

Commendations

“Across today’s evangelical landscape, it’s common to see the gospel reserved solely for unbelievers. While we never want to minimize the desperate need of lost sinners to be savingly converted to Christ through the gospel, we must simultaneously never lessen the importance of Christians needing the gospel every single day. In *Crucified with Christ*, Tony Inmon reminds us that the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Christ for sinners does not merely begin our journey but remains the very foundation and centerpiece of the Christian life. With compelling counsel, practical illustrations, and pastoral exhortations, he urges us to combat sin, selfishness, and worldly distractions by clinging to the good news of Jesus daily. Every believer needs continual gospel rehearsal, and Dr. Inmon has given us a resource to help us do just that. The appendix section I think could also be used well in a group setting.”

—**Allen S. Nelson IV**

Pastor, Providence Baptist Church, Perryville, AR
Author, *From Death to Life, Before the Throne*,
and *A Change of Heart*

“This book is an evangelist, a teacher for thinking biblically about life, an instructor in apostolic principles of growing in grace and the knowledge of Christ, a provocative for renewing the mind, and a coach for developing a consistent lifestyle of truth-grounded discipleship. From its clear explanation of the gospel, through its presentation of the character and necessity of worldview, to its biblical figures on the necessity of saving

union with Christ, and its striking emphasis on stewardship of God’s world and word, this book will help local churches in the whole of their God-commanded privilege to make people wise to salvation and thoroughly furnished unto all good works. Tony Inmon has crafted an edifying resource for the church’s ministry to the lost and to believers at all stages of Christian growth.”

—**Tom J. Nettles**

Retired Professor of Historical Theology,
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
Author, *By His Grace and for His Glory*
and *Praise Is His Gracious Choice*

“In a culture that uses the term *gospel* casually, Tony Inmon pushes the pause button and deeply immerses us in its consuming power. This work is not just another attempt to place greater emphasis on the gospel but a heart cry to see every Christ follower deeply impacted and enriched by the true glory of the gospel.”

—**Dr. Tony Lambert**
Pastor, Picayune First

CRUCIFIED
WITH
CHRIST

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HOW TO LIVE DAILY IN THE
CONTEXT OF THE GOSPEL

TONY INMON



Crucified With Christ
How to Live Daily in the Context of the Gospel

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Dedication

*This book is dedicated to my bride and best friend
Denita Norton Inmon.*

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May our gracious Savior and Lord bring this concept of daily living in the context of the gospel to bear on your life for His glory. I am so grateful He has allowed me to apply this glorious message to my life and to convey it to you. I am also grateful to all those who have supported me throughout my ministry. I am thankful to those who have helped in the writing of this book. Thank you Niall MacCárthaigh for your tireless efforts in editing. I give special thanks to my bride Denita and my daughter Taylor. All of the words in this book could not express how grateful I am to the Lord for placing you both in my life.



*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live,
but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live
in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God,
who loved me and gave himself for me.*

GALATIANS 2:20

INTRODUCTION

Spinning my tires and going nowhere . . .

We had decided to have a family beach day, so we loaded up the truck and headed to the most private public beach Florida's Gulf Coast could offer. It was packed, every parking space filled and vehicles lining the shoulder of the road. Just before I decided to turn around and head home, we saw one small spot on the sandy shoulder. I pulled up to show off my parallel-parking skills as I was thinking, "Everyone else is parked on the sand. Surely I will be able to pull out when the time comes." However, the only thing that was moving when we were done sunbathing was the sand under my tires as the truck sank deeper and deeper into my once-coveted parking space. Thanks to the help of one of the gawking bystanders with a bigger truck, we were spared a tow-truck bill, and it only cost me my pride.

Thinking back over my life as a Christian, this story relates well to my struggle as a "complacent Christian." Maybe you have felt the same sense of spinning your tires and going nowhere. Perhaps you have experienced the frustration

of knowing you should be more mature in your walk with Christ and yet were somehow unable to get out of the sinking sand. By God's grace, I grew up in a household with a Christian influence. However, by man's failures, I also grew up in a culture and time that supported a casual commitment to Christianized institutions as long as it was the acceptable American lifestyle. It was the clean-cut, conservative, middle-class way of life, especially in the South, where the Bible belt buckles. Through a long journey of life in ministry and in submission to how God has shaped me through His Word, my understanding of discipleship has been reformed and even transformed, and I want to share that with you. I am writing this book because I cannot remember a time in my life when anyone set me in the right context as it related to my growth as a disciple.

Upon becoming a member of the church where we attended, I was placed in the latest program of discipleship. That is the way things were done back then, and we liked it that way! Discipleship was organized, institutionalized, and commodified. Regrettably, the product of the program did not always turn out the intended result. Rather, it produced a culture of Christians who believed the goal of the proper Christian life was simply to conduct oneself in the appearance of an accepted Christianized lifestyle. We were taught that to live as a Christian means to live in obedience to certain accepted biblical characteristics. We were taught to witness to people about how Jesus loves them and wants them to have a great life. We were taught to support the church by regular attendance and tithing. We were taught to conduct ourselves with good behavior and not to drink, take drugs, have

sex, or get too involved with rock music or video games. We were basically taught self-empowered, surface-level behavioral modification. These lessons were both intentionally and subconsciously taught. However, for a generation always asking why, rather than just jumping in line with the organization, the program approach was not sufficient for most of my peers. A generation was lost and they, in turn, raised the next generation with little to no biblical foundation. Sadly, that ungrounded generation has raised another generation even further removed from a biblical worldview. Secular humanism has pushed its influence into every aspect of Western culture, and it is now the dominant determinant of our society's philosophy of life. It has become the religion of America.

Like many of my peers, I sought an escape from the hypocrisy I saw in the church. Yet by God's grace, I did not leave the church to search for answers in other places or philosophies. I knew my experience in church was not in line with the description of the church in the Scriptures. However, I could not put my finger on the pulse of the problem. I saw hypocrisy and corruption. I saw the politics of power struggles and felt the conviction that something needed to change. But I was young, recently surrendered to ministry, and undisciplined. Unfortunately, I was being exposed to church growth philosophies of the 1980s and 1990s as the answer to changing the way church was being done. The great megachurches were held up as the models of how things ought to be done. "Big Eva" (the industrial and economic machine of the evangelical movement) was beginning its heyday. The answer was better music, business models of organization, and making the message of the gospel more appealing to the

consumer. In a nutshell, it was pragmatism. On the surface, it was thrilling to be a part of the massive effort to spread the gospel throughout society and build the church to greater and greater heights. But below the surface it was a watered-down gospel, and there was still the mindset of programmed discipleship that has attributed to a population of false converts and undisciplined babies in Christ. That is where I spent too many years, even serving as a minister in the plateau of complacent Christianity. I am assured that the Lord in His providence used my meager, self-empowered, and weak offerings to carry out His overall purposes. But I was spinning my tires in the sinking sand until I was reminded to start every day in the context of the gospel.

It was Martin Luther who said, “We need to hear the gospel every day, because we forget it every day.”

The objective of this book is to convey the idea that all believers must learn to consider daily the context of the gospel message in relationship to every aspect of the life God has given. We must allow this truth to drive, determine, and dictate our lives, so as to lead us to a surrendered walk of reliance on the empowering Holy Spirit in every moment. It is essential that this simple yet profound concept be a daily exercise, as Jesus instructed His followers in Luke 9:23, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” Daily confrontation with the gospel is *the fundamental* aspect of our growth as disciples, our sanctification, our worship, evangelism, and prayer life. This is not meant to be a daily pep-talk, mental assent, or a means of rousing ourselves up for the week ahead. It is simply

a cry out loud to believers to do what we should be doing daily—*starting every day in the context of the gospel*.

So, where do we start to overhaul a discipleship mindset? When I was attending Bible college, the Lord placed a wise professor in my life. He was wise because when his students were faced with a strange teaching, he resisted the natural urge to repeat the standardized Christian answers of the day; rather, he instructed us to read the Word of God and seek the answer for ourselves. His wise counsel has remained fastened to my mind, and it has directed my search for answers. It was this refrain of “What does the Bible say?” that guided my study through Galatians. As I was coming to grips with Paul’s thematic emphasis of getting the gospel right, it occurred to me that, like the Galatians, we quickly and easily get distracted from the true gospel. If we are not intentional in our daily consideration of the good news, we will be as distracted as a middle-aged man playing a video game. Just ask my wife. In the opening of his letter to the Galatians, Paul uses the word *gospel* six times in six verses (in Gal. 1:6–11). In his straightforward fashion, Paul hammers the concept of the good news into their minds so that it permeates their every thought. As a pastor, I wanted the flock over which the Lord had given me responsibility to say the word *gospel* in their sleep, because they had heard it from me so much. I believe Paul had the same intention for the Galatians; he wanted them to re-evaluate their lives and their current behavior in the context of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Context really does matter. If you were to hear me say to a person, “Wow, you have gained a lot of weight,” you might

think the statement rude. However, context can change the meaning of the statement. What if you were to discover I was saying it to someone who had been sick and malnourished or that I was speaking to a high school football player and weightlifter? Conversely, if I made the comment to my wife or to a pregnant woman, the context would certainly change the understanding and probably result in me being physically assaulted. Context also matters in grammar and speech. For example, one of my wife's favorite grammar memes is the one that says, "Let's eat, Grandma! / Let's eat Grandma!" (Punctuation saves lives.) Another example of context defining a situation is if I were to say, "One plus one does not always equal two." Most rational people would respond by saying my claim was false. One plus one *always* equals two; it is a basic numerical equation. However, in the context of biblical marriage, Scripture tells us that a husband is to leave his father and mother to cleave to his wife so that they become one flesh. In this context one plus one equals one. Context makes an important difference as it helps to define meaning, even if the math does not line up.

Context is defined as the setting of a word or phrase in writing or speaking that determines or affects its meaning because the way it is situated brings overall clarity to the intended message. The last half of that simple definition is important, because it expresses how context helps determine meaning or purpose—it provides clarity of the intended message.

Context is very important when one is reading the Scriptures. Every student of the Bible knows you can extract one

verse from its context and manipulate or corrupt it almost any way the reader desires. True students of Scripture take seriously the surrounding context where a passage is found. Context determines meaning and purpose in other ways as well. The premise of this study is considering the idea that one's life is comparable to a mini-narrative. Every person is a story unto themselves, and we can only understand an individual's story as it fits within its context. A person's direct context is the environment they are surrounded by and the experiences they have come out of. But even that direct context fits within a larger meta-narrative that ultimately determines the meaning and purpose of all the aspects of all individual stories.

Being out of context simply means a word or phrase has been distorted or wrongly understood because it has been removed from its original environment so as to change its meaning or significance. Therefore, a life out of context is a distorted life. When God has set our lives back in their correct context as it relates to the gospel, it should come as no surprise that we will have problems if we start trying to live outside of that context. Our lives will look distorted, and we will fail to reflect the one who saved us.

Now that you have grasped the importance of context, and before you throw this book out of the context of your life, let's consider the story of all stories—God's great meta-narrative—and how it sets the context for all life.

Part 1:
The Grand Narrative of Life



Narrative, or story, is universal to every culture on Earth. It is woven into the fabric of who we are as human beings. We remember, we contemplate, and we tell our stories. God determined to reveal Himself through a narrative format. Story is the best method that can cross all cultural lines, because every people group possesses and understands stories. Opinions vary over what are the main components of a story. For our purposes I will suggest that every story has four basic and universal components: the setting/plot, the conflict, the climax, and the resolution.

Just as each culture has a narrative, so each person has a worldview, how they express and perceive the story of the world. It is their conscious and unconscious presuppositions about the basic elements of existence: origin, meaning, morality, and destiny. We can understand a person's worldview as we understand the parts of the grand narrative to which they ascribe. The first main question has to do with the origin of all things. How did everything get started? The second and third main questions of meaning and morality have to do

with purpose and what is right and wrong in the world and the problem that must be resolved. Is there a solution, and how can things be made right again? The fourth main question of destiny is about the resolution or conclusion. How will the story end? What does the final scene look like when everything has been corrected and concluded? The answers to these questions will reveal one's worldview.

There is a sense, as you compare the components of a story with the basic components of a worldview, that you can see a parallel. The answer to the question of origin corresponds to the setting and plot of a story. The answer to questions of meaning and morality corresponds with the conflict and the climax of a story. And finally, the question of destiny corresponds to a story's resolution. You can see how intertwined story and worldview are in the very being of a person. The biblical narrative of God's big story answers these basic life questions: where humans came from, which is origin; why humans exist, which is meaning; how humans determine right and wrong, which is morality; and what happens after humans die, which is destiny. Every worldview or life philosophy seeks to answer these questions, but only a biblical worldview can answer them convincingly, when you follow them all to their logical conclusions.

Therefore, let's consider this great story of God and discover where we fit in. Before we can set our lives in the context of the gospel, we must first establish the context. To make it easy, I have divided God's great meta-narrative into four sections that correspond with the basic components of a story and the basic framework of a worldview. So, the following

story is a summarized version of the Great Narrative of Life. It serves as the foundational background for all of life. From this foundation we are able to construct a biblically informed worldview and consider our own lives in the proper context.



*Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead,
the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel.*

2 TIMOTHY 2:8

1

THE STORY

The Setting: Creation (Genesis 1–2)

The story of the world began when God spoke everything into existence. God was and is the only self-existent being, and therefore, as the all-powerful and sovereign Creator, He is set apart from creation and is perfectly good. We use the term *holy* to designate God's uniqueness. The holy Creator made all things, whether seen or unseen. He made everything good and for the purpose of glorifying Himself. He determined all purposes, rules, and parameters for everything that He created. The story of the world is all about God. His creation originally existed in perfect harmony, with everything fulfilling its creation purpose. God's special creation was mankind, whom God made to worship Him and enjoy a relationship with Him. But we are not like other creatures. God made us special in a way no other creature could be, because we have a soul. It is the distinct mark of the image of God. We are made as special reflections of our Creator, and we were made to reflect His glory. Because of this fact alone, there is a very special sacredness and value to human life. God placed Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, in a perfect environment,

and He gave them the freedom to choose to obey and worship Him or to reject Him. Therefore, they had the destiny of the entire human race in their hands.

The key components of the setting:

- God the all-powerful, self-existent Creator made everything that exists.
- God made it all and, therefore, He is the sovereign Ruler over it all.
- God is holy, and He made everything good and to exist for the purpose of His glory.
- God's special creation was humankind, made with a soul that is intended to exist in a relationship with God that reflects His glory.
- God gave the first human couple the freedom to choose to live in His grace and reflect His glory or to reject Him and disobey His creation purposes.

When we look around the world today, however, it's obvious the setting has changed and we are not living in paradise, where everything is fulfilling its creation purpose of bringing glory to God.

The Conflict: Fall (Genesis 3)

Adam and Eve chose to use the freedom God gave them to reject God and His authority over them. They chose to set themselves in opposition to God, with the idea that they could be autonomous from Him and free of His purposes and rules. When they chose to break God's law (an action we call sin), they became subject to the just wrath of God (God's righteous

judgment poured out against sin), and they subjected the world God created to the curse of sin's evil corruption. Denying God's authority over their lives, Adam and Eve ruined their fellowship with God. Furthermore, because they were the first human beings, their sin against God infected everyone who has followed after them. It is embedded in our human nature to sin by rejecting God as the rightful Ruler and living according to our own desires. Having rejected God and His authority, we are also guilty of sin. Now we exist in a broken relationship with our Creator, we are surrounded by a physically and morally broken world infected with evil and its consequences, and we constantly fail to fulfill our creation purpose of reflecting the glory of God. Being perfectly holy, God must judge sin. Else, He would not be perfectly holy. When we see sin in the glorious light of a holy God, we begin to understand why it is only right and just that God brings His judgment to all sinners and their sin. Specifically, and personally, we begin to see how we have offended God by transgressing His law and rejecting Him and His authority over our lives, time and time again. As sinners, we all face God's wrath against sin, which results in death and eternal separation from God Himself, who is the source of life. Even though Adam and Eve deserved immediate death and separation from God for all eternity, God pursued them and confronted them in their rebellion. In an act of mercy, God postponed the fulfillment of the final execution of His righteous judgment and wrath against sin, and He did not immediately destroy mankind. Though we were subject to the effects of the curse on the physical body and were separated from God, we were allowed to continue in our existence until God would bring about His plan of redemption. God

promised Adam and Eve He would one day restore His perfect creation order. Throughout the centuries, God has revealed glimpses of Himself and His redemptive plan to mankind, teaching us of His nature and love. He did this through His Scriptures, and He further solidified His promise to form for Himself one people from all the peoples on Earth to be His special people, redeemed and created anew. To be redeemed means our debt to God has been purchased and paid for so that we are freed from our bondage to that debt. The entire Old Testament—the Law, covenants, prophecies, the people of Israel and their sacrifices—points to the fact that mankind can never pay the debt we owe to God for our sinful rebellion. We are helplessly trapped under the bondage of sin and the curse of God’s judgment. That ultimately means physical death as well as spiritual death and eternal punishment from God under His active outpouring of judgment in a place we call hell.

The key components of the conflict:

- God made the first humans, Adam and Eve, and He gave them the gift of freedom.
- They took this freedom and chose to reject God and His authority over them.
- This act of rebellion subjected the whole creation, including every human, to the curse of sin and sin’s consequences, and, worst of all, ruined man’s relationship with God.
- Man is now subject to the just wrath and judgment of a holy God.
- God, being holy and perfectly just, must punish all sin.

- God, being holy and perfectly merciful, must redeem people from their sins.
- God, being personal, has revealed Himself through the ages, and He has repeatedly promised a coming redemption for mankind as well as a coming judgment.
- God has, through the ages, shaped history to point creation to the reality that all mankind is helplessly in bondage to sin and its consequences.

We are at the climax of the story's conflict, and it would seem we are at an impasse. What will a perfectly just and perfectly loving holy God do to bring about His judgment over sin and at the same time redeem His creation?

The Climax: Redemption (John 1, 14, 19–21)

Man was held in bondage to sin until the final judgment, but God, being rich in mercy, decided to pay the debt against our sin by taking the punishment due to us. God did this at just the right time by sending His only Son, Jesus. Jesus the “Christ,” or “Anointed One,” is also God, and He enjoyed the perfect fellowship that exists within the triune Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The gospel, or good news, message of redemption is that Jesus set aside His authority as God and left His throne to become fully human and be miraculously born to the virgin Mary so that He could live as one of us and fulfill God's creation purpose for mankind by perfectly obeying all of God's commands. He is uniquely the God-man. Though Jesus was innocent of sin, God delivered Him over to the hands of men and He laid His life down to die on the cross in our place as a substitute and to satisfy the

righteous judgment and wrath of God that we deserved. On the terrible cross, Jesus bore the weight of all our sins, and God's judgment of death fell on Him.

But the story is not over. Because Jesus is God, death could not defeat Him. And on the third day after His death, He physically rose from the grave. Through this victorious resurrection, He has provided the final vindication that God the Father has accepted His payment for our sins. After His resurrection from the dead, He spent some time with hundreds of His disciples—teaching them of things to come, enjoying fellowship with them, and eating with them—before He visibly ascended into heaven, where He is with God the Father until He returns for His church and the final judgment of those who have rejected Him.

The key components of the climax:

- God made all things, and mankind chose to reject Him as the Creator and Ruler.
- Every person is a sinner by nature and helplessly subject to the wrath and judgment of God against our sin.
- God determined to accomplish man's redemption by sending His only Son, Jesus, to pay man's sin debt.
- Jesus's death on the cross was the substitutionary sacrificial atonement necessary to satisfy the wrath of God against man's sin.
- Jesus's resurrection from the dead secures eternal life for those who follow Him, and it provides Jesus's payment for sins and His offer of the free gift of salvation to all who will receive it.

There are many passages and individual verses that encapsulate the gospel. Three of the most prominent are 1 Corinthians 15:3–6, 2 Corinthians 5:21, and Galatians 2:20.

In summary, God offers this good news of forgiveness of sins and salvation as a free gift (Rom. 5:15; 6:23). This gift is received by faith, apart from any merit on our part (Eph. 2:8–9). Scripture says, “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom. 10:9). This work of Christ stands as the climax of human history as well as the free gift offered for the salvation of all who believe on Jesus and His gospel.

*The Resolution: Restoration (Romans 6:23
and Revelation 7:9)*

In a real sense, we are still living in the time of the resolution to this story. This is where our personal stories fit into the context of God’s story of all life in His creation. We are living in the story at this moment—perhaps God in His grace is extending right now to some the gift of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Repentance is the changing of one’s mind that results in the changing of one’s behavior. This story is more than just information; God is calling us to respond to the truth He has revealed to us in faith and repentance. Faith and repentance are bound together like two sides of the same coin. We can only repent as God grants us the faith to repent. As God works in our hearts to cause us to see our sinfulness, He then causes us to repent of our sins, which means to turn away from our sins and from trusting ourselves and turn in

faith to trust in God. Saving faith is placing total reliance in the redeeming work of the risen Jesus to save us from our sins. Jesus is the object of our faith as we trust that His sacrifice was in our place, a substitution that was necessary to take away our sins and satisfy our debt to God. When this occurs, we are counted justified by God and marked as righteous before Him. We are no longer guilty and no longer condemned; instead, we are adopted as a son of God and an heir to His promise of eternal life. By God's grace, this is the gift offered: to be reconciled to God and be made into a new creation. When we have received this gift of salvation from God, we are born anew. We still have and exist in our fleshly bodies, but God has taken up residence inside us through the Holy Spirit, working out the process of restoring us to reflect the glory of God, as we were made to do. We call this lifelong process sanctification, or being set apart unto God.

After hearing this great story of life, there are only two responses we can make: (1) We can choose to continue to reject God as the Creator and Ruler and try to rule our own lives. The consequence of that choice will be made known most of all when this life is over and we face eternal death and judgment. Or, (2) as the Spirit of God convicts us of our sin, we can submit to Jesus as our Ruler and by faith repent from our sin, confessing our total reliance on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and depending on His saving work to rescue us from the wrath of God we deserve.

By God's grace, as you read these words, maybe you have already responded to God's gift of faith and repentance in this way. You know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, and you are

now able to live every moment in the context of the gospel. Praise God!

For a period of time known only to God the Father, He has extended His mercy and has offered His forgiveness for sin based on the accomplished work of Jesus Christ on the cross and proved by the resurrection. But He will not delay His final judgment of sin and evil forever. The final resolution to His great story of life will come when He raises everyone up for judgment. Those who have rejected God's redemption through Christ and continue in their rebellion will forever face God's outpouring of wrath. And those whom He has rescued from judgment through the redeeming work of Christ Jesus will be raised to eternal life in His newly re-created world, restored to perfect peace with God as their Ruler and King forever.

For a more complete study of the grand narrative of life, I recommend every believer concentrate time in the study of biblical theology. Follow God's big story from Genesis through Revelation and trace the redemption plan God has revealed for His own glory. To set our lives in the context of the gospel is to recognize the Scriptures as authoritative to all human history—past, present, and future. We need to see Jesus as the central message of Scripture. He makes this clear in Luke 24. Jesus was on a walk to Emmaus with two disciples, and He asked, "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" (Luke 24:26). Luke continues, "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (v. 27). The Lord Jesus

Christ taught these disciples the significance that the Scriptures were all about Him, and He set their lives and all that was happening around them into the proper context of God's great redemptive story.



For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

EPHESIANS 3:14–21