

## Rejoice! Reflect! Release!

In order to understand the depth and breadth of good news, sometimes one first has to understand the comparative bad news. When God finished creation, everything was very good! It was very good because there was no chaos, no conflict, no struggle, no disorder, no pain, no discord, no disease, no decline, no death – and God saw what He had made and it was very good! When Adam and Eve ignored and violated God’s law, sin entered. Sin – *the violation of God’s law – defilement of any of His commands – going beyond the boundaries He has established – rebellion to God – ingratitude for anything and everything* – separates us from Him. Each of us has sinned. Talk about bad news! This is horrible! Unless there is Good News, sin will keep us chained to its slavery now on earth and for eternity in hell.

Ready for the Good News – really, really God News?! Sin and its mastery can be defeated! You do not have to live a lifestyle of selfishness or rebellion or living outside the boundaries your loving Creator established! Your future has a reality that is eternally glorious! God can deliver you from every single sin! God will forgive you! God gives meaning to life and makes joy complete! You and I do not deserve it – but that is how awesome God is! He brings Good News and changed lives to us – the undeserving! There is only one way to accomplish all of this and victory over sin: Jesus Christ, God’s only Son – the second Person in the Trinity. Jesus humbled Himself, came to earth, died on the cross, and three days was raised to life, and is right now sitting at the right hand of God the Father interceding for all those who have committed their hearts, minds, and souls to Him. He shed His blood so that each of us in this room today would be able to: (1) understand, through the power of this Holy Spirit, the third Person in the Trinity, how serious God is about sin; and (2) to accept the gift of salvation and eternal life with Him. How can we be sure we are saved? According to God’s Holy and Perfect Word: Rejoice! **“Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”** Romans 10:9 ESV

Once we have the assurance that we have made Jesus Master and Savior of our lives, we must continually focus on pleasing Him and being accountable to Him for every sin. 1 John 1:9 is clear: **“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”** This is an essential, ongoing step in our spiritual growth. We grow spiritually as we consciously and openly face the reality of our sinfulness and confess it. We must examine our lives in light of Scripture. We must deal with the dead weight that drags down the process of growing up strong in His Word and in His perfect ways. We must not make excuses for coloring outside the lines God has drawn. When we are humble and acknowledge & confess our sins God is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from everything that violates His law and His principles.

Once we are born again and are committed to following Jesus, God has promised to hear our prayers and answer us according to His will. John 16:24 assures us of this incredible promise: **“Until now you have asked nothing in My Name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.”** Communication is essential. We need to see this Scripture as God promising to hear us as we express adoration, praise, thanksgiving, confession, intercession, and requests. All of these forms of communication enable us to draw closer to God. Regular time alone with God – talking to Him and listening to Him – are vitally important in each of our lives.

Not only do we have amazing reasons to **rejoice** because of the incredible Good News and to seriously **reflect** on our daily thoughts, motive, and activities to evaluate what we are doing for Him and His kingdom and to confess our sin to Him, we also have reason to **release** every care – every burden – every loved one -- every request – into His loving hands knowing full well that they could not be placed anyway better!

Let’s take time now with our eyes closed and our minds focused ... to seriously reflect on the Scrapbook we are making daily and continually for God, our Creator and Sustainer. Imagine our **living** pages in the Scrapbook we present to God at the close of each day. What **embellishments** on those pages are not pleasing to the eyes of God? What **titling** work should be confessed and removed from the pages? What are **themes** of your pages which clearly give the glory to you or your loved ones and not God? Are **brads** holding things on your living pages which should be released? What type of **journaling, hidden or in full view**, did you write on your pages today? What things are you “hiding” in an **envelope** on your page all the while knowing full well you cannot hide anything from God?