

A THEOLOGICAL
MEMOIR:

WRITINGS FROM AND TO GOD



A compilation of memories,
teachings, poetry, and
prayers

BY
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Brian Drummond

[electronic edition]

Dear Christian family, friends, and curious neighbors:

I am here reaching out to share with you some of my writings in an effort to serve God and you. The title I have given this little book "Writings: from and to God" ... is just what it says: From God because He is the source of all Creation.

To God for His proclamation, honor, and praise.

I believe the Lord offers Himself that we might share in the life He desires us to live. God communicates this by His Word through His presence and His people. This is an offer of relationship wherein He intimates continually more and more who He is to bring us into conformity with His likeness. He reveals Himself without force that we may know Him, come to love Him, and care for His creation.

Within these pages, I would like to share what the Lord has intimated to me from my personal walk, thought life, prayers, and study. On the following pages, I have organized them by sharing a bit of my story. I also focus on Scripture. There are also writings penned along the way in my walk with the Lord. Hopefully, in reading these pages, there will be a good measure of benefit given to you.

I have sought to express myself through a seven-fold pattern divided into three parts:

The Given-Life: ¹Family, ²Identity, ³Blessed with Weakness

The Redeemed-Life: ⁴Mercy, ⁵Grace-Embraced

The Promised-Life: ⁶Character, ⁷Promised Rest

For some who read on, you may gain some insight. For most, I figure good reminders always help. Overall, my intention is edification and encouragement. I hope sharing with you will serve you well.

Yours in Christ,

Brian

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THE GIVEN-LIFE

I was given life.

That was easy enough to figure out, I know, but then the question arose in my mind: “What does it mean to be alive?”

I did the same thing as most do to sort that out. I explored in my younger years. I had fun, got happy, got mad, got hurt, got angry, and felt sad. I knew desire, had some fullness, and repeated the whole bit over and over.

Then one day the notion crossed my mind (as I figure it does for most everyone):
“Is there more to life than this?”
“There must be more to life.”

I figure the notion comes in one of the above two ways for all of us. One is pessimistic and the other is optimistic. “There must be more to life” (the latter) was the one that crossed my mind. Then, having a little thought experiment, a question occurred to me: “Why isn’t God down here with us?”

Let me share some thoughts about that question so it is a little more clear. I was around eight years old. I had a hard time understanding why God would create such a beautiful world and not be here among us enjoying His creation. That didn’t make sense to me. Instead, if indeed He existed, He remained strikingly separate from us.

I believe the Holy Spirit nudged me that He (GOD) existed. He impressed upon me that God was dealing with our mistakes and our sins in the midst of our relationships. I thought of the love of others. People in my family came to mind as well as people from church. These were kind people who cared and were caring for me.

I also thought about behaviors on my part that I knew were wrong and yet God was still there present and providing. It seemed to me God was somehow present and informing me of all of this. For Him to be here with us in fullness wasn’t best... at least not yet. This left a strong impression on me in God’s favor.

I figured that if God existed (and I believed He did), then He must be doing what was best, and I just needed to live and learn. Some day later, God would be here with us. There was a little more to it, but that sums it up.

The question developed and lingered as to how God could or would convey His glory to finite, sinful people. How much of His nature did He want us to know? How would God bring about His intent for the world? All related questions.

I leaned towards belief in God. He continued to construct a cognitive framework in my mind. Slowly, He filled each compartment with knowledge of Him. Though in retrospect, I of course didn't understand God's mysterious ways.

Intuitively I always assumed God wanted to share Himself (His glory) with us. I didn't know that to be a fact, but I believed it enough to stay open to the idea. The majestic revelation in nature also pointed me in God's direction. Still, I knew there was a disconnect that something that transcends was lacking.

I now know the disconnect was the consequence of the Fall in me (Genesis 3). The nudging silence of God I felt, even then, was God's way of communicating without forcing Himself on me. The Bible says God has placed eternity in our hearts (Ecclesiastes 3:11), so we know this intuitively... that is probably what I am trying to state.

"Eternity in our hearts" is probably what draws our attention to our lack of moral completeness. I sure understood there was a disconnect between me and what transcends rooted in my very bones. For me, it seemed next to impossible for God to make us like Him. I say, "next to impossible" because I figured God could do anything.

God had a means and could make a path. A simple thought in my mind.

Therefore, with simple faith, I presumed, "God could do it." I opened my heart with understanding. It would take some time for me to really understand life. I knew it would take some living. I guess you could say I committed myself to the process of being given life in a fallen world. My heart opened enough that God could communicate to me just as any responsible parent does to a child. God, I assumed, was best at that sort of love.

THE GIVEN-LIFE: FAMILY

I began as most do by exploring life within a family. I understand that for some families this isn't a topic of choice. I must admit it is not a topic that stirs up good memories for me, but there are some. There was a lot of neglect and brokenness in my family. Such as addiction, pain, emotional discomfort, and loss. Yet there was also forgiveness, patience, and pizza every Friday until I was about eleven. When came divorce, which meant no pizza together as a family.

There remained family support though not so much family unity.

Our human context of family is essential. God created the family to represent Him in the terrestrial domain. Turns out, that the family created and given life in the Paradise of God, the first family, decided to neglect God's instruction just like mine. They didn't listen to His command. This brought disharmony in their relationships and frustrated their God-given responsibilities. The life that followed for the human family resulted in more self-seeking and less God-reflecting.

Our context is seen in the Bible's Eden family story. I am pointing to the story in the Bible about humans losing access to the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were punished to live out lives under the fear of death in exile from the Garden of Eden.

In the first family, an inhabitant of Heaven (not an immediate human family member, but family nonetheless) rebelled from Father God's intent. This is the eventually-cursed serpent in the story. He became the source authority of life leading to death. Understand that at first, Heaven and Earth were unified and humans were morally innocent. The rebel turned away from God's plan. The rebel set a pattern we have all followed in our ignorance.

Adam and Eve continued to support each other after they sinned in Eden, but their unity became stressed with God and with one another. We can read such things in God's words about the consequences that would come to their relationship. God says to Eve, "Your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you" (Genesis 3:16). Apparently, the tension would stress the relationship. The oneness or unity in the family had been crippled, but note we still read about interaction with God. Adam and Eve were cast out of Eden, but the relationship with God was not dead. He gave them a reason to carry on and have faith in Him for redemption. Support remained from God, even though unity was clearly no longer as He intended.

Fast-forward in the family story, we read (Genesis 4:4) that Abel pleased God. By this, we have confirmation that God was still in a relationship with the family! They did not

have access to the Garden of Eden, but did have a seed of redemption promised, but it had not yet been manifest. Yet Cain, we learn, amplified the family issues after not receiving praise for his offering to God. He kills his brother Abel in jealous anger (Genesis 4:8). God, because Cain murdered Abel, casts him from His presence even further east of the Garden, east of Eden in Nod, which means wandering (Genesis 4:16). Still, where there is exile, hope can remain.

The family in Eden's story is really our story. I know our families are without a beginning in Paradise, but all families start with the potential of having God's intervention to thrive. Unfortunately, just like the first family sent to live outside Eden's Garden so we are all on Earth split from Heaven within a brittle family order.

We all feel the ripple effect of the fall in the Garden of Eden, even if we don't understand what happened. Therefore, we are more vulnerable to the pattern towards destruction introduced by our ancient progenitors. Not accepting (listening) to our source authority (God) is the core pattern. The reality is we start with what we are given. When choosing our own way, we end up further and further east of God. Always. This is not ideal for us. Yet, we are here with a fighting chance because God's life-giving nature never changes.

THE GIVEN-LIFE: IDENTITY

When it comes to my story, I will simply share a few snippets for context's sake rather than go into a deeply personal tale. The details may differ from your own narrative, but I hope sharing will provide something with which you can identify. If you find no points of similarity, please bear with me as I am really leading to something.

I always longed for structure. I thrived in structure. The problem was that I did not have much and did not trust folks outside my broken family. Sound familiar? Also, I am a bit of a loner. I was held back in kindergarten for not being socially ready for the 1st grade... whatever that means. I admit I am passive, but I remember protesting the decision and my mother backed it. For the next school year, I was given a compromise: half-day in kindergarten and half-day in 1st grade, which meant one-and-a-half years of kindergarten. I felt penalized for being me.

I was trying to stay out of the way and not be an emotional drain on anyone. My family life fostered this behavior as did my personality type. Yes, in the first grade. Anyway, things went awful. The teacher rejected my entrance into her class midday. That was, of course, extremely awkward for me in socially integrating with my peers. I felt unwelcomed as a genuine participant in the class. Things didn't work out.

Then came the 2nd grade. As the school year began, the teacher wrote a word on the chalkboard and began explaining some spelling rules. I instantly knew something wasn't connecting for me. After that, my mother fought for me and sought out some help outside my public school. Turns out I was dyslexic and to cut this facet of my tale short... I struggled with reading and primarily writing from then on.

Within that year of school, educators at my school informed my mother that I would never really be able to function well in society. They told her by the 6th grade I would drop out of school and likely be on drugs. There wasn't much they could do for me. They were preparing my mother for what they saw as inevitable.

They were right about things getting worse. By the 6th grade, things were wrong, but not for the reasons they had predicted. That year my family got divorced. Also that year, I became very sick and was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. Needless to say, things were overwhelming. They were very incorrect about my level of societal functionality, but because of the inferior support, I developed an overly independent disposition. Many of us do in such environments. Understand, I bring this out because I find it common, among others. When people don't know how to help, they apply a label or stereotype (as if that helps). I am not saying diagnosing issues is negative, but merely labeling someone is unsupportive.

I had a great aunt who was labeled mentally retarded. I know people hate that term, but I use it here because that is what I am told they called her. They did so out loud for everyone to hear. She died before I was born. I know this to be true about her because the story came down to me that she couldn't read or write. Other than that, she was functional. In her day, her label meant she was never taught. What is the point of teaching someone who can't learn... right? I am obviously being sarcastic.

The fact is, I don't know the extent of her issues, but from what I was told, it sounds like she dealt with dyslexia or something similar. In her social setting, that meant she lived with her family, never married, and carried a label that I shall not repeat. That label designated little potential.

My point is that at a young age, people can and will label you and set your life course if you let them. It can happen and when you are young if people don't want to help you... you don't get help. Those unhelpful folks are the ones who want you out of their way.

They may see an issue you have and likely due to lack of know-how say, maybe in words but more with their action, "you can't be helped" rather than "I will do what I can."

This is why family is such a foundation for fostering trust and identity. Family should draw you in for your benefit more than their own. Without the family foundation, your potential can be thwarted (at minimum) or you can live a lie (at worst). This means your identity and your role in the family unit, the community, and the world is not in line with what God intended.

I personally chose the “go it alone the best I can” path, which is the path I think most people start to follow in similar situations. For me, control issues arose from worry over dealing with my weaknesses. This led me to not asking for help. I sought to overcome weaknesses, so I wouldn’t be a burden on others, be burned by them, or need to trust them. This is a formula for depression because life doesn’t work in accordance to our fears.

As a kid, my weaknesses were always dominant in my thoughts. I now understand this is a two-fold issue. First, I lacked the support needed for proper development, which leads to improper self-reliance and self-dependence. Second, the absence of appropriate relationships lead to neglect and wrong sin choices which poison the soul. Without good relationships, we hurt others and hurt ourselves and can’t correctly (or may never) heal.

We all have this twofold issue to some degree.

Where a relationship lacks, we tend to hold tighter to self-reliance. Bad relationships (poor support) always leads to sin in some form. Sin leaves its mark and fuels lousy thinking. There is a natural resistance to self-denial because we long for the fullness of life here and now. Then instead of embracing proper relational patterns, we live in the lie. After sin marks us, it is hard to break free of the thought... “I am damaged goods.”

I remember my sister asking about a decorative plate on the wall of our home. It was a picture of Jesus as a shepherd knocking at the door of a house. My mother explained it was a favorite of hers and something about “Jesus is our shepherd, and He knocks on the door of our hearts, and if we let Him in, He will care for us His sheep.” I remember thinking “that maybe so, but if I am one of His sheep, I am a black sheep among white ones.” I didn’t feel a part of or worthy of the group about which my mother spoke. I think I said as much out loud. I felt lost to my place in the world. Therefore, I moved forward pretty much, only trusting in myself.

THE GIVEN-LIFE: BLESSED WITH WEAKNESS

I was a good athlete and found joy in sports, which lasted until about age 15 (a few years after I was diagnosed with diabetes). It is a bit of a long story that resulted in me feeling I could not compete at a high level. Sports were a strength. Now, for the first time, I began giving up on seeking my identity toward a somewhat nihilistic approach to life. I never quit anything until then. I drifted from seeking a decisive role and having a place in the world. I felt I had lost the ability to hit my target of finding identity in athletics. My strengths fell short. Nevertheless, through my weakness, God was about to help me forward into an identity grander than I could have ever achieved in myself.

But first, my life fell into a deep depression and mind-bending anxiety. Yes, it was that whole sad story and what typically accompanies it. I really began to long for something that transcended what my family and community offered. One good thing during this time is that I began to learn how to “smell the roses.”

I needed meaning and looked to the beauty of creation which is such an excellent gift. I appreciated the general grace of God and the little things of life. However, it's not enough to live on and carnality followed... as it typically does. I am sure you can understand how the simple things of life become grand to a soul and then become controlling.

My needs began to spill out and I started writing down my thoughts. I was slow and hesitant to write. It wasn't anything I shared much but with a few family members since writing for me was hard and embarrassing because I am dyslexic.

I was always a thinker, but sharing written words was hard. So, when I did write, it was out of a deep need to express my emotions. I found myself communicating with God in this way and through that practice, little by little, sharing with others became a fruitful result.

From here forward, I will share less of my story directly and more of my writings. This may be hard for you to follow, but I hope edifying nevertheless. God will be more in the picture as we move along. The writings are poetic in nature, but I simply call them “writings” for two reasons. First, some of them are raw emotive statements of pure expression on my part without little concern for syntax. Second, I struggle with grammar and writing (for the reasons I have already shared), and these writings I will be sharing with you are a natural outlet for expressing myself or what God has put on my heart.

The fact is writing is hard for me. Very hard.

The ability to even share with you is a testament to God's working through my weakness. It has been through recognizing my weakness that I have relationally learned of God's glory. Our gifts are from God, but our weaknesses are a more excellent gift in that through them, we look to God and see Him (2 Corinthians 12:9, Hebrews 11:34).

There was testing to help me let go of self (Ephesians 4:22-24). In that testing, I groaned for something that transcends. I felt this deep down as if hearing a voice from a distance, but I was unable to discern the words. Something was amidst nudging me. It was like light to me because life was dark.

One day as a teen I was filled with a need to write and share with my mother the following:

*I see a light, in my life shining bright ahead.
But it has been so dim, for so long, and very dark at times.
I doubt if I can reach my light.
I can see its arms reaching out to pull me in,
But it's been so dim.
I can barely see its hand, in the light,
To grasp hold to pull me in.
I am just afraid.
If it grows dimmer
I will lose sight of my light.
I will never see its hand,
To pull me in again.*

Though I could sense it deep down, I did not embrace that light nor understand how to at that time. Things grew darker. Oddly, however, after I wrote that out, I had a sense of peace come over me. It was as if I was in good hands. Maybe you can see it in my words. God was nudging and fighting for me from the outside.

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THE REDEEMED-LIFE

One of the most important things about God is His unchanging nature.

Even to the soul that neglects God's voice and seeks out life in ignorance or even outright rebellion, God remains the same life-giving source. He offered graciously of His nature and created a provision for us for life. The word for this is "redemption" in English. I like to think of that word as: "God showed up as the Son of Man." The "Son of Man" is what the Bible refers to as God Incarnate. He is the very nature of God in human flesh, which equals the offer of redemptive life for you and me.

THE REDEEMED-LIFE: MERCY

Understand, the life Adam (humankind) was granted is due to sin doomed to destruction. The life Jesus Christ offers through Himself is redemptive. He desires life for us (John 10:10). By His death, life is born out of the same flesh as Adam (human). Life is not only granted by Christ but entered through a covenant on both parties' part (the human being and God).

The Godman is Alone worthy of eternal life. He was the source of life and became the source of life. Therefore, we can only truly have experience by following Christ. God began to teach me about submission and the importance of being near to Him. When Father God revealed Jesus to me and opened my mind to the Scriptures, He put a name to what I was longing for innately. I had been seeking Jesus all along.

Below I have a letter to Jesus I would like to share with you. My hope is that you can identify with it. My hope is that you can read the witness of one conveying who Jesus is on a personal level. Dark and hard times come. God does test us but is also willing to go with us and see us through the testing.

*Jesus,
You are my Friend indeed,
In my great heartache
You would not let me break.
You held me by Your side
While I only sighed, cried
When my time was dim.
You brought light, my Dear Friend.*

*In my time of trial
You kept on my face a smile.
You would not let me hold a frown
Nor remain on the ground.
Through my grief was great
You helped in my escape
In my torment to the end
You are my Constant Friend.*

I began the process of recognizing grace to embracing grace through a great trainer... suffering. I hope you can relate to what I am getting at. God, like a surgeon, takes advantage of the consequences to our sin and lapses to eradicate our cancerous attitudes and pride toward the purpose reflecting His nature (Psalm 22:24, Psalm 119:50, Psalm 119:153). The suffering that comes under the loving care of God can help us turn ever more from self to following Jesus. Remember: Grace is God giving of Himself.

THE REDEEMED-LIFE: EMBRACING GRACE

God even cares for those that reject Him and it is a good thing (Romans 5:8)! In our ignorance, we tend to learn things the hard way. We must understand good behavior is the fruit of self-denial regardless of how difficult it is for us to change our behavior.

The goal is to embrace Christ.
To embrace Christ is to embrace all of God's grace.

We are to move beyond being like a parasite living off a life-giving source, but instead, we are to be grafted fully into the source of life Himself (John 15:1-10).

Here is a writing that speaks to my journey in learning to do as much. I have used it elsewhere, but this is a raw personal declaration:

*I live on earth where the heart longs
All-day long I sought for praise making sacrifice at the altar in my heart
I'd do anything to have praise that came from the throne deep within.
I heard no filling voice.
I was but a gatekeeper to silence
I was a throne guardian seeking his own god.
In my oblivion, the stunning handy work of men drew my attention
To only prolong my sickening emptiness.
Their ideas ran through my mind like smolder*

They burn up like a fading fire, warm and pleasant, but never lasting.

*I spent my days in toil for all the earth offers, caring for what grew and bringing forth its harvest
I fed gods all day long to an ever-growing appetite.
I was willing to work, but it never ended, and my strength restricted my heart's longing.
I foresaw my path lead where I did not want to go.
Surely, I would have died.*

*So, I have learned what my heart desires is beyond earth's touch
All the gods praised themselves and left me hungry.
I was working the ground of my own grave
I was living for praise that never arrives.
To this, I rebel.
I shut the gate to created gods
Therein I cried, let Him who overcomes rest in my heart enthroned.*

*With turning, came the Word like light to my mind
The revelation of the Son of Man,
That created my heart and fashioned its throne.
He. The Son of God has overcome.
Within that revelation came inquiry:
What can surpass His glory to sit enthroned on my heart?
I vowed; I shall let His presence be my first desire.
I shall bow to God, my eyes fixed to His nature.
My body will carry out His ways.*

Grace is God giving of Himself.
Grace is nothing less than life coming from the Source of Life.

It is personhood that stands out as God's prominent care. God can create anything and everything anyone could ever need without end. That is neither easy nor hard for God. He simply wills it and it is so. Yet, with people, God wanted to keep us alive even though it cost Him: grief, incarnational suffering, and death. We worry so much about having to give through our discomfort. Yet, we see in the gospels that the nature of Jesus is to embrace such giving even when it is resisted. Suffering is required to be faithful.

Only we who are created in God's image are granted the status to choose life, which is to accept Christ.

Let us together embrace God's grace. His grace... namely Jesus. We need to do our best to internalize the offer of redemption. We internalize this in order to better embrace the gift of life God has offered us.

The following is part of a blog I wrote toward that purpose focused on "the loving nature of Christ." I would like to share it with you here:

*Once grace is embraced, the question matures to:
What is this LIFE in Jesus Christ?*

I believe the meaning of life is to image Jesus Christ. There are several passages of Scripture that lead us down this path. First, though, let me repeat myself in proclaiming, God has conquered sin and death. Only when we turn to Christ and are released from sin's thwarting power in us to reflect God, can we indeed focus on what life is about for humanity? Once we accept, we are justified freely by grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Romans 3:24), we can earnestly begin learning to image God. Then reflecting God is the priority for us. The answer to life's questions can be profound and time-consuming to understand. They only become apparent once Jesus takes His cornerstone role in our lives. When we are focused on imaging God.

Now, to "image someone," you must eat (partake) from what they offer to understand their nature and then live following that nature. The Bible tells us many things about Christ's nature, but the most important is that Christ is the clear image of God and Who we are to reflect (see Colossians 1:15-20). This means He is of the unique nature and eternal Spirit of God (God as a human being). To know such verses from Scripture is beneficial, but the Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians 2:11 that the Holy Spirit is the only person that understands the thoughts of God. So, we learn much about the nature of Christ from Scripture, but it is by the Holy Spirit (God Himself) that we genuinely come to understand the nature of God. That Spirit is, of course, one and the same as He who dwells in the Christian heart (see 1 Corinthians 2:12). Therefore, we can by the Holy Spirit come to understand and live after the heart of God.

In Scripture and in the heart of the believer, the Holy Spirit tells us that God is a life-giving Person. In the context of Hebrews 10, we read that God's nature (that we are to acknowledge and follow) is what God desires to be manifest in sacrifice and offerings.

It is the giving of life that God wants us to partake in by living after His nature by actually giving of ourselves (giving fueled through his giving). The author of Hebrews puts it better, quoting from Psalm 40. Scripture points to Jesus as the True Image Bearer. Hebrews 10 tells us, "Sacrifices and offerings you did not desire, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings, you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, "Behold I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book'" (10:5-7 ESV).

So, the animal sacrifices and blood offerings God did not desire, without the understanding, that He was bearing their sin and giving life. Moreover, He provided what was to be offered as the Law required.

So, you may ask, why did He ask for what he did not want? The point is God provided LIFE of His own means, and human beings need to submit to His condition. God is a life-giving Spirit, and life alone comes from God. The reverence that life comes from God must always be in a person's heart for sacrifices and offering to be genuine. It is in that way God recognizes the sacrifices and offerings as authentic. Sacrifices without a respectful heart were undesirable to God.

So, you might ask, "Why even bring an offering since God knows our hearts?" It's not for God's benefit, but ours. It is also good to remember even in belief and faith, we must mature. The offering was always required for out of it; the pure heart is revealed. In the same way, an impure heart is revealed. The sacrifice is for the revealing. As James 2:18 tells us, "Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my work" (ESV). Real faith is revealed in real down-to-earth action. Therefore, it is not the means of revealing the heart, but the heart itself that brings God's response. It is the belief in God that God desires, not the sacrifice itself.

Therefore, in the life of Jesus, we have something profoundly unique in the relational process of life-giving-life, revealing the very heart of God. The death of Jesus Christ brings the cleansing of our souls by His very Will. Again, as stated above, He made purification within the dominion He established in humanity at the Creation. Genesis 1:26 says, "Let us create man in our image that they might rule." Remember, "to rule" is to "image God." In this way, He not only forgives sin but disarms all powers (see Colossians 2:15) and re-established God the Father's will for human beings to rule the Earth. Christ indeed redeems those that put belief in His sacrifice (forgiveness), revealing God's will, the very heart of Christ sacrificial offering. The sacrifice that purifies us to be in God's presence by means of Christ eternal Life. When faith is found placed in the faithfulness of Christ.

This is LIFE beyond repeated repentance. This is LIFE established with righteousness apart from the Law yet fulfilling it. This is LIFE under the order of King Jesus. The "Imaging God" and the "reigning with Christ" are not enough pursued. When we think of LIFE, imaging God should be first and foremost on our minds. Hebrews 10, quoted above, tells us of Christ's mindset in living His human life, which is played out for us in the Gospel accounts of His life, death, and resurrection. "In Christ," we see the life question is answered by enriching life within the life you are given. GOD is a life-giving Person, and "In Christ," we can be His reflection.

I pray the above words are helpful as you think on the cross. What happens on the cross is in Christian thought typically broken into three theories:

- the victory of Christ
- the example of Christ
- the penal sacrifice of Christ

When you read about what happened on the cross, it may say Jesus “expiated,” and it may state He “propitiated,” or it may be put that His sacrifice was an “atoning sacrifice.” Yes, the cross is all the above and more. I, for some time, tried to think of a word that captures what happened through Jesus on the cross. I have concluded, however, that there is no word for the sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary because it is unique to Him, the one of a kind phenomenon.

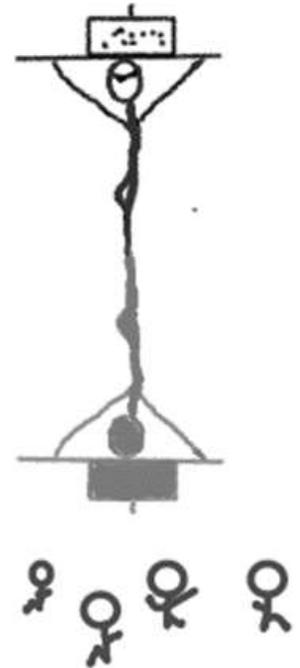
So, I wrote this:

*O' Christ,
Image of Almighty God.
Unique One,
The priceless object of abiding faith.*

Through You alone, Faithfulness is revealed.

*The place of Mercy,
Where shines forth your Atoning Life.
The righteousness of your Name,
Where comes forth your Spirits' light.
The crushing of death's blind eyes.
You set free your Glory to humanity,
Your veil tore open foot to brow.
Put forward as our cleansing peace,
You kept your solemn vow.*

*There you made a finish,
Where promised children humbly bow.*



I would like to underscore the above words and image speak to the type and shadow of the Old Testament along with the atoning sacrifice given at Calvary where Jesus Christ was crucified and sin was condemned once and for all. In concluding this section, The Redeemed-Life, I would like to emphasize the necessity of meditating on the Cross of Christ with a poetic statement:

*Deep within the human spirit
a humble heart can see
On the horizon
Beyond the cherub's flaming sword,
The Morning Star.*

*Restful light drawing one near the fiery divide.
Toward Eden's throne amid the sweat of daily toil.
To a blood-stained narrow path.
Quenching Hades' threat,
with the bright breeze of precious Glory.*

When you and I internalize deep down the love of Jesus, embracing the cross to condemn sin in His human flesh, only then do you seriously start down the narrow path that leads to God.

The Given-Life: ¹Family, ²Identity, ³Blessed with Weakness
The Redeemed-Life: ⁴Mercy, ⁵Grace-Embraced
> The Promised-Life: ⁶Character, ⁷Promised Rest

THE PROMISED LIFE

As God brought His people out of slavery (Book of Exodus), they went forward with the understanding they were free and heading for a land of promise. There they could live out a life free from bondage as God's people, a people of truth. This was a land that ran with milk and honey, and one could have their own vine from which came their family's provisions. Yet, few entered that land who were saved out of the oppressor's hand. Why? Because few trusted God with a faith that bared the character to follow the Lord into the Promised Land.

THE PROMISED LIFE: CHARACTER

Grace (that I conveyed above) is not only a means of release to freedom. Grace is a window to the heart of God, and all that transcends drawing us to the narrow way. Grace is God giving of Himself and His character and in its most real sense, is reflecting God. On a related note, becoming righteous means nothing less than the drinking of the same cup as Lord Jesus. He was faithful to the point of death. We are to be committed not in the sense of moral perfection, but loyalty to Jesus Christ. Yet, we are always aiming for moral purity. God calls us to discipleship, which plainly means behaving (with the attitude) towards maturing in Christ. We must face our issues, deal with our sin, and learn to forgive as God forgives.

God tells our hearts to grow in character that resembles His own. This is an on-going and challenging process and we must learn principally through the chaos. He brings order. To share in His eternal life, we learn many hard lessons in life.

The good news we must remember in difficulty is Jesus is faithful.

It is plain, but not so simple. We learn to conform to Christ by living as He lived and we learn from God's word (the Bible) and practice His teachings in everyday life. We do not wait for Him to change things for the better, but instead, we follow His teachings knowing by faith He will change us within our circumstances. So then, we learn along the way as in any relationship. The one big difference in this relationship is that God is always faithful.

*Integrity shines from heaven's abode
Like a compass leading toward the right road.*

*Guidance to be written on our hearts.
Of Himself, God imparts.*

*The kingdom's pillars raise up wicked minds.
For thinking thoughts of God's righteous kind,
Cognitive boundaries to heal the blind
God's wisdom come to humankind*

*Let us embrace the gift within,
To follow revelation to the end.
New eyes fixed on the conductor's baton
In rhythm with the Spirit of the Son.*

*A gift from God for us to shine.
When we partake of His nature divine.*

God gives provision within the human heart for dealing with life through abiding in Christ. God's character flows from those who follow Jesus.

This is how His kingdom comes.

Character is built in those that by faith, hold to and follow God's promises. Those promises are sealed within the heart.

Here is a writing toward such order:

"Kingdom Come"

*In an order fading
In bodies disowned
We live by faith
In Hope, now know.*

*Though in death's dominion,
Our souls still pine,
Experiencing sin's corrupting power die.*

*Praise God,
We have what indwells*

Love abundant,

Humbling our hearts to swell.

*By patience, we wait,
For what our confidence consumes.
A risen body, suiting life from the tomb.*

We suffer in this life (now), but we endure in a manner that is for promised glory (later). God is developing the character for life in our hearts for the age to come. The Apostle Paul tells us our present sufferings are not worthy of being compared to the weight of the glory to come (Philippians 3:8).

A prayer for Character:

*Father,
I cry
Your Name is beyond my strength.
Why do you summon me
To what I can never be?*

*Come by Your Spirit,
share yourself with me.
Do not hold back what I in myself can never be.
Pure love,
the blood you gave for me*

*Without Your Name, I stand neither meek nor free.
For,
Those that cry
Those that seek
Those that wonder of Your wisdom hung on a tree.*

Your Word, Your Mystery, Your Son, to believe.

The offer of salvation is going out to all humanity, but the world system resists the Kingdom of God coming in fullness. The saved ones are being conformed to the image of Christ Jesus for life in the fullness of His Kingdom (eternal life). Therefore, to be right with God, you must get your eyes on Jesus and keep them on Jesus. Our world is full of anxiety, which makes life very hard to bear. Reality can bite, but greater are they with God than those without God. So hold on to God with all your heart, soul, and mind. Love others as

you love yourself. Always pray for God to light up your soul with what will give you stamina for the spiritual battle.

With that in mind, let me share with you a poetic prayer:

Father, In Jesus' name...

*Lay us to rest from,
Sleepless night.
By Sovereign love,
Consume our fright.*

*Uplift our eyes,
Be in our sight.
Beyond hope's courage,
In your flaming might.*

*So, burn up,
Our selfish blame.
Sky-high like smoke,
Before your Name.*

*Fill our wings,
By your Spirit within
To reign uplifted,
By heaven's Wind.*

*Chains shattered
Our feet prepared.
To carry thy sword,
Your royalty declared.*

*So, in the righteous,
Thy glory will appear.
Death's destruction,
Evils fear.*

*Justice to quench,
every... last...tear. Amen*

[See Exodus in the Bible if the story is unfamiliar to you as what follows presumes a basic understanding of that text]

THE PROMISED LIFE: PROMISED REST

Now that I've written a bit about character, let's go back to the idea of what is promised by God. Remember, there was a Promised Land for those that came out of slavery in Egypt, but few entered. For us, the promise is to live free of sin and fear of the power of death. We are to do so now by faith and will do so in fullness (without the exercise of faith) in a promised age to come at the second coming of Christ.

We have freedom from sin in Christ just as Israel was saved out of slavery. They were given rest from the power of Pharaoh. The Christian is saved from the power of The Satan. In saying "saved," I am referring to what Jesus calls "being born again" through belief in the imperishable Good News sent from God (John 3:7; also in 1 Peter 1:23). A redeemed life is given to human beings that, without being quickened, will surely die.

Therefore, the saved are those souls embracing God's redemptive offer of life with the loyalty vow of "death to self" and "living unto God." Biblically both are symbolized and manifest in baptism. The spirit is at peace with God within such a bond. We are delivered from sin by trusting our soul to Christ's faithful nail-scarred hands.

This is not, however, a rest from our present dying in the fading old order. This rest is in line with embracing grace since we partake of Gods' nature through Christ by the Spirit in our present corrupt body and world.

The Apostle Paul speaks to this reality when he states that the believer is outwardly dying, but inwardly maturing into the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). He is saying that we must hold fast and robust until death or Christ's coming. His coming will be the death of all that is corrupt. The call for us is to remain loyal by God's provision through the Holy Spirit.

In Hebrews (chapter 4), we hear from God about the promised rest from slavery and testing in the wilderness to an offer of freedom. Hebrews makes this parallel to all who follow Jesus and seek God's promised rest. Jesus says, "I am the way the truth and the life no one come on to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6) and lays out the way to that rest.

Joshua (which means 'savior') led the children of God into the Promised Land. The author of Hebrews emphasizes for us that we are descendants of those Hebrews who God established in the Promised Land (Hebrews 11:12). We have a fuller rest. We have the

Father's rest. This is what I believe Jesus refers to in John 14:6 when He says, "comes unto the Father but by Me."

We can be saved out of sin. We must follow Jesus through the wilderness between life now and eternal life when Jesus returns. The Spirit of Christ is our compass into the fullness of God's rest requiring loyal belief in the wilderness of present living in the spiritual warfare that ensues. The result is character and blessing through trust in God.

This rest and being "born again" is not meriting eternal life, but it is bearing fruit by eating from God's Nature. We must trust Him in the face of opposition. The trust we must place in God is to fully know Him and enter His rest. It is possible, however, to not enter the LORD's rest (Psalm 95:11, Hebrews 3:11, 4:3, 4:5). Real faith, as James tells us, is revealed in what we do (James 2:18). What we do will be rewarded, but it will not merit eternal life. Life is God's free gift through Christ. Hence, the emphasis I place on character... since personal character is manifest through loyal belief.

The author of Hebrews, we are told, says that the people who came out of Egypt with Moses received the same Gospel, though, of course, without the same revelation we read in the New Testament (Hebrews 4:2, 4:6). Jude even states Jesus led them out of slavery and into the desert (Jude 1:5).

Faith is not just an intellectual exercise or merely an emotional wall by which we take shelter, but faith is sure hope in handing over one's course to God. In this way, His Glory manifests on Earth as it is in Heaven and we conform intellectually and emotionally to come into balance through partaking of Christ's divine nature.

The rest of the Age to Come already resides in Jesus' own people. The Apostle Paul tells us that we have rest in Christ's fulfillment in all the Law and Prophets (Romans 3:20-22). In our embrace of God's divine order, Father God and Christ Jesus make Their home with us and within us (John 1:14). So as on Sabbath, we who trust God are free of the heavy labor in maintaining life devoid of any peace with God.

Jesus makes such a statement in Matthew 11:28-30: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke on you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and my load is not hard to carry" (NET).

We have a wonderful promise here from Jesus Himself that we can take part in today and forever. Whenever I think about this, joy rises within me and longs for expression to praise

God. What follows are some lyrics I wrote out in praise for the rest God has always laid before humanity in offering eternal life:

HOLY DAY

*Toil fades as the night gives way
To the rising light of the seventh day.
God shares with us his restful abode
Time, we wear like a violet robe*

*Where provision is of no mind
tasting of God's end design*

*Set apart
God to know
Through His Name
All life bestowed
LORD,
we rise with you
Higher than the sun.
Blessed under your loving gaze,
we live in your glory ablaze.*

*Sabbath,
is a muse to the soul.
Drawing us to breathe deep,
at the Father's footstool.
Prophecy,
in the blessed flow of time
what's Holy declared in creation's design.
Set apart
Christ to know
Through His Name
All life bestowed*

*LORD,
we rise with you
Higher than the sun.
Blessed under your loving gaze,
we live in your glory ablaze.*

*Upheld by the Sovereigns way
Knit to humanity,
In Christ sustained.
Living bread beyond toil's pain.
In the Son of Man,
freed from strain*

*Present hope for all who cease,
to share in God's holy peace*

*LORD,
we rise with you
Higher than the sun.
Blessed under your loving gaze,
we live in your glory ablaze.
Forever, we rest in a Holy Day*

Jesus Christ has established a pure and incorruptible headship for Humanity. In Him, humanity is purified as a sacred space where God can presently live in us and through us. What's more, the LORD will eventually be in us and with humanity "seen as He is" forever (see 1 John 3:2), but we are not yet to that point! There is still harvesting and purifying growth to conform. Still the question... when?

The following is written to express such longing:

Father's Life

When comes the Father's life?

*When the LORD'S known are all seen alive
When the Eternal offer sent arrives.
When the Presence comes to dwell,
light complete.
Earthbound with humans,
in glorified feet.
Father's life to breathe,
Father's way maintained,
in Messiah's Name.*

When will the Father's rest descend?

*To bear no more sin.
To Live,
As He does intend.
When will Death's meal end?
inflicting God to extend,
stealing,
as He mends.*

*Grace is the answer to Why?!
Father feeds death
and we still die.*

*Incarnation,
answers His Spirit's cry.
Amid creation sigh.*

*For in Himself,
there is no dispute.
The Son lives,
His victory pursues.*

*Saints to stand at Christ's dawn anew
With creation adorned in wedding blue.
Bathed in life!
Death consumed,*

*The Son's Arrival,
The Father's Due*

For now, we have a promise. It is a sure promise because Christ Jesus is risen and imparts His Spirit within His own people who belong to Him. The Spirit of the Age to Come has appeared and is falling on all flesh. At the return of King Jesus, the fullness of the Kingdom will be on Earth as it is in Heaven. Those in Christ have rest for now in His finished sacrifice. Those in Christ shall enter God the Father's Rest at His arrival.

Do you believe it?

*God himself has given life
Through His nation, by his light
Christ himself has sacrificed
To cope with Sin's, deadly bite*

*Incarnate, to conquer our fear
By blood, to dry every tear
Glory as Man forever Revered*

In life, I firmly believe you can only bring others forward to the extent you have journeyed. I think that means seeking out the way of the One in Whose image we are created. I have shared a bit here about my personal story and what I have learned. I have told you a little about struggles with my broken family, dyslexia, diabetes, and mostly my fight with myself and seeking identity. I have found identity in Christ. Christ is the Son of Man Who has ascended in His human journey to the right hand of Father God. He alone knows the way to Father God.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, I would like to end with the question I mentioned at the beginning:

How does God get His glory in us?

Jesus has revealed the way for living and giving life to us. He offers redemption in line with His unchanging nature by becoming one of us because of our sin. He offers by way of His human life the means to have peace with Father God.

We tend to pursue what we desire. We also have a need to quench the thirst of our souls. Jesus Christ reveals the real way to do both pursue our desires and quench our thirst. He transmits His glory into us by becoming man and making eternal life one and the same as human life under His headship.

Christ alone provides.

Simply put, the LORD utterly came into humanity in order to rest His glory in us.

Jesus says, deny yourself, pick up your cross, and follow Him (Matthew 16:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23). If you do this, when all is said and done, you will find yourself at the feet of Father God, along with Jesus. Jesus Christ's aim is our entering Father God's rest with Him in the fullness of the intent for creation.

"When all things are subjected to him, then the Son Himself will be made subject to Him who put all things under Him, so that God may be all in all." (1 Corinthians 15:28, ESV)

We have all been given life. We are all offered redemption and with faith comes the promise of entering God's rest (eternal life).

So then, let me share one more writing:

A Prayer,

*Father God,
see us all the way through, to You.*

In Jesus' name, Amen.