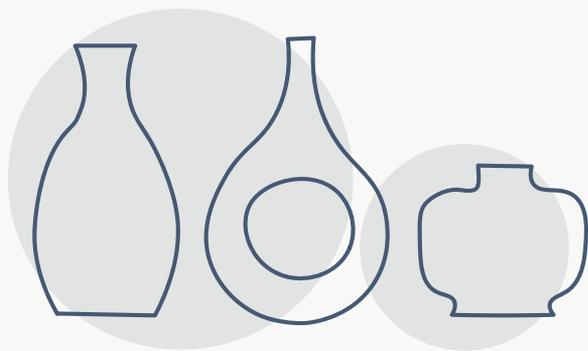


From **Death
to Life**

SHAPED
BY SCRIPTURE

SHAPED BY SCRIPTURE



Dr. Scott K. Thomas II



LONEOAK
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

March

AI Ethical Guidelines¹

As emerging technologies like AI find their way into the realm of ministry and theological writing, I've developed personal guidelines to preserve the integrity of this devotional work:

- 1 Avoid plagiarism and ensure authenticity: AI tools are helpful for idea generation, word choice, and structural planning, but I avoid copying AI-generated content verbatim. The goal is not expediency but authenticity. My personal study, meditation, and prayer are indispensable to every page written.
- 2 Maintain human oversight and moral responsibility: AI lacks moral agency and theological conviction. Human discernment is necessary to evaluate the appropriateness, tone, and truthfulness of all content.
- 3 Use AI to enhance, not replace, human creativity: AI serves as a helpful assistant but never replaces the divine inspiration that flows from prayerful engagement with the text. The Holy Spirit—not a machine—is the true illumination of Scripture.

These guidelines ensure that *Shaped by Scripture* is not only a tool of spiritual formation but also a product of integrity and pastoral care.

¹ I have chosen to include this disclosure and set self-imposed guidelines because the use of AI in writing and research remains a point of ethical concern and public skepticism. In the interest of transparency and pastoral integrity, I believe it is important to clarify how these tools were used in a supportive— not substitutive— role in the development of this work.

Shaped by Scripture

Introduction to *Shaped by Scripture*

Shaped by Scripture exists to help you plant God’s Word deep in your heart so it can transform your life. This resource is designed to guide you toward Scripture memorization and to equip you with the Word of God. Life in general—and the Christian life in particular—is spiritual warfare. Every believer faces continual pressures from the world, the culture, and the enemy of our souls. Yet God does not leave us defenseless. He gives us His Word to shape us, strengthen us, and sharpen us for victory.

The Bible says in Proverbs 7:2-3, “Keep my commandments and live; keep my teaching as the apple of your eye; bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart.” Notice how this verse begins with both a command and a promise: *Keep the Lord’s commandments—and live*. When God’s Word is hidden in your heart, it becomes your shield, your guide, and your joy.

Why We Created *Shaped by Scripture*

In an effort to promote Scripture memorization and spiritual growth, *Shaped by Scripture* was developed to guide participants in learning, understanding, and applying God’s Word. Over the course of a year, you will explore 12 unique themes covering 50 selected verses (with mid-year and end-of-year breaks for reflection). Each monthly booklet introduces a new theme, providing both an “entry point” for new participants and a “re-engagement point” for returning participants.

How to Use This Resource

Each week follows a simple rhythm designed to help you memorize Scripture and grasp its meaning:

- **Day 1 – Memorization & Meditation:** Learn the verse, reflect on the weekly theme, and receive prompts to begin memorization.
- **Day 2 – Contextual Understanding:** Discover the historical and biblical context so you can see how the verse fits into the larger story of Scripture.
- **Day 3 – Theological Insight:** Based on context, explore what the passage teaches about God, His character, and His purposes.
- **Day 4 – Personal Application:** Using the Inductive Bible Study method (Observe, Interpret, Apply), discover how the verse directly speaks into your life.
- **Day 5 – Recap & Reinforcement:** Review, rehearse, and reinforce what you’ve learned to lock the verse and its truths into your heart.

A Word of Encouragement

For some, memorizing Scripture comes naturally. For the rest of us, it feels daunting. Be encouraged—*Shaped by Scripture* is designed to support learners at every level. By investing a few focused minutes each day, you will develop the skill of Scripture memorization and also a deeper appreciation of God’s Word. Over time, you’ll look back and realize you’ve retained far more than you expected, and more importantly, you’ll be shaped by the living Word of God.

Dr. Scott K. Thomas II
Senior Pastor

From Death to Life: Introduction

The Saving Power of the Cross and Resurrection

March 9 – April 3, 2026

From the opening pages of Scripture to its final promise, the Bible tells a unified story of God bringing life out of death. In this great redemptive narrative, humanity’s deepest problem—sin—meets God’s greatest provision—a Savior who heals, forgives, and restores. The cross is not merely a symbol of suffering; it is the place where God’s Son secures our healing and opens the way for new life. When we understand the seriousness of sin and the sufficiency of Christ, the message of salvation becomes more than information we believe; it becomes the foundation of a transformed life.

This theme invites us into a theologically rich reflection on the gospel: the depth of our brokenness, the power of divine grace, and the victory of Christ’s atoning work. As we trace the story from our need for rescue to God’s provision through His Son, we see the heart of God revealed—holy, just, compassionate, and merciful. Christ not only takes our place but becomes the perfect sacrifice for our sin, satisfying what we could never satisfy and giving what we could never earn. Through His death and resurrection, the impossible becomes true: sinners are forgiven, hearts are made whole, and believers are raised to walk in newness of life.

Each week explores a key truth in this journey of redemption—our healing through the wounded Savior, our universal need for grace, Christ as the complete and final sacrifice for sin, and the new life believers receive through union with Christ. Together, these verses form a sweeping portrait of salvation from beginning to end. As we meditate on these truths, we learn *what* God has done for us, and *who* we are because of His saving work—people shaped, restored, and raised to life by the grace of Jesus Christ.

Week 1	<i>The Wounded Savior Brings Our Healing</i>	Isaiah 53:5
Week 2	<i>All Have Sinned, Grace Makes Us Whole</i>	Romans 3:23-24
Week 3	<i>Jesus Is the Sacrifice for Our Sin</i>	1 John 2:2
Week 4	<i>We Are Raised to Walk in New Life</i>	Romans 6:4

The Wounded Savior Brings Our Healing March 9, 2026

“But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.”

Isaiah 53:5

Few discoveries in modern history have strengthened confidence in the reliability of the Bible as powerfully as the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, ancient Jewish manuscripts were uncovered in caves near the ancient settlement of Qumran, along the northwest shore of the Dead Sea. Among these discoveries were fragments from nearly every book of the Old Testament, including a remarkably well-preserved copy of the book of Isaiah found in Cave 4.

The significance of these scrolls cannot be overstated. Before their discovery, the oldest complete Hebrew manuscript of the Old Testament dated to around AD 900. The Dead Sea Scrolls, however, date back as early as the second century BC—over a thousand years older. When scholars compared the Isaiah manuscripts from the Qumran with later Hebrew copies, they found something astonishing: the text was virtually unchanged. Word for word, phrase for phrase, the message had been faithfully preserved.

This discovery directly challenged a long-standing historical objection. Some Jewish interpreters had argued that passages describing a suffering or wounded servant—especially Isaiah 53—were either misinterpreted by Christians or shaped after the time of Jesus to fit Christian beliefs. The Dead Sea Scrolls decisively refuted that claim. Isaiah 53 existed in full form centuries before Jesus of Nazareth was born. The portrait of a wounded, suffering servant was not a Christian invention; it was already embedded in the Jewish Scriptures, waiting to be fulfilled.

That reality gives Isaiah 53:5 tremendous weight. It is not poetic coincidence or a forced interpretation. It is prophecy—clear, deliberate, and fulfilled in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Explanation of Isaiah 53:5

Isaiah 53:5 stands at the heart of the gospel. It explains what Jesus endured and why He endured it. Every phrase moves us deeper into the meaning of the cross and the grace of God.

“But he was pierced for our transgressions...”

The word *pierced* points to violent, intentional harm. It speaks of wounds inflicted by others. Isaiah is clear that the suffering servant does not suffer for His own wrongdoing. He is pierced *for our transgressions*. Transgressions are acts of rebellion—crossing a line God has clearly drawn. Jesus was not punished because He failed; He was punished because we did. The nails in His hands and feet were not accidents of history. They were the means by which God dealt with human sin.

“He was crushed for our iniquities....”

If transgression describe outward acts, iniquities describe inward corruption. Iniquity is the twisted nature of the human heart. To be *crushed* means to be broken under immense weight. At the cross, Jesus bore the full weight of humanity’s sinful condition—not only what we do, but who we are apart from God. This phrase reminds us that salvation is deeper than behavior change. It addresses the brokenness at the core of our lives.

“Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace...”

Chastisement refers to corrective punishment. Peace, in the biblical sense, is more than calm feelings; it is restored relationship. Because Jesus accepted the punishment we deserved, peace between God and humanity became possible. This peace is not earned. It is given. It flows from substitution—Jesus in our place—so that hostility is replaced with reconciliation.

“...and with his wounds we are healed.”

This healing is often misunderstood. While God certainly cares about physical healing, Isaiah is speaking primarily about spiritual restoration. Sin wounds the soul. Guilt, shame, separation, and death are its consequences. Through the wounds of Christ, those deeper injuries are

healed. Forgiveness replaces guilt. Grace replaces shame. Life replaces death. The cross becomes the place where broken people are made whole.

When we look at Isaiah 53:5 through the lens of Jesus' life, the fulfillment is unmistakable. He was pierced by nails and a spear. He was crushed under suffering and judgment. He bore chastisement in silence. And through His wounds, salvation came to the world. What Isaiah foretold Jesus fulfilled completely.

Isaiah 53:5 also invites a personal response. It is not merely information to be studied; it is truth to be received. The wounded Savior brings healing, but that healing must be embraced through faith. As you begin memorizing Isaiah 53:5 this week, allow the words to move from the page into your heart.

Memorization & Meditation

1. Read the verse aloud - Read Isaiah 53:5 slowly, out loud, at least twice. Hearing Scripture engages your mind and heart together. Pay attention to the rhythm and weight of each phrase.
2. Write the verse down - Write the verse by hand. Do not rush. Writing helps slow your thinking and strengthens memory. Notice which words stand out as you write.
3. Reflect on the meaning - Ask yourself: What did Jesus endure for me? Which phrase of this verse speaks most directly to my current spiritual need—forgiveness, peace, or healing?
4. Pray the verse - Turn Isaiah 53:5 into a prayer. Thank Jesus for bearing your sin. Confess areas where you need healing. Ask God to help you live in the peace Christ has secured. If you need help, pray the prayer below.

Father, thank You that Your Son was pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities. We praise You that the punishment that brought us peace was placed upon Him, and that through His wounds we are healed. Help us to live each day in humble gratitude, trusting fully in the healing, forgiveness, and peace You have provided through Jesus. Shape our hearts to walk in obedience as those made whole by Your grace. In Jesus' name, amen.

“But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.”

Isaiah 53:5

Isaiah 53:5 stands within one of the most profound and carefully constructed passages in all of Scripture. The book of Isaiah was written by the prophet Isaiah, who ministered primarily in Judah during the eighth century BC. His prophetic work spanned the reigns of several kings and addressed a nation facing moral decay, political instability, and the looming threat of exile. Isaiah spoke God’s Word into a world marked by fear, misplaced trust, and spiritual rebellion—yet his message consistently balanced warning with hope.

The immediate setting of Isaiah 53 is found within what scholars often call the “Servant Songs” (Isaiah 42-53). These passages describe a mysterious “Servant of the LORD” who would accomplish God’s redemptive purposes, not through military power or political dominance, but through obedience, suffering, and sacrifice. Isaiah 53 functions as the climax of these songs. Rather than presenting a conqueror triumphant by human standards, the chapter portrays a servant who is rejected, misunderstood, and afflicted.

The occasion behind this prophecy is Israel’s need for restoration—both spiritually and covenantally. God’s people had repeatedly broken faith, and exile was either imminent or already underway. Into that broken reality, Isaiah speaks of a future work of God that would address not only external circumstances but the deeper problem of sin itself. Isaiah 53:5 is central to this message because it explains *why* the Servant suffers. His wounds are not accidental. His pain is not meaningless. The verse declares that the suffering of the Servant is substitutionary— “for our transgressions” and “for our iniquities.”

In the broader context of Isaiah 53, verse 5 serves as a theological anchor. The surrounding verses describe humanity’s failure (“we have gone astray”) and God’s intentional plan (“the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all”). Isaiah 53:5 connects human guilt with divine

provision. Healing, peace, and restoration are not achieved through human effort but through the Servant's obedience and suffering. This verse prepares the reader to understand that redemption comes at great cost—and that God Himself provides what He requires.

Understanding Isaiah 53:5 in context helps us see that this verse is not an isolated promise of comfort. It is part of a carefully revealed plan of salvation, announced centuries before Christ, pointing forward to a Savior who would bear the weight of sin so that God's people could be made whole.

Take Action: Open your Bible and read Isaiah 52:13-53:12. As you read, note how often the passage contrasts *our condition* with *the Servant's actions*. Pay attention to repeated words like *our*, *him*, *wounded*, and *peace*.

Reflection Questions:

1. How does the broader passage explain the purpose behind the Servant's suffering, rather than simply describing the suffering itself?

2. What do you learn about God's plan for healing and restoration by reading Isaiah 53 as a complete unit rather than focusing on a single verse?

Memorization Reminder: Read Isaiah 53:5 aloud slowly. Then write it out by hand, paying attention to each phrase. Speak it again, emphasizing the words *for*, *our*, and *peace*, and thank God for the intentional grace revealed in this verse.

“But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.”

Isaiah 53:5

Isaiah 53:5 offers one of the clearest theological explanations in Scripture for how God deals with human sin. The verse states that the Servant of the LORD is “pierced for our transgressions” and crushed for our iniquities,” and that through His wounds, healing comes. These words are not poetic exaggerations; they are carefully chosen theological terms that reveal both the depth of human sin and the grace of God’s redemptive plan, as revealed in the Book of Isaiah.

The distinction between *transgression* and *iniquity* is important. While the two ideas overlap, Scripture often uses them to describe different aspects of sin. *Transgressions* refer to outward acts of disobedience—specific choices where God’s law is knowingly crossed. These are visible sins, actions that can be named, measured, and witnessed. They involve what we do. *Iniquities*, however, point deeper. Iniquity describes the inward condition of the heart—the twisted desires, attitudes, and inclinations that give birth to sinful actions. Iniquity involves who we *are* apart from God’s transforming grace.

Isaiah 53:5 teaches that the servant addresses both. Humanity’s problem is not merely behavioral but spiritual. We are not only guilty of sinful actions; we are shaped by sinful hearts. The Servant is wounded for what we have done and crushed for what we are by nature. This reveals the comprehensive nature of God’s salvation. God does not merely restrain sinful behavior; He heals the root of sin itself.

At the heart of this verse is the doctrine of substitutionary atonement. The Servant suffers *in place of* others. The punishment that rightly belongs to humanity is laid upon Him. The phrase “the chastisement that brought us peace” shows a transfer taking place: judgment falls on the Servant so that peace can be given to the guilty. This

is not accidental suffering or symbolic pain—it is intentional, divine substitution.

Isaiah makes clear that healing does not come from self-improvement, moral reform, or religious effort. Healing comes through the Servant's wounds. God's justice is satisfied, and God's mercy is extended, through one decisive act. Isaiah 53:5 proclaims that salvation is costly, grace is intentional, and healing is the result of God Himself stepping into the place of sinners.

Reflection Questions:

1. How does understanding the difference between transgression (actions) and iniquity (heart condition) deepen your understanding of human sin?
2. Why is it significant that the Servant addresses both outward behavior and inward brokenness?
3. How does substitutionary atonement shape the way you understand forgiveness and peace with God?

Memorization Reminder: Read Isaiah 53:5 aloud twice. Write the verse down, underlining the words *transgressions*, *iniquities*, and *peace*. Reflect on how each word reveals what Christ has done on your behalf, then thank God for the healing that comes through His sacrifice.

“But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.”
Isaiah 53:5

Personal application begins by allowing Scripture to move from the page into the heart and then into daily life. Using the inductive Bible study method, we first observe what the verse says, then interpret what it means, and finally apply how it should shape our lives.

When we observe Isaiah 53:5, we notice the personal language woven throughout the verse. The Servant is wounded *for our transgressions* and crushed *for our iniquities*. The result of His suffering is *our peace* and *our healing*. This verse doesn't speak in generalities. It doesn't describe an abstract group of people somewhere in history. It speaks directly to us. The repeated use of “our” demands a personal response. The verse also draws a clear connection between suffering and restoration. Wounds lead to healing. Chastisement leads to peace.

Interpreting this verse helps us understand why this matters so deeply. Isaiah 53:5 teaches that healing begins with honesty. We must acknowledge both our outward sins and our inward brokenness. Peace with God does not come from denying sin or minimizing it. It comes from trusting that Christ has fully dealt with it. The verse also clarifies the cost of our forgiveness. Peace was not free—it was purchased. Healing was not automatic—it came through sacrifice. This truth guards us from shallow faith and invites us into grateful obedience.

Application is where this verse presses on everyday life. Isaiah 53:5 calls us to stop carrying burdens Christ has already borne. Many believers intellectually affirm forgiveness but emotionally continue to live under guilt, shame, or fear. This verse invites us to release those weights. If Christ was wounded for our transgressions, we no longer need to punish ourselves. If He was crushed for our iniquities, we no longer need to hide our brokenness. Healing begins when we trust His work more than our feelings.

This verse also reshapes how we respond to suffering. While Isaiah 53:5 does not promise a pain-free life, it does promise a redeemed one. Suffering does not have the final word. God can use pain, loss, and hardship as places where His healing work becomes visible. Finally, Isaiah 53:5 challenges us to live as people of peace. If Christ absorbed judgment to give us peace, then we are called to reflect that peace in our relationships—through forgiveness, humility, and grace toward others.

Personal application means choosing daily to believe that Christ's wounds are enough—for your past, your present struggles, and your future hope.

Reflection Questions:

1. What burdens of guilt, shame, or fear are you still carrying that Isaiah 53:5 invites you to release to Christ?
2. How does knowing that peace was purchased through Christ's suffering change the way you view forgiveness?
3. In what specific area of your life do you need to live more fully as someone who has been healed by Christ?

Memorization Reminder: Read Isaiah 53:5 slowly. Write it from memory, then check your accuracy. Pause and emphasize the word *our* as you recite it. Ask God to help this verse move from your mind into your heart, shaping how you think, pray, and live.

“But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.”

Isaiah 53:5

This week you explored Isaiah 53:5 in its historical, theological, and personal context, learning that the Servant’s suffering addressed both our outward transgressions and our inward iniquities. You were reminded that true peace and healing come only through Christ’s substitutionary sacrifice, not through self-effort or denial of sin.

Recite from Memory

Without looking at your Bible, slowly recite Isaiah 53:5. If you stumble, pause, glance at the verse, and begin again. Focus especially on the phrases that explain *why* the Servant suffered and *what* His suffering accomplished.

Write It Out

Write Isaiah 53:5 by hand from memory. Afterward, compare it with the text in your Bible and correct any mistakes. Notice how writing the verse helps fix its truth more deeply in your mind.

Reflect

Take a few quiet moments to think about how this verse has reshaped your understanding of sin, forgiveness, and healing. Ask yourself how your daily life might look different if you consistently trusted that Christ’s wounds are sufficient for your peace.

Share It

Share Isaiah 53:5 with someone else—family member, friend, or fellow believer. Briefly explain what this verse has taught you about Christ’s sacrifice and why it matters to you personally.

Final Prayer

Father, thank You for the wounded Savior who took my transgressions and iniquities upon Himself. Help me to live each day in the peace and healing Jesus Christ has secured, trusting His work rather than my feelings or failures. Shape my heart and life by this truth. In Jesus' name, amen.

All Have Sinned, Grace Makes Us Whole March 16, 2026

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...”

Romans 3:23-24

Some truths level us. Other truths lift us. And sometimes, God does both at the same time.

Here is a simple illustration. Imagine standing at the edge of the Grand Canyon with a group of friends. One person takes a running start and jumps five feet. Another jumps eight feet. Someone else, feeling confident, jumps ten feet. Everyone applauds the effort. But when the dust settles, there is one obvious truth: no one made it across. The differences in distance may look impressive for a moment, but they do not change the outcome. Everyone falls short.

That illustration helps us understand why the Bible speaks so directly—and honestly—about sin. The topic can feel heavy or uncomfortable, especially in a culture that prefers encouragement over correction. Yet Scripture does not address sin to shame us. It addresses sin to prepare us for grace. Some truths level us, and this is one of them. But the good news is that God never leaves us leveled. He lifts us through His grace.

One of the more common cultural misunderstandings about sin is the belief that humanity can be divided into “good people” and “bad people.” In everyday language, this seems reasonable. We compare behaviors, intentions, and outcomes. We say things like, “I’m not perfect, but I’m not as bad as...” This way of thinking assumes that goodness is measured by comparison. As long as someone appears better than another, they feel justified.

The Bible confronts this idea directly. Scripture does not measure righteousness by comparison to others but by comparison to God’s holiness. In that light, the category of “good enough” disappears. A single sin—one failure to love God fully or obey Him completely—is enough to place a person in the category Scripture calls “a sinner.” Sin is not just about the worst thing someone has done; it is about falling short of God’s

perfect standard. This truth levels us all. No one stands taller than another before a holy God.

This is why Romans 3:23-24 is so important. Written by the apostle Paul in the book of Romans, these verses appear in a carefully reasoned argument explaining humanity's spiritual condition. Paul writes to believers in Rome, both Jewish and Gentile, showing that religious background, moral effort, and good intentions cannot produce righteousness. Everyone stands in the same place of need.

Explanation of Romans 3:23-24

"For all have sinned..."

Paul begins with a word that leaves no room for exception: *all*. This includes every category of person—religious and non-religious, moral and immoral, outwardly disciplined and openly broken. No one stands outside this statement. Sin, in Scripture, is not limited to extreme wrongdoing. It includes every failure to love God fully, trust Him completely, or obey Him perfectly. Paul's point is not to single people out, but to place everyone on the same level. This truth humbles human pride and removes the false comfort of comparison.

"...and fall short of the glory of God."

To "fall short" means to miss the intended goal. The image is that of humanity failing to reach the purpose for which it was created. God made people to reflect His glory—to display His holiness, goodness, truth, and love in the world. Sin disrupts that purpose. It distorts the image rather than displaying it clearly. Paul doesn't say humanity lacks value; he is saying humanity fails to live up to God's glorious design.

"And are justified..."

With this word, Paul shifts from the problem to the solution. *Justified* is a courtroom term. It does not mean "made perfect" or "proven innocent," but "declared righteous." The verdict changes, not because the accused suddenly became worthy, but because someone else acted on their behalf. This word assures believers that their standing with God is secure, based on His declaration rather than their performance.

“...by His grace...”

Grace explains the reason justification is possible. Grace is God’s undeserved favor toward those who cannot earn His approval. Paul makes clear that justification does not flow from effort, morality, or religious success. It flows from God’s kindness. Grace means God acts first, freely, and lovingly toward sinners who have nothing to offer in return.

“...as a gift...”

Paul reinforces grace by calling justification a gift. A gift is not negotiated, earned, or repaid. It is received. This phrase guards the gospel from becoming a transaction. Salvation is God’s providing fully what we could never supply ourselves.

“...through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

Redemption points to cost. In the ancient world, redemption described the price paid to free a slave. Paul uses this image to show that grace is free to the sinner but costly to the Savior. Christ Jesus paid the price that sin demanded. Freedom, forgiveness, and restoration come through Him alone.

Memorization & Meditation

1. **Read the Verse Aloud** – Slowly read Romans 3:23-24 out loud. Listen to the words and notice how the problem (sin) is followed immediately by God’s solution (grace).
2. **Write the Verse Down** – Write the verse by hand. Underline the words *all*, *grace*, and *gift*. Let the structure of the sentence guide your understanding.
3. **Reflect on the Meaning** – Ask yourself:

- Where do I tend to compare myself to others instead of trusting God's grace?
- How does this verse correct that habit?

4. Pray the Verse

Father, I confess that I have sinned and fallen short of Your glory. Thank You that You justify me by grace, not by my efforts. Help me to rest in the gift of redemption found in Christ Jesus and to live each day shaped by Your grace. In Jesus' name, amen.

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

Romans 3:23-24

Romans 3:23-24 appears within one of the most carefully reasoned theological arguments in the New Testament. The letter to the Romans was written by the apostle Paul to believers living in Rome, likely in the mid-first century AD. These Christians came from mixed backgrounds—both Jewish and Gentile—and were navigating questions about faith, law, grace, and what it truly means to belong to God’s people.

The occasion for the letter was not a crisis in the church, but a need for clarity. Paul had not yet visited Rome, yet he hoped to do so. Before arriving, he wanted to lay out a clear, unified explanation of the gospel. His purpose was to show that salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ alone and that this salvation creates a new kind of unity among believers who once stood divided by culture, law, and background.

Romans 3 plays a crucial role in this argument. In chapters 1 and 2, Paul demonstrates that Gentiles are guilty before God because they suppress the truth and live contrary to God’s revealed will. He then turns to the Jews and shows that possessing God’s law does not automatically make someone righteous. Knowing the law is not the same as keeping it. By the time Paul reaches Romans 3:23, he has carefully established that *everyone* is under sin’s power.

The setting of Romans 3:23-24 is therefore a courtroom-like presentation. Paul is presenting evidence, calling a witness (Scripture itself), and reaching a verdict about humanity’s spiritual condition. The function of verses 23-24 is to summarize the problem and immediately introduce God’s solution. Verse 23 concludes the argument of universal guilt: “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Verse 24 begins the transition into hope: sinners are “justified by his grace as a gift.”

Within the broader structure of the Book of Romans, these verses act as a hinge. Everything before them explains humanity’s need. Everything after them explains how God meets that need through Christ.

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

Romans 3:23-24

Romans 3:23-24 is short in length but rich in meaning. In just two verses, the apostle Paul introduces several of the most important theological terms in the Christian faith. These words—*sin*, *justified*, *grace*, and *redemption*—form the backbone of the gospel message. Each carries deep meaning, and together they explain both humanity’s problem and God’s gracious solution. While each term deserves far more attention than a single devotion can offer, understanding their basic meaning helps us grasp the heart of the Gospel.

The first key word is *sin*. Paul states plainly, “all have sinned.” Sin is more than a mistake or a poor choice. Biblically, sin means falling short of God’s holy standard. It includes actions, attitudes, and desires that fail to honor God as He deserves. Sin is universal—no one is exempt—and it affects both what we do and who we are. Paul’s use of this word removes comparison and excuse. Sin places all people in the same position of need before God.

The second major term is *justified*. To be justified means to be declared righteous. This word comes from the legal world and describes a verdict rather than a feeling. When God justifies a sinner, He does not ignore sin or pretend it never happened. Instead, He declares the sinner right with Him because of what Christ has done. Justification changes a person’s standing before God. It is not something we achieve; it is something God announces.

Closely connected to justification is the word *grace*. Grace is God’s undeserved favor toward sinners. Paul emphasizes that justification comes “by his grace.” This means salvation is not earned through effort, obedience, or religious performance. Grace highlights God’s initiative. He acts in love toward those who cannot fix themselves. Paul even calls grace “a gift,” making it clear that it must be received, not repaid.

Finally, Paul uses the word *redemption*. Redemption refers to the price paid to set someone free. In the ancient world, it often described the freeing of a slave. Paul uses this image to explain the cost of grace. Redemption is found “in Christ Jesus,” meaning that Jesus paid the price sin demanded. Grace is free to the sinner but costly to the Savior.

Together, these words form a connected chain: Sin reveals the problem. Justification announces the verdict. Grace explains the motive. Redemption describes the cost. Romans 3:23-24 teaches that while sin is universal, God’s grace is greater and it makes sinners whole.

Reflection Questions:

1. Which of the four theological terms—sin, justified, grace, or redemption—stands out most to you, and why?
2. How do these terms work together to explain both the seriousness of sin and the generosity of God’s salvation?
3. How does understanding justification as a declaration, not an achievement, change the way you view your relationship with God?

Memorization Reminder: Read Romans 3:23-24 aloud and pause after each key word. As you repeat the verse, say the words *sin*, *justified*, *grace*, and *redemption* quietly to yourself. Ask God to help you remember these words and to trust the truth they proclaim.

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

Romans 3:23-24

Personal application begins when Scripture moves from being something we *study* to something that *shapes* the way we think, believe, and live. Using the inductive Bible study method, we observe what Romans 3:23-24 says, we interpret what it means, and then we apply how it should influence our daily lives.

When we observe the text, we notice how direct and honest Paul’s language is: “All have sinned” leaves no room for denial or exception. The verse also connects sin with falling short of God’s glory, showing that sin is not merely about breaking rules but failing to live as God designed. We then see a sharp contrast in verse 24: those who have sinned are also “justified by his grace as a gift.” The same people who fall short are the ones God declares righteous. This contrast stands at the center of the Gospel.

Interpreting these verses helps us understand their meaning. Romans 3:23 removes the pressure to pretend. Many people carry a hidden burden of self-justification—trying to prove they are good enough, moral enough, or better than others. Paul dismantles that effort by showing that everyone stands in the same position of need. Paul does not leave us there. Romans 3:24 shows that God’s response to human failure is not rejection but grace. Justification is not earned; it is announced. Grace is not a reward; it is a gift. Redemption is not imaginary; it is costly and real, accomplished through Jesus Christ.

Applying these truths calls for personal honesty and trust. Romans 3:23-24 invites us to stop measuring ourselves by others and to start resting in God’s grace. It challenges us to release pride when we succeed and despair when we fail. If our standing with God depends on grace, then we are free to confess sin without fear and pursue obedience without anxiety. This passage also shapes how we treat others. When we

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Romans 3:23-24

This week you learned that sin is universal and that no one meets God’s standard on their own, yet God responds to human failure with grace. Romans 3:23-24 showed you that justification is a gift, purchased through Christ’s redemption, and offered freely to all who trust in Him.

Recite from Memory

Without opening your Bible, recite Romans 3:23-24 aloud. If you hesitate, pause, glance at the verse, and begin again until the words flow naturally.

Write It Out

Write Romans 3:23-24 from memory. Afterward, compare what you wrote with the text in your Bible and make any corrections. Notice which phrases are easiest to remember and which need more attention.

Reflect

1. How has God used this passage to reshape the way you think about sin and grace?
2. In what areas of your life do you need to live more fully in the freedom that comes from being justified by grace?

Share It

Share Romans 3:23-24 with someone else—either by quoting the verse or explaining its message in your own words. Briefly tell them what this passage has meant to you during the week.

Final Prayer

Father, I confess that I have sinned and fallen short of Your glory. Thank You for justifying me by grace through the redemption found in Christ Jesus. Help me to live each day resting in Your gift and reflecting Your grace to others. In Jesus’ name, amen.

From Death to Life



March 29 | 6:30 PM

Experience the hope of Easter at “From Death to Life” – a powerful musical journey celebrating the resurrection of Christ. Through worship, Scripture, and song, we’ll proclaim the victory of life over death and celebrate our risen Savior.

“He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.”

1 John 2:2

George Wilson was convicted of robbing a United States mail carrier in 1830. At the time, this crime was considered extremely serious, and Wilson was sentenced to death. While awaiting execution, an unexpected turn of events occurred. President Andrew Jackson issued Wilson a full pardon. The document was prepared, signed, and delivered. Everything necessary for Wilson’s freedom had been done. Yet something surprising happened. George Wilson refused to accept the pardon.

Because Wilson would not accept it, the case eventually went before the Supreme Court. Chief Justice John Marshall wrote the Court’s decision, stating that a pardon is an act of grace that must be received to take effect. If it is rejected, it has no power to save. Since Wilson refused the pardon, the Court ruled that it could not be forced upon him. He was later executed, not because mercy was unavailable, but because it was refused.

This historical account is both sobering and instructive. It reminds us that a gift—even a lifesaving one—must be received to accomplish its purpose. Grace offered but rejected changes nothing. Mercy extended but refused does not rescue. The tragedy of George Wilson’s story is not that he lacked a pardon but that he would not accept one freely given.

The same tension appears at the heart of the gospel. Scripture teaches that God has acted decisively to deal with the problem of sin. The solution has been provided, the cost has been paid, and forgiveness has been made available. Yet this gift, like a pardon must be received. 1 John 2:2 addresses this reality directly. It declares what God has done through Jesus Christ and invites the reader to trust in and rest upon that work.

1 John 2:2 reads: “He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.” In one sentence, the apostle John explains the heart of the Gospel—how God deals with sin, who provides the solution, and how far that solution reaches.

Laying at the heart of this verse is the clear and confident declaration that Jesus Himself is the answer to humanity's deepest problem. Sin creates separation between God and humanity. It carries guilt, consequence, and judgment. 1 John 2:2 does not deny the seriousness of sin. Instead, it proclaims that God has provided a complete and sufficient remedy. Jesus is essential for dealing with sin. He is the sacrifice that makes forgiveness possible.

At the same time, this verse presents a challenge. Accepting Christ's sacrifice requires humility. It means admitting that we cannot fix ourselves, that our efforts are insufficient, and that we are dependent on grace. For many, this is difficult. Like George Wilson, people may resist receiving what they desperately need because it requires surrender. Trusting Christ means letting go of self-reliance and receiving mercy as a gift rather than an achievement.

This tension—between desperate need and reluctant acceptance—makes 1 John 2:2 both comforting and confronting. It comforts because forgiveness is secure and sufficient. It confronts because it calls us to receive what we cannot earn.

Explanation of 1 John 2:2

“He is the propitiation...”

The word *propitiation* is not commonly used in everyday conversation, but it carries deep meaning. In Scripture, propitiation refers to a sacrifice that satisfies the righteous demands of God's justice. It means that sin has been fully dealt with. God is holy, and His holiness requires that sin be addressed. Jesus is described as *being* the propitiation (as opposed to offering a propitiation). This emphasizes that forgiveness is found in a person, not a process. Christ Himself stands in the place of sinners, bearing what justice requires.

“...for our sins...”

This phrase brings the truth of Christ's sacrifice into personal focus. John does not speak in abstract terms. He does not say Jesus dealt with sin in general, but with *our* sins. This includes every failure, every act

of rebellion, every moment of disobedience. The sacrifice of Jesus is sufficient to cover real guilt and real wrongdoing. Forgiveness is personal and specific.

“...and not for ours only...”

With this phrase, John expands the reader’s perspective. The work of Christ extends beyond a small group or special category of people. God’s grace extends beyond ethnicity, background, or religious history. This statement guards against spiritual pride and reminds believers that salvation is never a private possession to be protected, but a gift meant to be proclaimed.

“...but also for the sins of the whole world.”

The final phrase emphasizes the scope of Christ’s sacrifice. John is not teaching that every person is automatically saved, but that Christ’s atoning work is sufficient for all and available to all. No one is excluded from the offer of forgiveness. This is no sin too great, no past too broken, and no person beyond the reach of Christ’s sacrifice. The pardon has been issued to the world. The question that remains is whether it will be received.

1 John 2:2 calls us to trust fully in what God has done through Jesus Christ. Like the pardon offered to George Wilson, salvation is an act of grace that is not forced but must be received. The tragedy of rejected mercy still exists, but so does the beauty of grace accepted. In Christ, forgiveness is complete, justice is satisfied, and life is offered freely to all who will receive it.

Memorization & Meditation

1. Read the Verse Aloud

Slowly read 1 John 2:2 aloud. Emphasize the words *He*, *propitiation*, and *whole world*.

2. Write the Verse Down

Write the verse by hand. Circle the word *propitiation*. Reflect on what it reveals about both God's holiness and God's love.

3. Reflect on the Meaning

Ask yourself:

- Why is it important that Jesus Himself—not something He did—is called the propitiation?
- How does this verse shape the way I view forgiveness?

4. Pray the Verse

Father, thank You for sending Jesus to be the sacrifice for my sins. Help me to trust fully in what He has done and to live in gratitude for the mercy You have shown. In Jesus' name, amen.

“He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.”

1 John 2:2

1 John was written by the apostle John near the end of the first century to a community of believers who were struggling with confusion and uncertainty about their faith. These Christians were not facing persecution from outside the church as much as confusion from within it. False teachers had begun to spread ideas that distorted the gospel. Some claimed that sin was not a serious problem, while others suggested that possessing special spiritual knowledge mattered more than living a faithful and obedient life. As a result, many believers were left unsure about forgiveness, holiness, and their assurance before God.

John writes this letter to bring clarity, correction, and comfort. His purpose is to ground believers in truth. Throughout the letter, John repeatedly returns to the basics of the Christian faith: who God is, what Christ has done, and how believers are called to live in response. He wants his readers to know that their faith rests on something solid, not on feelings, moral perfection, or secret knowledge.

In the opening chapters, John presents two truths that must always be held together: God is light, and God is love. Because God is light, He is perfectly holy and truthful. Sin cannot be ignored, excused, or redefined. Walking with God means living honestly before Him. At the same time, God is love. His holiness does not drive sinners away; His love moves Him toward them. These two truths shape the entire message of the letter and provide the framework for understanding 1 John 2:2.

The immediate context of this verse is especially important. Just before it, John openly acknowledges that believers still struggle with sin. This admission is realistic and pastoral. John does not deny the ongoing presence of sin in the Christian life, nor does he suggest that true believers never fail. However, he refuses to let this truth lead to fear or despair. Instead, he directs attention to Jesus Christ, whom he describes as both an advocate and a sacrifice. Jesus speaks on behalf of sinners before the Father and stands as the sufficient offering that secures forgiveness.

“He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.”
1 John 2:2

Few words in Scripture carry as much meaning and importance as the word *propitiation*. Though unfamiliar to many readers, this term stands at the center of the Christian understanding of salvation. To understand the gospel clearly, believers must understand what propitiation means and why it matters. 1 John 2:2 uses this word intentionally to explain how God deals with sin in a way that is both just and merciful.

Propitiation describes the act by which sin is fully dealt with through sacrifice. Scripture teaches that God is holy, righteous, and good. Because of his holiness, God responds to sin with rightful judgment. This response does not arise from anger that is uncontrolled or unfair. It flows from God’s goodness and His commitment to what is right. Sin damages what God created for good, and justice requires that this damage be addressed. Propitiation affirms that sin carries real consequences and cannot simply be ignored.

At the same time, propitiation reveals the depth of God’s mercy. God does not require sinners to resolve their own guilt or bear the full weight of judgment themselves. Instead, God acts on their behalf. He provides the sacrifice that justice requires. Jesus Christ willingly bears the judgment sin deserves so that forgiveness can be offered freely to those who trust in Him. This truth shows that salvation begins with God’s initiative, not human effort.

The potency of propitiation lies in its completeness. Jesus does not partially address sin or temporarily cover guilt. He fully satisfies the demands of God’s justice. His sacrifice accomplishes what sinners could never accomplish on our own. Because of this, forgiveness rests on a firm foundation. Believers can approach God with confidence, knowing that sin has been dealt with fully and finally through Christ.

Propitiation also guards the gospel from misunderstanding. It keeps forgiveness rooted in truth rather than emotion. God’s mercy does

not minimize sin; it overcomes it through sacrifice. The cross stands as clear evidence that God takes sin seriously and loves sinners deeply. Justice and mercy do not compete at the cross; they work together in perfect unity.

Understanding Jesus as propitiation shapes how believers view the cross and their relationship with God. The cross represents a deliberate act of redemption. God planned it, Jesus accomplished it, and the Spirit applies its benefits to those who believe. This truth invites believers to live with humility, gratitude, and assurance. Because Jesus is the propitiation for sin, forgiveness is secure, grace is sufficient, and hope stands firm.

Reflection Questions

1. According to the theological insight, why does God's holiness require that sin be fully dealt with, and how does propitiation address this need?
2. How does understanding Jesus as the one who bears the judgment for sin strengthen a believer's confidence in forgiveness?
3. In what ways does the idea of propitiation shape how you view the cross and your relationship with God on a daily basis?

Memorization Reminder: Read 1 John 2:2 aloud three times today—once slowly, once at a normal pace, and once from memory as best you can. Do not rush. Allow each phrase to settle before moving on. Remember, memorization is not about perfection but about faithful repetition and growing familiarity with God's Word.

“He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.”
1 John 2:2

Scripture shapes believers most deeply when its truths move beyond understanding and begin to guide daily life. 1 John 2:2 does more than explain what Jesus has done; it invites believers to live with confidence, humility, and hope rooted in His finished work. Using the inductive Bible study method helps us move carefully from the text itself to meaningful application.

When we observe the verse, we notice that its focus rests firmly on Jesus. The verse begins with the words, “He is the propitiation.” Forgiveness is anchored in who Christ is, not in what believers feel or how well they perform. The verse also makes clear that sin is taken seriously. The need for a propitiation shows that sin carries real weight and requires a real solution. At the same time, the verse expands outward, declaring that Christ’s sacrifice reaches beyond one group to the whole world. These observations reveal both the depth and the breadth of God’s saving work.

As we interpret the verse, its meaning becomes clearer. Propitiation teaches that Christ fully satisfies the demands of God’s justice. God does not overlook sin, nor does He leave sinners to face judgment alone. Instead, He provides the sacrifice Himself. Jesus bears what justice requires so that mercy can be offered freely. This truth connects directly with the context of 1 John. John writes to believers who still struggle with sin and need assurance. He points them away from denial or fear and toward Christ’s completed work. Forgiveness rests on a historical act—the cross—not on emotional strength or spiritual performance.

The application of this verse calls believers to live differently. Many Christians carry unnecessary guilt, believing they must constantly earn forgiveness or fear losing it. 1 John 2:2 invites believers to rest. If Jesus truly is the propitiation for sin, then believers no longer need to hide failure, pretend perfection, or live in despair. We are free to confess sin honestly, knowing forgiveness stands secure.

This truth also shapes how believers pursue obedience. Holiness flows from gratitude rather than fear. Because forgiveness is secure, obedience becomes a response of love instead of an attempt to earn acceptance. The verse also influences how believers view others. If Christ's sacrifice is sufficient for the whole world, then no person falls outside the reach of grace. Believers grow in patience, compassion, and hope as they remember that the same mercy extended to them remains available to others.

Living in light of 1 John 2:2 means trusting fully in Christ's finished work and allowing that trust to shape confession, obedience, and relationships each day.

Reflection Questions

1. According to the devotion, how does knowing that Jesus fully satisfies God's justice change the way you respond to your own sin?
2. In what ways does understanding forgiveness as secure in Christ free you to confess sin honestly and pursue obedience with gratitude?
3. How does remembering that Christ's sacrifice is sufficient for the whole world shape the way you view and treat other people?

Memorization Reminder: Before ending the week, read 1 John 2:2 aloud one final time. Then close your Bible and recite the verse slowly from memory. If you pause or forget a phrase, glance back and begin again.

“He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.”

1 John 2:2

This week you learned that Jesus is the sacrifice for sin, fully satisfying God’s justice and fully revealing God’s love. 1 John 2:2 reminded you that forgiveness is secure, sufficient, and offered to the whole world through Christ.

Recite from Memory

Recite 1 John 2:2 aloud without looking. Repeat until the verse flows naturally.

Write It Out

Write the verse from memory. Compare it with Scripture and note any corrections.

Reflect

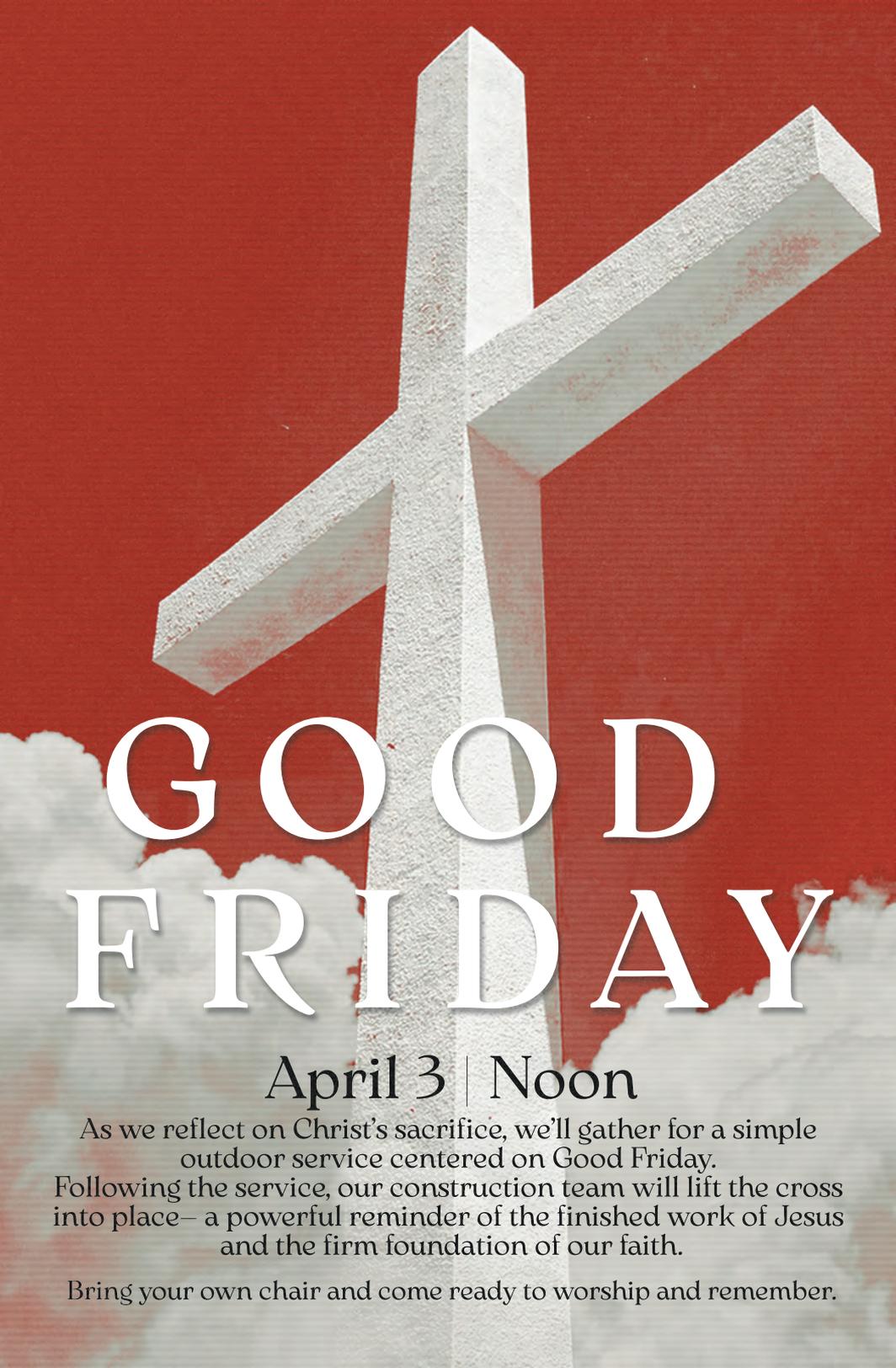
1. How has this verse shaped your understanding of forgiveness?
2. How does knowing Jesus is your propitiation bring peace and confidence?

Share It

Explain 1 John 2:2 to someone else in your own words. Share why this truth matters to you.

Final Prayer

Father, thank You for sending Jesus to be the sacrifice for my sins. Help me to trust fully in His finished work and to live each day in gratitude, obedience, and hope. In Jesus’ name, amen.



GOOD FRIDAY

April 3 | Noon

As we reflect on Christ's sacrifice, we'll gather for a simple outdoor service centered on Good Friday. Following the service, our construction team will lift the cross into place— a powerful reminder of the finished work of Jesus and the firm foundation of our faith.

Bring your own chair and come ready to worship and remember.

"We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in the newness of life."

Romans 6:4

In 1519, the Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés landed with his men on the coast of what is now Mexico. Popular retellings say he ordered the ships burned so retreat would be impossible. While historians note this detail is embellished, the central action is clear. Cortés beached the ships, stripped them of supplies, and rendered them unusable. The result was decisive. There would be no return. Whatever lay ahead, his men would face it without a way back. The power of this story does not rest on whether the ships were burned, but on what the act represented. Cortés forced a moment of commitment. His men were no longer explorers with options. They were fully given to the path before them. Retreat was removed from consideration.

This story resonates because it reflects something deeply human. We often want change without finality and commitment without surrender. We prefer to keep an exit open in case faith becomes costly or obedience uncomfortable. Yet lasting transformation requires a clear break with what came before. At some point, the ships must be stripped and left behind.

Romans 6:4 describes this same decisive break at a deeper level. Paul explains that the Christian life is grounded in death, burial, and resurrection. Through union with Christ, believers have been buried with Him and raised to live a new life.

Like Cortés's men on the shore, believers must recognize that returning to the old life is no longer an option. Sin is no longer home. Death no longer defines the future. Paul presents a completed work of God that reshapes identity and direction. The call to walk in newness of life flows from what has already occurred: believers have been buried with Christ and raised with him.

Explanation of Romans 6:4

“Therefore...”

Paul draws a conclusion from his teaching on grace. Grace does not make sin irrelevant. It frees believers from sin’s rule. Romans 6:4 explains why continuing in sin conflicts with the Gospel.

“we are buried with Him...”

Burial confirms death. Paul’s language expresses that believers are more than associated with Christ’s death, we were buried with Him. The old self—defined by sin and ruled by death—has been laid in the grave. This speaks first to identity, not behavior. The believer’s former way of life has come to an end.

“by baptism into death...”

Baptism is the visible sign of this spiritual reality. Going under the water pictures burial; coming up pictures resurrection. Baptism does not cause salvation, but it proclaims what God has done through faith in Christ: His death counts as our death. The power of sin has been broken.

“in order that...”

This phrase introduces purpose. God’s goal is not simply forgiveness of sin but transformation of life. Burial with Christ makes resurrection possible. New life flows from union with Him.

“just as Christ was raised from the dead...”

Paul grounds the believer’s hope in the historical resurrection of Jesus. Christianity stands on the truth that Jesus truly died and was truly raised. His victory over death secures life for all who belong to Him.

“by the glory of the Father...”

The resurrection displays God’s power and faithfulness. The same glorious power that raised Jesus from the grave is now at work in believers. The Christian life is sustained by God’s active presence.

“so we too may walk...”

Paul moves from theology to daily life. To “walk” means to live with intention and direction. Resurrection life is meant to be lived out in everyday obedience.

“in newness of life.”

This phrase captures the promise of Romans 6:4. The Christian life is marked by new desires, new power, and new direction. It means real change. Because believers have been buried and raised with Christ, returning to the old life no longer makes sense. The ships have been stripped. Going back is not the way forward.

Memorization & Meditation

Read the Verse Aloud

Read Romans 6:4 slowly and out loud. Pay attention to each phrase. Hearing Scripture helps fix it in your heart.

Write the Verse Down

Write Romans 6:4 by hand. As you write, notice the movement of the verse—from burial to resurrection to walking in newness of life.

Reflect on the Meaning

Take a few moments to reflect on what this verse teaches:

According to Romans 6:4, what has already happened to the believer’s old life?

What does Paul say is the purpose of being buried and raised with Christ?

Pray the Verse

Father, thank You that through Christ I have been buried with Him in death and raised by Your glorious power. Help me to believe that my old life no longer defines me. Teach me to walk today in the newness of life You have given me. Strengthen me to live as someone who belongs to the risen Christ. In Jesus’ name, amen.



From Death
to Life

Easter Services
at Lone Oak
Sunday, April 5
9 & 10:30 AM

"We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in the newness of life."

Romans 6:4

The book of Romans was written by the apostle Paul, most likely in the mid-50s AD, near the end of his third missionary journey. Paul had not yet visited the church in Rome, but he knew many believers there and longed to strengthen them in the Gospel. Romans is not a casual letter. It is Paul's most carefully written explanation of the good news of Jesus Christ and the Gospel's implications for the entire Christian life.

The believers in Rome were a mixed group of Jewish and Gentile Christians living at the center of the Roman Empire. They came from different backgrounds, carried different assumptions, and faced pressure from both religious tradition and surrounding culture. One of the key questions facing the church was how God's grace relates to human obedience. If salvation is truly by grace, apart from works of the law, what role does obedience play? Does grace mean that sin no longer matters?

Paul addresses this question directly in Romans 6. After spending several chapters explaining justification by faith alone, Paul anticipates a dangerous misunderstanding. Some might conclude that if God's grace increases where sin increases, then continuing in sin might somehow honor grace. Paul strongly rejects this idea. His response is firm and clear: *"By no means!"* (Romans 6:2).

Romans 6:4 appears in the middle of this argument. Paul explains that grace does not leave a believer unchanged because salvation unites the believer to Jesus Christ Himself. Through faith, believers participate in Christ's death and resurrection. This means sin no longer rules over them in the same way it once did. Romans 6 is not primarily about behavior modification; it is about a changed identity.

Understanding this context helps us see the gravity of Romans 6:4. Paul is not offering a poetic image or a motivational slogan. He is declaring a spiritual reality with serious implications. To be a Christian is to belong

to the risen Christ. The old life has been buried. A new life has begun. Grace does not excuse sin; it empowers obedience.

When Paul calls believers to “walk in newness of life,” he is reminding them that the Gospel reshapes their present way of living. Romans 6:4 stands as a turning point in the letter, moving from what God has done *for us* to what God now does *in us*.

Take Action: Open your Bible and read Romans 6:1-14. Pay attention to how Paul moves from questions about sin and grace to declarations about death, resurrection, and new life in Christ. Notice how Romans 6:4 fits into the larger flow of Paul’s argument.

Reflection Questions:

1. According to the Contextual Understanding essay, what misunderstanding about grace was Paul addressing in Romans 6?

2. How does understanding the original audience and purpose of Romans help clarify the meaning of Romans 6:4?

Memorization Reminder: When memorizing longer verses, break them into small sections. Start by memorizing one phrase of Romans 6:4 at a time, then slowly add the next phrase until the whole verse comes together. Building step by step helps the verse stay with you long-term.

“We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in the newness of life.”

Romans 6:4

Romans 6:4 contains many rich theological ideas—baptism, death to sin, resurrection, God’s glory, obedience—but the central truth holding them together is union with Christ. Paul’s argument depends on the believer being truly joined to Jesus in His death and resurrection. Without this union, the call to “walk in newness of life” would sound like moral pressure. With it, the call becomes a natural response to what God has already done.

Union with Christ means that believers share in Christ’s death and resurrection because we belong to Him. Paul teaches that what happened to Christ now defines the believer’s life. Paul does not say that Christ died *for* us only, though that is true. He says that we were buried with Him and raised with Him. This language shows that the believer’s story is now wrapped up in Christ’s story. What happened to Jesus now defines what is true of us.

This theological truth matters because it reshapes how we understand obedience. Paul is calling believers to live out the life we already have. The phrase “new-ness of life” describes a present reality rooted in resurrection power. Because Christ lives, those united in Him live differently.

Union with Christ also explains why continuing in sin contradicts the gospel. If the old self has been buried, returning to sin is like trying to live out of a grave. Sin no longer has the same authority because the believer no longer belongs to the old order ruled by death. This does not mean believers never struggle, but it does mean sin is no longer our master.

Finally, union with Christ gives hope and confidence for growth. The same reminder that humbles us—that we cannot save ourselves—also comforts us. The power for new life does not come from self-discipline

“We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in the newness of life.”

Romans 6:4

Romans 6:4 invites us to slow down and observe what Paul actually says before rushing to application. Paul begins with a statement of fact: believers have been buried with Christ and raised with Him. These are completed actions. The verse does not describe a goal to achieve but a reality already established through faith in Jesus. Paul roots the Christian life in what God has done, not in what we must accomplish.

As we interpret the verse, we see that Paul’s main concern is how this new reality shapes daily life. Burial with Christ means the old life no longer defines us. Resurrection with Christ means a new way of living now shapes our steps. Paul uses the word “walk” to describe everyday choices, habits, and direction. Newness of life is not limited to dramatic moments. It shows itself in ordinary faithfulness, steady obedience, and growing trust in God.

This interpretation leads us naturally to application. Romans 6:4 calls us to live in alignment with our new identity. Because we belong to the risen Christ, we approach each day differently. We no longer ask only, “What do I feel like doing?” We ask, “What reflects the life I have received in Christ?” Walking the newness of life means choosing responses, attitudes, and actions that match who we now are.

This doesn’t result in a Christian life that feels effortless. Growth still requires discipline, repentance, and dependence on God. Yet the motivation has changed. We do not obey to become alive; we obey because we are alive. Resurrection life shapes how we speak, how we forgive, how we handle temptation, and how we love others.

Romans 6:4 also gives encouragement when obedience feels slow or uneven. Walking implies movement over time. Each step matters, even when progress feels small. God’s power is already at work within us. Our calling is to walk forward, trusting that the same glory that raised Christ from the dead is sustaining our steps today.

Living this way brings freedom. We are no longer trapped by the past or ruled by sin. We walk as people who belong to Christ, confident that new life is not only promised for the future but active in the present.

Reflection Questions:

1. According to the devotion, what facts about your identity does Romans 6:4 establish before calling you to action?

2. How does understanding “walk” as daily, ordinary faithfulness shapes your view of obedience?

3. What is one area of life where you can intentionally walk in a way that reflects your new life in Christ?

Memorization Reminder: As you finish memorizing Romans 6:4, recite the verse slowly and connect each phrase to your daily walk. Let the verse shape how you think about your identity, your choices, and the new life you are living in Christ.

“We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in the newness of life.”

Romans 6:4

This week, we have focused on the truth that believers are united with Christ in His death and resurrection. Romans 6:4 teaches that the Christian life begins with God’s decisive work. We have been buried with Christ, raised by His power, and called to walk in newness of life. This life is not earned through effort; it is lived because we belong to the risen Christ.

Recite the Verse from Memory

Recite Romans 6:4 out loud without looking. Speak it slowly and confidently, letting each phrase remind you of your life in Christ.

Write the Verse without Looking

Write Romans 6:4 from memory. Do not worry about perfection. Use this exercise to strengthen recall and understanding.

Reflect on Your Week

Take a few moments to reflect on how this verse has shaped your thinking or actions this week. Where have you seen evidence of change?

Share It

Share Romans 6:4 or one insight from this week with another person. Speaking Scripture aloud reinforces its place in your heart.

Final Prayer

Father, thank You for uniting me with Christ in His death and resurrection. Thank You that my old life no longer defines me. Help me continue to walk in the new life You have given. Strengthen my faith, guide my steps, and shape my choices so they reflect the life of Christ within me. In Jesus’ name, amen.

DAILY PODCAST

SHAPED BY SCRIPTURE

Monday - Thursday

Hear the daily devotions and reflection questions.

Friday

Join Bro. Scott for practical insights, spiritual encouragement, and Biblical truth for everyday life.





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