

WHY HAS GOD SAVED US?

A Christian Guidebook



T. M. Moore

A ReVision Resource from The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe

Why Has God Saved Us?

Why Has God Saved Us?
A Christian Guidebook 9
A *ReVision* Resource from The Fellowship of Ailbe
Copyright 2024 T. M. and Susie Moore

Waxed Tablet Publications

Except as indicated, Scripture taken from the New King James Version. © Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Cover image Yahoo images.

Welcome to *Why Has God Saved Us?*

God does nothing with a reason. And, while His reasons may be mysterious to us, they're clear to Him and perfect in every way.

And that includes His reasons for having saved us.

The more we know about what God intends by having redeemed and saved us through Jesus Christ, the more we will appreciate our great salvation and will grow in love for the Lord. And the more we love Him, the more will know of our salvation and show it to the world.

Precisely according to God's plan.

In Part 9 of our series *A Christian Guidebook*, which concludes Book 1 of our *Guidebook*, we will those reasons for God having saved us which are most clear from Scripture and which can encourage us in our walk with and work for the Lord.

We're happy to provide this study at no charge. If you find these studies helpful, we hope you'll consider sending a gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, to help us in making these resources available to others.

May the Lord bless your study of His Word.

T. M. Moore
Principal

1 Everlasting Love

*The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying:
“Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love;
Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you. Jeremiah 31.3*

So many gifts!

Sinful and self-centered as we are, it is easy to lose sight of the many and unsurpassable gifts the Lord has granted us. We who are nothing, less than worms, even enemies of God (Rom. 5.10). Yet He has abounded toward us in so much unexplainable, unfathomable goodness! Consider the gifts of God to you and me:

- He sent Jesus for our salvation. His own beloved Son!
- He has put the very Name of Jesus upon us: We are Christians!
- He has sent His servants to bring the Good News of Jesus and His Kingdom to us. And we are saved!
- He has transferred and conveyed us into His own realm, where righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit obtain. We are citizens and ambassadors of a Kingdom not of this world!
- By His grace He has saved us, through the gift of faith.
- He has given us eternal life with Him in perfect and complete joy forever!
- He spreads daily before us such a great salvation to grow into, possess, and proclaim. And His Word to guide us in this salvation and His Spirit to teach and empower us!

And yet there is more!

These are, literally, unbelievable gifts. Yet we have them all, and we are encouraged to enjoy them all with such consistency and gusto that others will see the hope we have and want to know how they might have it, too.

All of which raises the question: Why? Why has God done this? He does not need us. We consistently disappoint His purposes for us. The existential gap between us is infinite. And yet we have these glorious and joyful gifts! Why?

Made for love

From what I can gather, the answer is love. God is love. We are made for love. To know love. Enjoy love. Share love. Seek love. Grow in love. And do all things in love. Being loved and loving: that's just who we as human beings are.

Well, were. For a while. God made us for love, especially to know His love and build a world upon it, and to return love to Him through grateful obedience and unceasing worship. But Adam and Eve wrecked that, precisely as God knew they would. For He had a greater plan for love than what they would ever have known or shared had they kept perfect obedience with God. We would never have known the eternal and everlasting love God showed in giving His Son for our salvation apart from our rebelling against God and His love from the beginning.

But now Jesus has renewed us in the love of God. Love is the hallmark of a Christian, the goal of all our instruction, the greatest of God's spiritual gifts (Jn. 13.35; 1 Tim. 1.5; 1 Cor. 13.4-13). We were made for love so that we could participate in God's love and know the joy that accompanies that experience.

We are made for love, and to the extent that we neither *know* love nor *give* love, we are acting in ways that are, frankly, less than human.

Why Has God Saved Us?

And what does that suggest about our society today?

Love everlasting

I would like to be able to explain the everlasting love of God, but I cannot. It is too vast, too unthinkable, too filled with improbabilities and unexpected blessings. I can try to describe it and encourage you to seek it; but we can only know this love by coming into true and personal contact with God Himself, by His Spirit, according to His Word, and through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

And yet I feel constrained to attempt some description of everlasting love. Love continuously reaches out, cares and seeks to improve, wants only what is good for the other person. This is how God regards us; it's how He wants us to regard one another.

God's love is everlasting. It has always been in operation. It reaches to everything in our lives—every aspect of our being and all our interests. God's love is present at every moment. It will be there tomorrow, and the next day, and forever.

The everlasting love of God draws us to Him. We want to be with Him, to know more of His love in every moment of our lives. We want to be the proof of God's love to others, to love them as God loves us, so that they will look to the Lord for the love only He can give.

Why did God save us? Because He is love, and He loved us with an everlasting love, the deep mysteries of which we will never fathom, but the reality of which we can know, delight in, and express every day. God made us *out of love* and *unto love*, and all for His glory and honor.

Search the Scriptures

1. Read 1 John 4.8. What does it mean to say that God is love? Do you experience Him as love? How?
2. Read 1 Corinthians 13.4-13. What makes love “the greatest” of God's gifts?
3. We think so little about loving others. Why is that? What are we thinking about instead of knowing and expressing the love of God?

Next steps—Preparation: How would you describe the state of love in your life at this time? Love toward God? Love toward others?

2 To Know the Things of God

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. 1 Corinthians 2.12

Precious things

I will let you in on a secret.

Few things give me more pleasure than for Susie to ask me to read her one of my poems.

I know, that probably sounds a little silly. But allow me to explain. God has given me a love of poetry—not all poetry, to be sure, but much. And He has given me a gift—if not, perhaps a calling—to try my hand at poetry, which I have done for many years now. Each poem I write requires a good bit of thinking, trying words, working within a set form, finding just the right meter, images, and points, and tying it all up nicely. It takes time. And when it's done—is a poem ever really “done”?—I take satisfaction and delight in what God has given me. My poetry-writing is a form of communion with God, learning His way of thinking, peering into the things that have been freely given to us with a view to seeing them as God does and proclaiming them in pleasing words (1 Cor. 2.13).

So, when Susie asks me to read a poem, I light up like Parliament on Guy Fawkes Night (to quote a line from an old Broadway song). I am tickled pink because I love her so much and I delight in my work and I rejoice in the thought that she might find some pleasure in what I've created.

I want her to know the things God has freely given to me in the way He has given them so that she may delight and find some small measure of joy in them as I do.

To the praise of the glory of God's grace.

And this is one reason God has saved us.

The things freely given

All who have come to the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ and are saved have “received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God”. Stop there. Freely given. We weren't seeking this. Indeed, at the time it came to us, we were enemies of the Lord (Rom. 5.10), wanted little or nothing to do with Him. But, in the fullness of His time for each of us, He sent His Spirit—the Holy Spirit of the eternal God!—into our heart, giving us a new heart and enabling us to cry out to God as Father (Ezek. 36.26, 27; Gal. 4.4-6). Now the Spirit of God, the Life-giver, the Encourager, He Who interprets God's Word to us, bears fruit in us, and distributes holy gifts among us—the Spirit of the living God is in us, having brought the gift of salvation and eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

He is the greatest of the gifts freely given to us. Salvation and eternal life are also in that gift-box. As well as understanding of God's Word, hunger for His truth, the desire to serve and please Him, know His will, grow in grace and the knowledge of Jesus, spread His grace to others, see and understand and marvel at and appreciate the majesty of His creation in all its forms and facets, and to continue living and knowing Him forever.

God has not only made a poem of the entire creation and all of spiritual life, but He knows there are great draughts of joy and enrichment and satisfaction for us as we “listen to” Him “read” that poem. God has freely given us a new life that allows us to see His world like one of those old disco balls, in which everything on its surface sparkles and reflects and refracts and cries “Glory to the Lord!” and beckons us into it for joy.

Why Has God Saved Us?

And even we are God's poems, as Paul says in Ephesians 2.10, where the Greek word for "workmanship" is *ποίημα*, *poiema*—poem. Perhaps this is why we find it pleasurable when others take an interest in us and want to get to know us better. They're asking us to "read" our "poem" to them. What fun! And God wants us to know, love, enjoy, and serve Him by all the things He has freely given to us and which He seeks to "read" to us day by day.

That we might know

Because all the things He has freely given to us are aids to knowing Him; and knowing Him and being in His Presence is where the greatest joy can be known. The more we ask God to read us one of His poems—speak to us from His Word, show us the majesty in a humble tree, open the wonder of creation, grant us greater appreciation of our work and calling, enfold us in some work of cultural beauty, deepen our love for others—the more He "reads" these to us, which He has given us out of His love, the more we find ourselves surrounded by and infused with His joy.

And while that joy is typically fleeting—and God has arranged that it must be so—it has the effect of reminding us that we are made for joy, that in the Presence of God is fullness of joy (Ps. 16.11), and joy is where our lives are ultimately headed forever. And thus in all the things He has freely given us, by the mind of Jesus which His Spirit teaches us to know (1 Cor. 2.16), we may live in the joy of the Lord as the defining framework, disposition, and motif of our lives.

Just as God intended when He saved us.

So today, ask God to "read" you one of His "poems"—that you might better understand and appreciate one of the things He has freely given us. Doing so may bring you into His delight, His joy, and His Presence in a new and wondrous way.

Search the Scriptures

1. Meditate on Psalm 16.11. Is this how you experience the Presence of God? When?
2. Read 1 Corinthians 2.12 and 13. What are we supposed to do with the things God has freely given us? How do you do that?
3. How would you counsel a new believer to begin using "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2.16)?

Next steps—Transformation: Make a mental inventory of the "poems" God has written for you. Choose one of them to meditate on as a gift from God, and to "listen" as He "reads" His joy and glory from that gift—whether a friend, a loved one, something from the creation, a work of art, or a meal.

3 The Mystery of the Kingdom

And He said to them, "To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, so that

Seeing they may see and not perceive,
And hearing they may hear and not understand;
Lest they should turn,
And their sins be forgiven them." Mark 4.11, 12

The things of God

God has saved us because He delights to delight us with the things He has freely given us. Those include a myriad of daily blessings as well as the new spiritual life and orientation we have in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

It pleases God to extend His delight to us so that we can enter it, know its great pleasure, and rejoice, because He has made us for joy and saved us for joy, and the things He freely gives to us are the various means whereby He transports us into His joy.

And of all the things God has freely given to us, surely one of the greatest is the mystery of the Kingdom of God.

Wait. How can that be? A mystery, by definition, is something difficult or impossible to explain, something secret or obscure, understanding of which continuously eludes us. How can we know this mystery of the Kingdom of God?

Because God has given it to us! And even more amazing, it's not merely that we have been given "to know" the mystery of the Kingdom. In Mark's version that phrase is not in the original language (it does occur in Matthew and Luke). What Jesus said is, "To you the mystery of the Kingdom of God has been given". The mystery of the Kingdom *has been given to us*; we have been conveyed into it (Col. 1.12, 13); we are *citizens* in that mystery and *ambassadors* of it; we may *seek more of it*; and we spread its effects to the world around.

We are beneficiaries, stewards, and executors of the Kingdom of God. And that's why God has saved us, that He may bless and employ us, and this great gift He has given to us, to spread more of His delight and joy to the world.

What's the mystery?

If we doubt that the Kingdom of God is a mystery, try this: Ask a fellow believer to explain the Kingdom of God. Through an uncomfortable few minutes of stammering and babble, a small gem of true understanding may emerge. But don't count on it. Most Christians have almost no understanding of the Kingdom of God, even though this mystery has been entrusted to them.

So the mystery of the Kingdom, although it has been given to all who believe—all who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ—remains a mystery even to most of them. This is not what God intends. It's no wonder many Christians today lack the power to grow in Christ and be consistent witnesses for Him and His Kingdom. The Kingdom of God *is* power (1 Cor. 4.20), but if we do not understand the mystery which has been given to us, that power will lie pent up and useless within us. And it's no mystery why there seems to be so little joy among Christians today—except for the pseudo-joy many experience during "worship" but which dries up shortly after that ends. The Kingdom of God *is* joy (Rom. 14.17, 18)! But if the mystery escapes us, or we are too uninterested in the mystery of the Kingdom to unwrap and stretch out into it, then it's no wonder we are no more joyful than we are.

Why Has God Saved Us?

The mystery of the Kingdom is among the many things God has freely given to us, and it is given unto us for power and for joy.

Beneficiaries, stewards, and executors

We who believe are beneficiaries of this great mystery. God wants us to realize the blessings and glory of the righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit which describe the character, context, and consequence of the Kingdom (Rom. 14.17, 18). He has given this mystery to us to enhance our experience of His glory.

We are also stewards of the Kingdom of God, given a gift and charge which we must faithfully seek more of if we are to know its fullest blessings. Do we truly understand the Kingdom? Of what it consists? What we are to do with it? What God intended in giving us this great gift? As stewards of the Kingdom, surely our first responsibility is to know this thing that has been freely given to us—what it is, what it is for, how it manifests, and what we must do with it.

For we are also executors of the Kingdom and of the joy God wants all people to know. Here there is work to do. The instructions for us as executors are simple: Plant this seed, water and fertilize it, protect and care for it, so that it will bear the fruit promised on the package. The fruit is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, as we have seen. That fruit is borne in our lives, the lives of those we cultivate for Kingdom living, and in everything to which we turn our hands.

The consequence of the fruit-bearing seed of the Kingdom is joy. Everyone wants joy. All the people in your Personal Mission Field would give just about anything for real joy. And you and I have it. We know the “secret” into the mystery of the Kingdom and its fruit of joy. Because we know Jesus. Jesus is the Good Seed of the Kingdom. He is also the faithful Sower of that Good Seed, working in us to bring forth the promises of the Gospel to those who do not know it and to help and encourage those who do to know more of it.

We have been given a great treasure—worth more than everything we own or ever could own. Enjoy it. Grow in your understanding of it. Seek, embody, and proclaim it daily. Do this, and you’ll know why God has given this great mystery to us.

Search the Scriptures

1. Meditate on Matthew 6.10 and 6.33. How do the charges given us here relate to our stewardship of the Kingdom?
2. Meditate on Acts 1.8 and 1 Corinthians 4.20. How do these relate to our being executors of the Kingdom?
3. Meditate on Romans 14.17, 18. How can you know when the mystery of the Kingdom is being manifested in your life?

Next steps—Conversation: Talk with a Christian friend or two about the Kingdom of God—what it is and why God has entrusted it to us.

4 A Holy Nation

“*And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.*” These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.” Exodus 19.6

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. 1 Peter 2.9, 10

No lone rangers

For many Christians today, salvation is treated like a purely individual matter: God saved me; isn't God great?

This notion is reflected in many of the praise songs we sing, in which the first-person personal pronoun features large: I, me, my, etc. We sing together about what Jesus has done for us as individuals, with very little sense of what we might have in common in the Lord or why that should matter.

Older hymns had a different view of salvation. The Church—and individual churches—are portrayed as faith soldiers on the march, a Kingdom of believers, a band of saints unified through space and time. That is, the older hymns expressed a unity of being and purpose for believers. We were saved *together*, and God saved us for a common *purpose* and endeavor. And even though churches long ago forsook any true visible sense of oneness or of a common body and vision, still, the idea persists in certain older hymns.

That idea seems almost lost in our day, shoved to the side by the celebration of an individualistic salvation.

But is this why God saved us?

A holy nation

Not according to God's own Word. His intention was not to deliver His people from being lost individuals to saved ones. Like Israel, making their way to and finally occupying the land of promise, God has saved us to be a nation. A Kingdom of priests and a holy nation. A royal priesthood, a holy nation, and as such, God's own special people.

People who are part of a nation share much in common. History, traditions, language, art and other forms of culture, national heroes and celebrations, and the bonhomie of shared citizenship. In this country—at least prior to the last couple of generations—Americans stood together proudly as “we the people” and found ways—despite our faults and differences—to live, work, play, and celebrate together.

The Church is a holy nation. That, at least, is why God has saved us. These days, except for a few common celebrations—such as Christmas and Easter—almost nothing identifies Christians and their churches as a nation, much less a *holy* nation. They tend to be more like the various German states prior to unification in the 19th century: Isolation, confrontation, competition, and posturing.

This is not what God intends. He has saved us to be one nation, spanning the globe, unimpeded by any boundaries of time, nationality, language, custom, or polity. One holy nation, identifiable by our common and exuberant proclamation of the Kingdom of God and the Kingship of Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. The Church of Jesus Christ has all the history, traditions, heroes, teaching, culture, and resources to identify us as one nation, under God, committed to holiness of word and deed.

That this world-spanning visible oneness of life, work, and celebration does not exist is a testimony to our failure to understand just why our God has saved us in the first place. That is, a testimony to our unbelief.

Why Has God Saved Us?

A kingdom of priests

God also intends us to be priests. Indeed, if there were something like a national character of the holy nation of the saved, or a common undertaking or language which marked us as citizens in this holy city, it would be priesthood. God saved us to serve Him in worship and praise and thanksgiving and offerings of our lives and all we possess to bring others with us into His Presence and under His rule.

We are not merely saved souls, bound for heaven when we die. We are priests of God, and as such we are called to a certain quality of life and a certain commonality of function. All believers are called to be holy, as God is holy—that is, to increase in Christlikeness day by day, that the perfect holiness of Jesus might increase in us and manifest itself in all the nooks, niches, crannies, relationships, roles, and responsibilities of everyday life.

And all that we do as a royal priesthood must be done—offered—as unto the Lord, for His honor and glory. No task, duty, or undertaking is outside the parameters of our priestly calling. Indeed, we must offer ourselves and all we have and are as living sacrifices to the Lord, that we may become the savor of Jesus to the world around. As the priests of ancient Israel constantly tended the holy fire in the Lord's house, so we must keep the fire of faith stoked and burning in our souls, encouraging and joining and learning from one another to read and study the Scriptures and seek the Lord in prayer.

And our priesthood should be conspicuous among the lost. The priests wore special garments. Let us put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh. Let us offer prayers for those in our Personal Mission Field, and let us invite their requests as the content of our offerings.

And let us depend entirely on the Lord for all our daily provision. We are His people. His holy people. His priests. It pleases God to save us to this nation and its priestly calling so that more people might be drawn in the Kingdom of God's dear Son, to know the things freely given to them by the Father, and to join us as one nation and Kingdom of holy, worshiping citizens.

Search the Scriptures

1. Meditate on 1 Peter 2:9, 10. How would you explain the idea of a holy nation of priests to a new believer?
2. In what ways are you conscious of being a citizen in this Kingdom? How do others discern that this is your national identity?
3. Meditate on Romans 14:17, 18. How should this verse inform or shape your daily walk with and work for the Lord?

Next steps—Preparation: Make a list of areas of your life that need to be better marked as pertaining to your being a royal priest of the Lord. Offer that list to the Lord in prayer, seeking from Him guidance in how to proceed.

5 To Restore the Reconciled World

Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. Genesis 1.31

Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation... 2 Corinthians 5.18

In the beginning

The world as we know it today is not what God intended in the beginning. As Neil Plantinga puts it in his book by this title, the world is “not the way it’s supposed to be.” So has God’s will been thwarted? Has His cosmic plan been undermined? Overthrown? Or has God decided that what He originally intended just isn’t going to work? Has God saved us merely to languish in a broken world?

Hardly. God does not change His mind. He sometimes adapts His approach to accomplishing His will, as we see in the various forms His covenant takes as it unfolds throughout Scripture. But His will and plan remain the same. God is sustaining the cosmos toward a great day of restoration, when all things will finally be made new, exactly as God intended, for His praise and glory, and unto the enormous and eternal blessing of His saints and other creatures.

For the time, however, the creation and everything in it groans and travails under foreign occupation. An enemy has invaded the field of the Lord, and he has sown seeds of waste, wickedness, and woe throughout. But the field is still the Lord’s, and His purposes for it will one day be realized. The world and all things in it have been reconciled to God by our Lord Jesus Christ. And He has given us the ministry of reconciliation, so that, as a Kingdom of priests, we might restore the world to the way it *is* supposed to be, if only in part, for the praise and glory of God, and the benefit of the world and its creatures.

In the beginning, God made everything in the vast cosmos *very good*. At that time, the world reflected the beauty, goodness, and truth of God throughout its vast extent. Creatures of all kinds abounded and flourished. A garden existed, which was both prototype and workshop for bringing greater completion and glory to the whole earth. Vast and precious resources existed to be discovered, harnessed, developed, and put to use increasing the goodness of God in all the earth. People were set to work in the garden, to extend its “very goodness” by managing and developing its resources and creatures, and bringing other humans into being to join in the work.

But those people were also assigned to *guard* their garden workshop (Gen. 2.15), and it was their failure in this aspect of their remit that plunged the world into its present “not the way it’s supposed to be” condition.

For the praise of God

Despite creation’s fallen condition, God intends that it should give Him praise and glory. This is clear from any number of psalms, especially Psalm 148.

If we had any doubts about God’s intentions for His creation, Psalm 148 should dispel those. Here God issues a blanket call to the cosmos to praise and glorify His Name. The galaxies of the heavens, angels and departed saints, sun, moon, stars, sea creatures, all kinds of weather, all sorts of topographies, trees, wild beasts, domesticated cattle, icky things and soaring things, fruits and seeds, princes and judges, men, women, and children, kings and peoples – all are commanded to give God praise and to exalt His glorious Name. This is the way it’s supposed to be, and God is determined that it shall be so.

The way things are supposed to be is that everything and everyone in the cosmos is to declare the excellencies and goodness of God. Sin has obscured the glory and goodness of God that is throughout the creation (Ps.

33.5). But, as we see in Psalm 148, this is not what God intends. Not from the beginning of the creation, and not now. It is the glory of God to conceal Himself and His praise in the things He has made; it is the glory of His servants to bring out that glory and praise, and thus to enable all of creation to fulfill its God-intended purpose (Prov. 25.2). Our earnest desires must be to see the goodness of God bursting forth in the land of the living (Ps. 27.13).

This requires the work of restoration, which we the people of God undertake in line with God's original design, and throughout all His creation. And God has given us His Kingdom and established us as priests, that our work might prosper in His grace and truth.

A Kingdom of praise and glory

David's prayer for his son, Solomon, envisions a day when that great work of restoration will proceed apace over all the earth (Ps. 72). Though his psalm has Solomon in view for the near term, it's clear the larger and longer vision is for the Kingdom Jesus would bring in His coming to the earth, a Kingdom in which those who have been reconciled to God will labor to restore the reconciled world.

Here we glimpse the Lord's plan for His Kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit—the very Kingdom Jesus has received and bestowed upon us, His people, that we should seek it as our highest priority in everything we do (Rom. 14.17, 18; Dan. 7.13, 14, 18; Matt. 6.33). The Kingdom of God, brought near by Jesus and bestowed in the Holy Spirit, is both the context and operative power for the work of restoration. And what David foresaw in Psalm 72 must guide us as we take up the ministry of reconciliation that has been given to us.

In David's vision of the world being restored, all of creation and its creatures and people give praise, honor, and glory to God. Righteousness abounds, together with justice and peace (vv. 1-4). The fear of God is over all the earth, and He daily refreshes all His creatures, that they might flourish and abound (vv. 5-7). The rule of King Jesus extends throughout the earth; His enemies are helpless before Him; and the nations bring their best gifts to lay at His feet (vv. 8-11). The poor, the needy, and the helpless are lifted by His grace; multitudes come to the salvation of the Lord (vv. 12-14). The works men do abound and prosper, and the Name of the Lord is honored in all nations, for the Lord Himself brings His work of reconciliation to increasing fulfillment (vv. 15-20).

The world needs restoration. God intends it. His Kingdom demands it. And we, His royal priesthood, are charged with this great and glorious work.

Search the Scriptures

1. Meditate on Genesis 3 and 4. What are some ways we can see that sin has marred the good creation of God?
2. Read Psalm 33.5. What are some ways you can see that the goodness of the Lord is in all the earth?
3. What does it mean to seek the Kingdom of God through the work of restoration?

Next Steps—Preparation: Pray about the day ahead, and all the opportunities for restoring God's good creation that lie ahead. Commit yourself to seeking His Kingdom in all you do.

6 To Make Him Known

*Your word is a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path.* Psalm 119:105

*The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament shows His handiwork.* Psalm 19:1

The God Who reveals Himself
“If God is *real*, then why doesn’t He *do* something? Something I can *see*?”

Ever heard that response to sharing the Good News of Jesus? This defense of wrong belief has been around for a long time. Those who employ it insist that if God really cared about our knowing Him, He would make it plain, you know, by healing a sick friend, or bringing bread and loaves to the hungry masses, or making my boss ease up on me a bit.

The implication, of course, is that, if God did something like that, then, well, I might consider Him.

This demand that God reveal Himself is not unreasonable. Indeed, it plays right into God’s wheelhouse. Scripture tells us that He has revealed Himself and continues to do so in three powerful ways. The Word of God is what we might call the *bright* light of divine revelation. Everything we can know about God, all the knowledge of Him we need to be saved and enjoy Him forever, is right there in Scripture.

But there is also a *secondary* light of divine revelation, and this comes through the things God has made, through creation. Trees, birds, stars, all the creatures of the woods, even our own divine-image-bearing friends and co-workers. Even many aspects of the culture we create—all these are revealing something about God.

Finally, Jesus Christ is the *focusing* light of divine revelation. He shows us what to look for in Scripture and creation—Him, in all His beauty, wisdom, power, love, faithfulness, kindness, patience, goodness, suffering, death, and resurrection. Him, exalted in glory, the Centerpiece of all Scripture and the end toward which all other knowledge is to be referred.

The problem, of course, is that most people are blind and deaf to the vast, full, rich, clear, and transforming revelation of God. In part because they *can’t* see or hear it, but mostly because they *won’t*.

And this is yet another reason why God has saved us.

Witnesses

We who have been saved are appointed to be witnesses for Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8). This is not an optional vocation. Every believer is called to it because God has saved us to make known the joy of knowing Him. In fulfilling this calling, we should make wide and thoughtful use of all the light of divine revelation, so that we can help others see through the fog of wrong-belief to the light of divine revelation in Jesus.

The world is not what wrong-believing people think. And the Scriptures are an impenetrable mystery to them because, like the Ethiopian in Acts 8:26-40, they haven’t a clue as to its meaning, even if they were reading it. Lost people need someone to interpret the revelation of God in Scripture and creation, to show how it all points to Jesus.

To that end, we interpret the Word of God and God’s world in the light of that Word (Ps. 36:9). For we can

Why Has God Saved Us?

only understand how creation speaks of God and His glory, and how it points us to Jesus, by looking to the Word of God in the Scriptures. There we learn how the many and wondrous works of God bear witness to Him all day long. The more we learn from God's Word about how creation praises and reveals Him, the better able we will be to explain His revelation to others.

But we're not content for people merely so experience some revelation of God from the things He has made. We want them to know Jesus. For that, we'll have to lead them to the Scriptures. The better we know the Scriptures and are daily immersed in them, the more we will see Jesus there and be made like Him. The more we are made like Him, the more we will see Him in all His works, and the more our hope will grow and be visible to others, some of whom may ask a reason for the hope that is within us. We must be ready when any such opportunity arises (1 Pet. 3.15).

Getting ready

God is always doing something. We must prepare to help others see and hear both what God is doing and what He has done through our Lord Jesus Christ. For He has appointed us as docents of His glory, that those to whom He sends us may realize His grace and turn in gratitude to Him (2 Cor. 4.15).

God has saved us to be agents of His grace, helping others gain insight and understanding of Him through the various avenues of revelation by which He is making Himself known. Our desire is to see the grace of God break through their wrong belief and bring them to faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Then, like us, they will know the joy of His Presence, the wonder of His revelation, and the beauty, goodness, and truth by which He guides and keeps us day by day.

We must make ourselves ready to bear such witness. We are part of God's plan to reach others with His grace, so that many might experience His grace and know all the reasons He has saved us for Himself. We must learn the ways of Jesus and increase in living in that path. But we also must prepare ourselves with a word of witness, to explain from anywhere in Scripture what God has done for us in Jesus Christ and how we may come to know Him. And it will help our witness overall if we begin to pay more attention to the revelation of God in creation so that we can, like docents in a fabulous art museum, point out the praises of God in all the things He has made.

The better we prepare to fulfill our calling as witnesses, the more consistent and effective we will be in this work that God has appointed to us. And the more we discover just how gracious and kind God is to have chosen us for this vocation, the readier we will be to step into His work of making Himself and His glory known throughout the world. Immerse yourself in His Word! Learn to know Him from His works in creation! Then you will fulfill your calling to be His witness in all you say and do.

Search the Scriptures

1. Meditate on 2 Timothy 3.15-17? Why has God given us the Scriptures? How many of those purposes are you realizing in your own life?
2. Read Psalms 111 and 148. What is our role in bringing out the praises of God in the things He has made? Why must we do this?
3. What do we mean by thinking of ourselves as witnesses and docents?

Next steps—Transformation: Begin journaling as you read the Bible concerning how Jesus is revealed in each passage. In the same journal, record observations of the glory of God in creation.

7 For His Own Glory

For the earth will be filled

*With the knowledge of the glory of the LORD,
As the waters cover the sea. Habakkuk 2.14*

The reasonable glory of God

To say that God has saved us for His own glory can sound a little, well, self-serving. We look at people who are always trying to get glory for themselves in one way or another, and an old Carly Simon song cues up in our brain: “You’re so vain...” And vanity, that’s not a good thing, as we all know.

But for God to seek glory for Himself is nothing like this. For God to seek His own glory is like water in a clear mountain stream, seeking the ocean. Or our lungs hungering for fresh air. Or leaves delighting to bask in the sunshine. It’s what they’re made for, what they do, and how they flourish and bless the world.

For God to seek His own glory thus is the *most* natural—well, not really *natural*, since nothing about God is merely natural—and the most *reasonable* thing of all. God being God, it makes sense that He should be glorified, and that His being glorified should have beneficial effects for those who experience that glory. For when God is glorified, glory breaks out, like the sun in full radiance, and blessings and benefits abound, healing and wellbeing begin, unspeakable joy and rejoicing pervade whatever is in glory’s reach, and those who know that glory and experience the reality of it want one thing only, that God would be even *more* glorified than at present.

God has saved us for His own glory, with which He bathes and fills and rejoices all who know, love, and serve Him.

When God glorifies Himself, everything and everyone within the immediate reach of that glory realize—if only briefly—the mystery and wonder and purpose of their own existence. Put another way, when God is glorified, “A splendid time is guaranteed for all” (Lennon/McCartney).

Consider the apostles.

Delightfully terrified

When Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James, and John, “His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light” (Matt. 17.2), “exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them” (Mk. 9.3). The apostles—Peter speaking for them all—found so much joy in the experience of Christ’s glory that they wanted to build some lean-tos and camp out for a while (Matt. 1.4). That is, they were so positively affected by their experience that all they wished to do was prolong it.

At the same time, as the glory of Jesus was magnified and enlarged by the bright cloud and the voice coming out of it—the voice of God the Father (v. 5)—the disciples “fell on their faces and were greatly afraid” (v. 6).

But they didn’t make any attempt to leave the Presence of God’s glory. Instead, they were comforted in their fear and doubtless rebolstered in their joy when Jesus “touched them and said, ‘Arise, and do not be afraid’” (v. 7).

This was as much of the glory of Jesus Christ as anyone had seen to that moment. We can be sure that Jesus’ purpose was realized in thus glorifying Himself, and His glory blessed the apostles and so affected them that they were renewed in their own purpose of following Him. Peter, recalling that situation years later, insisted that the ministry of the Word of God was a measure of that glory, entrusted to them as the means whereby others might know His glory as well (2 Pet. 1.16-19).

Why Has God Saved Us?

When God is glorified, while the supernatural and unbearable “weight” of it might seem to crush us, we are actually filled with holy joy, confirmed in our calling, and fortified to serve the Lord in all we do (1 Cor. 10.31).

Seeking God’s glory

In the spring of my senior year in high school, bored and pining for the last day of class, I and a friend decided on a risky adventure. Right across the river, the Gateway Arch in St. Louis was nearing completion. Outwardly, it was finished—630 feet of gleaming stainless steel which, in the glow of the moon and riverfront lights, glistened as if it were alive. The landscaping around the Arch not yet begun, and it had been raining for a few days, so the ground was muddy and nigh-about impassable. But we had decided to go and touch this wonder, just to be able to say we had. Arriving at the site, we broke through the “Keep Out” barriers (this was 1967, when I was still a lawless wrong-believer) and, on hands and feet, climbed the slight incline and achieved the base.

I stood at the south leg, my back to the river, and pressed my muddied body against the Arch, spreading my hands as wide as they would reach, and looking up to the top. Suddenly, I was transfixed. It was like an out-of-body experience. I could not stop looking up, even though my heart was pounding as it had never done before. It was as if I was glued to the thing; its glory would not let me go, and I was strangely OK with that. For in those moments, I was experiencing such affections as I had never known before, affections of transcendence, smallness, wonder, joy, fear, and hope.

If a man-made sculpture can produce such effects on one who did not know the Lord, how much more can God in His glory, speaking out of His Word or receiving us into His Presence or filling us with His Spirit or stretching out within us or allowing us to see Him with the eye of the heart in His exalted glory or tasting of His glory in the sacrament—how much more, in any of these situations, will wretches such as we not be glad for God to glorify Himself? And which of us will not, in the grip of His glory, renew our resolve to live for His glory as those He has saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ?

God has saved us so that He might glorify Himself. And if you understand this as God intends, you will desire nothing more.

Search the Scriptures

1. In 2 Corinthians 4.17 Paul uses the idea of “weight” to describe God’s glory. Why is that an appropriate metaphor?
2. In that same chapter, verse 6, Paul says that we may know the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. What does he mean by that? How do you experience that glory?
3. How does Paul instruct us concerning the glory of God in 1 Corinthians 10.31? Why should we want this to be the guiding objective for everything we do all day long?

Next steps—Transformation: Where do you expect to experience the glory of the Lord today? How do you expect to glorify Him?

Why Has God Saved Us?

For reflection or discussion

1. What does it mean to say that God glorifies Himself? How have you experienced this?
2. How does God glorify Himself through those He has saved? What does it mean to say that we are a holy people?
3. Why should we want God to be glorified? How is He glorified when we proclaim the Gospel?
4. How does God glorify Jesus to us? In us? Through us?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from this study? How are you putting that lesson to work in your life?

For prayer:

Why Has God Saved Us?

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at www.ailbe.org to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship to help us extend our ministry and resources to others. You can contribute to our ministry by using the donate button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, P. O. Box 8213, Essex, VT 05451.

Thank you.