery to sin** to live in righteousness. (*Rom 8:18 You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness*). And the motivation to live a righteous life comes only because of your faith in Jesus, who loved you first and to whom you respond in loving Him (*Gal 5:6*).

You will hear Him calling you to draw near when you meditate on the risen Lord, knowing He died on the cross out of love. And as you draw near to Him, His

love transforms you (2 Cor 3:18). On His Second Coming, you will see Him face to face and be like Him. You are glorified.

Song of Songs 2:14 [Jesus says to you] My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hiding places on the mountainside, show me your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.

1 John 4:19 We love because He first loved.

2 Cor 3:18 And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

1 John 3:2-3 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. 3 All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

And this, my dear friends, is our hope — the joyful expectation of certainty — that we will see Him face to face one day and become like Him. It purifies us (1 John 3:2-3). We will be glorified (Gal 5:5). This is this solid ground today on

which

we stand by grace alone.

Gospel and Human Misery

Outline

1. Human Misery
2. Cause of Human Misery
3. Gospel that saves you
4. Gospel that sets you free versus advice that puts burdens
5. Gospel Decisions
6. Gospel and Repentance

1. Human Misery:

- a. Despite enormous advances in science, disorder, misery, and death reign today and have been reigning throughout human history.
- b. Everyone, throughout history, seems to have more or less the same standards of right and wrong. It appears to be written in our hearts, and we call it conscience. When we put it down in writing, we may call it religion, and those that taught religion are religious leaders. **Most religious leaders are well-meaning people.**
- c. Although everyone knows right and wrong, everyone seems to do some wrong virtually every day, even from childhood, despite being brought up by well-meaning parents. We call the wrong behaviour — a sin. We observe everyone's sins, even from birth, so everyone is born a sinner. Even well-meaning religious leaders are born sinners and also sin.
- d. Taken together, the sins of the world cause disorder and misery throughout human history. **There seems to be no remedy for disorder and human misery because everyone is born a sinner and sins. No religious leader can change this situation.**

2. Cause of Human Misery

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth (*Gen 1:1*), and He created man and woman in His image and likeness (*Gen 1:27, 5:1*). He blessed them, telling them to multiply, rule and subdue the earth (*Gen 1:28-30*). Being in God's image and likeness, humans were in a perfect relationship with God. But Satan (a rebellious fallen angel) tempted them to rebel against God, which they did and **fell out of the relationship with God** — known as the Fall of Man. God warned Adam that if they disobeyed Him, they would die. Since then, the generations that followed were born in the likeness and image of Adam (*Gen 5:3*)

— a fractured image of God because of sin. Sin can be defined as self-centeredness and not God-centered. Because of our self-centeredness, we break God's law and sin against God. Henceforth, humans were born sinners and kept sinning, resulting in disorder, misery, and death. Humanity now has three giant enemies- sin, Satan and death. **Creation is now perishing. No religious leader can stop it. Only the Creator Himself must intervene.**

A preacher once said, "Jesus is the answer". A young man asked, "But what is the question?" The preacher replied, "Who can save us from human misery in this perishing world ruled by sin, death and Satan? That's the question", said the preacher. And then he said again to the young man, "Jesus is the answer".

3. Gospel that saves you. The word **gospel** comes from the Greek word "Evangelion", meaning "good news", which in old English is "god-spell" that eventually became "gospel". In secular Greek, "Evangelion" was a powerful word to mean an important and good announcement from the Emperor of Rome, e.g. the birth of his son or the crowning of a new emperor. And a herald would loudly proclaim it on the streets of Roman cities. But the New Testament writers used this word as the **excellent announcement or news**, not from an earthly emperor, but from God — a powerful announcement!

The Gospel is Good News that the Eternal Creator God Himself has intervened to save humanity from a perishing world.

God becomes 100% man without ceasing to be 100% God. He came into the womb of a virgin (Mary) so that He was not born of Adam's seed. His name is **Jesus**. Not being born of Adam, Jesus was not born a sinner. Jesus came:

(a) **To rescue humanity** from this perpetual misery and this perishing world.

(b) **To create an eternal new creation** that will not perish, and He invites everyone to join.

(c) **To die and pay the penalty for all humanity's sins.** Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead. Jesus gave believers in Him a new heart and a new spirit to have a harmonious relationship with God—with love, joy and peace.

(d) **To defeat the three enemies of humanity**—sin, Satan, and death. On the cross, Jesus paid our penalty for sin, so we are no longer under condemnation and thus disarmed Satan's power over believers. Jesus rose from the dead, defeating death. Those who believe in Him will also rise from the dead.

(e) **To reveal the Father-Heart of God and His values** to humanity

(f) **To give us a new heart and a new spirit**, to live out the values of God.

4. Gospel that sets you free versus advice that puts burdens: Every religious leader gives good advice and teaches how to find God. Only Jesus says I AM God, and I came to rescue you (Luke 19:10)

Good advice sounds good, but it is powerless to make you obey because of our sinful hearts. **Good advice puts burdens and condemns you for your inability to obey.** All good advice, however religious, cannot rescue humanity from a perishing world under sin, Satan and death.

The gospel is not good religious advice. Gospel is the good news that Jesus lived for you the life you couldn't live. And Jesus paid the penalty you deserved to pay, so you don't have to pay. This way, the gospel takes away burdens of condemnation. You are free.

5. Gospel Decisions: News is not religion. News is not a set of rules to obey. **But the news is an announcement of something that has already occurred.** And all we can do with news is respond to it by believing it or rejecting it. Those who believe the good news (gospel) will be part of God's new creation and will not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16, 5:24)—see points (a) to (f) above. Those who do not believe in the good news prefer to remain in a powerless, perishing world — they stand condemned already (John 3:17-18). They will perish eternally.

The Offense of the Gospel: Now, the gospel, even though very good and the best news, yet will offend people. The Bible says that all human behaviour (whether respectable, questionable, or unrespectable) is unacceptable and falls short of God's standards — causing misery, disorder, and death (point 1 above). We all need God's intervention in Jesus Christ, who came to save us. Putting all humanity and all human behaviour in one big bag and calling it "not good for God" is offensive, and further saying that Jesus Christ is the only answer by God to save us is also harsh. We must present the gospel the best we can, with the truth told in love, yet the gospel will offend many people. **If we are not prepared to face the offence caused by preaching the gospel, our message will not be the gospel of Jesus Christ.**

6. Gospel and Repentance: *Mark 1:15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news."*

What is the connection between the good news (gospel) and repentance? Are we not saved by faith alone? To answer these questions, we must first understand "repentance"—which means "turn from the path you are taking"—of being independent and trusting Jesus. So, the faith that saves you is repentant faith.

In his book, "War of the Jews", the Jewish historian Josephus (37-100 AD) mentions when he was a commander of the Jewish forces that fought against

the Roman occupation of Palestine. But he eventually persuaded his Jewish

troops

to "repent" and surrender to Rome in 67 AD. And what he meant by repent was that the Jewish forces should *turn from their path* against Rome and submit to Rome because Rome was much stronger. Josephus wrote his book in Greek during the same period that Mark wrote his gospel, closely after 70 AD. The Greek word (*metanoia*) used for repent was also the same. So, Mark's Gospel meant the same: turn from the path of rebelling against God and surrender to Him. But God is not oppressive like Rome. God is good, slow to anger, and abounding in love. He sent His son Jesus to become man and pay for humanity's rebellion against Him. Therefore, repent of your ways, believe in the good news of Jesus and rest in what God has done for you—rest in His embrace. And God will give you a new

heart

and a new spirit to enable you to follow His ways out of love for Him.

Let me give you the testimony of a very successful English businessman with whom I had the privilege to associate for several years. He and his wife attended

the Alpha Seminar led by Nicky Gumbel, pastor of Holy Trinity Brompton Church in London. After Nicky preached the gospel, he invited the Holy Spirit and suddenly, the gospel truth became clear to this businessman. He began moving his arm vigorously up and down, slapping the table he was sitting at, exclaiming, "That's it, that's it, that's it...! He now knew Jesus was most important to him,

and

at that instant, he embraced Jesus wholeheartedly, turning away from whatever was important to him in the past.

Often, we associate repentance with godly sorrow for sins. 2 Cor 7:10 "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation", which means when we are genuinely sorry for our sins, it must "turn us from the path we are taking" and turn to Jesus.

- Some people cry profusely for their sins and turn to Jesus. A close friend of mine cried for two days in sorrow for his sins as he turned to Jesus. He did this out of deeply recognising that he was rebelling against a holy and wonderful God.

- Some people fear God, turn to Him and embrace His gospel. I was such a person. I battled for three years, rebelling against the promptings in my heart before I surrendered and turned to God and embraced the gospel.
- Some people, like the English businessman above, just saw the truth of Jesus and instantly turned to Him wholeheartedly.
- Some people gradually see the truth of Jesus and turn to Him with no dramatic experience. Yet, at some stage, they submitted their lives to Jesus.

Now, repentance is not the same as the gospel. People may repent of their wrong way of life and then turn and reform as some alcoholics do. But if they don't turn to Jesus on His terms to save them from this perishing world, they will not transform into a new creation—they won't have a new heart and a new spirit.

If people say they believe the good news (gospel), they must also relinquish their old ways and follow God on His terms — they must repent. Such repentance would involve avoiding ungodly cultural and personal practices, which may take some time. But repentance and believing the good news must go side by side and hand in hand. Not one without the other. **In all cases, repentance and revelation of the gospel come from the Holy Spirit, who transforms us into a new creation. He cleanses our hearts from defilement and gives us a new heart and a new spirit that joyfully obeys God out of love for Him.**

Ezekiel 36:25-27 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. 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

Gospel and Born Again

Outline (Read John 3:1-16)

1. Why do we need to be born again
2. What does born again mean
3. What are the results of being born again
4. How can a person be born again

Read John 3:1-16 Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. 2 He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him." 3 Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again." 4 "How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!" 5 Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. 6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. 7 You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' 8 The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." 9 "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked. 10 "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? 11 Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. 12 I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? 13 No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. 14 Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, 15 that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him." 16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

1. Why do we need to be born-again: Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a member of the Jewish ruling council (John 3:1), and Jesus calls him Israel's teacher (3:10). People called Billy Graham America's Pastor because of his character and preaching. Nicodemus was of equal stature — Israel's Teacher.

John 3:1-2: Nicodemus approaches Jesus respectfully, calling Jesus "Rabbi", which shows his humility because Jesus had no credentials compared to him.

Nicodemus assesses that Jesus is a teacher mightily blessed with God's power, and he is curious about Him. But he doesn't openly ask Jesus a question as to who He is. Jesus senses a problem with this approach because **Nicodemus thinks he can see something of who Jesus is in the miracles.**

John 3:3: Jesus insists no one can 'see' (perceive) the Kingdom of God unless he (or she) is born again. [Remember Peter confessed that Jesus is the Son of God, and Jesus said God revealed this to Peter and not man — *Matt 16:15-17*].

Nicodemus is a respectable, upright, religious person who knows his Bible well. Yet, Jesus tells him, "***You must be born again to see the Kingdom of God*** (*John 3:3*). So, good behaviour and biblical knowledge are not required to be born again. And yet being born again is vital because if you can't see the kingdom of God,

you

can't enter it (*John 3:5*). Jesus told the Jewish leaders, of which Nicodemus was a part, that even people like tax collectors and prostitutes would enter the kingdom of God. (*Matt 21:31*). Tim Keller nicely summarises what Jesus meant:

- *You must be born again, no matter how religious and upright you are (like Nicodemus).*
- *You can be born again, no matter how despised you are (like tax collectors and prostitutes).* [Note: Jews considered tax collectors to be traitors who collected tax for the Roman conquerors]

It is very offensive to respectable people to tell them that we are all on the same

level — respectable and unrespectable in God's eyes. The gospel is offensive to many, even if you try and present it as kindly as possible. And if you're not prepared to receive a backlash, you're not preaching the gospel. So, everyone must be born-again to see and enter the Kingdom of God. So, what does the term "born again" mean?

2. What does "born again" mean?: Other passages (*1 Pet 1:3, 23*) refer to born-again as '**new birth**'. Certainly, Nicodemus understood it as a second birth (*John 3:4*). Jesus defines it as ***born of water and the spirit***" (*John 3:5*). What does "***born of water and the spirit***" mean? There are many explanations, but it must satisfy all four following points:

- (i) It must be from the Old Testament that Nicodemus knows because Jesus says that as Israel's teacher, he should understand (*John 3:10*)
- (ii) It must be from the Spirit above (*John 3:8*)
- (iii) It must involve the water and spirit together (*John 3:5*)
- (iv) It must be a single new birth, not two or more (*John 3:3-5, John 1:12-13*).

Let us examine some explanations for "**born of water and the spirit**":

- Water may refer to Christian baptism — but that's a New Testament practice and would make no sense to Nicodemus. Not an acceptable explanation
- Water may refer to baptism by John the Baptist — but believers discontinued this practice after the resurrection. Not an acceptable explanation
- Water may refer to natural birth, while spirit refers to spiritual birth — Jesus referred to only one "new birth" — not two. And this wasn't clear from the Old Testament. Not an acceptable explanation
- Water-spirit may refer to God's word, which a person believes and is born again (John 1:12-13, 1 Pet 1:23). While the new birth is by receiving Jesus, the Word made flesh (John 1:14) — yet it wasn't from the Old Testament. It is hard for Nicodemus to connect it simultaneously to water and the spirit. That is not an acceptable explanation.

The most acceptable explanation that satisfies points (i) to (iv) above is in Ezekiel 36:25-27, where water and spirit complement each other. The water cleanses the heart from defilement. And the spirit transforms the heart to

follow

God wholeheartedly. The Old Testament prophets foretold this would happen when God made a New Covenant with Israel (Jer 31:31-34, Ezk 11:18-20) and for which King David prayed to God (Ps 51:2, 5, 7, 10).

Ezk 36:25-27 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. 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. (also in 2 Cor 3:3)

This explanation is appropriate and essential—because a "new spirit and a new heart" means a **transformation** in your life.

3. What are the results of being born again: The main result (or sign) of being

born again is "**transformation**" to a new life that comes from the Holy Spirit

above—giving you

- (i) a **new vision** for your life (John 3:3 you can see the Kingdom of God)
- (ii) a **new sensitivity** to the Holy Spirit (Ezk 36:27) and a **new identity** (John

1:12-

13, Rom 8:15-16).

(i) New Vision for your Life. It is not repairing our existing life or habits because the whole of our current life is defective. But it is the renewal of our

whole nature. God cleanses our hearts from defilement. **He gives us a new heart and puts a new spirit in us** that changes the desires of our hearts to make relating with God our highest priority (Ezk 36:25-26). God promised He would do this in the New Covenant through Jesus Christ (Jer 31:31-34, Ezk 11:18-20).

God told Moses (Deut 18:15) that later, He would send another prophet like him. Moses gave the Law of God on a stone outside man's heart. Who was the other prophet? It was Jesus (Acts 3:22), but He wrote the law of God inside our hearts. Only Jesus was without sin and perfectly kept God's law. When you receive Him, His spirit comes inside your heart, and you're careful to follow Him with inner motivation.

As an illustration: Consider watching a movie. The background music is there

when

you see a movie, but your focus is on the movie.

- Before you are born again, the background music is like the kingdom of God (you may know about it), but what grips your vision is the movie (which represents the world).

- After you're born again, the movie becomes the Kingdom of God, which grips you, whereas the background music is your life in the world.

Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and not by works so that no one can boast (Eph 2:9). But the transformation must accompany your faith. Otherwise, it is not true faith and not the new birth. Martin Luther said it well — "We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone." Transformation accompanies it.

(ii) New Sensitivity and a New Identity. In our natural birth, when we come out from our mother's womb and are **sensitive to the world**, we cry loudly! This sensitivity carries on in life. We are affected by "What will people say?". Worldly values shape our lives — pride, boasting of what we possess and accomplish. The world also defines our identity based on our family name, social class or caste, race, career, how we look, etc. But the moment we are born again, we are **sensitive to the Holy Spirit** and "What will God say?" becomes more important. We have a **new identity as children of God and cry, "Abba Father"** (John 1:12-13, Rom 8:15-16).

4. How can a person be born again: To begin with, it's only by the revelation from God that a person can be born again. Nevertheless, God expects a **faith** response from us. In John 3:14-15, Jesus tells us how to be born again. He uses the example of Moses lifting the bronze snake in the desert. The background story is that when the Israelites travelled through the desert from Egypt to the

promised land, they were ungrateful and grumbled against God and Moses. God sent poisonous snakes among them that bit and caused many Israelites to die. They repented and cried, and God told Moses to make a bronze snake and put it on a pole. When poisonous snakes bit the Israelites, all they had to do was only look at the bronze snake, and they lived (Num 21:4-9). The bronze snake represented sin that God judged, and God paid

Jesus meant He took our sins upon Himself, and God judged Him guilty. Jesus paid for our sins by dying on the cross. **All we have to do is look at Him with faith**

— **and we are saved and born again.** Jesus tells this to Nicodemus as a hint that Jesus would die for humanity's sin on the cross out of love for us. Those that believe in Him would not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16). **This is the gospel.**

But is grace so cheap that all we have to do is look at Jesus and believe in Him that He took all our sins? No! Grace is not cheap, it is very costly, and Jesus paid the price for that grace. In John 16:21, Jesus uses the example of a mother in labour as she gives birth to a child. The child does nothing to be born. All the painful effort is made by the mother alone. And when the birth of her baby is over, she cuddles her baby with joy.

Similarly, the new birth costs us nothing. Jesus bears all the pain alone on the cross. He meets us after He rose again and joyfully imparts His resurrected life to us that believe in Him.

End Notes:

Testimony of Charles Spurgeon (Prince of Preachers). <https://bit.ly/3MINeCg>

Charles' father and grandfather were gospel preachers. Still, Charles always tried to earn his salvation by working hard to live a sinless life and failed — he felt condemned. One day, at age sixteen, he visited a village church when it was snowing heavily. A layman was preaching on Isa 45:22, "*Look unto Me and be saved*".

The preacher began: "This is a straightforward text indeed. It says, 'Look.' Now looking doesn't take much pain. It's not lifting your foot or finger but '**Look.**' Well, a man needn't go to college to learn to look. You may be the biggest fool, and yet you can look. A man needn't earn much money to look. Anyone can look; even a child can look.

"But then the text says, 'Look unto Me.' Yes!" he said, "many of you are looking to yourselves, but it's no use looking there. You'll never find any comfort in yourselves. Some say look to God the Father. No, look to Him later. Jesus Christ says, 'Look unto

Me.' Someone may say, 'We must wait for the Spirit's working'. You have no business with that just now. Look to Christ. The text says, '**Look unto Me.**'"

Then he said: "*Look unto Me; I am sweating great drops of blood. Look unto Me; I am hanging on the cross. Look unto Me; I am dead and buried. Look unto Me; I rise again.*
Look

unto Me; I ascend to Heaven. Look unto Me; I am sitting at the Father's right hand. O poor sinner, look unto Me! Look unto Me!"

He fixed his eyes on me as if he knew all my heart and said, "Young man, you look very miserable... And you will always be miserable—miserable in life and miserable in death—if you don't obey my text. Still, if you obey now, you will be saved." Then lifting his

hands,

he shouted, "*Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothing to do but look and live!"*

I saw at once the way of salvation. When I heard that word, "Look!"

Oh, that somebody had told me this before, "Trust Christ and you shall be saved."

Testimony of Cardinal Lustiger, Archbishop of Paris: <https://bit.ly/39N9jAO>

"Jesus, I know you died for me, but I don't give a damn!"

It was the summer holidays in the City of Orleans, France, in 1939. and a small group of naughty boys ran through the streets, having fun. They decided to have fun with a parish

priest in a nearby Catholic Church. One of those boys was a Jew named Aaron Lustiger, who decided to confess some wild imaginary sins to the priest for fun. But the priest was

no fool and realised this young boy was up to mischief. As part of the Catholic ritual of confession, he gave the young boy a penance to say three times to a large crucifix,

Jesus, you died upon the cross for me, and I don't give a damn."

Now, being a Jew, Aaron had no problem and gladly walked up to the large crucifix, looked upon the face of the dead man hanging there, and shouted, "*Jesus, you died upon the cross for me, and I don't give a damn!"* He laughed at how easy it was and said again, a little softer, "*Jesus, you died upon the cross for me, and I don't give a damn!"* But as he spoke the words a third time, something happened. He said, "Jesus, you died upon the

cross for me, and I--" He stopped. He fell to his knees and looked up at the man who had

died for him upon the cross and looked at him. And he saw the nails that pierced the dead

man's hands and feet, the wound that bared his pierced side, the thorns that scarred his forehead. He saw a brave, good man, an innocent man who bled innocent blood. He saw

God in that man. A loving God. A faithful God who would do anything to bring his lost children home. And Aaron wept at the sight of such perfect, unadulterated love. A year later, Aaron was baptised into the Catholic Church. As an adult, he became a Catholic priest; and in 1983, after thirty years of faithfully serving God's people, he was made the Cardinal Archbishop of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. He died in 2007.

Gospel and Forgiveness

Outline:

Introduction — the two options available when others hurt you

1. The first option and its consequences of living a defeated life
2. The second option and its consequence of resurrected life
3. Holding the wrongdoer accountable
4. Gospel and Forgiveness of God

Introduction — the two options available when others hurt you

Consider this situation. Your friend takes your expensive mobile phone. But drops it, and it breaks. Maybe it was a pure accident, or he was irresponsible and careless. But what can you do? There are essentially two options.

(i) The first is to demand that he pay for the damages.

(ii) The second is refusing to let him pay anything. You bear the cost yourself.

Notice that in either option, someone must pay for the damage because the cost does not go away and vanish by saying sorry. **In this illustration, forgiveness means the second option—you pay the price for his misdeed.**

Now, most of the wrong done to us we cannot measure in terms of money. Someone may have robbed you of some happiness, reputation, opportunity or promotion. Or someone may have insulted, beat, abandoned you when you were young and vulnerable, interfered with your marriage, etc. You cannot put a price tag on such things, but we know it was unjust. When people seriously do wrong and badly hurt us, that sense of gross injustice does not go away when the other person says, 'I'm sorry.' Because someone has to pay, there are only two options.

1. The first option is to make the wrongdoer suffer for the damage they caused you. How do you do that? There are several ways:

(i) You can stop talking to them. You can ignore them in a meeting.

(ii) You can hurt them by calling them vicious names

(iii) You can spoil their reputation. You can slander them.

(iv) You can curse them. You can kill them. Kill their loved ones.

(v) Children lead terrible lives and blame their parents for neglecting them.

(vi) People lead terrible lives and blame God for abandoning them

If those wrongdoers suffer, you may feel satisfaction—like a payback for the suffering they caused you.

But there are some serious consequences with this first option:

- You may become more complicated and colder or become an angry person.
- You may wallow in self-pity and live a poor me life.
- You may develop attitudes against a complete set of people typical of the wrongdoer who hurt you. (e.g. if the wrongdoer were a rich/opposite sex/another race/person of authority — then you would have an attitude against rich folk/opposite sex/that race/ people of authority.
- You may hurt or blame others (parents, spouses, God). If unable and unwilling to take responsibility, you will be dysfunctional and manipulative.

Besides all the above, you become an agent of spreading evil.

- The wrongdoer and his friends and family often feel they ought to respond to your payback in kind.
- Cycles of reaction and retaliation can go on for generations.
- Complete sets of people retaliate — causing communal riots, racial hostility, etc.
- People did evil to you. Yes, but when you try to get payment through revenge, the evil does not disappear. Instead, it spreads, and it extends most tragically of all into you and your character.

In all cases, the consequences of the first option are a life of defeat — defeated by anger, resentment and hatred; it will adversely affect your mental and physical health. You have allowed the wrongdoer to affect you still.

2. The second option. You forgive. You bear the cost yourself — but eventually, you get the freedom to live a resurrected life of victory.

Forgiveness means refusing to make them pay for what they did — no revenge.

And you pay the cost of the damage done to you. How?

Every time you refrain/restrain yourself from lashing out at someone when you want to do so with all your heart, you suffer pure agony. You not only sustained the original loss of happiness, reputation and opportunity, but now you suffer again by letting go of the opportunity to inflict pain on them. (in our example, you pay for the mobile phone twice). You absorb the payback, taking the cost entirely on yourself instead of taking it out of the other person. It hurts terribly. It is dying to your desire to take justice into your own hands.

And nobody likes death. Yes, but without death, there is no resurrection.

Either live a defeated life of bitterness and anger with **option 1** or take option 2

of forgiveness—which is dying to your desire for revenge. But this option can free you to live a victorious, resurrected life. You don't have to envy others who appear to have excellent opportunities you did not have, a pleasant youth you never had, or a marriage you didn't have — all because of wrongdoers that came into your life. You don't have to envy all this because you can live a victorious and resurrected life.

Many people refuse to forgive and keep resentment in their hearts, so they reject the resurrected life. They live with hurt all their lives. And living like that shows in their character defects — and it affects their mental and physical health and their family.

The way out of this defeated life into resurrection life:

As a pastor, I have counselled many people about forgiveness, and here's what I found. Anger slowly subsides when they refuse to take revenge on the wrongdoer by refusing actual acts of revenge but also by refusing to entertain revenge, even in their thoughts. Because you are starving the fire of resentment and anger

from

any fuel, you're not allowing it to go on burning. So, your resentment level becomes

lower and lower, and resurrection life grows more and more. There is life in forgiveness. *We grant forgiveness at first by an act of will, by choice, even though we don't feel like forgiving. But eventually, the force of revenge will die away gradually. Finally, you get freedom; you get resurrection life.* Again, I repeat, forgiveness is an act of will, of choice, and as we will see later, God's grace is available for it. So, I say, "**Choose life**" (Deuteronomy 30:19) — it will bless you and your family.

Deuteronomy 30:19 This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against

*you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now **choose life** so that you and your children may live.*

Testimony of a young woman: Many years ago, I was counselling a 20-year-old girl whose father was an army officer. She felt he was overly strict and uncaring, etc. She was hurt and angry, and her life wasn't going anywhere. I spoke to her at length and then heard the Holy Spirit prompt me to tell her two words — "**Choose life**". She looked at me and said, "OK, pastor". At that moment, the Holy Spirit's power fell upon her, and she fell to the ground. The anger came out in loud moans, followed by gushing joyful tongues from her innermost being. She would have let her father defeat her forever if she didn't agree to choose life. By choosing to forgive her father, she had victory over injustice. She had life.

3. Holding the wrongdoer accountable: When I counsel forgiveness to those whom others have badly harmed, they often ask this question, 'Shouldn't we hold the wrongdoers accountable?' I respond, "Yes, but only if you truly forgive them".

There are many good reasons that we should want to confront wrongdoers.

- Wrongdoers have inflicted damage; as in the mobile phone example, it costs something to get a new one.
- We should confront wrongdoers — to wake them up to their actual character, so they can move towards repairing their relationships.
- We should confront wrongdoers to constrain them at least and protect others from being harmed by them in future.

But the essential thing when confronting the wrongdoer is to be careful of your heart to see if any anger or vengeance is lingering there. You may say, "I just want to hold them accountable", but your real motivation may be to see them hurt. Suppose you are not confronting them for their or society's sake but for your own sake to pay back. In that case, the chance of the wrongdoer ever coming to repentance is virtually nil. In such a case, you will overreach, seeking not justice but revenge, not their change but their pain. Your demands will be excessive, and your attitude will be abusive. They will rightly see the confrontation as intended to cause hurt. A cycle of retaliation will begin.

Only if you completely forgive the wrongdoer inside your heart will your confrontation be free from vengeance. Instead, you can relate with them with wisdom and grace. Only when you have lost the need to see the wrongdoer hurt will you have any chance of bringing about change, reconciliation and healing — in your and the wrongdoer's heart. Therefore, submit to the costly suffering of forgiveness, causing death to your pain, if you want to gain any resurrection.

Forgiveness doesn't mean you can trust the wrongdoers and allow them to manipulate you continuously. You don't have to trust the wrongdoer, even after completely forgiving him. Instead, it is the wrongdoer's responsibility to earn

your

trust. **Therefore, drawing boundaries is necessary to awaken wrongdoers to respond to earning your trust. We draw boundaries for their sake.**

Our Testimony: When my wife Melanie and I were new Christians, we zealously served a charismatic and anointed pastor whom God mightily used in ministry. But through a series of unfortunate misunderstandings, he hurt us deeply, and we were utterly devastated. Other Christians came to hear about it, and it was the talk of the town. Then, to our horror, we realised that the poison of vipers was

on the tip of our tongues to lash out and spoil his reputation. But we also realised that this would not honour God. And by God's grace, we kept quiet to ourselves, blessing him, speaking well of him, and acknowledging our immaturity when people asked us about the problem. It was like suffering twice when he hurt us, to begin with, and suffering again when we forgave and blessed him, even saying we were immature. It took several months for the fire of our resentment to extinguish. But the minister was godly. He acknowledged the path that we chose. When we eventually met him, he publicly honoured us. Above all, God publicly honoured us before other city church leaders.

4. Gospel and Forgiveness of God

Rom 5:8, 10 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us...10For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

Why did Jesus have to die? Couldn't God forgive us?' It is what many ask. But now we realise that no one "just forgives", especially if the evil is grave. **Forgiveness means bearing the cost instead of making the wrongdoer do it, so you can reach out in love to seek the wrongdoer's renewal and change.** Everyone who forgives great evil, experiences agony and goes through death— but also experiences resurrection freedom. **But it is what God did for us. God determined to forgive us rather than punish us for all the ways we have wronged Him and wronged one another, that He went to the cross in the person of Jesus Christ and died there. On the cross, we see God doing publicly and universally what every human being must do locally to forgive someone. But God did it on an infinitely greater scale. We would have broken billions of His laws in our lives, and He paid for the damages Himself.**

Human forgiveness works this way because God created us in His image. That is why it should not surprise us if we sense that the only way to triumph over evil is through the suffering of forgiveness. **God's passion to defeat evil justly and love His people (whom He created in His image) is infinitely greater than ours.** So, He went to the cross Himself.

- God's passion for defeating evil in a just manner drove Him to the cross to pay the damages for our breaking His laws. At the foot of the cross, I see the litter of the immense number of His laws that I broke, and He paid for it all. And I am humbled to see it. I feel like Paul, who said in 1 Tim 1:15 *Here is a*

trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.

• God's passion for loving us meant He went **gladly** to the cross because He loves us. His love is the only one that matters in your life, and He loves you immensely.

Jesus says, "*As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love (John 15:9).*" That should affirm and secure us in His love.

Forgiveness is always a form of costly suffering. We saw human forgiveness and its costs, and it's the same with God's forgiveness but on a cosmic scale. However, God's forgiveness is the ultimate basis and resource for us. Understanding God's love in Jesus Christ, who gave His life on the cross, enables Christians to live a sacrificial life in the face of intense persecution. They are even able to forgive their persecutors.

Jesus' death, burial and resurrection were for our freedom:

Romans 6:3-4 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Jesus broke the power of sin in everyone's lives on the cross because He loved us, even though we didn't deserve His love.

When He rose again, He rose to freedom and victory **for everyone who believes**. As believers, we undergo **baptism to identify by faith** with His death, burial and resurrection. The sacrament of Baptism is similar to our marriage choice to live a life of covenant love with our spouse. We cannot live out these choices by our effort but only by the resurrection power of our risen Lord. But for this, we continually look to the **cross to humble and affirm us simultaneously. Humble us because we have grievously sinned. Affirm us because God infinitely loves us, and** it motivates us to live the cross life by God's grace.

There is so much hurt even in the church because **the gospel hasn't penetrated our hearts**. And so, we don't see the resurrected life in the church as much as we should. But when it does, we will see Revival. Let it begin with you. Become an agent of Revival and let it spread throughout the world. It will happen because God promised in **Num 14:21 (KJV), But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD.**

Gospel and the Glory of God

Outline

1. Introduction.
2. What is the *Glory of God*, and what does it mean to glorify Him?
3. Meditating on the cross is how we grasp the glory of God.
4. Embracing the cross is the way we glorify God.

1. Introduction.

Jesus Christ, just before He died, gave intensive teaching to His disciples before He sent them out into the world. We find it in John 12:20-17:26. It's the most extended and substantial body of teaching from Jesus in the Bible—to equip His disciples before He goes to the cross.

In these chapters, you will find a recurrent theme — "**the glory of God**", occurring 25 times (as glory, glorify and glorified). The glory of God is the essential theme in the universe. All creation must glorify God through praise (Ps 148, 150). Since our first parents sinned in the Garden of Eden, humans turned away from God and did not glorify His Name. God swore that His glory would again fill all the earth, even as the waters covered the sea. God will send His Son for this work, and His zeal will accomplish it (Isa 9:7).

Num 14:21 But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD (KJV).

Hab 2:14 For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea (KJV)

Isa 9:7 Of the increase of his government and peace, there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.

Jesus came to die on the cross and rise again, give us a new heart and spirit and send us out to glorify God as a lifestyle.

1 Cor 10:31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

If His glory is essential to God, it must be important to us. Do you want to have meaning in your life? Do you hunger for profound personal change? The key to all those things is the glory of God.

2. What is the Glory of God, and what does it mean to glorify Him?

John 12:28 Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it and will glorify it again

God the Father says, "I have glorified my name, and I will glorify it again". According to the Bible, that is, in a nutshell, the history of the world. It is *"the chief thing Jesus Christ came to do —to glorify God and to make known His glory over all the earth"* (Tim Keller).

What is the glory of God? "It is who God is. It is the essence of His nature;

the

weight of His importance; the radiance of His splendour; the demonstration of His power; the atmosphere of His presence." (Rick Warren)

"The glory of God is the manifest beauty of his holiness. It is the going-public of his holiness." (John Piper)

The glory of God is the infinite, indescribable perfection and beauty of all His attributes. (unknown author)

What does it mean to glorify God? "You don't just see God as supremely important, but you see Him as beautiful, desirable, that He attracts you., If you obey God because you 'have to,' that's not grasping the glory of God as much as if you obey God because you want to." (Tim Keller).

(a) To glorify God means to make Him of supreme importance in your life.

The most used Hebrew word for glory in the Old Testament is "*kawbode*", which primarily means "*weight*"—like saying His words on everything must carry "*weight*". They should be really "*important*" to us.

For most of us, God is of some importance. *But when you understand the glory of God, it is to treat Him with supreme importance. It means His will, His work, and your relationship with Him are the essential things in your life.*

So let's break it down to a few questions:

- Is your relationship with God most important in your life? Is it non-negotiable? Would you do nothing to jeopardise or weaken it?
- Is God always central in the manner in which you work?
- Is God central in your entertainment (e.g. what you watch on TV)?
- Is He central in how you manage your time and money?

Suppose you answer yes to those questions or even pray, 'Oh, Lord, I sincerely want to glorify You'. In that case, you are moving towards glorifying God in your life. So, to glorify God means He's of supreme importance in your life.

(b) To glorify God means you obey Him not because you have to but because you want to.

The New Testament word **doxa** means praise and wonder, and beauty. In point (a), we see God as supremely important. In point (b), you must also see Him as beautiful and desirable, that He attracts you.

If you obey God because you have to, you're not giving Him your whole self; you're giving Him your will, but nothing more. Consider a marriage relationship. A husband could provide for his wife and children and can be genuinely interested in their well-being. There will be peace and harmony in his marriage — and that may be the secret goal of the husband. But if he does not do everything out of genuine love and rejoicing in his wife and children — that relationship lacks something vital. Unfortunately, many marriages start with true love but end up desiring peace.

Similarly, with God. You could start your journey with genuinely loving God but end up obeying Him out of duty. 'But then God's not beautiful to you. He's useful. He's not the goal; He's a means to that goal.

But now, we want to be attracted to the **beauty of His holiness every day of our life.**

*Ps 27:4 One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on **the beauty of the LORD***

and to seek him in his temple.

*2 Chron 20:21 And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise **the beauty of holiness**, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth for ever (KJV).*

Example of Eric Liddell (1902-45): The film "Chariots of Fire" was based on the life of the Scotsman Eric Liddell, the 400 meters gold medallist at the 1924 Olympics. Eric Liddell was also a Christian Missionary to China, where he served after the Olympics. He could return home when the Japanese were advancing in China in World War 2 but preferred to stay back to serve the Church Mission there. As the Japanese overran the area, they put Liddell with 2000 others in a camp with only 20 toilets. Food, medicines and other supplies became scarce.

With

such shortages, believers and unbelievers became selfish and pushed each other to survive. Langdon Gilkey was a survivor, but he said of Eric Liddell, "He was

overflowing with good humour and love for life and with enthusiasm and charm. It is rare indeed that a person has the good fortune to meet a saint, but he came as close to it as anyone I have ever known. Shortly before the camp ended, he was stricken with a brain tumour and died the same day. The entire camp, especially its youth, was stunned for days, so great was the vacuum that Eric's death had left." Eric was 43 when he died, and Scotland mourned for him.

Eric wrote a manual on discipleship which became a book after his death, "The Disciplines of the Christian Life". He said, *'If you grasp the glory of God, then you obey Him no matter what it costs, no matter how you feel, no matter what the consequences, and you do it gladly. Why? Because what else could be more important than pleasing Him? And what else could be more enjoyable than*

pleasing

Him? And until you can answer that nothing is more important and more enjoyable than pleasing Him, you haven't grasped the glory of God.'

Two questions arise—

- How can we grasp the Glory of God as Eric Liddell did? — see Point 3 below
- What practical ways can we glorify God in our lives? — See Point 4 below

3. Meditating on the cross is how we grasp the glory of God.

John 12:27-33 "Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. 28 Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." 29 The crowd that was there and heard it said it had

thundered;

others said an angel had spoken to him. 30 Jesus said, "This voice was for your

benefit, not mine. 31 Now is the time for judgment on this world; now, the prince of this world will be driven out. 32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will

draw all people to myself." 33 He said this to show the kind of death he was

going

to die.

John 12:27 In John's Gospel, whenever Jesus talks about His hour, He's always talking about the hour of His death. And in John 12:32-33, when He talks about being lifted, He refers to being lifted and put on the cross where His

death

occurs.

So He says in 12:27, "My soul is troubled", meaning that Jesus is fearful before His hour, before going to the cross. But then, in 12:33, Jesus says, glorify

Jesus Christ says '**my soul is troubled**'. It is John's version of what we see in the other gospels in the Garden in Gethsemane. The word trouble here means He's frightened and trembling before His death. But many men and women face death without shaking. Some even met death with singing. So, what would be so terrible that it would make Jesus frightened? Well, because He knows He will enter darkness on that Cross [Matt 27:45-46 *From noon until three in the afternoon, darkness came over all the land. 46 About three in the afternoon, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?")*]. Jesus, having taken our sins upon Himself, was now experiencing God's wrath and probably faced the fires of hell.

He has no hope, love, or God and will enter absolute darkness. On the cross, the judgment that all of humanity deserves, including each of us, fell on Him. He experienced that. When He said, "*And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself*" (John 12:32), Jesus was referring to being lifted on the cross.

How will He draw all people to Himself? Because there is no more extraordinary beauty than the most beautiful being in the universe giving up His beauty, being beaten to a pulp for us, to save and love us. There's no greater love than Jesus Christ, who had heaven's glory to come to earth and lose it all for us; losing His glory and beauty for us is the greatest love possible. **There's beauty in starry heavens, which makes us say, 'If God made them, He must be marvellous. But the cross shows you His glory, the glory of His justice. He is so just and righteous; He had to punish sin, but the cross also shows you the glory of His love.**

He was so loving and merciful that He was willing to pay that penalty Himself.' Hebrews 10:8-10 *First, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them"—though they were offered in accordance with the law. 9 Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. 10 And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

How, when and where was the power of God strong enough to defeat sin, Satan and death and rescue us? On the cross, He willingly took all our sins upon Himself and paid the price of our rebellion against God to uphold God's justice and love. Jesus, having fully paid for our sins, conquered death by rising from the grave to give a new heart and a new spirit to those who believe in Him (Ezk

27, 2 Cor 3:3). And He has all the power and love to help us as we trust in Him. That's the good news — **the gospel**.

And that's what He did out of love for humanity, for you and me. **And when you look and meditate on the cross, the beauty of God comes through to you, and you begin to see the full blaze of His glory.**

It's Biblical — you become what you consider most important, go after it, and worship it. Suppose you worship money (because it's essential to you, and you go after it). In that case, you will eventually turn greedy and corrupt. If you worship status, you will ultimately turn proud. If you worship idols, you will be like them (*Ps 115:4-8, 135:15-18*). But suppose you meditate on the Lord's glory that shone brightest on the cross. In that case, it will transform you into His image with ever-increasing glory.

2 Cor 3:18 And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

4. Embracing the cross is the way we glorify God.

Transformation to become like Jesus takes time; it is a process. God helps you in this process by allowing you to experience "**trouble**". It troubled Jesus when He faced death on the cross, but did He ask God to save Him? No! He said, Father, glorify Your Name (*John 12:27-28*).

John 12:27-28 "Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.

*28 Father,
glorify your name!"*

When your soul is troubled, often it is because something you made too important to you is being threatened. God is showing you that in your heart, there's something that you made more important to you than God Himself. It's an idol in your life. And it's an opportunity to rest more in who God is and His love

for you. But don't despair out of unbelief, and don't try to escape the trouble. Jesus didn't. Instead, He embraced the cross. He said, "Father, glorify Your Name". You can do the same—embrace the cross and say, "Father, I trust you

and
glorify Your Name."

(Of course, it doesn't mean to say you don't go to a doctor if you're sick or your family member is sick. By all means, do. But don't despair if there is no healing. Despair is a sure sign of unbelief in God).

2 Cor 4:16-17 Therefore, we do not lose heart. Though outwardly, we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 17For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

Reference: Sermon on Glory of God by Tim Keller