

Below is a list of good books and booklets for a higher vision of thankfulness and confession, as well as for thriving in the Christian life.

*How to be Free From Bitterness\** ..... pamphlet by Jim Wilson  
*On Being a Christian\** ..... by Jim Wilson  
*Revolutionary Love\** ..... by Festo Kivengere  
*The Way of the Cross* ..... by Roy Hession  
*Continuous Revival* ..... by Norman Grubb  
*Victory in Christ* ..... by C. Trumbull  
*Forgiveness: "I Just Can't Forgive Myself!"\** booklet by Robert Jones  
*Thankfulness: Even When It Hurts\** ..... booklet by Susan Lutz  
*Five Vows for Spiritual Power\** ..... booklet by A.W. Tozer  
*In the Footprints of the Lamb* ..... by G. Steinberger  
*The Value of Trials\** ..... booklet by Mrs. Judson Elliott  
*The Beat of The Drum\** ..... booklet by Faith Murray  
*Agape Leadership* ..... by Peterson & Strauch  
*Out of the Black Shadows* ..... by Stephen Lungu  
*To End All Wars* ..... by Ernest Gordon  
*The Autobiography of George Muller*  
*Basic Christianity* ..... by John Stott  
*Mere Christianity* ..... by CS Lewis  
*Hell's Best Kept Secret* ..... by Ray Comfort  
*Jesus said, "Follow Me."\** ..... booklet by Michael Green  
*The Impossibility of Agnosticism\** ..... booklet by Leith Samuel  
*Letters: Q & A On Becoming a Christian\** ..... pamphlet

*Note: \* indicates our publication or difficult to find.*

If you desire further information, or are interested in the above titles, please contact me at:

**Oasis Books**

**76 East 400 North, Logan UT 84321  
(435)753-8697 oasisbook@juno.com**

**or**

**Community Christian Ministries**

**PO Box 9754, Moscow ID 83843  
(208)883-0997 ccm@moscow.com**

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# THANKFULNESS & CONFESSION

## *The Way to an Overflowing Heart*

by Brad Scheelke

### DEAR FRIENDS,

The scriptures are filled with wonderful words of the treasures that the Father in heaven has poured out abundantly on His children in His Son, Jesus Christ. Oh how the Father has loved us in extending mercy and forgiveness toward us, before you or I had requested it, and even before we had sinned against Him. In Christ, the gift of forgiveness was waiting for your sin and mine. At the cost of Christ's blood, the Father cancelled our entire debt; He did not merely make an impossible debt manageable. He was openhearted, welcoming and even drawing people close to Himself. Christ endured the insults, misunderstandings, and pain inflicted on him by sinners, even carrying the burden of their sin to death on the cross. In His pain He cried out for His tormentors' forgiveness. We see no distance, self-protection or impatience in the Son as He suffered for sinners. He chose to embrace death for you and me.

*"But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. . . . And be kind to one another, tenderhearted forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you."*

—Ephesians 2:4-7 & 4:32 NKJV

In a phone conversation in March 2002, a friend excitedly explained how she had just read through Ephesians with a pen in hand, noting what she saw the Father had given to her in Christ. She had then taken that list of 41 blessings and prayed it back to the Father. She simply changed the phrases slightly to make each a prayer of thankfulness. She had read it much before but said that it seemed as if she had never read it. It had suddenly come alive in her heart. She was so excited that she had to go get her list and pray through part of it on the phone with me. It was obvious that her spirit had begun to soar.

Two weeks later a letter arrived from another friend who has been a believer for about 15 years. Something was different in his expression—a sense of freedom of heart that was not there before. A few days later we spoke by phone, and I casually asked him if anything had happened to him. He said that he had recently read through the first two chapters of Ephesians, noting what God had done for him. He had then prayed through those notes and chapters thanking God for what He had done for him. As he thanked the Father for choosing him before he had done anything and for loving him when he was still an object of wrath, suddenly he realized that for all his years as a Christian he had believed the lie of the enemy that he was not a good enough Christian for God to love. He laughingly said that he had done Bible studies on Ephesians and had missed it. He was obviously encouraged.

The New Testament is filled with blessings from the Father. You probably know some and may have even memorized a few. Do you know from Romans 8:1 that *“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus?”* Since learning that, you have never felt condemned, have you? You probably know that in Christ **all** of our sins have been forgiven, and that in Christ, the Father has made us worthy and acceptable. So of course, knowing that, you have never thought that you were not a good enough Christian for God to love, have you? Likewise, you have never had thoughts that the Father might reject you, have you? Since *“perfect love casts out fear,”* you never adjust your words out of fear of men and their potential offense, anger or rejection, do you? Why are we

every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (that done in the body by the hands of men)—remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (NIV)

Following are the first two chapters of Ephesians. You may want to underline the blessings you have in Christ and thank the Father for them.

# EPHESIANS 1 & 2

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,  
To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and

sometimes inconsistent with what we know? Is it that the promises of God are unclear, weak or insufficient? Let’s be honest and admit that the problem lies with us. Is it that we are not strong enough? No, God says that He is our strength. Is it that we have not tried hard enough to trust? No, you cannot try and trust at the same time. Is it that we need to learn more thoroughly the scriptures? Understanding the scriptures is important, but what we really need is to be changed by them.

The way forward is simple. It is to meditate on and rejoice in the glorious riches of our inheritance in Christ. As we revel in all Christ is for us, our weaknesses, trials and afflictions become places of comfort, strength, pleasure, pure joy, and glory (2 Cor. 1:2-4, 12:9-10, James 1:2, Romans 5:3). The problem may be twofold. First we may know a scripture passage simply as a point of information, even while our heart refuses to embrace the reality of the passage. Secondly, it is not that we stop believing the facts of Christ’s power and mercy toward us, but rather we do not **actively** remember them. Why else would you feel condemned about your sin when you have memorized Romans 8:1? A man in Christ believes a lie about the Father when he feels condemned for his sin. He believes another lie when he feels condemned for forgetting that he has no condemnation in Christ. Jesus Christ, himself, in His person, is the truth. He is our holiness, righteousness, and redemption. He has made us perfect, worthy, and acceptable to the Father. In Hebrews we read

*“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For **consider Him** who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.**”*

–Hebrews 12:1-3 NKJV

The enemy of our souls has many schemes and lies to get

you and me to look away from Jesus and to not consider Him. Let us, ***“Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”*** –Ephesians 6:10-12 NKJV In Ephesians 1-3, we get a glimpse into the invisible realities of what is “in the Lord” and what is “the power of His might.” You may have read Ephesians repeatedly, done Bible studies on it, or even memorized parts or all of it, and still notice yourself having difficulty standing against the wiles of the devil.

In the short testimonies above and following there is a common thread of thankfulness to the Father for the riches He has hidden for us in His Son. Notice carefully the **focus** of the thankfulness. It is not on what we or others do or get to do; it is not on what others have done for us or for God; it is not on how we are to respond to what God has done; it is simply on what the Father has done for us in the Son. Notice also the simplicity and intensity of what flows from the heart. Thankfulness is not the only aspect of spiritual warfare, but Ephesians 5:18-21 and Colossians 3:15-17 reveal that it is to permeate **all** of spiritual warfare. So let’s begin at the obvious. Let us often give thanks to the Father for what He has given to us in His Son, thus stirring up our hearts, and so begin to be prepared to resist all the wiles of the devil.

For ten years the Lord has given me good times of prayer several times weekly with a friend who takes several medications for “mental illness.” The focus of these times in prayer has been thankfulness for the blessings we have in Christ. Through those years he has listened much to the Bible on tape, good Bible teaching tapes, radio preaching, and Christian music. He has read the Bible and good Christian books. He has also memorized key Bible verses. But in those times of prayer, he almost never prayed aloud. He seemed to waver between discouragement and depression, almost never smiling. Fear and anxiety seemed to overwhelm him almost constantly. One day he said that he was so discouraged that the

with him. But why not take the less painful way? The longer we coddle our sins the more discipline we need from our loving Father. He is committed to molding us into the image of His dear Son to His glory and as a testimony to this world.

***“Dear heavenly Father, thank you for loving us while we were objects of wrath and for making us alive in your dear Son. Thank you for washing us clean in His blood and freeing us from the fear of death. Thank you for making your Son poor so that we through His poverty might become rich. Move our hearts to embrace the cross as your Son embraced it for us. Make us to decrease that your Son may increase. Break us for the blessing of others as you broke your Son for our blessing. Convict us deeply when we excuse and hide our sin. Thank you for flooding our hearts with joy in your Son. In Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.”***

In our faithful Lord Jesus Christ,  
Brad Scheelke  
February 2003

P.S. As our hearts begin to fill and overflow with the riches of the glory of our inheritance in Christ, should we not expect our relationships with one another in the kingdom to increasingly reflect the following passage?

***“But be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God.”***

–Ephesians 5:18-21 NKJV

Oh what a glorious vision this is of joyous and openhearted fellowship in the Father and the Son with one another. Are you willing? Am I willing? Let us choose this together.

joyous looking to His cleansing power. As He grows in brightness before our eyes, we see less of ourselves and become more sensitive to our own sins. Our sins suppress His glory. Let us be quick and honest in confession. Do you use words like: mistake, error, weakness, struggle, not God's best, or imperfection? If so, do you apply them to actions or thoughts that God has called sin, evil or wickedness? In the book of 1 Samuel, king Saul used excusing words to cover his disobedience. Notice the uncomfortable revealing words that God gave Saul through Samuel:

*“So Samuel said: ‘Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For **rebellion** is as the sin of **witchcraft**, and **stubbornness** is as **iniquity** and **idolatry**. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king.’”*

–1 Samuel 15:22,23 NKJV

God calls stubbornness to be iniquity and idolatry. Do you? Do I? Christ said that He did not come for the righteous but for the wicked. Let's not cover our sins with excuses when the Father has **already** covered them with the blood of His dear Son. That blood provides an infinite ocean of forgiveness. You cannot use words that minimize and excuse your sin without also isolating your heart from the glory of the riches of Christ and from other people. It gets ugly when you realize that this also hides the light of Christ from a condemned world. But when you speak of the evils of your own sin in the light of the riches of Christ, you give two testimonies to the holiness of God and His great love for sinners.

You will need to resist with all God's power the wiles of the devil (sometimes masquerading as Christian teaching) who will tempt you to use soft and evasive words. I feel this pressure intensely and often. Reveling in the riches of Christ will slowly draw you to the desired end. For the brother above it happened this way. He was so confused that he did not realize that he needed to confess as sin and selfishness his discouragement and depression. Yet the Father was tender

only thing he could pray for was his food, and that only rarely.

At that point, nearly three years ago, I gave him a card listing four blessings he had in Christ and asked him to thank the Father daily for them. He began to do that faithfully, aloud, when alone. We continued to pray together very often, he being silent. After about three months he began to pray aloud the items from his “prayer card.” After about five months his demeanor began to rise and he began to smile. After about ten months he joyfully said one day that the winter blues had not hit him. After one year he gave the card back and asked for a new one with more blessings on it. When he mentioned once that the rain was depressing him, I suggested that he begin thanking the Father for the rain. He did so and the rain became a welcome friend. After 1½ years he began thanking the Father for blessings not on his card. He also began praying for the needs of other people.

Part of his medication works to counteract voices that he hears. These voices had been a constant temptation to condemnation and to doubt the character of God. Recently, as he was telling his story to a woman who is plagued by voices, he cheerfully told her that his voices had faded nearly away and that the continual nightmares of the old drug parties had ceased. He attributed the changes to praying his “prayer card.” Today he is comfortable praying on the phone. He initiates conversation with other people, something impossible three years ago. He rarely feels condemned and quickly confesses believing that lie. Three years ago he felt guilty and condemned for the sins of those around him and was insensitive to his own sins. Now he is joyful in confessing his own sins—which he usually notices without help. Three years ago you would have been hard pressed to find a more depressed person. Nothing changed in his circumstances to which the world could credit the encouragement and joy. Many around him have been surprised and encouraged at the change.

Just recently the realization struck me that he has been a great blessing to me in this matter as well. During those many years of prayer with this dear brother, the Lord was working

deeper into my heart the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. Eighteen months after this brother began his

*Thank you*  
**HEAVENLY FATHER**

For loving me and sending your Son  
to die in my place;  
*and*  
For forgiving all my sins  
by your Son's blood shed on the cross;  
*and*  
For writing my name in heaven;  
*and*  
For making your Son to be all my  
righteousness and holiness;  
*and*  
For freeing me in your Son  
from all condemnation;  
*and*  
For being fully pleased with your Son  
who lives in me;  
*and*  
For promising that not one of those who  
come to your Son will be cast out;  
*and*  
For making me worthy to partake  
in the inheritance of the saints in the  
light;  
*and*  
For delivering me from the power of  
darkness and translating me into the  
kingdom of your dear Son;  
*and*  
For making me to sit together with the  
saints in the heavenly places in your Son  
at your right hand above all rule,  
power, might, and dominion;  
*and*  
For promising to bring to completion  
the work you began in me;  
*and*  
For making tribulation, affliction and  
weakness to be the place of comfort,  
pure joy, strength, pleasure, and glory.

“prayer card,” I was diagnosed with cancer. The Father immediately flooded my soul with the riches hidden in Christ, making no room for discouragement. He filled my mind and heart with meditations and songs of these simple glories hidden for all saints in His Son. The ever-expanding “prayer card” flowed through my mind in the hospital stays, doctor visits and thoughts of the future.

The intensity of the above continues to strike me more and more. Could not the blessing that this brother has found free other believers from the imaginary chains that do not bind them? Following is a refinement of some feeble attempts to communicate this blessing. It is a “prayer bookmark” for whomever is interested. This brother was excited to see it. He mentioned that the last item of thanksgiving was especially encouraging—it was new to him. It is the

one uncomfortable promise of the Father in the list. Feel free to improve this idea; add more uncomfortable promises as you like. If your experience has been like that of this brother, wavering between discouragement and depression, remember his perseverance and the Father's patience. Months passed as the Father slowly lifted him up. The Father calls us all ever higher into the glories of the Son. As your vision of the Father and Son expand, you will stand ever more firm and tall in Christ; all the while, in your own mind, you will be disappearing into smallness and reveling in the Father's perfect acceptance of you.

Please do not misunderstand and think that this “bookmark” contains promises to learn. The point of the above is to thank the Father for His tender mercies to you. Thank Him often, even aloud when alone. If you follow my dear brother's example, after some months you will likely find several pleasant, and probably unexpected changes in yourself. Prayer may become a joyful and natural expression for you. You may find yourself thanking the Father as you read scripture, as the riches seem to flow out of the pages to your heart. You may find a growing freedom to pray aloud with others, and in a way that encourages them. The mercy and forgiveness you have received will begin to overflow to others. You may become the one who offers words of encouragement in conversation. You may even find yourself eager to speak to others of your riches in Christ. The distance you now feel from others may slowly disappear as your walls of self-protection come down in the presence of the Openhearted One. But do not try to change or even seek to notice the changes. Simply begin to notice the glorious riches that are **already** yours in Christ and thank the Father often for what you notice.

Since our loving Father has commanded us to give Him heartfelt thanks always in all situations, thanksgiving is simply a submitting in honesty to the spiritual realities as He has created them. Part of that reality, which came slowly to my dear brother, is confession of sin. Confession is simply agreeing with God. We confess Christ as well as our sins. As we gaze upon Christ and His riches, confession becomes a