

PLEASANT SPRINGS CHURCH • DISCIPLESHIP SCHOOL • RESEARCH
BRIEF

Third World Souls — the Research

The theological research behind the sermon “Spiritual Formation of our Third World Souls”

Third World Souls — the Research Brief

Barclay • Willard • Moreland & Craig • the full Greek + ESV scripture thread

This brief gathers the scholarship behind the sermon [Spiritual Formation of our Third World Souls](#): John Barclay’s *Paul and the Gift* on what a gift meant in the Ancient Near East and the first century; forgiveness as royal debt-release from the old empires to the Jubilee; Dallas Willard’s *Renovation of the Heart* on how souls are formed and re-formed; and J. P. Moreland & William Lane Craig on the reality of the soul and why Jesus could say the Son does not know the day or hour. It began as a page of handwritten study notes — transcribed below exactly as written.

1. “σῶμα = SOMA = (The Self) (Creativeliness) — A Sphere of Sovereignty”

2. “**Third World Souls** — They live in a dimension you, with your 5 senses, cannot know who you are; because to know who you are in a dimension you have to be allowed to Hear, See, Touch, Taste and Smell by the One who gives you the ears to hear and the Eyes to see.”

3. “(Conscious / Sub-conscious) — who you are in Christ”

4. “**Spiritual Formation** — All people are Spiritually formed by the world around them; to be re-formed requires the...” *(the page ends mid-sentence)*

How the research completes the unfinished sentence.

To be re-formed requires **the Gift** — the incongruous grace of God (Barclay) received into a real, immaterial soul (Moreland & Craig), renovated by the Spirit through vision, intention, and means (Willard), until the hidden identity in Christ rises into waking life and overflows in forgiveness to others.

I. JOHN BARCLAY — *PAUL AND THE GIFT*: THE GIFT OF FORGIVENESS

John M. G. Barclay's "Paul and the Gift" (Eerdmans, 2015) begins with an anthropology of gift built on Marcel Mauss: in the ancient world there was no such thing as a "free" gift in our modern Western sense. Gifts were the glue of society — they created bonds, obligated a return, and circulated inside ongoing relationships. The Greek word *charis* (grace) is simply the ordinary word for gift/favor/gratitude and covers the whole circle of giving, receiving, and returning; it does not by itself mean "unmerited." Givers — human and divine — were expected to give discriminately, to WORTHY recipients (Seneca's *De Beneficiis* opens by naming failure to "pick out those who are worthy" as the chief cause of ingratitude). Barclay then shows that "grace" is not one thing but can be "perfected" (pushed to an extreme) along six distinct lines — superabundance, singularity, priority, incongruity, efficacy, non-circularity — and that the great interpreters (Marcion, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Barth) each perfected different combinations, which is why they talk past each other. Surveying five Second Temple Jewish texts (Wisdom of Solomon, Philo, the Qumran Hodayot, Pseudo-Philo, 4 Ezra), he finds that "grace is everywhere in Second Temple Judaism, but not everywhere the same": most held divine giving to be congruous with worth, while the Hodayot and Pseudo-Philo perfected incongruity. This repositions E. P. Sanders: covenantal nomism was right that Judaism ran on grace, but wrong to flatten grace into one thing — Sanders quietly assumed that priority entails incongruity.

Barclay's central claim about Paul: the Christ-gift is perfected as INCONGRUOUS — God gives His supreme gift without regard to the recipient's worth (ethnicity, status, gender, virtue), "justifying the ungodly" (Rom 4:4-5; 5:6-8) — but it is NOT perfected as non-circular. The gift lands with expectations: the "obedience of faith," a transformed life, new communities where Jew and Gentile share one table because worth has been recalibrated by the cross rather than by law, lineage, or achievement. His signature formula: "The divine gift in Christ was unconditioned but it is not unconditional" (p. 500) — no prior conditions of worth, but real subsequent claims. Grace is undeserved yet "strongly obliging"; it "is designed to produce obedience" (p.

492), creating "agents who are newly alive, required to live the life they have been given" (pp. 518-19). Crucially, the return does not repay or earn the gift — Barclay calls the dynamic "energism," God's grace energizing the very response it expects.

For a sermon on the gift of forgiveness, this frame is gold. Forgiveness in Scripture is literally gift-language: Colossians 2:13 says God "graced away" (*charisamenos*) all our trespasses, canceling the *cheirographon* — the handwritten certificate of debt — by nailing it to the cross. The Greek word for forgiveness, *aphesis*, is the Septuagint's word for the Jubilee "release" of debts and slaves (Lev 25:10 LXX; Luke 4:18), echoing the ancient Near Eastern royal practice of debt-cancellation edicts at a king's accession. So forgiveness is the incongruous gift *par excellence*: given to debtors precisely because they cannot pay, yet — like every ancient gift — it binds the receiver into relationship and sets the gift circulating: "forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you" (Eph 4:32; cf. Matt 6:12; 18:23-35). Forgiveness does not merely acquit; it obligates, transforms, and creates a forgiving community.

Key points:

1. ANCIENT GIFTS HAD STRINGS: Drawing on anthropologist Marcel Mauss (*The Gift*, 1925), Barclay shows that in antiquity every gift created a bond and expected a return — gratitude, honor, loyalty, counter-gift. Mary Douglas summarized Mauss: 'There are no free gifts; gift cycles engage persons in permanent commitments.' The 'pure gift' with no strings — anonymous, one-way, expecting nothing — is a MODERN Western invention (post-Reformation, post-Kant). First-century hearers of 'grace' (charis) heard relationship and obligation, not a no-strings handout. Barclay (in his own words): in the ancient world 'gifts normally expected a return, and were therefore normally distributed with care.'

2. CHARIS IS ORDINARY GIFT LANGUAGE: charis was the everyday Greek word covering the whole gift-circle — the favor shown, the gift given, and the gratitude returned (we still say 'thanks' — eucharistia). It 'does not by itself mean unmerited gift' (Barclay). What Paul does is not use a special religious word but take the common coin of benefaction and stamp it with the cross.

3. THE SIX PERFECTIONS OF GIFT/GRACE (Barclay ch. 2 — grace can be maximized along six independent lines): (1) **SUPERABUNDANCE** — the sheer scale, lavishness, permanence of the gift; (2) **SINGULARITY** — the giver is **ONLY** benevolent, never judge (perfect this and you get Marcion's God who never punishes); (3) **PRIORITY** — the gift comes first, before any move by the recipient; (4) **INCONGRUITY** — the gift is given **WITHOUT REGARD TO THE WORTH** of the recipient; (5) **EFFICACY** — the gift accomplishes/empowers what it intends in the receiver; (6) **NON-CIRCULARITY** — the gift escapes reciprocity, expecting no return at all. Key insight: these are separable. You can preach superabundant, prior, incongruous grace that still expects a grateful, obedient return — that, Barclay argues, is exactly Paul.

4. RECEPTION HISTORY — WHO PERFECTED WHAT (Barclay ch. 3):

Marcion perfected SINGULARITY (a purely benevolent God, no judgment). Augustine perfected PRIORITY, INCONGRUITY, and EFFICACY (prevenient grace given to the unworthy that then transforms them). Luther radicalized INCONGRUITY as permanent — the believer remains simul iustus et peccator, grace stays incongruous for the whole of life — and tilted toward NON-CIRCULARITY (the gift benefits the neighbor, not God). Calvin stressed PRIORITY, INCONGRUITY, and EFFICACY but kept grace CIRCULAR — good works necessarily follow. Barth (like Luther) made INCONGRUITY central. Modern test cases: Douglas Campbell perfects all six at once (closest to Marcion, says Barclay); E. P. Sanders perfected PRIORITY and quietly conflated it with incongruity. Lesson for the pulpit: when Christians fight about grace, they are usually maximizing different perfections, not disagreeing about whether grace exists.

5. FIRST-CENTURY BENEFACTION — GIVE TO THE WORTHY: Greco-Roman society ran on patronage and civic euergetism (rich benefactors funding temples, games, grain — repaid in honor, inscriptions, statues). Seneca's *De Beneficiis*, the era's textbook on giving, opens by blaming ingratitude on careless giving: 'we do not pick out those who are worthy of receiving our gifts' (Ben. 1.1, Loeb). His famous image: the Three Graces 'dance in a ring, hand in hand,' because 'the course of a benefit is from hand to hand, back to the giver; the beauty of the whole chain is lost if a single link fails' (Ben. 1.3). Even imperial clemency (Seneca's *De Clementia*) was a discretionary gift that bound the pardoned to loyalty. Giving to the UNWORTHY was considered wasteful, even immoral — it dishonored the gift. Against this backdrop, a God who gives His Son to the ungodly is socially scandalous.

6. SECOND TEMPLE JUDAISM — GRACE EVERYWHERE, NOT EVERYWHERE THE SAME (Barclay Part II): Wisdom of Solomon — superabundant, benevolent grace, but CONGRUOUS: giving to the undeserving would impugn God's wisdom. Philo — God's gifts superabundant and prior, tending to singularity, but given to the 'worthy and fitting' (worth is a condition, not a cause). Qumran Hodayot — the striking exception: incongruous grace to a 'creature of clay,' the hymnist confessing utter worthlessness, plus strong efficacy (closest analogy to Paul). Pseudo-Philo (LAB) — God's incongruous, unbreakable mercy toward sinful Israel because of covenant election. 4 Ezra — strict congruity: mercy reserved for the righteous few who keep the law. Barclay's own summary: 'It was unusual, and theologically dangerous, to consider that God might give significant gifts without regard for worth.'

7. SANDERS REPOSITIONED, NOT DEMOLISHED: Sanders' covenantal nomism ('getting in' by grace/election, 'staying in' by obedience) rightly killed the caricature of Judaism as grace-less works-religion. But Barclay shows Sanders treated grace as ONE thing (priority) and silently assumed it included incongruity — an Augustinian lens projected onto the rabbis. Barclay: covenantal nomism is 'one dimensional' (p. 319); Jewish soteriology is 'irreducibly diverse' (p. 313); and 'it becomes senseless to ask whether Paul represents real grace, as opposed to its diluted forms in Judaism' (p. 320). So the sermon must never say 'Jews believed in earning, Christians in grace' — the real difference is WHICH grace.

8. PAUL'S DISTINCTIVE — THE INCONGRUOUS CHRIST-GIFT: For Paul the Christ-event is God's supreme gift given WITHOUT REGARD TO WORTH — ethnic, moral, social, or gendered. Rom 4:4-5: Greek 'τῷ δεῖ ἐργαζομένῳ ὁ μισθοῦς οὐ λογίζεται κατὰ χάριν ἀλλὰ κατὰ ὀφείλημα· τῷ δεῖ μὴ ἐργαζομένῳ, πιστεύοντι δεῖ ἐπὶ τὸν δικαιοῦντα τὸν ἀσεβῆ, λογίζεται ἡ πίστις αὐτοῦ εἰς δικαιοσύνην' — ESV 'Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.' Rom 5:8: 'ἔτι ἁμαρτωλῶν ὄντων ἡμῶν Χριστοῦ ὑπερῆμῶν ἀπέθανεν' — 'while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.' God does wholesale what Seneca said no sane giver does retail: He gives His best gift to the certifiably unworthy. In Galatians this incongruity founds mixed Jew-Gentile churches — communities 'ordered by a new calibration of worth' (p. 425).

9. BUT NOT NON-CIRCULAR — UNCONDITIONED, NOT UNCONDITIONAL: Paul does NOT perfect non-circularity. The gift lands with expectations: 'the obedience of faith' (Rom 1:5, εἰς ὑπακοὴν τῇ πίστει), bodies presented as 'a living sacrifice' in view of God's mercies (Rom 12:1), life 'under grace' (Rom 6:14: 'οὐ γὰρ ἐστε ὑπὸ νόμον ἀλλὰ ὑπὸ χάριν' — 'you are not under law but under grace'). Barclay: 'The divine gift in Christ was unconditioned but it is not unconditional' (p. 500). Unconditioned = no prior conditions of worth had to be met. Not unconditional = it carries real subsequent claims. The return (faith, obedience, gratitude) never PAYS for the gift — Barclay coins 'energism' (p. 442): grace itself energizes the response it expects. 'God's grace is designed to produce obedience' (p. 492).

10. GRACE THAT TRANSFORMS — INCONGRUITY AIMING AT

CONGRUITY: 'The gift is entirely undeserved but strongly obliging: it creates agents who are newly alive, required to live the life they have been given' (pp. 518-19). The gift given to the unworthy goes to work MAKING them new — new self (Gal 2:19-20, crucified and alive in Christ) and new community where the ground is level at the cross. 'There is no neutral zone in Paul's cosmos... The gift of God in Jesus Christ has established not liberation from authority, but a new allegiance... a new slavery under the rule of grace' (p. 497). For PSC theology this maps cleanly onto grace that saves unconditionally as to merit and then, by God's own effective keeping, produces perseverance and fruit (Titus 2:11-12: 'ἐπεφάνη γὰρ ἡ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ... παιδεύουσα ἡμᾶς' — 'the grace of God has appeared... training us').

11. FORGIVENESS IS LITERALLY GIFT-LANGUAGE: Col 2:13-14 uses the gift-verb charizomai for forgiving: 'χαρισάμενος ἡμῖν πάντα τὰ παραπτώματα· ἐξαλείψας τὸ καθ' ἡμῶν χειρόγραφον τοῖς δόγμασιν... προσηλώσας αὐτὸ τῷ σταυρῷ' — ESV 'having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands... nailing it to the cross.' The cheirographon was a handwritten IOU, a signed debt certificate. God did not collect the debt from us; He absorbed it — the costliest gift in history, given to debtors who could not pay. That is incongruity in its purest form: by definition you can only forgive the guilty.

12. APHESIS — FORGIVENESS AS ROYAL DEBT-RELEASE (ANE BACKGROUND): The NT's main word for forgiveness, aphasis, is the Septuagint's word for the Jubilee RELEASE: Lev 25:10 LXX 'διαβοήσετε ἄφεσιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς πᾶσιν τοῖς κατοικοῦσιν αὐτήν' — ESV 'proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants.' Behind Jubilee stand ancient Near Eastern royal edicts (Akkadian andurarum/misharum): a new king's accession gift of canceled debts and freed debt-slaves — a gift no subject earned, which bound the realm to the king in loyalty. Jesus claims exactly this royal act: Luke 4:18 'κηρύξαι αἰχμαλώτοις ἄφεσιν' — 'to proclaim liberty to the captives.' Forgiveness is the King's accession edict: sins canceled not because the books balanced but because the King decreed release.

13. FORGIVENESS OBLIGATES AND CIRCULATES: Because ancient gifts moved in a circle, received forgiveness must keep moving: Eph 4:32 'χαριζόμενοι ἑαυτοῖς, καθὼς καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἐν Χριστῷ ἐχαρίσατο ὑμῖν' — 'forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you' (same gift-verb both times). Matt 6:12 'ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν' — 'forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.' The unforgiving servant (Matt 18:23-35) is Barclay's thesis in parable form: a canceled debt that produces no changed treatment of one's own debtors was never truly received. Forgiveness in Paul's world does not merely acquit; it adopts, binds, and transforms — it makes forgivers.

14. THE GIFT STANDS FIRM — GOD DOES NOT REPOSSESS: Rom 11:29
'ἀμεταμέλητα γὰρ τὰ χαρίσματα καὶ ἡ κλήσις τοῦ θεοῦ' — ESV 'For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.' Barclay ends Paul and the Gift with Romans 9-11: Israel's very existence flows from incongruous mercy, and that same mercy guarantees her hope. For the congregation: the God who gave without regard to your worth will not take the gift back when your worth wobbles — assurance (ROSES eternal security) rests on the character of the Giver, not the performance of the receiver; yet the same gift that cannot be revoked also will not leave you unchanged.

In their own words:

“The divine gift in Christ was unconditioned but it is not unconditional.”

— Paul and the Gift, ch. 15 (on Romans), p. 500 (*confidence: verified*)

“Grace is everywhere in Second Temple Judaism, but not everywhere the same. It was unusual, and theologically dangerous, to consider that God might give significant gifts without regard for worth.”

— Barclay, EerdWord author post 'Meet This Book: Paul and the Gift' (2015); the first sentence also appears in Paul and the Gift, p. 6 (*confidence: verified*)

“The gift is entirely undeserved but strongly obliging: it creates agents who are newly alive, required to live the life they have been given.”

— Paul and the Gift, pp. 518-19 (*confidence: verified*)

“God's grace is designed to produce obedience.”

— Paul and the Gift, p. 492 (*confidence: verified*)

“There is no neutral zone in Paul's cosmos, no pocket of absolute freedom, no no-man's land between the two fronts. The gift of God in Jesus Christ has established not liberation from authority, but a new allegiance, a new responsibility, a new 'slavery' under the rule of grace.”

— Paul and the Gift, p. 497 (*confidence: verified*)

“It becomes senseless to ask whether Paul represents 'real' grace, as opposed to its 'diluted' forms in Judaism.”

— Paul and the Gift, p. 320 (*confidence: verified*)

“Grace means not just liberation from individual guilt, but freedom also from prevailing cultural systems of value.”

— Barclay, EerdWord author post 'Meet This Book: Paul and the Gift' (2015) (*confidence: verified*)

“We do not pick out those who are worthy of receiving our gifts.”

— Seneca, De Beneficiis 1.1 (Loeb trans., Basore) — named as the first cause of ingratitude (*confidence: verified*)

“The course of a benefit is from hand to hand, back to the giver; ... the beauty of the whole chain is lost if a single link fails.”

— Seneca, De Beneficiis 1.3 (on the Three Graces dancing in a circle; Aubrey Stewart trans., Project Gutenberg) (*confidence: verified*)

“There are no free gifts; gift cycles engage persons in permanent commitments.”

— Mary Douglas, foreword to Marcel Mauss, The Gift (1990 Routledge ed.) (*confidence: well-known*)

“τῷ δεῖ ἐργαζομένῳ ὁ μισθοῦς οὐ λογίζεται κατὰ χάριν ἀλλὰ κατὰ ὀφείλημα· τῷ δεῖ μὴ ἐργαζομένῳ, πιστεύοντι δεῖ ἐπὶ τοῦ δικαιοῦντα τοῦ ἄσεβῃ, λογίζεται ἡ πίστις αὐτοῦ εἰς δικαιοσύνην. — 'Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.' (ESV)”

— Romans 4:4-5 (Greek NT + ESV) (*confidence: verified*)

“χαρισάμενος ἡμῖν πάντα τὰ παραπτώματα· ἐξαλείψας τὸ καθ’ ἡμῶν χειρόγραφον τοῖς δόγμασιν ὃ ἦν ὑπεναντίον ἡμῖν, καὶ αὐτὸ ἤρκεν ἐκ τοῦ μέσου προσηλώσας αὐτὸ τῷ σταυρῷ. — '...having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.' (ESV)”

— Colossians 2:13b-14 (Greek NT + ESV) (*confidence: verified*)

“γίνεσθε δε` εἰς ἀλλήλους χρηστοί, εὖσπλαγχοι, χαριζόμενοι ἑαυτοῖς, καθω`ς και` ὁ θεο`ς ἐν Χριστῷ ἐχαρίσατο ὑμῖν. — 'Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.' (ESV)”

— Ephesians 4:32 (Greek NT + ESV) (*confidence: verified*)

“και` διαβοήσετε ἄφεσιν ἐπὶ` τῆς γῆς πᾶσιν τοῖς κατοικοῦσιν αὐτήν — 'and proclaim liberty [aphesis, release] throughout the land to all its inhabitants.' (ESV)”

— Leviticus 25:10 (Septuagint LXX + ESV) — the Jubilee 'release' word is the NT forgiveness word (*confidence: verified*)

“ἀμεταμέλητα γὰρ τα` χαρίσματα και` ἡ κλήσις τοῦ θεοῦ. — 'For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.' (ESV)”

— Romans 11:29 (Greek NT + ESV) (*confidence: verified*)

Handle with care — what not to overstate:

Do NOT preach 'Judaism = works-righteousness, Christianity = grace.' Barclay's whole point is the opposite: grace was everywhere in Second Temple Judaism — the Hodayot and Pseudo-Philo even celebrate incongruous grace. The difference is WHICH perfection of grace Paul radicalizes (incongruity centered on the Christ-event), not grace versus no grace.

Keep 'unconditioned but not unconditional' the right way round:

UNCONDITIONED = no prior conditions of worth had to be met to receive it;

NOT UNCONDITIONAL = it carries subsequent expectations. It is easy to flip these in the pulpit and accidentally preach either legalism or licence.

Do not let 'grace expects a return' slide into salvation-by-works or a loseable salvation. For Barclay the return never pays for or maintains the gift — grace itself produces the obedience it expects ('energism,' not synergism). Preached at PSC, this sits comfortably with ROSES-style eternal security: Rom 11:29, the gift is irrevocable; transformation is the gift's effect, not its price.

Barclay is describing, not ranking: he explicitly refuses to call Paul's incongruous grace 'purer' or 'higher' than Wisdom's or Philo's congruous grace ('senseless to ask whether Paul represents real grace,' p. 320). A confessional sermon may still proclaim Paul's gospel as true (so Schreiner's critique), but don't put a value-ranking in Barclay's mouth.

Augustine's perfection of grace comes packaged with his inherited-guilt reading of Romans 5:12 — that is Barclay's reception history, not an endorsement, and it is not PSC's position. Keep to ancestral corruption/mortality with 'because all sinned' (ἐφ' ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον), and simply use Augustine as an example of perfecting priority/incongruity/efficacy.

The six perfections are separable, not a checklist: no thinker (except, per Barclay, Douglas Campbell — and before him Marcion) perfects all six, and Paul deliberately does NOT perfect singularity (God still judges) or non-circularity (the gift expects a return). Don't present Paul as maximizing all six.

Don't caricature ancient reciprocity as bribery or corruption: for Seneca and his world, the gift-and-return circle was the moral glue of society ('the chief bond of human society'). The contrast is not honest modern giving vs. corrupt ancient giving, but a whole social world where gifts bound people together — which is why grace CREATES community.

Barclay's book is about charis/gift broadly, not a monograph on forgiveness; the forgiveness application (Col 2:13-14, aphesis/Jubilee, ANE debt-release) is a legitimate extension of his framework — Col 2:13 really does use the gift-verb charizomai — but don't attribute the Jubilee/andurarum material to Barclay himself.

Col 2:14's cheirographon is the 'record of debt' (the IOU standing against us), not the Law itself being destroyed — avoid saying God 'nailed the Law to the cross.'

The famous one-liner is often misquoted as 'grace is free but not cheap' or conflated with Bonhoeffer's 'cheap grace' — Barclay's actual formulation (p. 500) is about unconditioned vs. unconditional; quote it accurately.

The quote 'grace is everywhere... not everywhere the same' is verified from Barclay's own hand (EerdWord post; p. 6 of the book); page 319's wording is the related claim that covenantal nomism is 'one dimensional' — don't attach the famous sentence to p. 319.

II. FORGIVENESS AS DEBT-RELEASE — THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST &

Long before Israel, the Ancient Near East already knew one form of total debt-forgiveness: the royal clean slate. Old Babylonian kings — most famously Ammi-šaduqa of Babylon (c. 1646–1626 BC, Hammurabi's great-great-grandson, whose mīšarum edict is the only one surviving nearly complete) — proclaimed mīšarum ("justice/equity") and andurārum ("release, return to origin"; Sumerian amargi, often glossed "return to the mother") at their accession and at intervals afterward. Tablets recording barley debts were declared void, foreclosed land went back to families, and debt-slaves walked home free — signaled, in Hudson's reconstruction, by the king raising a torch associated with Shamash, god of justice. Crucially, this was pure sovereign initiative: no debtor could earn, purchase, or demand it; it flowed entirely from the king's throne and was timed to the KING's new reign, not the debtor's merit. Israel took this royal act and transformed it: instead of the whim of a new king, the divine King legislated release into the calendar — every seventh year all debts released (Deut 15, deror's cousin: shemittah), and the fiftieth-year Jubilee proclaiming deror (cognate to andurārum) "to all its inhabitants," announced by trumpet on the Day of Atonement itself (Lev 25:9-10), grounded in God's ownership of land and people ("the land is mine," Lev 25:23; "they are my servants whom I brought out of Egypt," 25:42). The exegetical hinge for preaching is the Septuagint: Lev 25:10 renders deror with ἀφεσις (aphesis), and the Jubilee is literally the "ἐνιαυτοῦ ἑξ ἀφέσεως," the Year of Aphesis; Deut 15's debt-release is likewise aphasis; Isa 61:1 LXX has the Anointed One proclaiming aphasis to captives — the very text Jesus reads at Nazareth (Luke 4:18) before announcing "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled." Aphesis is the New Testament's standard word for "forgiveness of sins." Every time the NT says forgiveness, Greek-speaking ears heard the Jubilee trumpet — and 11QMelchizedek (11Q13, c. 100 BC) proves Second Temple Jews were already reading Lev 25 + Isa 61 as an end-time Jubilee in which iniquities themselves are released and atoned.

Gary Anderson (Sin: A History, Yale 2009) supplies the second movement: in the First Temple period sin was predominantly a BURDEN to be carried (nasa' 'awon, "bear iniquity"; the scapegoat carries sins away), but in the Second Temple period, under the

influence of Aramaic — where ḥôb/ḥôbâ means both "debt" and "sin" — sin became a DEBT to be remitted. Jesus, an Aramaic speaker, teaches exactly this idiom: "forgive us our debts (ὀφειλήματα)" (Matt 6:12; Luke 11:4 makes the equation explicit — "forgive us our sins, for we forgive everyone indebted to us"), and dramatizes it in the unforgiving servant's absurd, unpayable ten thousand talents (roughly 200,000 years of a laborer's wages) forgiven in a moment by a king's pity. Behind all this stands Israel's core confession, Exod 34:6-7 — the most re-quoted verse within the OT itself — naming YHWH as the God who forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin; and the sacrificial system, rightly read, is not man's payment upward but God's gift downward: "I have GIVEN it to you on the altar to make atonement" (Lev 17:11) — God provides the very means of forgiveness he requires, climaxing in the Day of Atonement he himself instituted.

The first-century Greco-Roman frame makes the gospel's distinctiveness measurable, and here John Barclay's *Paul and the Gift* does its work. Ancient gift-giving was discriminating: you gave to WORTHY recipients (Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca's *De Beneficiis*), and gifts created bonds of obligation and return. Caesar's celebrated *clementia* was a sovereign's power-display toward defeated enemies that turned them into obligated clients; Seneca (*De Clementia*, Book II) even argued the truly wise man does not grant *venia* (pardon), because "pardon is the remission of a deserved punishment" and thus offends justice — clemency yes, forgiveness of the undeserving no. Much Jewish theology, too, expected God's mercy to track repentance and covenant worthiness (grace was "everywhere in Second Temple Judaism, but not everywhere the same" — Barclay). Against both backdrops, the gospel proclaims a forgiveness that is FULL (the cheirographon, the signed debt-note, blotted out and nailed publicly to the cross, Col 2:14), PRIOR (while we were still sinners, Rom 5:8), INCONGRUOUS (God "justifies the ungodly," Rom 4:5 — the very thing Exod 23:7 and Prov 17:15 say a righteous judge never does — made just through Christ's blood, Rom 3:25-26), THROUGH CHRIST (redemption-aphesis "according to the riches of his grace," Eph 1:7, where debt-release and gift meet in one verse; Luke 7:42's forgiveness verb is literally ἐχαρίσατο, "he gifted the debt away"), and KINSHIP-CREATING (the released debt-slave is not merely freed but adopted — Gal 4:5-7). Barclay's summary: the Christ-gift is unconditioned (no prior worth required) but not

unconditional (it expects and empowers a transformed, forgiving life) — which is exactly why the forgiven servant of Matt 18 and the "as we forgive our debtors" of the Lord's Prayer describe what forgiven people become, not a fee they pay. Key sources: J.J. Finkelstein's edict translation (ANET); Michael Hudson, ...and forgive them their debts (2018); Moshe Weinfeld, Social Justice in Ancient Israel; Anderson, Sin: A History; Barclay, Paul and the Gift (Eerdmans 2015); 11Q13.

Key points:

1. THE KING'S CLEAN SLATE (Mesopotamia): Old Babylonian kings proclaimed misharum ('justice') and andurarum ('release') edicts, typically at their accession — Ammi-saduqa of Babylon (c. 1646–1626 BC) left the fullest surviving text. Barley/consumer debts were annulled (commercial silver debts stood), foreclosed family land returned, and debt-slaves went home to their families. The proclamation was signaled by the king raising a torch (associated with Shamash, god of justice). Teaching point: the debtor could do NOTHING to trigger it — no payment plan, no petition, no merit. Release came solely from the king's initiative and was timed to the KING's new reign. Forgiveness in the ancient world was, from the beginning, a royal gift.

2. FROM ROYAL WHIM TO DIVINE LAW (Israel): Israel knew this ANE pattern but transformed it. Instead of hoping a new king might feel generous, God wrote release into the calendar itself: every 7th year all debts released and Hebrew slaves freed (Deut 15:1-2, 12-15, explicitly motivated by 'you were a slave in Egypt and the LORD redeemed you'), and the 50th-year Jubilee proclaiming deror — the Hebrew cognate of Akkadian andurarum — 'to all its inhabitants' (Lev 25:10). The theological ground: 'The land is mine; you are strangers and sojourners with me' (Lev 25:23) and 'they are my servants, whom I brought out of Egypt' (Lev 25:42, 55). Israel's true King never dies, so his clean slate never lapses.

3. THE APHESIS BOMBSHELL (the sermon's exegetical spine): The Septuagint translates deror in Lev 25:10 with ἄφεσις (aphesis) and calls the Jubilee the ἐνιαυτὸς ἁφέσεως — 'Year of Release.' Deut 15's debt-cancellation is also aphasis in the LXX. And aphasis is THE New Testament word for 'forgiveness of sins' (Mark 1:4; Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; Eph 1:7; Col 1:14). To a Greek-speaking Jew, 'forgiveness of sins' did not sound like a private religious feeling — it sounded like the Jubilee trumpet: debts void, slaves freed, everyone goes home.

4. JUBILEE ANNOUNCED FROM THE MERCY SEAT: Lev 25:9 — the Jubilee trumpet was blown 'on the Day of Atonement.' Liberty was proclaimed on the day blood was carried into the Holy of Holies. Economic release and atonement for sin were fused on Israel's calendar centuries before Christ united them on the cross.

5. NAZARETH AS CORONATION PROCLAMATION (Luke 4): Jesus stands up in his hometown synagogue and reads Isa 61:1 LXX — 'to proclaim aphasis to the captives... to send the oppressed away in aphasis... to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor' — and says 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.' He is doing what a new Babylonian king did at accession: proclaiming the release. The Dead Sea Scroll 11QMelchizedek (11Q13, c. 100 BC) proves first-century Jews already read Lev 25 + Isa 61 this way — as a final, tenth Jubilee in which iniquity itself is forgiven and atoned. Jesus stepped into a live expectation and claimed the herald's role.

6. SIN BECAME A DEBT (Gary Anderson, *Sin: A History*): In the First Temple period the dominant picture of sin was a BURDEN carried on the back (*nasa' 'awon*, 'to bear iniquity'; the scapegoat literally carries sins away, Lev 16:22). In the Second Temple period, as Jews began speaking Aramaic, the picture shifted to DEBT, because the Aramaic word *hōb/hōbâ* means both 'debt' and 'sin.' The Targums routinely render 'forgive' as 'remit the debt.' This is not a detail — it means Jesus' whole generation carried a ledger in its head when it thought about sin.

7. JESUS TALKS LIKE AN ARAMAIC SPEAKER: 'Forgive us our DEBTS (*ὀφειλήματα*)' (Matt 6:12); Luke's version makes the equation explicit: 'forgive us our SINS, for we ourselves forgive everyone INDEBTED to us' (Luke 11:4) — sins and debts are the same thing in Jesus' idiom. The unforgiving servant (Matt 18:23-35) owes ten thousand talents: one talent $\approx$ 20 years of a day-laborer's wages, so the debt $\approx$ 200,000 years of paychecks — deliberately absurd, several times the tax revenue of whole Roman provinces. The point is not that the debt is large but that it is UNPAYABLE — and the king releases it in one sentence, 'out of pity' (Matt 18:27, *σπλαγχνισθεῖς*). The fellow-servant's 100 denarii (about 3-4 months' wages) is real money — forgiving each other is costly — but it is nothing beside what was forgiven.

8. EXODUS 34:6-7 IS ISRAEL'S CREED: 'The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger... forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin' — spoken by God about himself at the golden-calf disaster, i.e., first revealed to people who had just committed covenant treason. It is the most re-quoted verse inside the OT itself (Num 14:18; Neh 9:17; Pss 86, 103, 145; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Mic 7:18). Forgiveness is not a late add-on to Israel's God; it is his self-given name.

9. THE SACRIFICES WERE GOD'S GIFT, NOT MAN'S BRIBE: Lev 17:11 — 'the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have GIVEN it to you on the altar to make atonement.' Pagan sacrifice moved upward (feed and appease the god); Israel's atonement moved downward (God provides the channel he requires). The Day of Atonement was not Israel's invention to mollify God but God's own institution to cleanse Israel. So even under the old covenant, the MEANS of forgiveness was itself grace — which is exactly the logic Paul completes: 'Christ Jesus, whom GOD put forward as a propitiation by his blood' (Rom 3:25). God is the giver of the sacrifice, not its reluctant recipient.

10. THE GRECO-ROMAN WORLD GAVE GIFTS TO THE WORTHY: Barclay shows ancient gift-giving was discriminating and reciprocal — you chose recipients who deserved gifts and could return honor or loyalty (Aristotle; Cicero, *De Officiis* 1.45; Seneca, *De Beneficiis*). Caesar's famous *clementia* was a conqueror's calculated mercy to defeated peers, converting enemies into obligated clients. Seneca went further: the wise man shows clemency but does NOT pardon, because 'pardon is the remission of a deserved punishment' (*De Clementia* bk. 2) — forgiving the undeserving offends justice. The pagan gods forgave no one; they were appeased. Into that world walks a gospel announcing that God 'justifies the UNGODLY' (Rom 4:5) — the very act Exod 23:7 ('I will not acquit the wicked') and Prov 17:15 ('he who justifies the wicked... is an abomination') forbid a human judge — and Paul insists God remains just in doing it, because of the cross (Rom 3:26).

11. BARCLAY'S GRID: grace was 'everywhere in Second Temple Judaism, but not everywhere the same.' His six 'perfections' of gift: superabundance, singularity, priority, incongruity, efficacy, non-circularity. Different Jewish authors perfected different ones. Paul's distinctive move is perfecting INCONGRUITY — the Christ-gift given without regard to the recipient's worth, to Gentile sinners and enemies — while NOT perfecting non-circularity: the gift is 'unconditioned but not unconditional.' It requires no prior worth, but it expects (and itself produces) a returned life of gratitude, obedience, and mercy. That is the frame for every NT 'forgive as you were forgiven' text.

12. WHAT MADE GOSPEL FORGIVENESS DISTINCTIVE — five marks: (1) FULL: Col 2:14, God 'canceled the cheirographon' — the signed IOU, the debtor's own handwriting — blotting it out and nailing it publicly to the cross, the ancient equivalent of posting a canceled note where all can read it. (2) PRIOR: 'while we were still sinners, Christ died for us' (Rom 5:8) — release proclaimed before repentance, like the king's edict before any debtor petitioned. (3) INCONGRUOUS: given precisely to the unworthy (Rom 4:5; 5:6 'the ungodly'). (4) THROUGH CHRIST: at the giver's own cost — Eph 1:7 puts redemption, blood, atonement, and 'the riches of his grace' in one sentence; God does not wave the debt away as if it were nothing, he absorbs it. (5) KINSHIP-CREATING: the Babylonian debt-slave walked home to his old life; the forgiven sinner is adopted into the King's own family (Gal 4:5-7) — release ends in sonship, not just solvency.

13. FORGIVENESS AND GIFT ARE ONE WORD: In Luke 7:42 (the two debtors, at Simon's table) the verb for 'he canceled the debt' is ἐχαρίσατο — from χάρις, grace: 'he GRACED the debt away.' Paul uses the same verb for God's forgiveness (Col 2:13; Eph 4:32 'forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you' — χαρίζόμενοι... ἐχαρίσατο). In the Greek NT, to forgive IS to gift. This is the direct bridge between the sermon and Barclay's title.

14. THE LOOPHOLE AND THE LORD (first-century irony): By Jesus' day the sabbatical debt-release was being legally circumvented — Hillel's prosbul (m. Shevi'it 10:3-4) let lenders assign debts to the court so the seventh-year aphesis wouldn't cancel them, because otherwise credit dried up (the very problem Deut 15:9 warned about). Human beings engineered their way OUT of forgiving at the precise moment God was engineering his way IN: the true Jubilee arriving in person at Nazareth. (Preach the prosbul gently — it was a pragmatic fix to a real economic problem, not simple villainy — but the contrast stands.)

15. FORGIVEN PEOPLE BECOME A JUBILEE PEOPLE: In the ANE only the king could proclaim release, and the proclamation created a new social reality overnight. Likewise the church is the community living inside God's proclaimed aphesis: 'forgive us our debts AS WE ALSO HAVE FORGIVEN our debtors' (Matt 6:12), the warning of Matt 18:35, and Eph 4:32 all describe the family resemblance of the released — the king's edict flowing through the freed slaves to each other — not a wage by which God's forgiveness is purchased.

In their own words:

“Greek (LXX): και ἁγιάσετε τὸ ἔτος τὸ πεντηκοστὸν ἐνιαυτοῦν και διαβοήσετε ἄφεςιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς πᾶσιν τοῖς κατοικοῦσιν αὐτήν· ἐνιαυτὸς ἀφέσεως σημασία αὕτη ἔσται ὑμῖν. — ESV: 'And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you.'”

— Leviticus 25:10 (LXX Rahlfs; ESV) (*confidence: verified*)

“Greek (LXX): Δι' ἑπτα ἔτων ποιήσεις ἄφεςιν. και οὕτως τὸ πρόσταγμα τῆς ἀφέσεως· ἀφήσεις πᾶν χρέος ἴδιον, ὃ ὀφείλει σοι ὁ πλησίον... ὅτι ἐπικέκληται ἄφεςις κυρίῳ τῷ θεῷ σου. — ESV: 'At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release... every creditor shall release what he has lent to his neighbor... because the LORD's release has been proclaimed.'”

— Deuteronomy 15:1-2 (LXX Rahlfs; ESV) (*confidence: verified*)

“Greek (LXX): Πνεῦμα κυρίου ἐπ' ἐμέ, οὗ εἵνεκεν ἔχρισέν με· εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς ἀπέσταλκέν με, ἰάσασθαι τοὺς συντετριμμένους τῇ καρδίᾳ, κηρύξαι αἰχμαλώτοις ἄφεςιν και τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν. — ESV: 'The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.'”

— Isaiah 61:1 (LXX Rahlfs; ESV) (*confidence: verified*)

“Greek (NT): κηρύξαι αἰχμαλώτοις ἄφεςιν και τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν, ἀποστεῖλαι τεθραυσμένους ἐν ἀφέσει, κηρύξαι ἐνιαυτὸν κυρίου δεκτόν. — ESV: '...to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.'”

— Luke 4:18-19 (NA28; ESV) (*confidence: verified*)

“Greek (LXX): Κύριος κύριος ὁ θεὸς οἰκτίρμων και ἐλεήμων, μακρόθυμος και πολυέλεος και ἀληθινός... ἀφαιρῶν ἀνομίας και ἀδικίας και ἁμαρτίας. — ESV: 'The

LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness... forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.”

— Exodus 34:6-7 (LXX Rahlfs; ESV) (*confidence: verified*)

“Greek (LXX): ἡ γὰρ ψυχὴ πάσης σαρκὸς αἷμα αὐτοῦ ἐστίν, καὶ ἐγὼ δέδωκα αὐτὸ ὑμῖν ἐπὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου ἐξιλάσκεσθαι περὶ τῶν ψυχῶν ὑμῶν. — ESV: 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls.'”

— Leviticus 17:11 (LXX Rahlfs; ESV) (*confidence: verified*)

“Greek (NT): καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν. — ESV: 'and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.'”

— Matthew 6:12 (NA28; ESV) (*confidence: verified*)

“Greek (NT): μὴ ἔχόντων αὐτῶν ἀποδοῦναι ἀμφοτέροις ἐχαρίσατο. — ESV: 'When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both.' (The verb is echarisato — from charis, grace: he 'graced' the debt away.)”

— Luke 7:42 (NA28; ESV) (*confidence: verified*)

“Greek (NT): χαρισάμενος ἡμῖν πάντα τὰ παραπτώματα· ἐξαλείψας τὸ καθ' ἡμῶν χειρόγραφον τοῖς δόγμασιν ὃ ἦν ὑπεναντίον ἡμῖν, καὶ αὐτὸ ἤρκεν ἐκ τοῦ μέσου προσηλώσας αὐτὸ τῷ σταυρῷ. — ESV: '...having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.'”

— Colossians 2:13-14 (NA28; ESV) (*confidence: verified*)

“Greek (NT): τῷ δὲ μὴ ἐργαζομένῳ, πιστεύοντι δὲ ἐπὶ τὸν δικαιοῦντα τὸν ἀσεβῆ, λογίζεται ἡ πίστις αὐτοῦ εἰς δικαιοσύνην. — ESV: 'And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.'”

— Romans 4:5 (NA28; ESV) (*confidence: verified*)

“Greek (NT): συνίστησιν δε` τη`ν ἑαυτοῦ ἀγάπην εἰς ἡμᾶς ὁ θεός, ὅτι ἔτι ἁμαρτωλῶν ὄντων ἡμῶν Χριστο`ς ὑπε`ρ ἡμῶν ἀπέθανεν. — ESV: 'but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.'”

— Romans 5:8 (NA28; ESV) (*confidence: verified*)

“Greek (NT): ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τη`ν ἀπολύτρωσιν δια` τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ, τη`ν ἄφεσιν τῶν παραπτωμάτων, κατα` το` πλοῦτος τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ. — ESV: 'In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.' (Aphesis and charis — debt-release and gift — in a single sentence.)”

— Ephesians 1:7 (NA28; ESV) (*confidence: verified*)

“Grace is everywhere in the theology of Second Temple Judaism, but not everywhere the same.”

— John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Eerdmans, 2015), conclusion to the Second Temple survey (Part II) (*confidence: well-known*)

“The Christ-gift is 'unconditioned' — given without regard to prior worth — 'but not unconditional': it expects and produces a return of transformed life.”

— John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (2015) / *Paul and the Power of Grace* (2020) — his signature formulation, widely quoted in reviews (*confidence: well-known*)

“Pardon (venia) is the remission of a deserved punishment — and for that reason the Stoic wise man, Seneca argues, does not pardon; he may show clemency, but forgiving the undeserving would offend justice. (Latin: 'venia est poenae meritaе remissio.')”

— Seneca, *De Clementia*, Book 2 (ch. 7) (*confidence: well-known*)

“Whoever has lent barley or silver to an Akkadian or an Amorite at interest... because the king has established justice (misharum) in the land, his tablet is voided; he may

not collect the barley or silver on the basis of his tablet.”

— Edict of Ammi-saduqa, section 4-5 (trans. after J. J. Finkelstein, ANET) (*confidence: well-known*)

“In the Second Temple period the reigning picture of sin changed: no longer chiefly a burden carried on the back, sin became a debt owed to God — a shift driven by the move to Aramaic, where one word (hoba) means both 'debt' and 'sin,' so that to forgive is literally to remit a debt.”

— Gary A. Anderson, Sin: A History (Yale University Press, 2009), argument of chs. 1-4 (*confidence: paraphrase*)

Handle with care — what not to overstate:

Do not preach 'Judaism was works-righteousness, Christianity discovered grace.' Barclay's central finding is the opposite: grace was everywhere in Second Temple Judaism. The gospel's distinctive is the SHAPE of grace — incongruous, prior, through Christ — not its presence versus absence. Framing it as 'law religion vs. grace religion' misreads both Barclay and the sources.

Do not flatten Barclay into 'grace has no strings attached.' His formulation is 'unconditioned but not unconditional' — the gift requires no prior worth but expects a returned life. Skipping this makes Matt 6:14-15 and 18:35 unpreachable. And keep those warning texts inside the church's eternal-security frame (ROSES): they describe what genuinely forgiven people BECOME because the gift transforms them, not a threat that God repossesses the gift. Forgiveness received is forgiveness secure; an unforgiving life is evidence the release was never truly received, not evidence God cancels it.

Do not say Israel 'borrowed' the Jubilee from Babylon as if it were warmed-over paganism. The ANE parallel (*deror/andurarum*) is real and preachable, but Israel transformed it: from a new king's occasional whim to permanent divine law; from economics alone to atonement (trumpet on Yom Kippur); grounded in God's ownership of land and people. Analogy, not plagiarism.

Do not claim the Jubilee was regularly practiced in Israel. Historical evidence suggests it was rarely if ever fully observed (cf. Jer 34's broken release). That failure is itself the sermon: Isa 61 turns the unkept Jubilee into future hope, and Jesus claims to fulfill it.

Do not let the debt metaphor turn the Father into a reluctant creditor whom the Son pays off behind His back. Scripture's grain runs the other way: God HIMSELF gives the blood on the altar (Lev 17:11) and God HIMSELF put Christ forward (Rom 3:25). The Father is the giver of the ransom, not its grudging recipient. The debt is real and really absorbed — but by the Judge Himself, in love.

Do not read Matt 6:12 ('as we also have forgiven') as a wage that earns God's forgiveness — the order of Matt 18 (king forgives first, then expects mercy to flow) governs the petition. But do not soften it into nothing either; Jesus attaches real warning to unforgiveness.

If Romans 5:12 comes up alongside sin-as-debt, hold the church's confirmed position: we inherit Adam's corruption and mortality ('because all sinned'), not Adam's guilt on our personal ledger. The unpayable debt of Matt 18 is our OWN accumulated sin, which suits the ancestral-sin reading well — no need to posit inherited guilt to preach an unpayable debt.

Dates and details for Ammi-saduqa (c. 1646-1626 BC) follow the conventional middle chronology; other chronologies shift them decades. Say 'around 1650 BC' rather than a hard date. Also: misharum edicts canceled consumer/agrarian debts but generally left commercial silver debts intact — don't overstate them as total amnesties. Use Michael Hudson's historical data without importing his modern economic polemics.

Do not claim aphesis 'always means forgiveness of sins.' It is a release word covering debts, slaves, captives, and sins — the breadth IS the point. Present it as resonance every Greek hearer felt, not as a secret code or a lexical trick.

Do not overstate 'pagans had no forgiveness.' Rome had clemency and pardon; the distinctive gospel claim is full, prior, incongruous forgiveness of the unworthy, at the giver's own cost, creating family. Precision here makes the contrast stronger, not weaker.

The prosbul point should be preached gently: Hillel was solving a real problem (credit drying up before sabbatical years, the very fear Deut 15:9 names), not twirling a villain's mustache. Use it as irony — human law working around release just as God's release arrived in person — not as an anti-Jewish jab.

Anderson's burden-to-debt thesis is about the DOMINANT metaphor shifting, not an absolute break — burden language persists (John 1:29 'takes away,' airon, the sin of the world) and debt language predates the exile (Isa 40:2 'double for all her sins'). Preach it as a shift of accent, not a light switch.

III. DALLAS WILLARD — *RENOVATION OF THE HEART*: SPIRITUAL

Dallas Willard's *Renovation of the Heart* (NavPress, 2002) argues that spiritual formation is not an optional religious hobby but a universal human fact: every person's spirit is being given a "form" by something — family, culture, wounds, habits, media — and "the most despicable as well as the most admirable of persons have had a spiritual formation." The only question is what kind. Christian spiritual formation, by contrast, is "the Spirit-driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ himself" (p. 22), so that the outer life becomes a natural expression or outflow of Christ's character. Willard's key text is Galatians 4:19 — "until Christ is formed (μορφωθῇ) in you." His diagnosis is that the human self has six interlocking dimensions — thought, feeling, will (which he equates with spirit and heart, the "executive center"), body, social context, and soul — and that sin has left all six in ruins: the soul is "lost" in the precise sense of being out of place, away from God, and therefore malfunctioning. What is needed is not information, willpower, or behavior management but renovation: "The greatest need you and I have — the greatest need of collective humanity — is renovation of our heart."

The book's practical engine is VIM: Vision, Intention, Means — "If we are to be spiritually formed in Christ, we must have and must implement the appropriate vision, intention, and means" (p. 85). The Vision is life now in the range of God's effective will (the kingdom); the Intention is an actual settled decision to be Christ's person; the Means are the disciplines and graces that retrain each dimension. Two Willard distinctives matter enormously for preaching this: (1) the body is not the enemy but our God-given "power pack," the "focal point of our presence in the physical and social world" and "our primary area of power, freedom, and — therefore — responsibility" — our small kingdom, since "our 'kingdom' is simply the range of our effective will" (*The Divine Conspiracy*, p. 21), which is why Romans 12:1 begins renovation by presenting the σῶμα to God; and (2) grace does not exclude effort: "Grace is not opposed to effort, it is opposed to earning. Earning is an attitude. Effort

is an action" (The Great Omission). The disciplines are means of receiving grace, never merit.

The outcome Willard envisions (final chapter, "The Children of Light") is people whose obedience has become routine, easy, and natural — a lamp that shines without straining — because thought, feeling, will, body, relationships, and soul have all been re-organized around God. For the sermon "Spiritual Formation of our Third World Souls," Willard supplies exactly the needed picture: souls that were built for glory but whose infrastructure is broken — power grid down, water lines ruptured, everything running on a corrupted operating system — and a God who does not merely repaint the exterior but guts the house to the studs and rewires it from the inside, restoring the soul (Ps 23:3 LXX: τη`ν ψυχὴν μου ἐπέστρεψεν) until Christ is formed in us.

Key points:

1. EVERYONE GETS A FORMATION. Willard opens by stripping the phrase 'spiritual formation' of its churchy sound: 'Spiritual formation, without regard to any specifically religious context or tradition, is the process by which the human spirit or will is given a definite "form" or character. It is a process that happens to everyone.' The despicable and the admirable alike have been spiritually formed. So the sermon question is never **WHETHER** your people are being formed — Netflix, grief, gossip, and grandma's prayers are all forming them right now — but **WHO** is doing the forming and **INTO WHAT**. In his essays Willard sharpened it to: 'Terrorists as well as saints are the outcome of spiritual formation.'

2. THE CHRISTIAN DEFINITION (p. 22): Christian spiritual formation is 'the Spirit-driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ himself,' with the result that 'the outer life of the individual becomes a natural expression or outflow of the character and teachings of Jesus.' Three load-bearing words: **SPIRIT-DRIVEN** (the Holy Spirit is the general contractor, not us), **INNER WORLD** (God renovates from inside out, never outside in), and **NATURAL OUTFLOW** (the goal is not performed behavior but changed nature). Key verse: Galatians 4:19 — Greek NT: 'τέκνα μου, οὓς πάλιν ὠδίνω μέχρις οὗ μορφωθῇ Χριστοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν' — ESV: 'my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!' Paul's word μορφωθῇ ('be formed') is where 'spiritual formation' comes from.

3. THE SIX DIMENSIONS OF THE PERSON. Willard's anatomy of the self: (1) **THOUGHT** — ideas, images, beliefs, what we dwell on; (2) **FEELING** — emotions, sensations, desires that incline us toward or away from things; (3) **WILL / SPIRIT / HEART** — three biblical names for one thing seen three ways: 'will' as it chooses, 'spirit' as it is non-physical, 'heart' as it sits at the center; (4) **BODY** — our physical presence and power in the world; (5) **SOCIAL CONTEXT** — our rootedness in others ('the human self requires rootedness in others'); (6) **SOUL** — the deepest dimension that integrates all the others into one life. Transformation must reach **ALL SIX** — a renovated kitchen with ruptured plumbing is not a renovated house.

4. THE HEART IS THE EXECUTIVE CENTER. Willard: the will/spirit/heart 'is the executive center of a human life. The heart is where decisions and choices are made for the whole person' (ch. 2). It is the CEO's office of the self — tiny compared to the whole building, but every order goes out from it. This is why Scripture guards it above all: Proverbs 4:23 LXX: 'πάση φυλακῇ τήρει σὴν καρδίαν· ἐκ γὰρ τούτων ἔξοδοι ζωῆς' — ESV: 'Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.' Renovation of the **HEART**, because the heart runs everything else.

5. THE SOUL IS WHAT RUNS YOU. Willard's deepest and least familiar claim: 'What is running your life at any given moment is your soul. Not external circumstances, or your thoughts, or your intentions, or even your feelings, but your soul. The soul is that aspect of your whole being that correlates, integrates, and enlivens everything going on in the various dimensions of the self. It is the life-center of the human being.' His verified analogy: the soul is like the computer that quietly runs a business in the background — the hidden operating system nobody thinks about until it crashes. You cannot renovate the soul directly by willpower; you bring the soul into the presence of God and He restores it: Psalm 23:3 (LXX Ps 22:3): 'τῇ ἡ ψυχὴν μου ἐπέστρεψεν' — ESV: 'He restores my soul.'

6. THE RUINED SOUL — RADICAL EVIL. Willard's chapter title is literally 'Radical Evil in the Ruined Soul.' A 'ruined' soul is a LOST soul in the plain sense: 'To be lost means to be out of place' — a soul is lost the way car keys are lost: out of its proper place (the presence of God) and therefore useless for what it was made for. This is why our souls are 'third world': built for glory, but the infrastructure is down because they have been 'formed by a world away from God' (p. 14 area, ch. 1). And the first step of renovation is honest diagnosis: 'The ruined soul must be willing to hear of and recognize its own ruin before it can find how to enter a different path.' The classical church called this condition *homo incurvatus in se* — man curved in on himself (Augustine's image, Luther's phrase) — which describes exactly what Willard analyzes, though the Latin tag is theirs, not his.

7. RENOVATION, NOT INFORMATION. 'The greatest need you and I have — the greatest need of collective humanity — is renovation of our heart. That spiritual place within us from which outlook, choices, and actions come has been formed by a world away from God. Now it must be transformed.' Sermon-on-the-Mount Christianity cannot be downloaded; Willard is widely quoted as saying 'the will is transformed by experience, not information' (attribution is popular, not page-verifiable — paraphrase it). The biblical anchor is Romans 12:2 — Greek NT: 'μη ` συσχηματίζεσθε τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ, ἀλλὰ ` μεταμορφοῦσθε τῇ ἀνακαινώσει τοῦ νοός' — ESV: 'Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.' Paul's word ἀνακαίνωσις is literally 'renovation' — making-new-again.

8. VIM — THE GENERAL PATTERN OF ALL TRANSFORMATION (p. 85): 'If we are to be spiritually formed in Christ, we must have and must implement the appropriate vision, intention, and means.' **VISION:** seeing what life in God's kingdom actually looks like — 'the vision of life now and forever in the range of God's effective will — that is, partaking of the divine nature' (pp. 87-88). **INTENTION:** an actual settled **DECISION** to be Christ's person, not an admiring wish. **MEANS:** the concrete practices (Scripture memorization, solitude, fasting, service, worship, fellowship) that retrain each of the six dimensions. Willard's insight: when transformation fails, it is almost never for lack of means — it is for lack of real vision and real intention. Nobody accidentally learns Arabic; nobody drifts into Christlikeness.

9. TRANSFORMING THE THOUGHT LIFE — THE FIRST FREEDOM (p. 95):

'The ultimate freedom we have as human beings is the power to select what we will allow or require our minds to dwell upon.' Formation of the mind is the front door of the whole renovation: you cannot control what you feel on the spot, but you can choose what you set your mind on (Col 3:2), and what plays on the screen of the mind eventually writes itself into feeling, will, and behavior.

Practical means Willard names: memorizing whole passages of Scripture so they become 'permanent fixtures' of thought.

10. THE BODY IS YOUR SMALL KINGDOM — the σῶμα as a sphere of sovereignty. Willard refuses all body-hating spirituality. The body is 'the focal point of our presence in the physical and social world... our primary energy source or "strength" — our personalized "power pack"' (ch. 2), and 'our primary area of power, freedom, and — therefore — responsibility' (ch. 9, 'Transforming the Body'). Behind this stands his kingdom definition from *The Divine Conspiracy* (p. 21): 'Our "kingdom" is simply the range of our effective will. Whatever we genuinely have the say over is in our kingdom.' Your body is the one plot of creation where your will actually runs — your kingdom with a small k. This is exactly the pastor's note: σῶμα = the self as a sphere of sovereignty. So renovation begins where our sovereignty begins: Romans 12:1 — Greek NT: 'παραστήσαι τὰ σώματα ὑμῶν θυσίαν ζῶσαν ἁγίαν εὐάρεστον τῷ θεῷ, τῇ λογικῇ λατρείᾳ ὑμῶν' — ESV: 'present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.' Offering the body is handing God the deed to your little kingdom so He can annex it into His big one. Important distinction: Paul's negative word is σὰρξ ('flesh' — self-reliant human power), not σῶμα (the body itself, which is good and will be glorified).

11. GRACE IS NOT OPPOSED TO EFFORT. The famous Willard line, verified in The Great Omission: 'Grace is not opposed to effort, it is opposed to earning. Earning is an attitude. Effort is an action. Grace, you know, does not just have to do with forgiveness of sins alone.' Spiritual disciplines are MEANS of grace — places we stand to receive what God freely does — never merit that obligates God. Philippians 2:12-13 holds the balance: 'μετα` φόβου και` τρόμου τη`ν ἑαυτῶν σωτηρίαν κατεργάζεσθε· θεο`ς γάρ ἐστιν ὁ ἐνεργῶν ἐν ὑμῖν' — ESV: 'work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you.' We work OUT what God works IN — never work FOR what only Christ can earn. This fits eternal security perfectly: the farmhand sweats in the field not to buy the farm but because the farm is already his father's.

12. THE REVOLUTION RUNS THROUGH THE HEART, NOT THE CAPITOL. Verified: 'The revolution of Jesus is in the first place and continuously a revolution of the human heart or spirit. It did not and does not proceed by means of the formation of social institutions and laws.' Jesus does not renovate the world by passing better ordinances; He renovates persons who then leaven everything they touch. A word rural congregations need in an election-saturated culture: no law can do what a renovated heart does.

13. THE OUTCOME — CHILDREN OF LIGHT WITH ROUTINE, EASY OBEDIENCE. Willard's closing chapter describes 'children of light': people whose thoughts run to God's truth, whose feelings are dominated by love, joy, and peace, whose will is habitually surrendered, whose body serves as a ready instrument, whose relationships are transparent and without manipulation, and whose soul rests whole in God. The mark of maturity is that doing what Jesus said becomes ROUTINE AND EASY — not gritted-teeth compliance but the easy yoke (Mt 11:30). Willard laments (foreword) that Christians 'routinely and easily' doing what Jesus taught 'has generally been considered out of reach.' Ephesians 5:8 — Greek NT: ἦτε γὰρ ποτε σκότος, νῦν δε ` φῶς ἐν κυρίῳ· ὡς τέκνα φωτο `ς περιπατεῖτε' — ESV: 'for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.' Note Paul's grammar: not 'you were IN darkness' but 'you WERE darkness' — and now you ARE light. Formation makes you what you already are in Christ.

14. THE GREAT COMMANDMENT IS THE BLUEPRINT. Willard's six dimensions map onto Jesus' summary of the law — Mark 12:30 / Deut 6:5 (LXX): ἀγαπήσεις κύριον το `ν θεόν σου ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας σου καὶ ` ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς σου καὶ ` ἐξ ὅλης τῆς διανοίας σου καὶ ` ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ἰσχύος σου' — ESV: 'you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' Heart (will), soul, mind (thought/feeling), strength (body) — plus 'love your neighbor' (social context). Full renovation is simply the Great Commandment finally becoming true of a person. That is the finished house.

In their own words:

“Spiritual formation, without regard to any specifically religious context or tradition, is the process by which the human spirit or will is given a definite 'form' or character. It is a process that happens to everyone. The most despicable as well as the most admirable of persons have had a spiritual formation. Their spirits or hearts have been formed.”

— Renovation of the Heart, ch. 1 ('Introducing Spiritual Formation') (*confidence: verified*)

“Spiritual formation for the Christian basically refers to the Spirit-driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ himself... the outer life of the individual becomes a natural expression or outflow of the character and teachings of Jesus.”

— Renovation of the Heart, ch. 1, p. 22 (NavPress 2002) (*confidence: verified*)

“Terrorists as well as saints are the outcome of spiritual formation. Their spirits or hearts have been formed. Period.”

— Willard, essay 'Spiritual Formation in Christ: A Perspective on What It Is and How It Might Be Done' (parallel wording to Renovation ch. 1) (*confidence: well-known*)

“The greatest need you and I have — the greatest need of collective humanity — is renovation of our heart. That spiritual place within us from which outlook, choices, and actions come has been formed by a world away from God. Now it must be transformed.”

— Renovation of the Heart, ch. 1 (*confidence: verified*)

“The revolution of Jesus is in the first place and continuously a revolution of the human heart or spirit. It did not and does not proceed by means of the formation of social institutions and laws.”

— Renovation of the Heart, ch. 1 (*confidence: verified*)

“If we are to be spiritually formed in Christ, we must have and must implement the appropriate vision, intention, and means.”

— Renovation of the Heart, ch. 5, p. 85 (NavPress 2002) (*confidence: verified*)

“The vision that underlies spiritual (trans)formation into Christlikeness is, then, the vision of life now and forever in the range of God's effective will — that is, partaking of the divine nature.”

— Renovation of the Heart, ch. 5 (pp. 87-88 area) (*confidence: verified*)

“The ultimate freedom we have as human beings is the power to select what we will allow or require our minds to dwell upon.”

— Renovation of the Heart, ch. 6 ('Transforming the Mind'), p. 95 (NavPress 2002) (*confidence: verified*)

“What is running your life at any given moment is your soul. Not external circumstances, or your thoughts, or your intentions, or even your feelings, but your soul. The soul is that aspect of your whole being that correlates, integrates, and enlivens everything going on in the various dimensions of the self. It is the life-center of the human being.”

— Renovation of the Heart, ch. 10 ('Transforming the Soul') (*confidence: verified*)

“[The soul is] like the computer that quietly runs a business in the background — it coordinates and integrates all the parts; nobody notices it until it stops working.”

— Renovation of the Heart, ch. 10 — Willard's verified analogy; wording here is condensed. In an interview he extended it: the soul is 'like the computer system that coordinates everything, from the smog device to the fuel injection system to the brakes' in a car. (*confidence: paraphrase*)

“[The body is] the focal point of our presence in the physical and social world. In union with it we come into existence, and we become the person we shall forever be. It is our primary energy source or 'strength' — our personalized 'power pack.'”

— Renovation of the Heart, ch. 2 ('The Heart in the System of Human Life') (*confidence: verified*)

“The body is our primary area of power, freedom, and — therefore — responsibility.”

— Renovation of the Heart, ch. 9 ('Transforming the Body') (*confidence: verified*)

“Our 'kingdom' is simply the range of our effective will. Whatever we genuinely have the say over is in our kingdom.”

— The Divine Conspiracy (HarperOne, 1998), ch. 1, p. 21 (*confidence: verified*)

“Grace is not opposed to effort, it is opposed to earning. Earning is an attitude. Effort is an action. Grace, you know, does not just have to do with forgiveness of sins alone.”

— The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship (HarperOne, 2006) (*confidence: verified*)

“The ruined soul must be willing to hear of and recognize its own ruin before it can find how to enter a different path, the path of eternal life that naturally leads into spiritual formation in Christlikeness.”

— Renovation of the Heart, ch. 2-3 (study guides cite p. 59) (*confidence: verified*)

“The will is transformed by experience, not information.”

— Widely attributed to Willard in quote collections; not page-verifiable to Renovation — treat as attributed, or paraphrase the idea (*confidence: well-known*)

Handle with care — what not to overstate:

'Everyone gets a spiritual formation' does NOT mean everyone is indwelt by the Spirit or on a path to God. Willard distinguishes formation-in-general (universal, often malformation) from CHRISTIAN spiritual formation (Spirit-driven, toward Christ's character). Don't let the congregation hear universalism in it.

Do not let 'grace is not opposed to effort' slide into works-salvation — and don't let anyone hear the disciplines as a way to KEEP saved. Willard's whole point is anti-earning: disciplines are means of receiving grace for GROWTH, not maintenance payments on salvation. This sits comfortably with the church's eternal-security position: effort flows from a secure inheritance, it doesn't purchase or preserve it.

Willard is one of the most misquoted authors alive. Verified page numbers here (p. 22 definition, p. 85 VIM, p. 95 ultimate freedom) are from the NavPress 2002 hardcover; paperback and 20th-anniversary editions paginate differently — check against the copy in hand before printing an insert. 'The will is transformed by experience, not information' is attributed but not page-verifiable; introduce it as 'Willard liked to say' or paraphrase.

'Curved in on itself' (*incurvatus in se*) is Augustine's image and Luther's phrase, not Willard's wording — it accurately describes Willard's 'ruined soul,' but credit it to the older tradition if you quote it.

Willard's 'radical evil in the ruined soul' is about pervasive CORRUPTION and mislocation — a self 'formed by a world away from God' — not a doctrine of inherited guilt. That fits the church's ancestral-sin reading of Romans 5:12 ('because all sinned') well; don't press Willard into either Reformed total-depravity-with-imputed-guilt or Pelagian self-help. He is neither.

Keep Willard's terminology straight or the six-part model collapses: WILL = SPIRIT = HEART (one dimension, three names), and the SOUL is a DIFFERENT, deeper dimension that integrates everything. If you use 'soul' and 'spirit' interchangeably in this sermon, his anatomy stops making sense. Also sidestep the dichotomy/trichotomy debate — Willard's six 'aspects' are dimensions of one unified person, not detachable parts.

Do not preach the body as the problem. Willard explicitly opposes body-hating spirituality: the σῶμα is good, God-given, and destined for glory; Paul's negative term is σὰρξ ('flesh' = self-sufficient human power operating apart from God), not the body itself. Confusing the two undoes the whole Romans 12:1 move.

'Routine, easy obedience' is the description of MATURE formation, not a stick to beat strugglers with. Willard insists transformation is a process with means, not an instant event — preach it as hope for the journey, not as a standard people are failing.

Willard says almost nothing about eschatology in Renovation — don't draft him into premillennial (or any) end-times arguments; his focus is kingdom life NOW, which is compatible with the church's historic premillennialism but not an argument for it.

The 'Third World' sermon image works because it's about broken infrastructure and a rebuilding program — keep it about SOULS (including ours; the preacher's soul is third-world too) and avoid any framing that sounds like it's disparaging actual peoples or places.

IV. MORELAND & CRAIG — THE SOUL, *THE SUBSTANCE OF*

Substance dualism, as defended by J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, is the claim that you are not your brain: the self is an immaterial substance — a soul — that has and uses a body, rather than a property, program, or byproduct of brain chemistry. The most rigorous recent statement is *The Substance of Consciousness: A Comprehensive Defense of Contemporary Substance Dualism* by Brandon Rickabaugh and J. P. Moreland (Wiley-Blackwell, Nov 2023) — Rickabaugh is lead author and should be named. They defend "Mere Substance Dualism": the human person is comprised of a soul (a fundamental, immaterial substance) and a physical body; the person can exist without the body but not without the soul; and the soul is what possesses and unifies the whole mental life. Their core arguments: consciousness is not identical to brain states (by Leibniz's Law — mental states have properties like first-person subjectivity and "aboutness" that no brain state has); the unity of consciousness at any moment requires one single experiencer, not a committee of neurons; the same "I" endures through total physical change (their Mereological Argument); we have direct introspective acquaintance with the self; and neuroscience only ever establishes correlation between brain and mind, which is not identity. Moreland's accessible version, *The Soul: How We Know It's Real and Why It Matters* (Moody, 2014), adds the biblical anthropology (nephesh, ruach, psyche; Gen 35:18; Eccl 12:7; Matt 10:28) and explicitly says the fourth reason the soul matters is that understanding the immaterial nature of the human spirit is crucial to grasping spiritual growth. Craig defends the same body-soul dualism in *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (co-authored with Moreland, IVP 2003/2nd ed. 2017, Part on Philosophy of Mind) and in popular teaching: humans are body-soul composites, the soul is the seat of consciousness and personal identity, and it survives death in a conscious intermediate state awaiting resurrection.

On Mark 13:32, Craig's proposed model of the Incarnation (*Philosophical Foundations*, the Incarnation chapter; *Reasonable Faith Q&A* #410; *Defenders* lectures) holds that during the state of humiliation "the divine elements of Jesus' personality were largely subliminal" (verified, 2017 ed., p. 607): "the Logos allowed

only those facets of his person to be part of Christ's waking consciousness which were compatible with typical human experience, while the bulk of his knowledge and other cognitive perfections, like an iceberg beneath the water's surface, lay submerged in his subconscious" (verified wording). Christ therefore remains truly omniscient — the knowledge is really his — but in his waking human consciousness he genuinely did not know the day or hour, and spoke plain truth in Mark 13:32; Craig adds that Christ "could have drawn upon his subliminal knowledge, had he chosen to do so, but he refrained from doing so, thereby having an authentic human consciousness" (verified, Q&A #410). Honesty requirements for the pulpit: this is Craig's proposed POSSIBLE model, offered to show Chalcedon (one person, fully God and fully man) is coherent, not dogma; a different plank of his model (the Logos serving as Christ's rational soul) is labeled "neo-Apollinarian" — a label Craig accepts with qualifications and critics press hard — so the sermon should use only the subliminal-knowledge insight, framed as "one way faithful scholars explain it," never denying the Son's deity or omniscience. The classical alternative is to attribute the ignorance to Christ's human nature per Chalcedon's two-natures reading (Athanasius, Cyril, Aquinas: the Son knows the day in his divine nature, not in his human knowledge; Augustine's variant: "does not know" = "is not his to make known").

The sermon payoff is strong and fair to the sources. Just as who Jesus was — the divine glory — lay beneath his waking consciousness, real and whole though not accessed by his human senses or introspection, so who the believer is in Christ is written deeper than the conscious mind: "your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col 3:3 ESV). You do not always feel like a forgiven, adopted child of God, but the identity is objectively there, and spiritual formation is the Spirit's work of bringing that hidden identity up into waking, everyday life (Rom 8:16; 2 Cor 4:16-18). This is exactly why the soul matters for formation: Dallas Willard — a professional philosopher, committed substance dualist, and Moreland's teacher and father-figure at USC — defined spiritual formation as "the Spirit-driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ himself" (Renovation of the Heart, p. 22, verified). If you are only a brain, "renovation of the heart" collapses into chemistry management; because you are a soul, there is a real inner person that God can actually transform and that outlasts the body (Matt 10:28; 2

Cor 4:16-18). And because the soul is immaterial, it "lives in a dimension the five senses cannot reach": no instrument detects it — not because it is unreal but because instruments only read matter — while the God who made the hearing ear and the seeing eye (Prov 20:12) reads the person directly (1 Sam 16:7).

Key points:

1. PLAIN-TERMS MAP OF THE VIEWS. Physicalism/materialism: you ARE your body-brain; mind is what the brain does; when the brain stops, you stop. Property dualism: the brain is the only THING, but it has special non-physical properties (thoughts, feelings) — consciousness is like smoke off the engine, real but owned by a physical thing. Substance dualism (Moreland, Craig, Rickabaugh, and historic Christianity): the soul is a SUBSTANCE — a real, whole, immaterial thing that has properties, endures through time, and owns the body — 'a fundamental, immaterial, and unifying substance' (Wiley publisher description). Preaching translation: you are not a body that has feelings of a self; you are a self — a soul — that has a body.

2. THE SUBSTANCE OF CONSCIOUSNESS (Rickabaugh & Moreland, Wiley-Blackwell, Nov 7, 2023 — name Rickabaugh, he is lead author): defends 'Mere Substance Dualism' — in the authors' own words the human person '(i) is comprised of a soul (a fundamental, immaterial substance) and a physical body, (ii) capable of existing without a body, but not without his/her soul, and (iii) the mental life of which is possessed and unified by his/her soul' (APA Blog author interview, Dec 2023). It is billed as the most comprehensive single-authored-team academic defense of substance dualism in print, from a major secular academic press — useful pulpit note: belief in the soul is not intellectual roadkill; it is being argued at the highest levels of philosophy today, and the authors document a 'renaissance of substance dualism' and a shift away from standard physicalism.

3. CORRELATION IS NOT IDENTITY. Neuroscience shows that brain states and mental states move together (damage the brain, impair the mind), but correlation never proves the two are the same thing. The argument runs on Leibniz's Law (the Indiscernibility of Identicals): if A and B are identical they must share every property; mental states have properties no brain state has — a felt quality ('what it is like' to taste honey), aboutness (a thought is ABOUT Jesus; no neuron is about anything), first-person privacy (only you can feel your pain; anyone can observe your neurons), and no size or location (your thought of your mother is not 3 cm wide). Therefore mind is not brain. Both *The Soul* (ch. 1, 3) and *The Substance of Consciousness* press this; they also insist the question of identity is philosophical, not something a scanner can settle.

4. UNITY OF CONSCIOUSNESS AT A TIME (a core argument of *The Substance of Consciousness*, Part 3): right now you see the page, hear the fan, feel the chair — as ONE unified field of experience belonging to ONE experiencer. But the brain is billions of separate cells; no single neuron experiences the whole. A committee has no single point of view. The best explanation of the oneness of your experience is a true unity — a simple, substantial soul that possesses and unifies it all. Rickabaugh and Moreland argue physicalism, emergentism, and panpsychism all fail to explain this.

5. THE ENDURING 'I' (their Mereological Argument): your body's matter is continuously replaced and your brain constantly rewires, yet the very same 'I' persists — the one baptized years ago is the one repenting today and the one God will raise. A merely physical object that swaps its parts is, strictly, a different aggregate; but persons endure as strictly the same self. Moreland's version in *The Soul*: only an immaterial soul explains strict personal identity over time — and this matters morally (the person punished must be the person who did the deed) and spiritually (sanctification is the same self being transformed).

6. INTROSPECTIVE ACCESS TO THE SELF: The Substance of Consciousness (Part 2) mounts the first extensive defense of the argument from introspection against its biggest critics (Churchland, Searle): in self-awareness you are directly acquainted not just with your thoughts but with YOURSELF as the single owner of them — 'I am aware of MY pain.' Notably, they argue dualism 'seems true' even to physicalists (physicalists themselves admit the intuition and must explain it away) — what they call the hard meta-problem of consciousness.

7. MORELAND'S THE SOUL (Moody, 2014) — the accessible version the church already resonates with. Four stated reasons the soul matters: (1) Scripture teaches the immaterial soul as genuine KNOWLEDGE, not wishful faith; (2) human dignity and ethics hang on it; (3) belief in life after death erodes when people think science has debunked the soul; (4) 'understanding the immaterial nature of the human spirit is crucial to grasping the essence of spiritual growth' (as cited in published reviews). Biblical anthropology (ch. 2): nephesh (soul, ~754x) and ruach (spirit, ~361x) name the life-principle and seat of mind, will, and emotion that departs at death (Gen 35:18 — Rachel's soul departing; Eccl 12:7 — the spirit returns to God) and awaits resurrection; psyche in Matt 10:28 distinguishes soul from body explicitly. Ch. 4 gives five arguments: basic self-awareness of a simple, unextended self; the irreducible first-person perspective; the modal argument (I could conceivably exist without my body, so I am not my body); libertarian free will and moral responsibility (if physical determinism runs everything, 'ought' dies); and personal identity through change. He also maps the soul's faculties — mind, will, emotion, senses, and SPIRIT, the faculty through which we relate to God: ready-made sermon anatomy.

8. NDE EVIDENCE — HANDLE AS SEASONING, NOT FOUNDATION. In *The Soul* ch. 5 ('The Future of the Human Person') Moreland treats near-death and out-of-body experiences as supportive, corroborating evidence that consciousness can continue apart from the body; he developed this more fully with Gary Habermas in *Beyond Death* (1998). He presents them cautiously as one line among many, with Jesus' resurrection as the decisive evidence for life after death. Preach it that way: the soul's reality rests on Scripture and argument; NDEs are at most a corroborating whisper.

9. CRAIG ON THE SOUL: In *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Moreland & Craig, IVP Academic, 2003; 2nd ed. 2017), the Philosophy of Mind section (2nd ed. chs. on 'The Mind-Body Problem' Parts I-II, 'Free Will and Determinism,' 'Personal Identity and Life After Death') defends property AND substance dualism against physicalist alternatives. In popular teaching (Defenders 'Doctrine of Man' lectures, e.g., 'Refuting Materialism/Monism'; Reasonable Faith Q&As; interviews) Craig teaches that the biblical view is soul-body dualism — humans are body-soul composites; the soul is the seat of consciousness and personal identity; and this matters for the afterlife: at death the soul consciously survives in a disembodied intermediate state with Christ (Phil 1:23; 2 Cor 5:8) until the bodily resurrection reunites soul and body. Personal identity between death and resurrection is preserved precisely because the SOUL persists — on physicalism there is nothing left to BE with Christ before the resurrection.

10. CRAIG ON MARK 13:32 — THE VERIFIED MODEL. Mark 13:32 ESV: 'But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.' Craig's model (Philosophical Foundations, the Incarnation chapter; Defenders 'Doctrine of Christ'; Q&A #410 'Incarnation and Omniscience,' 2015) has three planks: (1) full Chalcedonian affirmation — one person, truly God and truly man, without confusion or division; (2) the divine Logos is the rational soul of the incarnate Christ (this is the controversial 'neo-Apollinarian' plank — do NOT preach this part); (3) 'the divine elements of Jesus' personality were largely subliminal during his state of humiliation' (verified, 2017 ed., p. 607). The famous image: 'the Logos allowed only those facets of his person to be part of Christ's waking consciousness which were compatible with typical human experience, while the bulk of his knowledge and other cognitive perfections, like an iceberg beneath the water's surface, lay submerged in his subconscious' (verified wording). So Jesus remains genuinely omniscient — the knowledge never stopped being his — but in his waking human consciousness he truly did not know the day or hour, and his statement in Mark 13:32 is plain truth, not pretense. Craig: Christ 'could have drawn upon his subliminal knowledge, had he chosen to do so, but he refrained from doing so, thereby having an authentic human consciousness' (verified, Q&A #410). This also illuminates Luke 2:52 ('Jesus increased in wisdom') without any denial of deity.

11. THE HONEST FRAME AND THE CLASSICAL ALTERNATIVE. Craig explicitly offers this as a POSSIBLE model — enough to show the Incarnation is coherent — not as required doctrine. Critics (Orthodox, Reformed, and some evangelical writers) call his broader Christology 'neo-Apollinarian' because of plank 2, and Craig himself has used that label while insisting he avoids the ancient heresy (since on his view Christ has a complete human nature, body and rational soul). The sermon should borrow ONLY the subliminal-knowledge insight, introduced as 'one way faithful scholars explain it.' The classical mainstream reading: the Son is ignorant of the day AS MAN, omniscient AS GOD — ignorance belongs to his human nature/human mind (Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria, Gregory Nazianzen, Aquinas ST III q.10); Augustine's variant: 'does not know' means 'it is not his to make known.' Either road protects the same two rails: the Son never stopped being omniscient God, and Jesus never spoke a false word.

12. THE SERMON BRIDGE (the pastor's connection, stated fairly): in Jesus' earthly life, WHO HE WAS — the divine glory — lay beneath his waking consciousness: real, whole, but not paraded before the five senses, and (on Craig's model) not even accessed by his waking human introspection. Likewise, WHO YOU ARE IN CHRIST — forgiven, justified, adopted — is written into you deeper than the conscious mind: 'For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God' (Col 3:3 ESV). You do not always FEEL like an adopted child of God; feelings are surface water, the identity is the iceberg's mass below. Spiritual formation is the Spirit's work of surfacing that hidden identity into waking, everyday life: 'The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God' (Rom 8:16) — the witness comes from beneath the conscious surface up into it. Be clear this is an ANALOGY drawn from the doctrine, not the exegesis of Col 3:3 itself.

13. WHY THE SOUL MATTERS FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION — THE WILLARD LINE. Dallas Willard was a USC philosophy professor for 47 years and, in Moreland's words, 'a committed substance dualist' who 'never tired of defending the existence of and talking about the flourishing of the (embodied) soul' (verified, Moreland's memorial tribute, dwillard.org). Moreland did his Ph.D. at USC in Willard's orbit — sat in his doctoral seminars, called him 'like a father to me.' Willard's definition: spiritual formation is 'the Spirit-driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ himself' (Renovation of the Heart, 2002, p. 22 — verified). The logic: if you are only a brain, 'renovation of the heart' is chemistry management — mood maintenance until the organism fails. Because you are a soul, there is a real inner person for God to renovate, and the renovation LASTS: 'Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day... the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal' (2 Cor 4:16, 18 ESV). Matt 10:28 seals it: men can kill the body but cannot touch the soul — so the deepest part of you is the part only God can either destroy or transform.

14. THE CONTROLLING CLAIM GROUNDED: the soul 'lives in a dimension the five senses cannot reach.' This is philosophically precise, not just poetic: instruments (eyes, ears, MRIs, EEGs) detect only physical things — mass, charge, location; the soul has none of these, so no instrument will ever photograph it. Undetectable-by-sensors is not unreal — it is exactly what an immaterial substance should be. Yet it is the most real thing about you: it is the YOU that owns every experience. And the God who manufactured the senses is not limited to them: 'The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the LORD has made them both' (Prov 20:12); 'man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart' (1 Sam 16:7 ESV; the LXX of 1 Kingdoms 16:7 says man sees 'eis prosopon' — into the face — but God sees 'eis kardian' — into the heart). Only the Maker of eyes can show you who you really are.

15. CONSISTENCY NOTE FOR THIS CONGREGATION: the church already teaches Moreland-influenced material on the soul (the 'Soul, Hell, and the Supreme Ethic of Love' study drawing on Moreland and Swinburne), so this sermon extends an established framework rather than introducing a novelty — same Moreland doctrine of the immaterial self, now applied to identity in Christ and formation.

In their own words:

“We defend Mere Substance Dualism (SD), according to which the human person (i) is comprised of a soul (a fundamental, immaterial substance) and a physical body, (ii) capable of existing without a body, but not without his/her soul, and (iii) the mental life of which is possessed and unified by his/her soul.”

— Brandon Rickabaugh & J. P. Moreland, authors' interview on The Substance of Consciousness, APA Blog 'Recently Published Book Spotlight' (Dec 29, 2023) (*confidence: verified*)

“The Substance of Consciousness delivers a unique and powerful defense of contemporary substance dualism. The book makes the claim that the human person is an embodied fundamental, immaterial, and unifying substance.”

— Publisher's description, The Substance of Consciousness (Wiley-Blackwell, 2023) (*confidence: verified*)

“Since omniscience is an essential property of God, Jesus Christ must be omniscient, even during his earthly sojourn (his so-called state of humiliation). But just as you and I know vastly more than we are at any time conscious of, so Christ need not be conscious of all that he knows in order to be omniscient. So on my proposed model, much of Jesus' divine knowledge is subliminal during his earthly life.”

— William Lane Craig, Reasonable Faith Q&A #410, 'Incarnation and Omniscience' (Feb 22, 2015) (*confidence: verified*)

“It is consistent with saying that Christ could have drawn upon his subliminal knowledge, had he chosen to do so, but he refrained from doing so, thereby having an authentic human consciousness.”

— William Lane Craig, Reasonable Faith Q&A #410, 'Incarnation and Omniscience' (Feb 22, 2015) (*confidence: verified*)

“the divine elements of Jesus' personality were largely subliminal during his state of humiliation”

— J. P. Moreland & William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, 2nd ed. (IVP Academic, 2017), p. 607 (Incarnation chapter; page as cited in a peer-reviewed critique) (*confidence: verified*)

“the Logos allowed only those facets of his person to be part of Christ's waking consciousness which were compatible with typical human experience, while the bulk of his knowledge and other cognitive perfections, like an iceberg beneath the water's surface, lay submerged in his subconscious.”

— J. P. Moreland & William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, Incarnation chapter (quoted verbatim in multiple secondary sources) (*confidence: verified*)

“Spiritual formation for the Christian basically refers to the Spirit-driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ himself.”

— Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart* (NavPress, 2002), ch. 1, p. 22 (*confidence: verified*)

“You are an unceasing spiritual being with an eternal destiny in God's great universe.”

— Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy* (1998); a signature line he also used in talks (*confidence: well-known*)

“He was a committed substance dualist, and never tired of defending the existence of and talking about the flourishing of the (embodied) soul.”

— J. P. Moreland on Dallas Willard, 'Reflections on Four Final Concerns of Dallas Willard,' memorial tribute at dwillard.org (*confidence: verified*)

“reality is what you bump up against when your beliefs are false”

— Dallas Willard, as reported by J. P. Moreland ('As Dallas often said...'), memorial tribute at dwillard.org (*confidence: verified*)

“But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”

— Mark 13:32, ESV (*confidence: verified*)

“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”

— Matthew 10:28, ESV (*confidence: verified*)

“For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”

— Colossians 3:3, ESV (*confidence: verified*)

“So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.”

— 2 Corinthians 4:16, ESV (*confidence: verified*)

“For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.”

— 1 Samuel 16:7, ESV (LXX 1 Kingdoms 16:7: man sees 'into the face,' God sees 'into the heart') (*confidence: verified*)

“the soul can and does exist independent of the body... I think that commits us to body-soul dualism.”

— William Lane Craig, interview on The Dr. Jeff Show ep. 32 (Summit Ministries podcast) (*confidence: well-known*)

Handle with care — what not to overstate:

Attribute The Substance of Consciousness to BOTH authors — Brandon Rickabaugh is the lead author, not a junior add-on to Moreland. Saying 'Moreland's new book' from the pulpit would be inaccurate.

Craig's incarnation model is a proposed POSSIBLE model to show Chalcedon is coherent — he does not offer it as dogma, and it is not the historic majority view. Preach it as 'one way faithful scholars explain it,' alongside the classical answer (ignorance belongs to Christ's human nature/human knowledge — Athanasius, Cyril, Aquinas; Augustine: 'not his to make known').

Use ONLY the subliminal-knowledge plank of Craig's model. The other distinctive plank — the Logos serving as the rational soul of Jesus — is the part critics (and Craig himself, with qualifications) label 'neo-Apollinarian,' and it is seriously contested. Do not import it into the sermon, and never say or imply the Son lacked full deity, full humanity, or omniscience.

Do not slide into kenoticism: on Craig's model Jesus did NOT 'give up' or 'empty himself of' omniscience — the knowledge remained fully his, just not in waking consciousness. Saying 'Jesus stopped knowing' overshoots; 'in his waking human mind he did not access it' is the accurate line. Critics do press whether Mark 13:32 stated without qualification is fully candid on this model (that is their strongest objection), which is another reason to present it as one proposal among faithful options.

Col 3:3 ('your life is hidden with Christ in God') is about union with Christ and its security in God — Paul is not teaching a psychology of the subconscious. Use the hidden-identity connection as an ANALOGY the doctrine invites, not as exegesis of the verse.

Do not attribute 'You don't have a soul. You are a soul. You have a body' to C.S. Lewis — it is a famous misattribution (Lewis never wrote it). The idea is fine and genuinely Moreland-ish; just don't credit Lewis.

'Correlation is not identity' is not anti-neuroscience. Moreland and Rickabaugh affirm deep, intimate soul-brain interaction and expect brain damage to impair the soul's expression. Don't preach 'the brain doesn't matter' — preach 'the brain is the instrument, not the player.'

Handle NDEs the way Moreland does — as supplementary corroboration, not proof. They are anecdotal and contested; the sermon's weight should rest on Scripture and the philosophical arguments, with the resurrection of Jesus as the decisive evidence for life after death.

Substance dualism is a rigorously defended position, not a laboratory result. Don't claim 'science has proven the soul' — the claim is that Scripture, reason, and experience support it and that physicalism cannot explain consciousness, unity, or the enduring self. Also be aware (not necessarily from the pulpit) that some evangelical scholars are Christian physicalists — the argument is live even inside the church.

Verified page numbers are limited: p. 607 (Philosophical Foundations, 2nd ed., 2017) for 'largely subliminal,' and p. 22 (Renovation of the Heart) for Willard's definition. Do not add page numbers to the other quotes.

Moreland's exact relationship to Willard: Moreland did his Ph.D. at USC where Willard taught, sat in Willard's doctoral seminars, and describes him as 'like a father to me'; sources also report Willard supervised his dissertation — 'Willard's student and close friend' is the safe, accurate phrasing.

2 Cor 4:16-18 contrasts the wasting outer self with the renewed inner self amid suffering — it beautifully supports the inner-person point, but Paul's emphasis is perseverance under affliction, not a metaphysics lecture; let the context breathe when reading it.

Every passage that carries the sermon, set out per our practice: Septuagint (LXX) for the Old Testament, Greek New Testament for the New, with the ESV beside it and the load-bearing Greek word explained.

Proverbs 20:12

οὗς ἀκούει καὶ ὀφθαλμός ὁρᾷ· κυρίου ἔργα καὶ ἀμφότερα.

“The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the LORD has made them both.” (ESV)

Key word: οὗς *ous* = ear; ὀφθαλμός *ophthalmos* = eye; κυρίου ἔργα *kyriou erga* = 'the works of the Lord.' The LXX reads literally 'an ear hears and an eye sees — both are the Lord's works': the very faculties of perception are His workmanship.

The sermon's anchor — your five senses are themselves gifts from the One who gives ears to hear and eyes to see, so the unseen dimension of the soul can only be known when He grants the perceiving.

Matthew 10:28

καὶ μὴ φοβεῖσθε ἀπὸ τῶν ἀποκτεννόντων τὸ σῶμα τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν μὴ δυναμένων ἀποκτεῖναι· φοβεῖσθε δὲ μᾶλλον τὸν δυνάμενον καὶ ψυχὴν καὶ σῶμα ἀπολέσαι ἐν γέεννῃ.

“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.” (ESV)

Key word: ψυχὴ *psychē* = soul, set against σῶμα *sōma* = body (the pastor's SOMA note); μὴ ἰδὲ δυναμένων ἀποκτεῖναι *mē dynamenōn apokteinai* = 'not able to kill' — the soul is beyond the reach of every physical weapon.

Jesus Himself distinguishes soul from body and declares the soul unkillable by material means — the soul is a real, irreducible substance, a 'third-world' reality the five senses cannot touch.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Διὸ οὐκ ἐγκακοῦμεν, ἀλλ' εἰ καὶ ὁ ἔσω ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος διαφθείρεται, ἀλλ' ὁ ἔσω ἡμῶν ἀνακαινοῦται ἡμέρα καὶ ἡμέρα. τὸ γὰρ παραντίκα ἐλαφρὸν τῆς θλίψεως ἡμῶν καθ' ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν αἰώνιον βάρους δόξης κατεργάζεται ἡμῖν, μὴ σκοπούντων ἡμῶν τὰ βλεπόμενα ἀλλὰ τὰ μὴ βλεπόμενα, τὰ γὰρ βλεπόμενα πρόσκαιρα, τὰ δὲ μὴ βλεπόμενα αἰώνια.

“So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.” (ESV)

Key word: ὁ ἔσω ἄνθρωπος *ho esō anthrōpos* = 'the inner person'; ἀνακαινοῦται *anakainoutai* = 'is being renewed' (present passive — continuous renovation); τὰ μὴ βλεπόμενα *ta mē blepomena* = 'the things not seen.'

Paul locates the real, eternal you in the unseen inner self under daily renovation — the soul's dimension outlasts the sense-world that is wasting away.

Mark 13:32

Περὶ δὲ τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης ἢ τῆς ὥρας οὐδεὶς οἶδεν, οὐδὲ οἱ ἄγγελοι ἐν οὐρανῷ οὐδὲ ὁ υἱός, εἰ μὴ ὁ πατήρ.

“But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” (ESV)

Key word: οὐδε ὁ υἱός *oude ho huios* = 'nor the Son'; οἶδεν *oiden* = 'knows.' In His incarnate humiliation the Son's divine omniscience was not held in His waking human consciousness.

If even the incarnate Son carried depths beneath His earthly conscious mind, then what is truest about a person is not exhausted by what the conscious mind can access — the identity runs subliminal, deeper than the five senses.

Colossians 3:3

ἀπεθάνετε γάρ, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν κέκρυπται σὺν τῷ Χριστῷ ἐν τῷ θεῷ.

“For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” (ESV)

Key word: *κέκρυπται kekryptai* = 'has been hidden and remains hidden' (perfect passive of *κρύπτω kryptō* — a settled, standing state).

The believer's true identity — 'who you are in Christ,' conscious and sub-conscious — is stored in God Himself, hidden deeper than introspection can dig, waiting to be revealed by Him.

Romans 12:2

καὶ μὴ συσχηματίζεσθε τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ, ἀλλὰ μεταμορφοῦσθε τῇ ἀνακαινώσει τοῦ νοός, εἰς τὸ δοκιμάζειν ὑμᾶς τί τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ εὐάρεστον καὶ τέλειον.

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (ESV)

Key word: *συσχηματίζεσθε syschēmatizesthe* = 'be molded to the schema' (outward pattern-pressing by the age); *μεταμορφοῦσθε metamorphousthe* = 'keep being transformed' (metamorphosis, from the inside out); *ἀνακαινώσει τοῦ νοός anakainōsei tou noos* = 'renewal of the mind.'

This is the sermon's thesis verse — all people are spiritually formed by the world's schema; re-formation is a divine metamorphosis worked through a renewed mind, not a self-improvement project.

1 Corinthians 2:16

τίς γὰρ ἔγνω νοῦν κυρίου, ὃς συμβιβάσει αὐτόν; ἡμεῖς δὲ νοῦν Χριστοῦ ἔχομεν.

“For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.” (ESV)

Key word: *νοῦν Χριστοῦ noun Christou* = 'the mind of Christ,' from *νοῦς nous* = mind — the same word renewed in Romans 12:2 (*τοῦ νοός*).

The re-formed mind is not generic positivity but a shared possession — Christ's own nous — already given to believers whether or not the conscious mind has caught up to it.

Philippians 2:5

τοῦτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν ὃ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ,

“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,” (ESV)

Key word: *φρονεῖτε phroneite* = 'keep minding / set your habitual mindset' (present imperative of *φρονέω phroneō*) — a settled disposition, not a single thought.

The command to actively inhabit the mind that is already 'yours in Christ Jesus' bridges who you are in Christ (position) and how you think day by day (formation).

Colossians 2:13-14

καὶ ὑμᾶς νεκροὺς ὄντας ἐν τοῖς παραπτώμασιν καὶ τῇ ἀκροβυστίᾳ τῆς σαρκὸς ὑμῶν, συνεζωοποίησεν ὑμᾶς σὺν αὐτῷ· χαρισάμενος ἡμῖν πάντα τὰ παραπτώματα, ἐξαλείψας τὸ καθ' ἡμῶν χειρόγραφον τοῖς δόγμασιν ὃ ἦν ὑπεναντίον ἡμῖν, καὶ αὐτὸ ἤρκεν ἐκ τοῦ μέσου προσηλώσας αὐτὸ τῷ σταυρῷ·

“And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.” (ESV)

Key word: *χαρισάμενος charisamenos* = 'having graced/forgiven as a free gift' (*χαρίζομαι charizomai*); *χειρόγραφον cheirographon* = the handwritten IOU, the certificate of debt; *ἐξαλείψας exaleipsas* = 'having wiped clean/erased.'

Forgiveness pictured as a debt-document wiped out and nailed to the cross — the incongruous gift given to people who were dead, not merely struggling.

Ephesians 2:8-10

τῇ γὰρ χάριτί ἐστε σεσωσμένοι διὰ πίστεως· καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν, θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον· οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων, ἵνα μὴ τις καυχήσῃται. αὐτοῦ γὰρ ἐσμεν ποίημα, κτισθέντες ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἐπὶ ἔργοις ἀγαθοῖς οἷς προητοίμασεν ὁ θεὸς ἵνα ἐν αὐτοῖς περιπατήσωμεν.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (ESV)

Key word: *χάριτι chariti* = 'by grace' (*χάρις charis*); *δῶρον dōron* = gift; *ποίημα poiēma* = 'workmanship, thing made' (root of English 'poem') — believers are God's crafted artwork.

Grace as pure gift, and *ποίημα* as the formation word itself — the re-formed soul is God's craftsmanship, the 'creativity' of the pastor's SOMA note answered by God's own creativity.

Psalm 103:2-5, 12 ESV (= Psalm 102 LXX)

εὐλόγει, ἡ ψυχὴ μου, τὸν κύριον καὶ μὴ ἐπιλανθάνου πάσας τὰς ἀνταποδόσεις αὐτοῦ· τὸν ἐνιλατεύοντα πάσαις ταῖς ἀνομίαις σου, τὸν ἰώμενον πάσας τὰς νόσους σου· τὸν λυτρούμενον ἐκ φθορᾶς τὴν ζωὴν σου, τὸν στεφανοῦντά σε ἐν ἐλέει καὶ οἰκτιρμοῖς· τὸν ἐμπιπλῶντα ἐν ἀγαθοῖς τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν σου, ἀνακαινισθήσεται ὡς ἀετοῦ ἡ νεότης σου. ... καθ' ὅσον ἀπέχουσιν ἀνατολαὶ ἀπὸ δυσμῶν, ἐμάκρυνεν ἀφ' ἡμῶν τὰς ἀνομίας ἡμῶν.

“Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. ... as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.” (ESV)

Key word: *ψυχὴ psychē = soul (the psalmist preaches to his own soul); ἀνακαινισθήσεται anakainisthēsetai = 'shall be renewed' — the same ἀνακαινίζω renewal-root as Romans 12:2 and 2 Corinthians 4:16. Numbering: ESV Psalm 103 = LXX Psalm 102.*

The soul commanded to remember forgiveness, healing, redemption, crowning, satisfaction — and infinite east-west removal of sin — makes forgiveness the engine of the soul's renewal.

Leviticus 25:10 (LXX)

καὶ ἀγιάσετε τὸ ἔτος τὸ πεντηκοστὸν ἐνιαυτὸν καὶ διαβοήσετε ἄφεσιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς πᾶσιν τοῖς κατοικοῦσιν αὐτήν· ἐνιαυτὸς ἀφέσεως σημασία αὕτη ἔσται ὑμῖν, καὶ ἀπελεύσεται εἰς ἕκαστος εἰς τὴν κτῆσιν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἕκαστος εἰς τὴν πατρίδα αὐτοῦ ἀπελεύσεσθε.

“And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, when each of you shall return to his property and each of you shall return to his clan.” (ESV)

Key word: *ἄφεσιν aphesin / ἐνιαυτοῦς ἀφέσεως eniautos apheseōs = 'release / year of release.' The LXX names the Jubilee with ἄφεσις aphesis — the very word the New Testament uses for the forgiveness of sins.*

In the Greek Bible this church reads, Jubilee IS aphesis — debts cancelled, slaves freed, everyone sent home — so 'forgiveness of sins' carries the full economics of release.

Isaiah 61:1 (LXX) + Luke 4:18-19

Isa 61:1 LXX: πνεῦμα κυρίου ἐπ' ἐμέ, οὗ εἵνεκεν ἔχρισέν με· εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς ἀπέσταλκέν με, ἰάσασθαι τοὺς συντετριμμένους τῇ καρδίᾳ, κηρύξαι αἰχμαλώτοις ἄφεςιν καὶ τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν. — Luke 4:18-19: Πνεῦμα κυρίου ἐπ' ἐμέ, οὗ εἵνεκεν ἔχρισέν με εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς, ἀπέσταλκέν με κηρύξαι αἰχμαλώτοις ἄφεςιν καὶ τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν, ἀποστεῖλαι τεθραυσμένους ἐν ἀφ᾽ ἑσθι, κηρύξαι ἐνιαυτὸν κυρίου δεκτόν.

“Isa 61:1: The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound. — Luke 4:18-19: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.” (ESV)

Key word: ἄφεςις *aphesis* appears twice in Luke's line ('liberty... at liberty'); ἔχρισεν *echrisen* = 'anointed' (root of *Χριστός* *Christos*); ἐνιαυτὸν κυρίου δεκτόν *eniauton kyriou dektion* = 'the acceptable year of the Lord' — the Jubilee year of *Lev 25:10*. Note: 'recovering of sight to the blind' (τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν) is the LXX reading of *Isa 61:1*, and it is the LXX form Jesus reads in the Nazareth synagogue.

Jesus announces His whole mission as Jubilee-aphesis — He is the anointed One who proclaims the release, opening blind eyes to see (*Prov 20:12*) in the dimension the senses cannot reach.

Ezekiel 36:26 (LXX)

καὶ δώσω ὑμῖν καρδίαν καινὴν καὶ πνεῦμα καινὸν δώσω ἐν ὑμῖν, καὶ ἀφελῶ τὴν καρδίαν τὴν λιθίνην ἐκ τῆς σαρκὸς ὑμῶν καὶ δώσω ὑμῖν καρδίαν σαρκίνην.

“And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.” (ESV)

Key word: καρδίαν καινὴν *kardian kainēn* = 'a new heart'; λιθίνην *lithinēn* = 'of stone' vs. σαρκίνην *sarkinēn* = 'of flesh'; δώσω *dōsō* = 'I will give' — three times, all God's doing.

Re-formation is not renovation of the old equipment but a divine heart-transplant — God alone can replace the world-hardened center of the inner dimension.

2 Corinthians 5:17

ὥστε εἴ τις ἐν Χριστῷ, καινὴ κτίσις· τὰ ἀρχαῖα παρῆλθεν, ἰδοὺ γέγονεν καινὰ·

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” (ESV)

Key word: καινὴ ` κτίσις kainē ktisis = 'new creation' — the same καινός kainos ('new in kind') as Ezekiel's new heart; ἐν Χριστῷ en Christō = 'in Christ,' the location of the new self.

The 'in Christ' identity from the pastor's notes stated at maximum voltage — the re-formed person is a fresh act of creation, not the old self lightly edited.

Ephesians 4:32

γίνεσθε εἰς ἀλλήλους χρηστοί, εὖσπλαγχνοι, χαριζόμενοι ἑαυτοῖς καθὼς καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἐν Χριστῷ ἐχαρίσατο ὑμῖν.

“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.” (ESV)

Key word: χαριζόμενοι charizomenoi, from χαρίζομαι charizomai = literally 'to grace, to grant as a free gift' — the same root as χάρις charis (grace/gift); ἐχαρίσατο echarisato = 'God gift-graced you.' In Paul's Greek, forgiving one another IS gift-giving: not the ledger-word ἀφίημι here, but grace handed on.

The overflow movement — the forgiven soul becomes a forgiver, and Paul's very vocabulary makes our forgiving each other an act of passing along the incongruous gift we received.

John 7:38

ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμέ, καθὼς εἶπεν ἡ γραφή, ποταμοὶ ἐκ τῆς κοιλίας αὐτοῦ
ρεύσουσιν ὕδατος ζῶντος.

“Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'” (ESV)

Key word: ποταμοὶ ` ὕδατος ζῶντος potamoi hydatos zōntos = 'rivers of living water'; κοιλίας koilias = literally 'belly, innermost cavity' — the deepest interior of the person, below the conscious surface.

The image of the overflow: what God pours into the hidden interior does not pool there but rivers out — forgiveness received becomes forgiveness spilling over to others.

3 John 2

Αγαπητέ, περὶ πάντων εὐχομαί σε εὐοδοῦσθαι καὶ ὑγιαίνειν, καθὼς εὐοδοῦταί σου ἡ ψυχή.

“Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul.” (ESV)

Key word: εὐοδοῦται *euodoutai* = 'is prospering, is on a good road' (εὖ *eu* 'well' + ὁδός *hodos* 'road'); ψυχή *psychē* = soul — the prospering soul is the benchmark for every other kind of prospering.

The closing benediction — John measures a whole life by the health of the unseen soul, sending the congregation home to tend the third-world dimension God has re-formed.

VI. THE SYNTHESIS MAP — HOW THE PIECES BUILD THE SERMON

MOVEMENT	HANDWRITTEN NOTE	SCHOLARSHIP	SCRIPTURE
The hidden country	Note 2: the soul lives in a dimension the 5 senses cannot reach; only the Giver of ears and eyes reveals who you are	—	Prov 20:12
The country is real	Note 2 (the dimensional claim IS substance dualism in preaching language)	Rickabaugh & Moreland, <i>The Substance of Consciousness</i> ; Craig & Moreland, <i>Philosophical Foundations</i> — you ARE a soul that has a body; correlation is not identity	Matt 10:28; 2 Cor 4:16, 18
Everyone gets a formation	Note 4: all people are spiritually formed by the world around them	Willard: everyone receives a spiritual formation — the question is what kind; the “ruined” soul	Rom 12:2
The Gift enters the bankrupt country	Note 4 (completing the sentence): re-formation requires the Gift	Barclay: no free gifts in antiquity; gifts to the worthy (Seneca); royal clean-slate edicts; Jubilee ἄφεσις	Lev 25:10 LXX; Luke 4:18, 21
The scandal of incongruous grace	—	Barclay: the Christ-gift perfected as incongruity — given without regard to worth; unconditioned but not unconditional; the cancelled χειρόγραφον	Rom 4:5; Col 2:13–14

The return the Gift expects	Note 1: σῶμα, the self, a sphere of sovereignty	Barclay: the gift expects a transformed life, not repayment; Willard: grace opposed to earning not effort; six aspects of the person; Vision–Intention–Means	Rom 12:1
Deeper than you can feel	Note 3: (Conscious/Sub-conscious) — who you are in Christ	Craig on Mark 13:32: the Son’s divine knowledge largely subliminal during the incarnate life (the iceberg) — one faithful model, full deity intact	Mark 13:32; Col 3:3
The overflow (climax)	“You cannot share a person you have not met”	Barclay: the gift keeps circulating; Eph 4:32 χαριζόμενοι — “forgiving” IS the gift-word (χάρις root); channels, not sources	1 Cor 2:16; Eph 4:32; John 7:38
The prospering soul	—	The whole life measured by the health of the hidden country	3 John 2

VII. DOCTRINAL GUARDRAILS OBSERVED

Eternal security — the Gift is never revoked (“God does not repossess His gifts”); the expected return is not a condition — “He finishes what He funds.”

Ancestral sin, not inherited guilt — we inherited Adam’s broken country, the corruption and the dying; but the debts on the paper are our own, because all sinned (Rom 5:12).

Christology — Craig’s subliminal-knowledge model is presented as one way faithful scholars explain Mark 13:32, with full deity affirmed in the same breath: in His divine nature the Son never ceased to know all things and uphold the universe. The believer parallel is a picture, not an equation.

Grace and works — forgiveness flows through believers as channels, never sources (Mark 2:7); effort is grace-funded (Willard), never earning.

The “third world” image — explicitly turned inward: not a comment on any nation on the map, but on the country inside us.