

**Living Daily
in God's
GRACE**

**Wayne Barber
with Chip MacGregor**

2012 by Wayne Barber with Chip MacGregor

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Experiencing the Rest of Grace

Not long ago I was working on a jigsaw puzzle that has more than a thousand little pieces. For long hours I sat trying to fit them together in various ways, sorting according to color or shape or design, and watching it slowly come together. There is a sense of urgency and accomplishment that drives me as I see the various elements begin to form a whole, and I felt I was nearing the finish when something occurred to me: A piece was missing. When I finally got all the pieces together, I felt disappointment rather than completion. No puzzle is complete unless *all* the pieces come together.

The funny thing is, that feeling best describes how I used to feel about my Christian walk. There was a piece missing. I tried with all the energy I could to do the right thing, but I could never quite achieve it. I tried loving people, only to be driven away from them. I tried gritting my teeth and getting through tough times in my own strength, only to end up facing failure and frustration. I searched the Scriptures, but there was something missing in my spiritual walk.

Then one day, through the grace of God's Word, it hit me: *I was still trying to do it myself*. I was trying to be a "good" Christian, trying to force myself to do things I hate, and trying to accomplish things in my own power. In essence, I was still trying to save myself. My striving was of the flesh, and as I read my Bible it dawned on me that was the very reason God had sent His Spirit into my life—to give me rest from my own fleshly striving. Christ didn't just give me life, He *is* my life. He empowers me to do what He knows I cannot do without Him.

In Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus says, "*Come unto Me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light.*" Here I had been trying to do the work myself, and Jesus was telling me to rest in Him. I had been trying to achieve spiritual greatness through my own power, and the Lord was saying it could only be found in Him.

That's the message of grace. When we learn that Christ is our life, we can *rest* in His grace. Imagine that for a moment: allowing yourself to experience resting in grace. That's what I did... and that message changed my life. I discovered that it is an exchanged life not just a changed life—all that I'm not for all that He is.

Now when I face the valley of discouragement, I am quickly reminded of the message of grace. I still have a responsibility, but it is to run to the cross and confess my inability rather than to tough it out and attack life's struggles in my own power. Through surrender to Jesus, I have learned to enter into the wonder of the life He gave me. His grace empowers and comforts me, allowing me to understand that He is truly in control.

If you have been striving for something more in your spiritual walk, I urge you to read this book. I want you to experience rest in God's grace. This book won't resolve every issue you face—it's not intended to be the answer to every possible problem. But if it can help you recover that missing piece to your Christian life, the fact that Christ is your life, and you need nothing else, then it can be used of God in a mighty way. My prayer is that you'll let the joy of His power give you the rest you've been seeking.

—Wayne Barber
Chattanooga, Tennessee

Introduction

I love the song “I’m Saved and I Know that I Am.” Like the man in John 9 who knew one sure thing after Jesus healed his eyes, “I was blind but now I see.” But what does it mean to be saved? Saved from what?

Let’s begin by understanding a little word that is large in power. It is the word *gospel* in Scripture. In the Greek language it is the word *euaggelion*. It means “*good news*.” Good news about what? Well, before anyone would desire to hear this good news or even know that it is needed, it would be helpful for him to understand the bad news. The bad news is that people are not born with any basic good in them at all. I understand this is not politically correct to say, but it’s biblically accurate. Years ago I used to see these signs that read, “I’m OK, you’re ok.” I don’t think so. The bad news is that all humanity is born into sin and is therefore eternally separated from God. How did that happen? Paul helps us in Romans 5:12 when he says, “*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.*” The one man that Romans is referring to who sinned and whose sin infected the whole human race is found in the book of Genesis. His name is Adam who is first mentioned in Genesis 2:20. He is the first human being on this earth. Genesis 2:7 shares, “*Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.*”

Adam was filled with both physical and spiritual life as God breathed into him. He was placed into a beautiful garden called Eden. God told him that he could eat of all the trees in the garden with the exception of one: “*The LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die’*” (Genesis 2:16-17). If this command was violated, it was to result in death. This death would not only be physical death but spiritual death. Ironically, with the fruit of all the trees to enjoy, Adam did not obey this one command. He ate of the forbidden tree, as did Eve. The day he sinned by disobeying God, he began to physically die. But when he sinned, the life of God left him and spiritual death was immediate. He had been born with the capacity to have spiritual fellowship with God. Now he was devoid of God’s life and therefore His intimate fellowship.

How this happened is explained in Genesis 3. The devil came in disguise as a serpent to the woman that God had created out of Adam’s side and whose name was Eve. He tempted her to eat of the fruit of that forbidden tree. He deceived her into thinking that God didn’t really tell them not to eat of the fruit. The woman took of the fruit of the tree and tempted Adam to eat from it and he chose to do so. Whereas Eve was deceived into partaking of the fruit, Adam willfully sinned against God. When that happened, the curse of sin was tagged to him and therefore placed upon all humanity. We were all yet unborn in the loins of Adam and as a result of Adam’s willful sin; all humanity is born into this world separated from God and without His life within them. That’s the bad news! You wonder about all the hurt and pain is in this world? It’s a sin problem.

But God made a way back to Him. Oh, how I’ve come to love those words in Scripture: “*God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not*

perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). God had a plan to rescue us from the curse of sin. This marvelous plan was introduced in Genesis 3 right after the first sin. He addresses the devil who had succeeded in tempting man into sin in Genesis 3:14-15: “*The LORD God said to the serpent, ‘Because you have done this, Cursed are you more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you will go, And dust you will eat All the days of your life; And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.’*” There would be One born of woman who would one day crush the devil and rescue people from his grasp. This One who would later be born into this world and crush Satan’s grip would be our Lord Jesus. He was born into the human race as God incarnate, in human form. In order for this plan to be carried out, God wanted to create for Himself a people through whom Jesus Christ, God’s eternal Son, would become human and be born into this world.

When I was little, I was afraid of the dark. I would cry out in fear of the monsters that were haunting my room in the shadows. My mother would hurry to my door and open it asking me what was wrong. After she had comforted me as only a mother can, she would start to leave the room and I would ask her if she would leave the door open a little. She would crack the door so that light from the hallway could enter the room. But after she left to go back to bed, the little light allowed into the room made the monsters bigger and the shadows longer. I cried out again and the process repeated itself leaving the door a little more open. After about three times, my mother flung the door wide open and went back to bed. Ah, now I could go to sleep! What cracks the door for the light of our redemption to begin to come in began in Genesis 3. But, the door was cracked open a bit more when He singled out a man by the name of Abraham and brought him out of the land from Ur of the Chaldeans where He cut covenant with him, promising him a land, a nation, and a *seed*. That seed would be the Lord Jesus who would one day come into the world.

Abraham had a son named Isaac. Isaac had two sons named Esau and Jacob. The younger of the two was Jacob who was the one through whom the covenant promises would be carried on through. Jacob’s name was changed to Israel and Israel had 12 sons who became 12 tribes, forming the nation of Israel. It would be from the tribe of Judah and the line of David that our Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, would come into this world to redeem us from our sin. He came into the world in which He Himself had created. John 1:3 says, “*All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.*” God threw the door wide open when Jesus came into this world as a seed in a mother’s womb, the virgin Mary, as recorded in the Gospels. He came to die for all people. He came to pay a debt He didn’t owe and a debt that we couldn’t pay. He would go to the cross bearing our sin and die and then on the third day resurrect from the dead and soon ascend back into heaven becoming the *satisfaction* to God the Father that sin had been paid for.

For us to benefit because of His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead we need to **believe**. John 3:16, “*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*” Now, this word “believe” must be understood. It is the word **pisteuo** in the Greek. It comes from the word **pietho** just like the word “faith.” The word **pietho** when used subjectively means to be fully persuaded to the place that you are willing to bow and submit to what you say has persuaded you. It is not static. If one does not act upon that which he says has persuaded him then he has not been persuaded. So to

believe has the idea of bowing and receiving as John 1:12: *“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.”*

The act of repentance flows out of the fact that one has truly believed. The very fact that the word implies bowing indicates that one recognizes to whom he is bowing. You only bow to One who is LORD. Romans 10:13 says, *“Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.”* God reveals to us that Jesus is God and in that revelation we realize that God died for us on the cross so that we might once again have fellowship with Him and have His life in us: *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly”* (John 10:10). What was lost in the garden when man sinned is now regained in Christ never to be lost again. In Christ, we can be reconciled back to God. It is through His death we are reconciled but it is also through His life that we are saved. Romans 5:10 shares, *“For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.”*

Once we receive Christ into our hearts, which is what believing is all about, we then possess His life in us. He comes to live in us in the person of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. Romans 8:9 teaches, *“However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.”* At salvation we surrender all we know about ourselves and receive all that we understand of Him into our lives. This begins our journey of learning. I liken it to when a person gets married. A husband makes all kinds of commitments to his lovely bride and she to him but they will both spend the rest of their lives learning what that was all about. At salvation we are made complete in Christ. Paul says in Colossians 2:10, *“...and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority. We have been given every spiritual blessing in Him.”* Ephesians 1:3 similarly shares, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”* But, sanctification is the process of learning to live out what God says we already are. In all other religious systems, there is a progression from one level to the next. But, in Christianity, we come **from** not **towards**. To do this, we must live as Paul says in Romans 12:1-2: *“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”*

This is where the battle begins. We still have our flesh; the self-centered desires that battle with the renewing of our minds. Paul says in Galatians 5:16-17, *“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.”* The Christian life is not just a changed life; it is much more an exchanged life. The way we conquer the temptations of the flesh is to say yes to Christ. Victory is not us overcoming sin; it is Jesus overcoming us. Christ lives in us once we are saved. He wants to do through us what we could never do ourselves. Galatians 2:20 encourages, *“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”* As Paul likewise writes in Philippians 1:21, *“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”* To the Colossians, Paul wrote, *“When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory”* (Colossians 3:4).

That's what this book is all about; learning to let Jesus be Jesus in us.

1. What's Wrong with Me?

Every morning my daughter Stephanie, when she was a teenager, would get up at 6:00 A.M. to get ready for school, and soon would be brushing her hair. At 6:15 she was brushing her hair. At 6:30 she was still brushing her hair. At 7:00 I would go by the bathroom door and say, "Now, Stephanie, remember we're going to leave at 8:00 A.M. to go to school."

"I hear you, daddy," she would holler back as she continued to brush her hair.

By about 7:30 her hair would begin to frizz from all the stroking. She would not be able to do anything with it and her time had run out.

Finally, I would go by the door at 7:50 and say, "Stephanie, we have got to go!"

"I hear you, daddy!" would come the reply, shouted through the bathroom door.

So my son and I would go out to the car and wait. We got to know each other very well during those days while we were waiting for Stephanie to get ready for school. Each morning my daughter would come racing out to the car at the last minute, hair flying off into space, a frustrated look on her face. The funniest thing about it was that she would most often have something profound to say to us, touching on the unfairness of life, the mysteries of the universe, and the hair she inherited from my side of the family.

One particular morning as Stephanie was coming around the corner of the house to get to the car, she slipped and fell on an icy sidewalk. I didn't see her fall, but I saw the results of it — books flying, feet in the air, steam rising from her ears. Before she could reach us I told my son, "This is going to be good today, son, so pay attention."

Stephanie got in the car and slammed the door, her ripped hose increasing her frustration level by the second. Her composure was absolutely gone.

"Good morning, Stephanie," I said sweetly.

"Daddy," she muttered, lips pressed tightly together, "I've got something to tell you."

"What's that, dear?" "I don't care what you preach, I don't care what you think, I don't care what the Bible teaches — *there is no way you can live the Christian life!*"

I drove in silence for moment, smiling to myself. "Well, thank you, Stephanie. I'll try my best to encourage somebody with that wonderful truth today." Steven just sat in the back seat grinning.

We got halfway to school when the Holy Spirit began to minister to my heart. "Wait a minute— what did she just say?" I wondered to myself. *There is no way you can live the Christian life.* The more I reflected on her words, the more impressed I became.

When we pulled into the school parking lot, I turned to my daughter, took her arm gently, and said, "Stephanie, remember what you said? That you can't live the Christian life?"

"Yeah. At least that's how I feel."

"Well, honey, I want you to know something: *You're exactly right.*"

She looked at me for a moment, wondering what I was saying.

“Where in Scripture does it ever say we can live the Christian life?” I asked her. “It doesn’t. You’re absolutely right, Stephanie. You cannot live it.” I let her think about that for a minute before adding, “*You* can’t, but Christ can live it in you.” Then I gave her a peck on the cheek and sent my daughter on her way.

Christ Is Our Life

The more I’ve had a chance to meditate on my daughter’s frustrated words, the more I believe them. We simply can’t live the Christian life. We try and try. We read books about how to achieve it, we go to seminars that claim to reveal the secrets, and we listen to preachers tell us how to get to the next step in our faith, but we never quite get there. The fact is, *we can’t live the Christian life*, so we have to let Christ live it in us.

Christ is our life. He didn’t just give us life; He *is* our life. As we learn to let Christ be in us what we are not, the Christian life begins to take place in us. That to me is the basis of my entire ministry. It is also the message of this book. *Jesus Christ died to set us free from our old patterns of frustration and failure. He wants to live life through us, giving us a whole new way to live.*

A lot of believers are frustrated because they have grown up in the church and have heard all these messages about how they ought to live. They’ve read their daily devotionals every day. Maybe they’ve participated in a Bible study or joined a small group. They go to church Sunday morning and Sunday evening. If they’re really spiritual they go on Wednesday night to prayer meeting. They keep trying to find the key to the happy, fulfilled spiritual life that’s talked about in Scripture. But the feeling they’re left with is that something is missing.

Something isn’t quite right about their lives even though they have heard the preacher talk about the fulfilled life. They’ve heard spiritual people talk about this wonderful walk with Christ, and they’ve read about it in books. Yet they feel as if that special “something” that should be there is missing.

I’m not saying these people are not Christians. They love the Lord, and they are on their way to glory. But at the same time they have a feeling of frustration with their Christian walk.

When someone comes to me and says, “Wayne, I’m frustrated with the Christian life. I just can’t live it. What should I do?” I say to him, “My friend, you are in a great spot!” Frustration is simply a symptom of a person trying to do what he cannot do. When he gets to the end of himself, he begins to realize that there must be more to it than he thought.

A frustrated believer is in a wonderful place, because he or she is ready to discover the truth about living like Jesus Christ: He can’t do it on his own. Once he realizes this truth, he is ready to hear the good news that Christ can start to live through him.

It’s like someone who says, “I’m going to get up tomorrow, and I’m going to live for Jesus. God loves everybody, so I’m going to love everybody.” By nine in the morning God puts a brother in his life who is hard to love. By noon he is already frustrated with his inability to love his brother. He cries out, “Lord, I can’t!” And Christ replies back to him, “I never said you could. That’s why I came to live in you. That’s why I *am* your life.”

To me, the frustration comes when I don’t realize the sinful potential of the flesh that I have to live with until Jesus comes back. As Christians we need to realize that the flesh was a problem before we got saved, and it is also a problem *after* we get saved. We are going to have to learn to

deal with our flesh **daily** in order to experience the things that God has for us. So we can expect frustration in the Christian life.

A lady came to me one day and said, “You know, since I’ve gotten saved, all hell has broken loose.” I said to her, “Welcome to the normal Christian life! What did you expect? Christ didn’t call you to a party—He called you into a battle. Now the war starts.” You see, many Christians want to rejoice that they’ve been saved **from** something. They’ve been saved from their past, saved from their mistakes, saved from their sins.

But we’ve also been saved to something, and Christ wants us living surrendered to Him in the daily battle. Our battle is not only with the devil, but also with the flesh and with ourselves. The beautiful thing about salvation is that I’ve been saved from myself. Wayne Barber has been saved from Wayne. I’ve been saved from something, but I’ve also been saved to something — a new life in Jesus Christ.

The Bible talks about the church as being the **ekklesia**, the “called out ones.” As a believer, I’ve been called out of my old life into a brand-new way of living. I have to learn to completely rethink how I live. Romans 12:1,2 says, *“I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”* I have to learn to think differently now that I am a brand-new creature. I have to learn to think God’s way. The frustration for many Christians comes after being saved when they try to do what God says in His Word in their own strength.

No Longer the Same

In Romans chapters 6 and 7 the apostle Paul showed the Roman believers that they were new creatures: *“For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection”* (Romans 6:5). The word **united** is an intimate word. It means to be blended together, much like a baker blends the various ingredients together in order to create something new. Christ’s life has been “baked” into us, if you will. That’s why I like telling people in churches that we are “biscuits” for Jesus.

Paul continues by telling the Romans, *“...knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin”* (Romans 6:6). The old man is dead. What I was in Adam I can never be again. The Spirit of God has come to live in me and has made me a brand-new creature. I can never be like I was in Adam. When Paul says, “that our body of sin might be done away with,” the actual idea is that the body has been rendered powerless. The word in Greek is **katargeo** and has the idea of “to be broken or destroyed in the sense of shifted into neutral or disengaged.”

But if the power of sin is broken, why do we still sin? Think of it as a car being shifted into neutral. You can have the most expensive automobile on the road, but as long as you keep it in neutral, you won’t be going anywhere. When our flesh is in neutral, there is no power to do anything sinful. However, it did not cease to exist. The transmission did not fall out. If I choose to shift it back into gear by my choosing to sin, then my flesh can come back and control me.

When the average Christian first gets saved, he does not realize the truth of this principle. Instead, he tries to overcome the drive to sin by redirecting its power to some other area. For example, he may become extremely religious to compensate for his failure. But Paul says in Romans 7:9, *“I*

was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died.” Ask yourself a question: When was Paul ever alive without the law? When he didn’t yet fully understand the grace of God. Until that time, he was **physically** alive, but he was trying to develop a relationship with God through his own good works. Once we are saved, most of us want to continue seeking the Lord through our works, since we don’t know any other way. This is exactly what Paul is saying to his readers in Galatians 3:1-3. He begins by saying, *“You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?”*

The law demands that my flesh act and the problem is that my flesh **wants** to act. In other words, the law demands works. It demands my performance. My flesh responds to that by seeking to work. My flesh loves to check all the boxes and bask in its accomplishments. The problem is that what the law demands it also condemns. Everything I do in the energy of my flesh the law is going to condemn. That’s the frustration of a person who is trying to be saved by his own works. He can’t do it. That is also the frustration of a person who is saved and is trying to live the Christian life by his own works. He can’t do it either. To overcome this frustration, he’ll try shifting his energy into some other law. He may attempt to impose the “Quiet Time” law or the “Be Like Jesus” law. He’ll seek some external way to work toward salvation. However we define “the flesh,” this we know: The flesh loves the law.

Because sin takes opportunity through the commandments (Romans 7:8), the commandments become a base of operations for sin to work. Therefore my flesh tries to work. When Paul says, *“I once was alive apart from the Law”* (Romans 7:9), I believe he is talking about a time just after his Damascus road salvation experience. Once he got saved, the Lord had to teach him a new way to live. Many years are missing in Paul’s life and many believe that several years were spent in the desert, where the Holy Spirit taught him about grace. However, when he came back among his peers, suddenly it dawned on Paul that he was getting back into the old mindset. It occurred to him that even though he was saved, his religious flesh was still as powerful as it had ever been. He could still put himself back under law. Paul realized that something had to conquer his desire to be under law. Something had to set him free from his old way of living. That’s when he says in Romans 7:24b, *“Who will set me free from the body of this death?”* His answer in Romans 7:25 is clear: *“Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”*