

Grounding your Disciple in Gospel Realities (Part 2)

By Jay Wegter

Six “access points” whereby the gospel feeds and builds up the souls of believers:

- 1.) *The Gospel is the VOICE of Christ’s love to His sheep*
- 2.) *The Gospel is the VERDICT of God’s justice at the cross*
- 3.) *The Gospel is the VALUE of justification by faith through grace*
- 4.) ***The Gospel is the VIEW of God’s glory in the face of Christ***
- 5.) *The Gospel is the VANTAGE point whereby we see the kingdom*
- 6.) *The Gospel is the VICTORY won by Christ at Calvary*

IV. The Gospel is the VIEW of God’s glory in the face of Christ

KNOW YOUR GLORIOUS CALLING IN CHRIST. *To receive the good news of the gospel is not merely the acceptance of the historical facts of Jesus’ life.* To become saved is to have ‘seen’ the glory of God in the face of Christ so as to trust Christ with one’s whole being (2 Cor 4:4-6). It is to behold by faith the divine identity of Christ, the *Good Shepherd*. A saved person has Christ revealed to him as the Lord of Glory, the Jehovah of the O.T.—for no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Spirit’ (1 Cor 12:3). Even the Apostle Peter could not say “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” apart from the revelation of the Father (Mt 16:16-17). Paul’s own testimony extolled God as the One who ‘revealed Christ in me’ (Gal 1:16).

Salvation restores our ability to behold the glory of God and to be captivated by His majesty. We are all familiar with the verse, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). But, what often goes unnoticed in this verse is the fact that by our sin we have forfeited not only our ability to reflect God’s glory, but also our capacity to desire and to behold God’s glory by faith in His Word. God’s power through the gospel restores to His people the spiritual sight of God’s glory.

The new birth gives God’s glory back to us; the sight of which was lost by the fall. Thus, regeneration is a miracle both of revelation and restoration. By the Spirit’s regenerating work, we are given a revelation of Christ—seeing who He really is; seeing the glory of God in Christ (2 Cor 4:4-6). Jonathan Edwards, in his work on the infinite merit of Christ opens up aspects of the glory of Christ to our understanding. Edwards notes that the glory of Christ is not only our Savior’s majestic divine Person, His glory is also the ‘*equipment*’ He earned by His obedience to the Father in order to save to the uttermost’.¹ Christ’s mission in His incarnation, atonement, resurrection, ascension and exaltation, was to *earn* that equipment. And, because of His obedience in accomplishing redemption, God highly exalted Him above every name (Acts 2:36; Phil 2:5-11).

The author of Hebrews unfolds our Savior’s mediatorial glory: “The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, ‘You are a priest forever’ so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant. The former priests, on the other hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore, He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the

heavens” (Heb 7:21-26).

When God grants the new birth to an elect sinner, that person receives a new faculty of perception. This new faculty is known as “the eyes of the heart,”—it is given to believers in order that they might perceive the glory of their Lord and the riches He has purchased for them. “*I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints*” (Eph 1:18). The *eyes of the heart* allow us to comprehend spiritual realities so as to be rocked and staggered by them. “For to us God revealed *them* through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the *thoughts* of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the *thoughts* of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God [by His grace], which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*” (1 Cor 2:10-13, 15-16).

While we were spiritually dead we could not see the Lord’s glory and beauty. We did not love His glory or live for His glory—we had no passion for His glory—no sentiment for His purpose to extend His glory. Therefore, as adversaries of God, we worshipped and served the creature and the creation (we were infatuated by the world’s promises). Our hearts were not temples of God, but were idol factories (a veritable ‘zoo of lusts’ *Calvin*), producing coveting of every kind as the Apostle Paul says in **Romans 7:8**. We gladly let our flesh set the standard for our behavior. ***But, now, through the miracle of the new birth, believers have become the ‘unveiled ones’ able to behold the glory of the Lord.*** Our new identity is that of an ‘unveiled one’, and our new vocation is to behold His glory (**2 Cor 3:18**). “But whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away” (**2 Cor 3:16**). God’s glory is the outshining of His perfections made manifest in Christ, and revealed in the wonderful plan of redemption. God’s majesty and excellence are put on display in our redemption (**Rom 3:24-26**). Beholding the glory of the Lord is now the vocation of the church that we might proclaim His excellencies—excellencies revealed by His accomplishment of our redemption (**1 Pet 2:9-10**).

‘Look and live’ (Jn 3:14-15) is not a bare spiritual principle or law, for to behold the glory of the Lord is to be ravished by the sight of His glory. The reason why is stunning—to understand the vastness and supremacy and dignity of the Person who gave His life for us is to be thrilled at His majesty. ‘My Savior is the Lord of the cosmos!’ Thus, at the moment of regeneration, the sinner not only meets his Savior for the first time, but he also meets his Creator for the first time.

In Speaking of the Spirit’s power in the effectual call, Thomas Boston states that the Spirit of truth, in testifying of Jesus (**Jn 15:26**) imparts a knowledge of Christ in His transcendent glory and excellency in the free promise of the gospel. In so doing the Spirit reveals the parties of the covenant (*the Father giving Christ for the sinner*), and He thereby works saving faith in the individual.ⁱⁱ How marvelous this revelation of Christ is, for by the Spirit’s power He begets faith by the word of grace. At that moment, the glory of Christ bursts upon the understanding, flooding the soul with light. It is a revelation granted by the Spirit, namely that the Father has given Christ crucified as a gift for the salvation of the lost sinners of mankind, thus to look upon Christ as the very purpose of God in giving Him is to be accepted by God (Thomas Boston).ⁱⁱⁱ

The saints will never tire of beholding the glory of their divine Substitute. For in their Savior they see the Father’s heart of love. God the Father lavished grace on believers for His Name’s sake

(Eph 1:7-8). The dignity of our suffering Substitute is beyond our comprehension; He formed the cosmos, it belongs to Him, He will reign forever with His people ruling with Him. To regularly take delight in God's glory in the face of Christ is to be 'calibrated' afresh to Who He is. The activity of beholding the glory of the Lord has a rectifying effect—it cures our lukewarm-ness, double-mindedness, and spiritual sloth. Beholding the glory of the Lord is an important dimension of communing with the Holy Trinity. Consider that by His saving work, Christ fulfilled God's plan to reveal the divine perfections by means of the redemption of sinners. Let this sink in and it will blast you out of the doldrums and 'blahs.' It will fill you with passion for the glory of the Lord. For in Christ, God's glory and our eternal good are eternally joined and accomplished together (**Eph 2:6-7**).

Someday soon, the saints will behold the glory of God in the face of Christ unmediated, face to face (1 Cor 13:12). The believer is a beholder now by faith in God's revealed Word, but then we will behold His glory in His very presence. Christians are being prepared now for this Kingdom purpose of *beholding, worshipping, and serving*. Every genuine believer is already finding endless delight in these three activities. *Christ in you* is 'the hope of glory' of His coming Kingdom (**Col 1:27**), as we will see in our next 'access point'.

V. The Gospel is the VANTAGE point whereby we see the Kingdom

KNOW THE TREASURE OF YOUR KINGDOM DESTINY IN CHRIST. The gospel plants the longing for Christ's Kingdom into our hearts. Only through the gospel can we 'scale Mt. Nebo' enabling us to see the promised land—in other words, the gospel provides a vantage point lofty enough to see the grandeur, wealth, and scope of the Kingdom of God. When His Kingdom comes, the Lord's Prayer will be fully answered: "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (**Mt 6:10**). The glory of the Lord's kingdom will fill the universe someday; there is more here than we can possibly imagine. With Christ as their 'Head' a newly formed humanity will have been fashioned for life in the Father's house in a restored planetary paradise (**Jn 14:2-3; 2 Pet 3:10-138; Rev 21:1-7**). Kingdom life will answer our hunger for an immutable, 'forever' family of perfect love, dignity, and belonging—we will be eternally satisfied.^{iv}

We saw under '*view of glory*' that believers are transformed into Christ's likeness by beholding the glory of the Lord. In a very similar manner meditating on the gospel of the Kingdom instills in us a 'Kingdom consciousness' which deepens our hope of glory. The gospel feeds our Kingdom awareness, causing us to be controlled by an eagerness to see the Lord face to face, and to live with Him, and to finally be free of personal sin (**1 Cor 13:12-13; Rom 8:23-25; Titus 2:13; 1 Jn 2:28**).

Kingdom consciousness is a kind of 'lens' through which the believer sees all of life now. When the Lord saves a man or woman, He brings that person into His story—into His 'Kingdom plot'. Consider what the Lord says in the book of Hebrews of those who have this Kingdom hope: "For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed, if they had been thinking of that *country* from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better *country*, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them" (**Heb 11:14-16; 12:25-29**).

By contrast, those who love this present world are warned that they will pass away with it (**1 Jn 2:15-17**). Consequently, the rejection of mankind's created purpose to live as the image of God means that the rebellious individual has never seen the infinite value of the Kingdom of God (**Mt**

13:44-46). Those who love the world will lose their treasure, their glory, and their souls (**Mt 13:49-50**). The rulers of this world and their wisdom are passing away (**1Cor 2:6-8**).

The cruelty of the devil's lie is evinced in the enslaving service rendered by the natural man—for those who refuse to serve their Creator serve Satan by default (**Jn 8:38-47; 2 Cor 4:3-4; 1 Jn 5:18-19; Eph 2:1-3**). By blessed contrast, the child of God has undergone a 'kingdom transfer'—he has been moved from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light (**Col 1:13-14**). This change in kingdoms is a change in masters and service. As a child of the King, the Christian is willing to suffer with Christ his King (**Rom 8:18-23**). The believer is willing to suffer for the sake of inheriting the Kingdom of God (**Acts 5:39-42; 14:22; 2 Thess 1:5; 2 Tim 3:12**).

As citizens of heaven, the redeemed are able even now to perceive the infinite value of the Kingdom (treasure in a field, priceless pearl—Matthew 13:44-46). Jesus described this perception of the preciousness of the Kingdom in a most unusual manner: “. . . violent men seize it by force” (**Mt 11:12**). In other words, once a person sees the infinite worth of the King and His Kingdom—that man or woman will venture any cost in order to have it! As Jesus said, 'they are forcing their way into it'. They are making whatever sacrifices necessary to have it. How opposite this is from what the world values, for the natural man (unregenerate man) is lethargic and complacent about eternal issues.

Kingdom hope is more than the promise of future comfort and joy. Kingdom hope sanctifies those who possess that hope. “Whoever has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself just as He is pure” (**1 Jn 3:2**). Hope is part of our spiritual armor, allowing us to see the world for what it is—a mirage of stimuli that cannot offer a crumb of nutrition to our hungry souls, or a speck of substantive hope (**1 Thess 5:8; Rom 13:12**).

Kingdom consciousness is an essential habit of godliness—it helps drive our victory because it reminds us that we are locked in a combat to the death in a battle between temporal and eternal values. When Christ came to earth He did not find a single acre of real estate completely devoted to the knowledge and glory of God. The coming Kingdom of God will change all of that. “[Someday] the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (**Is 11:9**). The Lord's prayer will be answered someday, “His kingdom will come and His will is going to be done on earth as in heaven. God's great inheritance gift to His people is the Kingdom (**Dan 7:18, 22, 27**).

“And do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and do not keep worrying. For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things. But seek His Kingdom, and these things will be added to you. Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the Kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (**Lu 12:29-34**).

No other king ever gave His life blood to make friends and subjects of His former enemies. No other king gave His life for His bride that she might be at His side in love forever. No other king owns and rules the entire cosmos. Through the work of Christ, the saints are permitted to 'handle' and possess this infinite treasure by faith through His grace. Kingdom hope means living under the rule of our King now. That is the gospel of the Kingdom which Christ continually preached (**Mt 4:19, 23 7:21**). For, Christ is forming His own character in His people that they might be prepared to rule and reign with Him (**Rev 2:26-29**). In our final *access point*, we will explore how Christ's victory at

Calvary is applied to His people that they might increasingly live as *overcomers*, having been made like Christ, their Head.

VI. The Gospel is the VICTORY won by Christ at Calvary

KNOW THE VICTORY CHRIST HAS WON FOR HIS PEOPLE. Because of Christ's substitutionary death for all who would ever believe, sin's dominion is broken for God's people. "Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin" (**Rom 6:6-7**). Christ came to destroy the works of the devil (**1 Jn 3:8**). Christ as Creator and Ruler of all did not need personal victory over sin and the world. He came to earth to be the prototypical overcomer for the sake of His bride. He gained the victory over sin, death, and hell in order to give that victory to His church.

Everything Christ endured from His birth to His ascension was for His people. His vicarious life had one great aim for His people—to give them life, righteousness, sonship, pardon, holiness, adoption, and victory—all out of His infinite stores of grace (**Rom 6:23**). He gave His life to make the believer an overcomer in both position and practice. His conquest over the enemies of our souls was not merely an example to follow—His conquest and victory is the believer's possession by sovereign decree, "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD" (**1 Cor 1:30-31**).

Now, by faith and obedience, we participate in His conquest of our souls' enemies. We enter into His victory by faith and obedience resulting in the conquest of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Victory was gained decisively by Christ, our mighty Champion, but, we are to daily appropriate that victory through faith, love, and obedience. In Colossians chapter 3 we see four aspects of appropriating Christ's victory over sin. **1)** We are to practice occupying our minds upon things above where Christ is; for believers are united to Him, and our lives are hidden in Him (**Col 3:1-4**). **2)** We are to reckon ourselves dead to sin (Christ's death was my death to sin). And, as those dead to sin we are to mortify the lusts generated by our old natures (**Col 3:5ff.**). **3)** We are to put off the behaviors of the 'old man'—casting them off like a dirty garment, refusing to give them expression through our persons (**Col 3:8-9**). **4)** We are to put on the behaviors of the new man. These 'garments of grace' are to characterize all of our relationships. Sin and lust are not merely conquered by abstaining from their practice, there must be replaced with godly behaviors (**Col 3:10-4:6**).

Thus, the only possible way we can live for God is to 'die with Christ'. This co-crucifixion is exactly what happened—the sin natures of all who would ever believe were judged in the crushing of the body and soul of our Savior 2000 years ago. Our co-crucifixion with Him was to this end; so that we would 'no longer live for self, but for Him who died and rose on our behalf' (**2 Cor 5:14-15**). By reckoning these truths (spiritual realities) by faith, the reality of 'co-crucifixion' is worked into our daily walk so that victory over sin becomes inseparable from our Christian experience.

The victory Christ won is the rightful property of His church. He overcame in order to give that victory to His church. But it is not a victory that is enjoyed passively. The saint is commanded to enter into Christ's victory by feeding the mind upon gospel realities. We are commanded to *reckon, to count, to consider* ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (by means of His cross).

Romans chapter six describes the appropriation of Christ's victory: "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God" (**Rom 6:11-13**). True believers are overcomers in Christ, and overcoming is how they are to live.

All that Christ has accomplished at the cross is ours by virtue of being in union with Him. When the Spirit placed us *in Christ*, all of the benefits of Christ's 'cross-work' became our possession—'deeded' to us in the new covenant. But this is a 'positional truth' that is not immediately experiential. You may wake up tomorrow morning and not 'feel' dead to sin. In fact, if you allow yourself to be gripped by fear, anger, resentment, or lust, you may 'feel' very alive to sin! Paul's point is that true believers are to reckon themselves *dead to sin* regardless of how they feel. This reckoning is not an attempt to make something fictional into something real. It is an appropriation of Christ's victory by faith. The Lord accomplished a mighty conquest of our souls' enemies. Our part is to believe it and act upon it—what Christ accomplished is bedrock reality for His people. That is how we participate in victory that Christ has purchased for us.

We must be convinced (by counting God's promises about us in Christ as fact) that through Christ's substitution on our behalf, we are dead to sin. We must reckon ourselves dead to sin before we can fight sin successfully. **Romans 13:14** has a wonderfully relational way of saying the same thing in terms of reckoning oneself dead to sin by virtue of His atoning death. "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to *its* lusts." The gospel order is, reckon yourselves dead to sin, then say 'no' to sin's overtures. Christ has killed the sin that defiled and enslaved us, separated us from God, and brought judgment upon us. Therefore, we are to '**take to the morgue**' the sin that Christ has slain. Put sin to death by starving it—by refusing to let it have expression through your body and spirit.

Victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil is not an option, it is the condition necessary to finish the race. The citizens of heaven are said to be overcomers. "He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part *will be* in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (**Rev 21:7**). Those who live obediently by faith in Christ are overcomers (**1 Jn 5:4-5**).

The victory joined to overcoming is set up in stark contrast to those who are overcome by the world instead. Scripture refers to them as 'cowardly and unbelieving' and not heirs of eternal life. What a cause for sober reflection! Those who do not overcome; but instead are overcome by sin and the world, will not enter heaven (**Rev 21:8; 2 Pet 2:18-22**). One cannot have his sin and heaven too. We must constantly keep in mind that Christ is our 'sphere' of life. Co-crucifixion with Christ is the 'staging area' from which the practical work of mortifying sin takes place. I reckon who I am, and what I am in Christ—a child of God who is dead to sin—THEN from that gospel fact, or perspective of co-crucifixion, I make my forays against temptation and indwelling sin.

Defining myself as crucified with Christ (a positional truth) is an act of obedient faith. At the moment of salvation, the Holy Spirit set me apart in Christ as belonging to God. *Set apart to Him* is an accomplished fact that allows me to live the rest of my earthly life as God's own possession (**Heb**

10:10, 14). The more I trust in this fact that I am set apart from sin unto God as His child devoted to Him, the more I will understand why Christ does not want to share my heart with idols (**Eph 3:14-17**).

CONCLUSION: *We have seen that feeding upon Christ as He is displayed and offered in the gospel is the spiritual discipline of the godly.* Our part in preaching the gospel to ourselves is to view these treasures by faith and then meditate on them until we are able to explain their wealth to our own souls. We should always be matching His all-sufficient Savior-hood with our sinner-ship—always dwelling upon how His redeeming work is a perfect fit for our ruin by sin (**Heb 7:25-27**).

Preaching the gospel to self is to grow in our knowledge of the Lord. To deal with the wealth of the gospel is to deal directly with Christ's Person. For the benefits He has won for us are not 'commodities' that have an existence apart from Him. Our wealth is *in Him*—we are sons *in Him*; overcomers *through Him*, heirs *in Him*. As we meditate upon our union with Christ, all that is ours through Him tends to put our Savior into more clear focus. Our hearts are drawn out in love and adoration to Him—our affection deepened, our loyalty to Him becomes more stable and firm.

We must always remember that Christ's work in His atonement was a purchase—not only a purchase of eternal life, but also a purchase of ourselves as well. To have received God's free gift of redemption is also to have become God's own possession. It is to be owned by the Lord as His cherished possession (**1 Cor 6:19-20**). It is to be Christ's 'slave' who is ruled by His Word. The Lord has an absolute right to control all aspects of the life of His child. What follows then for the rest of our lives (in time and eternity) is *giving our selves back to God* in overflowing gratitude (**Rom 6:12-23**).

Grace is commonly defined by professing Christians as boundless kindness, but not as absolute obligation. Paul, in **Titus 2:11-14**, corrects this misnomer by declaring that grace instructs us in holiness. Grace fits us and motivates us to live our entire lives as set apart to God's calling—to present ourselves back to God without reservation as our daily privilege (**Rom 6:11-13**). In this life, you will never outgrow your need for the gospel. The word of grace provides the foundation, the formation, and the motivation for loving obedience to Christ—which is the reason He called us to Himself. "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace [the gospel], which is able to build *you* up and to give *you* the inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (**Acts 20:32**).

Preaching the gospel to ourselves is the key to thinking spiritually, it is the chief spiritual habit which the Lord utilizes to form Christ in us and grow us to maturity. It is essential we do all from grace-driven motives. When we are gospel-centered, it is normal for us to experience fruitfulness and as well as victory over the world and its idolatrous offers. Only the gospel proclaims that a sinner may be right with the God of the universe by faith (**Phil 3:10**). Exploring all that God is toward us in Christ is a gold mine we cannot exhaust. There is no greater glory and honor than to know God (**Jer 9:23-24**) and to be the beloved bride of the One who owns and rules the cosmos. For He gave His blood to make us His own (**Eph 5:25-27**).

End Notes:

ⁱ Craig Biehl, *The Infinite Merit of Christ; The Glory of Christ's Obedience in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards*.

ⁱⁱ Thomas Boston, *The Beauties of Boston*, p. 572.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid*, pp. 566, 574.

^{iv} Greg Koukl, *The Story of Reality*, pp. 165-171.