

**(i) Scripture.**

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

Working together with Him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain.

2 Corinthians 5. 17 – 6. 1 (*English Standard Version—emphasis added*)

**(ii) Food for thought.**

**'Be clothed with humility' (1 Pet. 5. 5).**

1. 'It is not true humility to doubt, and underrate, until it becomes easy to deny altogether the work of the Holy Ghost within us — it is true humility and lowliness to confess His work, bear testimony to His operation, and ascribe to Him all the power, praise, and glory.

(Octavius Winslow, '*Personal Declension*', page 151.)

2. 'In looking to Christ it is our privilege to forget ourselves. True humility does not so much consist in thinking badly of ourselves as in not thinking of ourselves at all. I am too bad to be worth thinking about. What I want is, to forget myself and to look at God who is indeed worth all my thoughts'.

(J. N. Darby, '*Why do I groan?*', Collected Writings, Volume 12, page 197.)

**'After His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He also went up' (John 7. 10).**

'Jesus's brothers urge Him to go to Jerusalem so His disciples and the world can see the works He does, apparently assuming that He "seeks to be known **openly**" (John 7. 4) ... This understanding of what the brothers of Jesus have suggested ... allows us to see no contradiction between Jesus's saying He is not going up to the feast in verse 8 and His going up to the feast **privately** in verse 10. Jesus does not mean he is not going at all.

'Jesus explains Himself in verses 6–8. He states that He will not take the unbelieving advice of His brothers and go up to Jerusalem because His "time has not yet come". While His brothers can go up, the time for Jesus to do so **publicly** has not yet arrived. That time will arrive at the triumphal entry narrated in John 12. 12–19, when Jesus will declare that "the hour has come" (John 12. 23)'.  
(J. M. Hamilton Jr, '*Did Jesus Lie to His Brothers?*', accessed at <https://www.crossway.org/articles/did-jesus-lie-to-his-brothers-john-7/>.)

**'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you ... Let not your hearts be troubled' (John 14. 27).**

'Europe trembled. Hitler's menacing armies were poised for a strike against Czechoslovakia. Attempting to appease the dreaded dictator, England's Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain travelled to Germany and, on September 29, 1938, signed the infamous Munich Pact. Upon his return, Chamberlain triumphantly announced, "I believe it is peace for our time". A year later Germany invaded Poland and World War II began.

'Was Jesus' talk of peace like Chamberlain's optimistic boast? After all, why talk of such when war, violence, greed, and ill will still abound? Although Jesus talked much about peace and promised the disciples (and us) that He would leave us His peace, He did not ignore the reality of the world's conflict.

'That's why His Passover message concerning peace was immediately followed by this clarification: "In the world you will have tribulation" (John 16. 33). Jesus was a realist. There is nothing of evasiveness or idealism in His ministry ... "These things I have spoken to you, that in me you may have peace" (John 16. 33). Christ Himself is our peace. His presence, strength, and comfort are our in every gale; for He is always with us'.

(Charles Stanley, '*A Gift of Love: Reflections for the Tender Heart*', page 105.)

**'In Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily' (Col. 2. 9).**

"The Godhead" ... that which makes God what He is and without which He would cease to be God

...

“*Bodily*” ... in Christ as incarnate, both during His historical life on earth and in His present glorified state in heaven’.

(A. L. Williams, ‘*The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: Cambridge Greek Testament*’, pages 88-89).

**‘Our momentary light affliction ... an eternal weight of glory’ (2 Cor. 4. 17).**

‘We each have our stories of struggle and pain, but some people seem to have far more than others. Some stories are so broken that it is hard to see any possibility of relief in this life. Does the Christian faith offer any hope for making sense of senselessly deep devastation and tragedy?’

‘The Christian faith contends that there is a bigger story, a broader perspective that we need if we are going to make any sense of suffering. Can our individual broken stories be fixed? Yes, by embedding them in this much bigger story in which good wins and evil loses. It’s a story that isn’t finished yet but one day will be, and justice will be carried out in its fullest sense. God will right the wrongs and comfort His people in extraordinary ways.

‘Why do Christians believe this? Because Jesus rose from the dead ... As Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans, “For I consider that the sufferings of the present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Rom. 8. 18). This life with its sorrows is not all that there is. There is more’.

(S. Dirckx, ‘*If God is Real, Why is the World so Messed Up?*’, accessed at <https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/resources/if-god-is-real-why-is-the-world-so-messed-up/>.)

**‘Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas or Jesus who is called Christ?” (Matt. 27. 17).**

‘*Barabbas*’ is a compound name based on the Aramaic words ‘*bar*’ (‘son’) and ‘*abba*’ (‘father’) and means ‘Son of a father’. (In Greek it takes a final sigma (‘s’), in common with certain masculine names.)

**The Lord Jesus** is spoken of, in the second epistle of John, as ‘the Son of the Father’ (2 John 3).

In effect, then, Pilate asks the crowd to choose between the ‘Son of a father’ and ‘the Son of the Father!’

Consider the following quotations:

(i) ‘In the case of Barabbas, we know from Mark and Luke that he had been guilty of insurrection and consequent bloodshed (Mark 15. 7; Luke 23. 19) ... Thus, by a strange irony, the hierarchy obtain the release of a man guilty of the very political crime with which they charged Christ—sedition (Luke 23. 2, 5, 25).

‘The people no doubt had some sympathy with the insurrectionary movement of Barabbas, and on this the priests worked. Barabbas had done just what Jesus had refused to do, take the lead against the Romans’.

(A. Plummer, ‘*John: Cambridge Greek Testament*’, pages 320-321.)

(ii) ‘Barabbas, we are told, is bound (‘*δέω*’) (Mark 15. 7) in prison (Luke 23. 19), alongside the ‘rebels’ or ‘bandits’ (‘*ληστές*’—Mark 15. 27) who had committed murder in the insurrection (Mark 15. 7; Luke 23. 19). The reference to ‘binding’ immediately links him to Jesus, who was also ‘bound’ (‘*δέω*’) (Mark 15. 1).

‘The differences between the two men are abundantly clear. Jesus specifically contrasted Himself with a robber (‘*ληστής*’) at His arrest: ‘Have you come out as against a robber (‘*ληστής*’), with swords and clubs to capture me?’ (Mark 14. 48).

‘His answer to the tribute question (Mark 12. 13-17) and insistence on voluntary suffering (Mark 8. 34-38) make it quite clear that He is no political activist. The two men embody quite different ideas of what it means to be Messiah, or King of the Jews: one a political aspirant, the other a suffering servant’.

(H. Bond, ‘*Barabbas Remembered*’, published in ‘*Jesus and Paul: Global Perspectives in Honour of James D G Dunn for his 70th Birthday*’, pages 59-71.)

(iii) ‘The Jews laid information against Jesus before the Roman government as a dangerous character; their real complaint against Him was precisely this, that He was *not* dangerous. Pilate executed Him on the ground that His kingdom was of this world; the Jews procured His execution precisely because it was not’.

(J. R. Seeley, ‘*Ecce Home: A Survey of the Life and Work of Jesus Christ*’, page 35.)

(iv) ‘There is a still more interesting thing about Barabbas. It is a second name and there must have been a first name, just as, for instance, Peter had been “Simon bar-Jonah”, Simon the son of Jonah.

‘Now there are certain ancient Greek manuscripts and certain Syrian and Armenian translations of the New Testament which actually give the name of Barabbas as “Jesus”. That is by no means impossible, because in those days Jesus was a common name, being the Greek form of Joshua. If

so, the choice of the crowd was even more dramatic, for they were shouting: "Not Jesus the Nazarene, but Jesus Barabbas" (John 18. 40)'.

(W. Barclay, 'John: Daily Study Bible', comments on John 18. 40.)

**'Caught up' (1 Thess. 4. 17).**

'O my sins! I am going where you cannot come, where no unclean thing shall enter nor any thing that defileth (Rev. 21. 27). Methinks, I see all my afflictions and temptations, all my infirmities and corruptions, falling off me as Elijah's mantle at his translation ...

'How canst thou doubt of ready reception ... If there was joy in Pharaoh's court when it was said, "Joseph's brethren are come", surely it will be welcome news in heaven, when it is told, "the brethren of Jesus are come"'.

(Joseph Alleine, 'The Believer's Triumph in God's Promises', added to M. Mead, 'The Almost Christian Discovered', page 230.)

**Jesus: teaching, preaching and healing.**

'The three aspects of Jesus' ministry during His earthly life included teaching, preaching, and healing: "Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people" (Matt. 9. 35). The flow of Matthew's gospel from chapters 4 to 12 shows us how this worked.

'In chapter 4, we see that, when Jesus preached and ministered the kingdom of God, saying "Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand" (Matt. 4. 17, paraphrased), He drew in masses of people from all over the area.

'In chapters 5 to 7, Jesus taught about the nature of the kingdom of God in the Sermon on the Mount.

'As soon as He came down from the mount, He began to heal, and in chapters 8 and 9 we read stories of how He ministered the power of the kingdom of God in His healing.

(Dallas Willard, 'The Scandal of the Kingdom', pages 36-37.)

**The Gospel of John.**

'Gleaming over its portal is the inscription: "No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him".

'John's *raison d'être*, also, flashes like a torch all the way through his Gospel and finds final expression at the end: "That ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His Name" (John 20. 31).

'The three synoptists simply set forth the facts, and leave them to make their own impression on the reader. Not so *John*: all is statedly selected and directed to the securing of a verdict. He is concerned not only with the facts but with the issues ... By the time anyone has gone through Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, the biggest of all decisions must be made. It may have been made before John is reached, but, if not, it can no longer be side-stepped. The reader is directly challenged, and must choose—to receive and be saved, or to reject and perish'.

(J. Sidlow Baxter, 'Explore the Book', page 271.)

**'God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself' (2 Cor. 5. 19).**

'The concept of substitution may be said to lie at the heart of both sin and salvation. For the essence of sin is man substituting himself for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting Himself for man.

'Man asserts himself against God and puts himself where only God deserves to be; God sacrifices Himself for man and puts himself where only man deserves to be. Man claims prerogatives which belong to God alone; God accepts penalties which belong to man alone'.

(John Stott, 'The Cross of Christ', page 160.)

**David's laments.**

David laments separately over two men who had sought to kill him:

(i) Over Saul (2 Sam. 1. 17-27).

(ii) Over Absalom (2 Sam. 18. 33 - 19. 4).

**Solomon's 'wise and understanding heart' (1 Kings 3. 12).**

'(There is a) difference between what we mean by wisdom and the various things the Bible means by wisdom. We usually mean something pretty generic, like "knowing how to live well and make wise choices". But whereas wisdom in the Bible can refer to something broad—such as knowing how to live in the fear of God—very often it refers to a particular skill. This may be the skill of knowing how to survive in a dangerous world (Prov. 30. 24), or some technical know-how (Exod. 28. 3).

'But one of the skills to which wisdom can refer is the skill of administration, not least the administration of justice. And transparently, that is what Solomon asks for in 1 Kings 3.

'When he responds to God's gracious offer to give him anything he asks for, Solomon acknowledges that he is only a little child and does not know how to carry out his duties (1 Kings 3. 7). What he wants therefore is a discerning heart to govern the people well, not least in distinguishing between right and wrong (1 Kings 3. 9). God praises Solomon because he has not asked for something for himself, nor even something vindictive (such as the death of his enemies), but "for discernment in administering justice" (1 Kings 3. 11). God promises to give Solomon exactly what he asked for, along with riches and honour (1 Kings 3. 12–13).

'The account of the two prostitutes each claiming the same live baby and denying that the dead one is hers, and Solomon's resolution of their case (1 Kings 3. 16–27), proves that God answered the king's request. The entire nation perceives that Solomon has "wisdom from God to administer justice" (1 Kings 3. 28).

(D. A. Carson, '*For the Love of God*', Volume 1, meditation for 1 October.)

### **(iii) Go on, smile.**

**1.** George Perkins turned to his daughter, Esther, and said: 'Your young man approached me earlier this afternoon and asked for your hand in marriage. You'll be delighted to know that I consented'.

'I am, Father', Esther replied, 'although I can't bear the thought of leaving Mother'.

'I understand, my dear', George said. 'I really don't want to stand in the way of your happiness—you *can take your mother with you!*'

**2.** Way out in the West of North America, farmer Gilbert was driving down a road. His dog was riding in the back of his pickup truck with his faithful horse in the trailer behind.

Gilbert's mind began to wander and, failing to negotiate a curve properly, he had a nasty accident.

Shortly after, a State Police Trooper came upon the scene. He saw the horse first. Being an animal lover and realizing the serious nature of the horse's injuries, he drew his service revolver and put the animal out of its misery.

Walking around the scene of the accident, he found the dog, also hurt critically. Unable to bear hearing the dog whining and howling in pain, he ended the dog's suffering as well.

Finally, he located Gilbert—who suffered several fractures—under a clump of bushes.

Rushing over to him, the Trooper called out, 'Hey there, pal, are you okay?'

Gilbert took one look at the smoking revolver in the Trooper's hand and quickly replied, '*Never felt better!*'