

## THE WELCOMING

Welcome in the name of God our Loving Creator

**All: We welcome you in His holy name**

The Lord Jesus Christ our Redeemer be with you (Ruth 2:4)

**And also with you**

May the Holy Spirit's peace be with you (John 20:19-24)

**And with your spirit**

So come! Let us receive the many generous blessings God has reserved for us

**We gladly accept them, amen**

*"Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith [or ongoing faithfulness]." "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." Habakkuk 2:4*

## CONFESSION

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God have mercy upon me, a sinner

**Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God have mercy upon me, a sinner**

*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, (Philippians 2:5)*

**All:**

**Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:**

**That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father, (Philippians 2:6-11)**

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God thank you for having mercy upon me, a sinner

**Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God thank you for having mercy upon me, a sinner**

**All: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. (Matthew 6:9-13)**

**HYMN:** Our Father in Aramaic <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= AdPiRWlam0>

## PRAISE

Let us continue to use scripture to worship the living God who even today, can change lives and work miracles. Together, as one community may we draw upon God's Word and say...

**All:**

***"Praise the Lord***

***Praise God in His sanctuary***

***Praise Him in the firmament of His power.***

***Praise Him for His mighty acts***

***Praise Him for His excellent greatness***

***Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet***

***Praise Him with the psaltery and harp***

***Praise Him with the drums and dance***

***Praise Him with stringed instruments and organs***

***Praise Him upon the loud cymbals***

***Praise Him upon the high-sounding cymbals***

***Let everything that has breath praise the Lord***

***Praise you the Lord,"*** (Psalm 150)

May we now focus our adoration upon the majestic person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, our true Saviour who forgives and cleanses our many sins

**All:** He is ***"The way, the truth and the life; no man comes to the Father but by"*** Him! (John 14:6)  
***"Neither is there any salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"*** (Acts 4:12)

Together let us worship Jesus as our ***"Lord and [our] God"*** (John 20:28b) by saying: -

**All:**

**Praise you Jesus, for who you were and for what you did,**

**Praise you Jesus, for who you are and for what you are doing,**

**Praise you Jesus, for who you will be and for what you will do,**

**Praise you Jesus, now and for all of eternity**

**For you are *"the same yesterday, today and forever"*** Amen, (Hebrews 13:8)

Moreover, may we now praise Jesus for His work of redemption...

**All:**

**Wherein, as perfect God, he became perfect Man in order to offer a perfect sacrifice for sin,** (Philippians 2:5-11 & Hebrews 5:9). As the Apostle John States: -

*The next day John saw Jesus coming unto him, and says, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me comes a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.* John 1:29-31

*And 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.

## PRAYER

Be encouraged! *"The fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."* (James 5:16) With this promise in mind, we can draw from the great prayers of Scripture to help us glorify God in both a reverent and joyful manner

**All:**

**Abba Father,** (Romans 8:15c)

**Through Your Son,** (1 Timothy 2:5)

**The Lord Jesus Christ** (James 1:1)

**Our priestly mediator,**

**We ask you to send Your Holy Spirit**

**To grant us the wisdom to pray**

**In full obedience to your holy will.**

**Also, help us to draw a clear distinction**

**Between those things we should strenuously pray for,**

**And those we should simply entrust into your hands**

**Please Father! Do not allow these intercessions**

**To be a waste of time,**

**We humbly depend upon you**

**To answer them, Amen**

Whilst trusting that we have been granted the wisdom to pray in accord with our Makers holy will, let us make specific intercessions as led by the Spirit.

A Time for Open Prayer Follows

Through our one true Mediator,

The Lord Jesus Christ, (1 Timothy 2:5)

We present to you, our heavenly Father and Creator

All of our prayers

We trust with a joyful confidence

That, in a time of your choosing

And in ways you see fit,

You will answer them to the glory of your great Name, Amen

**In the name of Jesus, we commend each and every prayer to you. In your mercy, may you graciously answer them, Amen!**

**HYMN:** When I Survey the Wondrous Cross [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iK8kYIBn\\_qI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iK8kYIBn_qI)

# BEARING WITNESS

## (EXPLORING HOW CHRIST'S DEATH CAN BLESS TRANS PEOPLE)

### Part 1: My Least Favourite Bible Passage

For most of my adult life, **2 Corinthians 12:6-8** was my least favourite bible passage. From September 1976 until November 2016 it emerged whenever I was troubled by my own trans issue. During the start of that period this passage was read to me by a Roman Catholic Priest who didn't know my situation. Decades later it came-up in a letter from a close friend (who also knew nothing of my situation). Sometimes it would emerge in sermons but most often it arose in response to prayer. I would cry '*Lord take this cup from me*' and shooting back like a barbed arrow would come Paul's words. Only after I completed an in-depth study during October-November 2016 did I grudgingly concede being Trans was my '*thorn in the flesh*' that was not going to go away. It took a little while after that before I came to accept that God's grace (or unmerited favour) was more than sufficient to bring good out of that situation. Whilst it would be an exaggeration to claim that I rejoice in being trans I certainly do rejoice in the marvellous work God has done and is doing through it. Now all guilt and shame has been crucified. What was once a raging sea of conflict has become a tranquil lake. For the first time in my life I am content with whom I am. Given where I was that is a miracle.

In hindsight, I recognize that my problem was not in failing to hear from God but rather lay in a proud refusal to listen what He was saying. Never once did I receive any intimation that He would '*cure*' me of being trans. It took four decades for this situation to be resolved. I was required to take a journey in which proud resistance gave way to a suffering helplessness which in turn gave way to a reluctant acceptance before ending with the joyful realization that Christ's grace was indeed sufficient to sustain and bless me. Miraculously, it was also sufficient to cause being trans to become a means in which God was glorified, a suicide prevented, and the Gospel honoured. Several years ago I would never have dreamt such developments were possible.

My aim is to take you along a similar journey by presenting four complementary views of what Christ accomplished for us through His death on the Cross. My intention is not to evaluate the merits of each view; instead, it is to outline them and show how they can bless trans people. The emphasis will be upon the practical rather than then theoretical. Specialised terminology will be kept to a minimum.

### Part 2: Four Views of Christ's Death

**First, the Confessional (or Demonstrative-Informative) View** stresses the open and expressive [demonstrative] nature of Christ's death – revealing something about the nature of God whilst exposing the darkness of the human heart. It informs the mind through Christian teaching and by encouraging an intelligent appreciation of his achievements. Highlighted is: -

- God's ability to personally communicate His revelation to people
- Jesus, the '*Good Teacher*' who, by His death, revealed the truth about God and humanity
- The limited human intellect and its need for enlightenment
- God's wonderful love in revealing His saving truths

However, if taken in isolation, this view can lead to a superficial intellectualism, which fails to see the need for a spiritual regeneration of the heart.

This view can bless trans people by highlighting the way God can communicate His Love to us amidst great suffering and weakness. What we have endured Christ has endured also, (**Hebrews 4:15**). This means he can sympathise with us and act as our great High Priest praying on our behalf. The wisest way to apply it is to view being Trans as an educational experience offering many lessons that if applied can be of great blessing to both ourselves and to others. The greatest tragedy in life lies not in the making of mistakes but in failing to learn from them. Here one may ask, '*Lord what are you teaching me through this?*' Joyfully, I bear witness that being trans can be an enriching educational experience.

**Second, the Judicial (or Penal-Substitution) View** stresses the way in which Christ died as the sacrificial substitute, gaining the propitiation (or pacification) of divine anger against human sin. It serves

to motivate evangelism through Christian preaching, whilst encouraging a heartfelt admiration for Christ's achievements. Highlighted is: -

- God's mercy in devising a means for people to receive forgiveness
- Jesus, the atoning sacrifice, who died in the sinner's place to open the way to God
- The human heart and its need for peace with God
- God's Holiness (moral purity) and justice

However, if held in isolation this view may lead to a sense of complacency, smugly resting upon the benefits of knowing Christ but doing little or nothing to apply them.

This view can bless trans people by highlighting the way God's mercy and forgiveness is freely available to all who want it and are willing to place their trust in Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Only He can permanently liberate us from paralysing feeling of self-condemnation and the real alienation that can exist between us and our Creator. If Christ can forgive us can we not also forgive ourselves? The wisest way to apply it is to accept that by His sacrificial death, Christ has given us a choice between belief or unbelief in its effectiveness. There's no middle ground, **(James 1:8)**. Here one may ask, *'Can I believe that what Christ accomplished through His death is more than sufficient to bring me into a relationship with my Creator?'* Joyfully, I bear witness that being trans need not stop us from being friends with God.

**Thirdly, the Moral (or Practical-Exemplary) View** stresses the inspirational effect Christ's death has upon spirit-filled Christians. It shows that Christ died to lovingly identify with the human condition no matter how squalid and to provide an example to stimulate practical moral effort. It emphasises the need for our faith is to be lived out in our daily lives. Highlighted is: -

- Divine holiness and humility in freely identifying with the human condition
- Jesus as the suffering servant whose love motivated Him to endure the worst form of suffering so that He could redeem Humanity from the slavery of sin
- The human will and its need to rely upon divine grace alone in order to practice good works
- God's personal involvement in human affairs

However, if taken in isolation this view can lead to a works-orientated approach, which reduces Christianity to a nominal observance of external moral standards. Little or no allowance is made for the inner grace and promptings of the Holy Spirit.

This view can bless trans people by highlighting the way it enabled our saviour to endure all manner of suffering and form of rejection in order to participate in our plight. Whatever we've been through He's been through. This allows Christ to deal gently with us since he was subject to a most paralysing weakness on the Cross, **(Hebrews 5:2)**. It is not some remote or uncaring deity we follow. The wisest way to apply it is to draw hope that Christ empathises with our sufferings He's actually endured them as *'a man of sorrows, acquainted with Grief,' (Isaiah 53:3)*. In gratitude we can only respond by making Him, the centre of our lives. Nothing can take his place. Here one may ask, *'Am I willing to allow Jesus to rule over every part of my life?'* Joyfully, I bear witness that doing this can effect revolutionary changes in our lives and bring immeasurable good out of being trans.

**Fourthly, the Triumphal (or Total-Victorious) View** stresses Christ's total victory over every form of human and spiritual evil. It emphasises how Christ died to release people from all types of oppression in order to bring them into eternal life. Offered is a sound hope, enabling believers to appreciate that the work Jesus did at Calvary contains far greater blessings than we can imagine. Highlighted is: -

- Divine power and creativity
- Jesus as the Warrior King who will overthrow His enemies to bring about a *'New Creation'*
- The human spirit and its need for hope
- God's determinations to overthrow evil and in accomplish His redemptive plan

However, if taken in isolation, this view can lead to a woolly-minded vagueness which assumes that *'all is best in the best possible worlds'* and *'everything will nicely pan out in the end.'* A shallow Triumphalism may prevail..

This view can bless trans people by highlighting the fact that through the Holy Spirit and ordering of personal circumstances God can provide more than enough resources for us to glorify Him and honour His Gospel. It is possible to be trans and to bear the good fruit listed in **Galatians 5:22-23**. Under God's grace our lives can be productive and useful to others. The wisest way to apply it is to be willing to combat those evils God is calling us to combat. We must never forget that we are waging a war at both the human and spiritual level, (**Ephesians 6:12**). However care must be taken to distinguish between those battles one is called to fight and those that are to be avoided. Both discernment and wisdom is required on this matter and part of this may involve seeking out the counsel of others. Relevant is the advice of **James 1:5** that encourages readers to seek divine wisdom, before embarking upon any major action. Here one may ask. *'Lord what the right way forward?'* Joyfully, I bear witness that divine wisdom and strength is available to help trans people to handle the many temptations that they face.

### **Part 3: Bearing Witness**

Paul's words in **2 Corinthians 12:6-9** are true. Christ's grace can be more than sufficient for those who believe in Him and opt to benefit from His awesome work on the cross. *'Sufficient for what one may ask?'* Briefly, the answer is *'sufficient to provide us with everything that is good and necessary for fruitful Christ-centred Living in both this life and the next.'* Rather than spend years in futile navel gazing striving to resolve the question of *'How can I reconcile my faith with being trans?'* all we need do is accept the work of reconciliation Christ has already accomplished for us on the cross. What we could never accomplish by our own efforts he has already done on our behalf – reconciled us with our creator! This may sound simple but in essence the Gospel that *"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,"* is simple and can be inclusive of trans people, (**John 3:16**). We don't need a PHD in Theology to understand this message. So, why not receive by faith the reconciliation that Christ freely offers as an act of love. When this happens we can be amazed by His grace and the way He brings immense good out of being trans.

Joyfully, I bear witness that being trans can be something that God can use for His glory and our benefit. The only appropriate response to this marvellous reality is to dedicate lives to him as a *'living sacrifice,'* (**Romans 12:1-2**). This we can now do in the following prayer.

## **PRAYERS OF DEDICATION**

Let us begin dedicating ourselves to the Lord by applying Luke 11:13 which reads *"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"*

**All:**

**Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God,** (Mark 1:1)

**Please, come into my heart and mind** (Revelation 3:20)

**Please, come in to deal with my every sin**

**And Father, send your Holy Spirit** (Luke 11:13)

**To remove any fear, doubt, confusion, and unbelief** (2 Timothy 1:7)

**On your strength alone** (Zechariah 4:6)

**I willingly accept You** (John 1:12)

**As my Saviour, Lord and God** (1 Timothy 1:15)

**Who died on the cross** (Matthew 27:50)

**To cover all my real or imagined offences**

**And who, three days later,**

**Rose bodily from the dead** (Romans 10:9)

Let us continue this time of dedication applying Romans 12:1 which reads *"By the mercy of God present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God. This is your reasonable service."*

**All:**

**On your strength, Jesus, and in obedience to your Word, I present my body and gender identity as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God. Please become the centre of my life and the foundation stone of my identity. Send your Holy Spirit to come into these areas and use them for our glory and for the honour of your Gospel. Bring good out of my gender identity and sexual orientation so my life can be a blessing to others and a source of praise to you, Amen.**

Let us close this dedication by employing the words from John Wesley's Covenant prayer.

**All: I freely and heartily yield all things to your pleasure and disposal and now, oh glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit you are mine and I am yours So be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth let it be ratified in heaven, Amen**

May you oh Lord you send your Holy Spirit to bring peace, to teach us all things and guide us into all truth, (John 14:26 & 16:23) Do this to honour your Heavenly Father who created us to live lives that are pleasing to Him. Above all, help us to appreciate and your amazing grace.

**Hymn: Amazing Grace** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NG0vH4WYChQ>

## **CLOSING PRAYERS**

By way final praise we may say together...

**All:**  
***"To the only wise God and Saviour,  
Be glory and majesty, dominion, and power,  
Both now and forever, Amen"*** (Jude 25)

This time of worship and prayer is now over drawing to a close May we now go out and serve the Lord in His World without fear or reproach, (Isaiah 51:4-16 & Jeremiah 30:10-11a).

**Amen, praise God!**

Together let us end proceedings by saying...

***"May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
The love of God our Father and  
The fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
Be with us all, forevermore, Amen"*** (2 Corinthians 13:14)

Praise you Father, bless you Jesus, thank you Spirit, Glory Alleluia, Amen