

A Brief Summary of your Salvation

Through [Adam] sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned (Romans 3:12).

These will go into everlasting punishment.... into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:46 & 41), which is the second death (Revelation 21:8).

God is the God of salvation; and to God the Lord belong the escapes from death (Psalm 68:20).

God will buy back my soul from the power of the grave (Psalm 49:15).

The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23).

[Christ] has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2nd Timothy 1:10).

The Word of this salvation has been sent to you (Acts 13:26).

Believe to the saving of the soul! (Hebrews 10:39.)

God... now commands all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30).

Repent, and believe in the gospel! (Mark 1:15.)

If we would confess our sins, [God] will be faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1st John 1:9).

[God has] given to us the greatest and precious promises (2nd Peter 1:4).

How will we escape if we would neglect so great a salvation? (Hebrews 2:3.)

[Strive] for the faith of the gospel! (Philippians 1:27.)

Your Faith

In what could and should you have faith?

You could and should have faith in God's promise of salvation.

How did God bring about his promise of salvation for you? He brought it about in this manner: after their fall into sin, as Adam and Eve were cowering in hiding from the divine anger which they had stirred up by their transgression; as they were shaking in terror over the eternal torment which they now faced, God had grace in his heart toward them. His intent was to rescue them. His motive was to hand over a gift of his grace, and to give them a righteousness which they lacked.

To accomplish this, the Second Person of the Trinity came down to earth, and took on a human body and the name of "Jesus." His title was "The Christ." Then he lived a holy life in the place of everyone and obtained righteousness for all. He also suffered everyone's eternal torment. By doing so he delivered every sinner from that punishment.

Looking back at what Christ had just accomplished, God then declared the whole ungodly race to be righteous, freed from everlasting punishment, and ready to enter heaven. When everyone was still ungodly (Romans 4:5), God decreed that he had forgiven the world on account of the eternal suffering which he had suffered on the altar of his cross for all.

Since the Lord has accomplished this for all, he has accomplished this for you. See it!

Yet how would this salvation do you any good? Remember: sinful man could not look into the mind of God and read his thoughts!

The answer is this: God gave his salvation by promise (Galatians 3:18).

First the Lord put his salvation into the form of news, the “good news of great joy” (Luke 2:10), which is “the gospel.” Then he framed this news into the form of a pledge (Acts 13:32).

However, this was not all. Since it is a pledge, the gospel is also an offer, or, to be more precise, a proffer. A “proffer” is a “proposal for acceptance by another.” It is a “proposal brought before you, brought to your attention for the purpose of presenting it to you with the intent that you should accept it.”

Why did your salvation-giving God put his gospel promise into the form of a proffer? It is because he intends for you to accept it. You will obtain his salvation by believing it. It is as simple as that.

Thus the God of promise (2nd Corinthians 1:20) wants you to be one of his “children of promise” (Romans 9:8), and to take part in “his promise in Christ through the gospel” (Ephesians 3:6) by having faith in that promise (Acts 13:32; Romans 10:16).

This belief is what the Bible calls “your faith.” Realize that the function of faith is to believe a promise! Since the function of your faith is to believe the gospel promise, your faith could and should be called “your saving faith” because your belief grabs onto the promise of salvation. In other words, you are saved because of the salvation which your faith has grasped.

What pledge, then, is worthy of full acceptance? It is the promise that “you, being dead in your trespasses, [God] has made alive... having forgiven you all trespasses” (Colossians 2:13).

What is it that will bring your faith to life?

The gospel pledge itself will create this faith in your soul. “Faith comes by the gospel report” (Romans 10:17). Thus the creation of faith in your mind is all of the gospel’s doing, none of yours. Therefore, the gospel is called “the Word of faith” (Romans 10:8) because it is that “Word of God which effectually works in you who believe” (1st

Thessalonians 2:13) to bring about your faith. Since God has “fathered us through his Word of truth” (James 1:18), you have become one of “the sons of God through faith” (Galatians 3:26). Thus your faith is created after God’s gospel pledge is brought to your attention.

How would your faith be kept alive? It will be kept alive in the same manner. After you would contemplate the gospel promise of God further, more life will be furnished to your faith.

Of what, then, would you need to do more? You will need to think more about the gospel pledge. Do so! Confess your faith in his pledge by declaring, “This pledge of salvation includes me. The Lord has promised”!

All That You have is a Promise

God has a promise.

...which he promised before through his prophets in the Holy Scripture (Romans 1:2).

God assures you that he is truthful about his promise.

All of the promises of God in [Christ] are “Yes!” and in him “Amen!” (2nd Corinthians 1:20.)

God will keep his promise.

He who promised is faithful (Hebrews 10:23).

God gave his promise already a long time ago.

By the mouth of his holy prophets, who have been since the world began, [God] spoke.... To perform the mercy promised to our fathers (Luke 1:70 & 72).

This promise is called “the gospel.”

... the gospel of God which he promised before through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures (Romans 1:1-2).

His promise is for the whole world.

[The gospel] by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all nations according to the commandment of the everlasting God (Romans 16:26).

It is an important promise.

[God] has given to us the greatest and precious promises (2nd Peter 1:4).

His gospel promise is about salvation.

... the gospel of your salvation (Ephesians 1:13).

His promise is meant for you.

The promise is to you and to your children (Acts 2:39).

God wants you to obtain his gospel promise of salvation.

To you the Word of this salvation has been sent (Acts 13:26).

The Lord wants you to obtain his gospel promise of salvation by believing it.

Repent, and believe in the gospel! (Mark 1:15.)

God's promise will alert you to what it is: salvation from God.

The holy Scriptures... are able to make you wise for salvation (2nd Timothy 3:15).

His pledge will hand over to you of what it consists - salvation.

You are clean through the Word which I have spoken to you (John 15:3).

The divine power of his promise will move you to believe it, and thus to possess it by an act of faith.

Faith comes by the gospel report (Romans 10:17).

After receiving God's gospel pledge and upon believing it, you will receive personal possession of your salvation.

I declare to you the gospel... by which also you are saved, if you would hold firmly the Word which I preached to you (1st Corinthians 15:1-2).

The gospel of God pledges that the work of Christ has obtained salvation for you.

God has not appointed us for [his] anger, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us (1st Thessalonians 5:9-10).

After Christ accomplished your salvation, he promised that he had done it.

After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished.... said, "It is accomplished!" (John 19:28 & 30.)

It is God's will that you could and should keep a grip on his gospel pledge of salvation by an act of faith.

Believe in the gospel! (Mark 1:15.)

Ten Questions and Answers

1. Are you happy?

Be of good cheer! Your sins are forgiven (Matthew 9:2).

2. "Who could say: "I have made my heart clean'?" (Proverbs 20:9.)

For out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, extramarital sex, thefts, false witnessing, [and] blasphemies (Matthew 15:19).

3. What must you do to be saved?

Repent, and believe in the gospel! (Mark 1:15.)

4. What is the gospel?

[It is the] good news of great joy which will be for all people (Luke 2:10); that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day (1st Corinthians 15:3-4).

5. Are you also forgiven?

God in Christ forgave you also (Ephesians 4:32).

6. Would you want to be assured of going to heaven?

[God] justifies the ungodly (Romans 4:5).

7. Would you want a closer walk with God?

Draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having [your] hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.... by the blood of Jesus! (Hebrews 10:22 & 19.)

8. Why was Christ Jesus crucified, dead, buried, and risen again?

It was done for you.

9. What is love?

*Love is sacrifice.
[Christ] appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself (Hebrews 9:26). By this we know love, because [Christ] laid down his life for us (1st John 3:16).*

10. Why do you have to suffer?

Whom the Lord loves he disciplines (Hebrews 12:6).

Law and Gospel

See the importance of the salvation of God in this comparison of the law and the gospel passages of the Bible!

The law passages will be given in italics and the gospel in the regular style.

Those who are in the flesh cannot please God (Romans 8:8).

Having made peace through the blood of his cross... [Christ] has now reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy, blameless, and irreproachable in his sight (Colossians 1:20-22).

I am carnal, sold under sin (Romans 7:14).

Our great God and Savior Jesus Christ... gave himself for us, in order that he might buy us back from every lawless deed (Titus 2:13-14). In him we have this buying back through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace (Ephesians 1:7).

You... were dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2; 1).

You, being dead in your trespasses... [God] has made alive together with [Christ], having forgiven you all trespasses (Colossians 2:13).

Who will deliver me from the body of this death? (Romans 7:24.)

Our Savior Jesus Christ... has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2nd Timothy 2:10).

Our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has grown up to the heavens (Ezra 9:6).

Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more (Romans 5:20).

By the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in [God's] sight (Romans 3:20).

God justifies the ungodly (Romans 4:5).

We will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ (Romans 14:10).

Jesus answered...."He who hears my Word and believes in him who sent me has everlasting life, and will not come into judgment" (John 5:19 & 24).

Consider the goodness... of God! (Romans 11:22.)

A Prayer for Assurance

Be sure your sin will find you out! (Numbers 32:23.)

You are clean through the Word which I have spoken to you (John 15:3).

Dear sustaining, strengthening, and supporting Spirit of God: Help me to look at your gospel passages, not only for the answer to the perplexing problems of life, but chiefly for your powerful assurance that my sins, as repeated and ruinous as you know them to be, have been pardoned, sent away, and drowned in the depths of the sea! What gracious kindness you have shown toward me! How could I ever find the words to express it? So hold before mine eyes the saving acts of Christ in which, as my substitute, he suffered my penalty for me, completely paying off to Divine Justice its demand for my punishment, in addition to fulfilling my place Heaven's requirement for a perfect life! Then, through the living power of your gospel pledge, enable me to build securely and solidly on this assurance from you that since you have now declared the whole ungodly race to be righteous and ready to enter heaven, this declaration would include me! Make me confident of this fact by turning mine eyes often toward this gospel! Have your gospel guaranty turn me from doubt and hesitation to boldness and determination! Increase my faith's power from the least to its fullest confidence! Evermore cement me on your purest pledge that you have proved your love for me in that while I was still a sinner, Christ died for me! What a glorious promise this is! What more could I ask? Therefore, lift me high above all doubt to the state of full certainty, in which I could and should confess, "I am confident of this gospel promise which you have given to me, and I am convinced completely that it is able to save me." Amen!

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[God has] given to us the greatest and precious promises (2nd Peter 1:4), to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins (Luke 1:77).

[You are able to be] participants of his promise in Christ through the gospel (Ephesians 3:6).

[Strive] for the faith of the gospel! (Philippians 1:27.)

Your Salvation is Your Lord's doing

God's intent -	to rescue
His motive -	to hand over a gift of his grace
His spirit -	mercy
His purpose -	to sacrifice
His cost -	his life
His object -	you
His benefit -	none
Your benefit -	all of the best
His resolve -	to get you to heaven
His responsibility -	it is all his doing, none of yours
His acts -	the saving acts of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit ¹
His proof -	the sacrifice of himself on the cross
His guaranty -	his resurrection

¹ The Father saw his plan through, the Son lived a holy life for the sinner and died the sinner's death in hell; and the Spirit puts this salvation into the sinner's possession.

His means - his gospel pledge
His mark - your baptism
His result - your life in heaven

The Nine and Five Theses.

Martin Luther wrote his *Ninety-five Theses* in 1517. These theses God used as a spark to set off the gigantic Reformation. Believe the same salvation which Luther did! Confess it today and get to heaven! Profess your own *Nine and Five Theses*!

Thesis 1

I need salvation because I have broken all of the commandments of the holy God. "If we would say that we have no sin, we will deceive ourselves" (1st John 1:8). Indeed, "there is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin" (Ecclesiastes 7:20).

Thesis 2

Because of this unwarranted evil, I deserve to die, for "the soul who sins will die" (Ezekiel 18:20). That is, I am cursed to be punished for all eternity by all of the fury of the enraged Almighty who threatens, "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire!" (Matthew 25:41.)

Thesis 3

Since in my natural, sinful condition I am dead spiritually ("dead in trespasses and sins," Ephesians 2:1), I am not only unable to save myself, I am also determined to remain in my sins, resisting any holy, divine effort to change my misery.

Thesis 4

Yet the Lord of all mercy announced already to my first ancestors, that is, to the very first sinners, his gracious decision to intervene so that I could inherit the kingdom of heaven.

Thesis 5

Against the constant conceited objections of my sinful flesh, the Lord did not ask me to contribute anything toward my salvation. In order that my salvation would not be ruined, he kept it out of my hands entirely, accomplishing it all by himself (John 19:28) perfectly and flawlessly in order that I could have absolute assurance that it most certainly has been completed.

Thesis 6

In order to meet God's demands for punishment on the one hand while sparing me from that same punishment on the other hand, the Second Person of the Trinity took my place. As my mighty substitute he wrapped himself in his power, took on my punishment in hell, and suffered it all the way through to its completion after he had first obeyed all of the commandments in my place to gain righteousness for me.

Thesis 7

In order to get this salvation to me so that I could possess it, God recounted all of the saving acts which the Father, the Son, and the Spirit had done for me, and then, he put them down in writing in the form of a promise which he intended me to believe so that I could possess my salvation. To this promise he gave the endearing name "the gospel," "the good news of great joy" (Luke 2:10).

Thesis 8

So that I would not hate the gospel promise and reject it, the gospel promise has an inherent and mighty power (Hebrews 4:12) to prevent this by accomplishing three results in me: 1) The gospel promise makes itself clearly known to my understanding (1st Thessalonians 2:13), thus overcoming my natural spiritual blindness to it (1st Corinthians 2:14 & 12); 2) The gospel promise gives me the very thing which it says that it is, namely, a pardon (2nd Thessalonians 2:10); and 3) The gospel promise moves my soul to reject this pardon no longer, but to obtain it and to possess it as my very own (1st Thessalonians 1:5) by the act of believing the gospel pledge (Romans 10:17).

Thesis 9

After the power of the gospel moves me to believe its pledge, I obtain pardon at once.

(After all of this has been done, the all-wise Lord knows that my most important need now is to fortify my faith in his pledge of pardon. To accomplish this he will do the following for me.)

Thesis 1

The Lord will proceed to assure me of my pardon by swearing oaths to that effect (Hebrews 6:17), and by giving me guaranties (2nd Timothy 2:19), in order that his gospel promise might be sure to me, that is, in order that my heart may be persuaded (1st John 3:19) to believe with certainty ((Acts 2:36) so as to cement me so firmly on the foundation of his pledge (2nd Timothy 2:19) that I could not be moved.

Thesis 2

Since the function of faith is to believe the gospel promise, my faith needs to be safeguarded. To do this the Lord will also comfort me through his pledges of pardon. That is to say, after my faith would have been weakened through sinning, as I would contemplate his promises, the power of those precious pledges will strengthen me. The gospel promise will strengthen my faith.

Thesis 3

Moreover, the loving Lord will fortify my faith by sending me suffering - of all things! He also will fortify my faith by driving me to prayer and by impelling me to confess my Christian beliefs. In all three of these exercises of my faith I will be divinely drawn to think on his promises. As a result, the power from his gospel pledges will increase my faith. Stated again: Whenever my faith in these pledges would be exercised, the might of the gospel promises will cause my grip on them to increase and to become more firm.

Thesis 4

The true and triune God also has provided me with the sacrament of baptism in which he will adopt me "into" his holy family whose name is "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19), and thus will further strengthen my saving hope through this gospel assurance that I will now live with him in his heavenly home.

Thesis 5

The Savior from sin has also spread before me a heavenly banquet for my faith which is called the "table of the Lord" (1st Corinthians 10:21). He gives me this sacrament for frequent use in order to reassure me of my complete forgiveness by giving me not only his gospel pledge to that effect, but also the very things which got me my forgiveness: his very body and blood. Thus my faith is further fortified.

A Prayer for Forgiveness

I will declare mine iniquity; I will be in anguish over my sin (Psalm 38:18).

There is forgiveness with you (Psalm 130:4).

Pardon mine iniquity for it is great! (Psalm 25:11.)

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I cannot find the words to express my thoughts adequately. My sins are great. I am ashamed to admit them. The guilt of them weighs heavily on my mind. My guilt has robbed me of joy and peace. I know my sins to be wrong. I also know that you are angry over them. I am sorry. I apologize to you for them. Hear me! I do not want to do them again. Help me! I need your help. Do not leave me! I need the comfort of your forgiveness.

You have pledged that you will look to that sinner whose spirit is sorry (Isaiah 66:2). That sinner is I. Come! Be merciful to me! Heal my soul of the trespasses against you! You also have promised that there is forgiveness with you. Give me that forgiveness! Do it now! Take my sins and cast them behind your back! Drown them in the depths of the sea! Cleanse me now and every day from all my transgressions through the holy blood of Christ! Make me confident of this! Keep me from returning to the harm of my crimes! Let me love to do your will!

How good you are to me! How wonderful you have been to give me your pledges of forgiveness! They are where your help is. Remind me of them! Lead me to them! I confess that I believe them.

Be my forgiving God and I will serve you! Show me how to show you my thanks! Amen!

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If we would confess our sins, he will be faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1st John 1:9).

Christ forgave you (Colossians 3:13).

Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you! (James 4:8.)

Keep (yourself) unspotted from the world! (James 1:27.)

The Synonyms of Forgiveness

It is due to the influence of the *Apostles' Creed* and to that distinctive phrase in it which its authors chose to sum up the salvation of God that most church writers for centuries now have commonly used the expression “the forgiveness of sins,” literally, “the sending away of sins” (Acts 13:38). Just the same, the Lord recognizes that his remarkable report of salvation is too wonderful an announcement to be limited to one term only. Therefore, the Lord, who is the creator of all human thought and expression, exhausts the limits of our language in order to paint for you such colorful portrayals of his salvation, which are rich in revelation, by employing vivid metaphors, striking scenes, and blazon images.

Listen to the almost four dozen different descriptions which the Lord uses to portray his salvation for you!

At length the assuring Almighty describes his salvation as –

1. Being gracious to you (Colossians 2:13);
2. Being merciful to you (Luke 1:78) to as great an extent as heaven is high above the earth (Psalm 103:11);

3. Sighing deeply in pity over your misery, and being moved to act ("to comfort" you, Isaiah 40:1);
4. Casting your sin behind his back (Isaiah 38:17);
5. Drowning your sin in the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19);
6. Separating your sin from you (2nd Samuel 12:13) by sending it away (as with a scapegoat, Leviticus 16:10);
7. Putting sin far off (Psalm 103:12), as far as the east is from the west;
8. Setting you free by the payment of a ransom, which ransom is the blood of Christ (Ephesians 1:7);
9. Freeing you from all your iniquities by paying a price (Psalm 130:8);
10. Freeing you from the power of the grave by paying a price (Hosea 13:14a);
11. Lifting sin up and away from you (Psalm 25:18) multiple times (Isaiah 55:7);
12. Loosening sin away (Luke 6:37);
13. Having your heart sprinkled with the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 10:22 & 19; 4:14; Leviticus 16:14-16);
14. Washing you thoroughly of iniquity (Psalm 51:2) in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 5:9), who is Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:5);
15. Cleansing you with hyssop (Psalm 51:7), a plant dipped in water used for sprinkling in a cleansing ceremony (Numbers 19:18);
16. Having your body washed with pure water (Hebrews 10:22; Numbers 19:19);
17. Blotting out sin, that is, wiping it up, absorbing it, or erasing it (Psalm 51:1) as greatly as a cloud could (Isaiah 44:22);
18. Covering your sin (Psalm 32:1);
19. No longer remembering your sin (Psalm 25:7);
20. Hiding his face from your sins (Psalm 51:9);
21. Making his face to shine upon you (Psalm 31:16);
22. Lifting up his face to you (Numbers 6:26);
23. Passing over your sin (Romans 3:25);
24. Changing sin's color from guilty red to innocent white (Isaiah 1:18);
25. Rescuing you from your sins (Matthew 1:21);
26. Delivering you from all your transgressions (Psalm 39:8);

27. Not retaining his anger against you (Micah 7:18);
28. Turning away from the fierceness of his anger (Psalm 85:3b);
29. Drawing his unrestrained wrath back to himself (Psalm 85:3a);
30. Having his anger turned away from you (Hosea 14:4);
31. Not causing his anger to fall on you (Jeremiah 3:12);
32. Causing his anger toward you to cease (Psalm 85:4);
33. Turning to you according to the multitude of his tender mercies (Psalm 69:16);
34. Being reconciled to you (2nd Corinthians 5:19);
35. Making peace through the blood of his cross (Colossians 1:20);
36. Having broken down the middle wall of partition [Matthew 27:51] between us (Ephesians 2:14);
37. Paying off your iniquity ("to pardon," Isaiah 40:2);
38. Not charging iniquity to your account (Psalm 32:2);
39. Erasing the handwriting in the decrees against you (Colossians 2:14) which indicted you with guilt;
40. Having nailed this erased handwriting to his cross (Colossians 2:14) as a public testimony that your sin debt has been paid in full;
41. Giving to you the Lord's righteousness (Jeremiah 33:16);
42. Declaring you to be righteous (Romans 4:5);
43. Bringing forth the declaration of righteousness (Isaiah 42:1);
44. Clothing you with the garments of salvation (Isaiah 63:10); and
45. Being a light to the peoples (Isaiah 51:4).

Realize that your loving Lord has expressed these synonyms of forgiveness, not for his sake, but for yours! He has designed them to rivet your attention to them in order to bring you into contact with their power. After that is accomplished, God's chief purpose is to use their great gospel might to convince you with absolute assurance that his salvation already has been accomplished for you decisively.

Believe it!

“Blessed are those who hear the Word of God, and keep it!” (Luke 11:28.)

Why must I suffer?

Whom the Lord loves he disciplines (Hebrews 12:6).

As many as I love, I scold and discipline (Revelation 3:19).

[You] must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22).

“My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways,” says the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9).

God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not discipline? (Hebrews 12:7.)

Though [God] would cause grief, yet he will have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he does not afflict willingly (Lamentations 3:32-33).

All things work together for good to those who love God (Romans 8:28).

We suffer with [Christ] that also we may be glorified together (Romans 8:17).

When I thought how to understand this, it was too painful for me until I went into the sanctuary of God. Then I understood (Psalm 73:16-17).

[Christ] has done all things well (Mark 7:37).

It is good for me that I have been afflicted! (Psalm 119:71.)

Why does God send Suffering?

First of all, the Almighty sends suffering to punish the unbelievers for their sins. "I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity," he threatens in Isaiah 13:11. In other words, God judges that these people have not yet paid sufficiently for their wickedness. Instead of waiting for Judgment Day, the Almighty has begun to punish them already in this life. Indeed, this ought to bring them to their knees in repentance. Moreover, the Lord, the ruler of heaven and earth, states that he is the one who will be sending the suffering. "If there would be calamity in a city, will not the Lord have done it?" (Amos 3:6.)

Secondly, the Lord testifies that he will be the one who will send suffering to those who believe his gospel promise. "Whom the Lord loves he disciplines" (Hebrews 12:6). Indeed, the apostle points out that "we must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). A "tribulation" is a "distress," a "trouble," or an "affliction." Are you a believer, or not? As a believer, all of your suffering, whether it would be of the body or of the soul, would come under the heading of "your cross." What a name! Why would God's unbreakable Word call it that? As condemned criminals long ago had to carry the very instrument on which they would be crucified to death through the main streets so that they could be humiliated before the general public, likewise God has laid a cross on you, so to speak, his believing and most loved child, which, at times, will cause you intense suffering and deep humiliation before the unbelieving public.

However, your cross is unexampled and exceptional. It is the extraordinary way which God has chosen to show you that he loves you (Revelation 3:19). See it! Believe it! It is the way in which the hidden God has decided to reveal himself to you in connection with his gospel pledges.

Why does God do this through a cross? He assures you of his reasons. First of all, as God has chosen to reveal himself to all through the cross of Christ, so he has chosen to reveal himself to you additionally through the cross which he lays on you (Proverbs 3:11-12).

Secondly, as God the Son suffered, so you, as his disciple, will likewise have to suffer. Yet the Lord encourages you with his remarkable guaranty that your sufferings are not yours alone, but you share in those sufferings which Christ also had. "You share in the sufferings of Christ" (1st Peter 4:13). "We suffer with him" (Romans 8:17). To be sure, because you have suffered with Christ, Holy Writ vows that you will also be glorified with him, which will cause you to rejoice with exceeding joy (1st Peter 4:13).

Thirdly, the Lord has sent suffering to you, his child, in order to put to shame the prideful thinking of your mind in matters of salvation. He does this to demonstrate that it is useless to look to your mind for help. To show you what great, saving power his bare promises have, the Lord decided to wed his helping promises to the one thing which your flesh despises the most: suffering. The very thing which your flesh believes could only hurt you is what God has intentionally chosen to work his miraculous power through to turn something unquestionably evil into something undeniably good. As God has wedded his promises to other outward signs, such as, to the rainbow, so he has wedded to your suffering his high comforting pledge that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen" (2nd Corinthians 4:17-18); that your cross is Heaven's way in which the power of Christ could rest on you to help (2nd Corinthians 12:9).

Look to God wherever his promises are! There is his help; even in your suffering.

Biblical Maxims

(Expressions of general biblical truths)

The cross of Christ is the only instruction in God's Words, the truest theology (*Luther*).

True theology and knowledge of God are found in Christ crucified (*Luther*).

The cross alone is our theology (*Luther*).

God makes himself known only through Christ's suffering.

Just the same, God makes himself known through the individual's suffering.

Suffering is the Christian's most precious earthly treasure, for God makes himself known through suffering (*Luther*).

Heaven is open to all through the reconciliation accomplished by the suffering Christ (*Franz Pieper*).

The sins of the world are forgiven (*Franz Pieper*).

Christians are not perfect. They are forgiven sinners.

When you would pray, as you would exercise your faith in God's promises, your faith will grow stronger.

When you would confess what you believe, as you would exercise your faith in God's pledges, your faith will grow stronger.

When you would perform humble self-sacrificing service for your neighbor, as you would exercise your faith in God's promised, great self-sacrifice for you, your faith will grow stronger.

When God would lay his humbling cross upon you, as you would exercise your faith by disregarding all of the sufferings which your senses could feel, but by regarding all of the Lord's pledges of his good will which you could not feel, your faith will grow stronger.

The Meaning of your Life

Your intent - to serve God

Your motive - an appreciation for God's salvation

- Your spirit - your Christians nature which has the mind of Christ (1st Corinthians 2:16)
- Your purpose - to bring praise to God and help to your needy neighbor
- Your objects - God and your neighbor

A Prayer for America

It is clear from the various passages in both the Old and in the New Testaments that it is the will of God that believers should also pray for their government and for the citizens of the land in which they live. With that in mind the Christian residing in America could and should pray for his country. Of what things could and should such a prayer be composed? See the following commands and promises of God! Then pray this prayer!

Come boldly to the throne of grace! (Hebrews 4:16.)

Lord, you have heard the desire of the humble (Psalm 10:17).

I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and for all who are in authority.... For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior (1st Timothy 2:1-3).

Seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it! (Jeremiah 29:7.)

I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity (Isaiah 13:11).

The Lord is a man of war (Exodus 15:3).

They chose new gods. Then there was war (Judges 5:8).

All nations that forget God will be turned into hell (Psalm 9:17).

The nation and the kingdom which will not serve you will perish, and those nations will be utterly ruined (Isaiah 60:12).

Stand in the gap before me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it! (Ezekiel 22:30.)

See the example of Abraham's prayer! (Genesis 18:23-32.)

Note the prayer of Daniel! (Daniel 9:3-27.)

Dear true and triune God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the true founder and preserver of my country:

Since I will stand on holy ground (Exodus 3:5) whenever I would come before you in prayer, as the high priest in the Old Testament (Hebrews 7:27), so I must first cleanse myself of mine own sins by repenting of them, and by believing your gospel pledge before I could bring the sins of my fellow Americans before you. Therefore, I humble myself, leaving behind my prideful heart and laying my selfish soul in the dust. According to your command (Ezekiel 22:30-31) and to your promise (Psalm 10:17), I now confess the grievous sins of my country, plead with you that they may be forgiven, and pray for the peace of this land from its deserving punishment. Where should I start? There is atheism in our colleges, unbelief in our high schools, and rejection of the Creator in the grade schools. The holy name of Christ is locked out of our public buildings with a vengeance. The American family is torn by turmoil, robbed of peace and love because its members have cast aside your commandments and gospel - the only remedies for home happiness. The American workplace reeks of profanity, gossip, and backbiting. Too many churches deny that Jesus Christ is God, and that his bible is God's own truth. Of these, and of so many other insulting sins, I confess to you, O most holy God. Though thousands cry, "God bless America!" how could you bless it when hundreds of millions of Americans reject what is required of them by you to bring down your blessing? Therefore I plead with you to forgive my countrymen of their sins, and not to punish this land from sea to shining sea as it so justly deserves. Hear my prayer! Spare this people! Save this land! Thank you

for all of your past mercies which you have poured down upon my country in mighty showers. May all of civilization note it, and compliment you until the end of time for making us such a highly favored nation! What patience, mercy, and help you have shown to us! Bless you for it! Amen!

If my people who are called by my name would humble themselves, and would pray and would seek my face, and would turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and will heal their land (2nd Chronicles 7:14).

The Meaning of your Life

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- Your purpose - to bring praise to God and help to your needy neighbor
- Your objects - God and your neighbor
- Your means - love and sacrifice
- The result - the accomplishment of the good works for which you were created (Ephesians 2:10)
- Your salvation - God's gospel pledge
- Your faith - to believe God's gospel pledge
- Your end - to live with your Creator in heaven

