



# THE LITTLE HIM BOOK

*'Remove Christ from the Scriptures  
and there is nothing left.'*

**Martin Luther**

This is not a book about *hymns* – it is a book about *him*. Christianity is about Christ. One of the most famous verses in the Bible declares that God loved, and God gave so that if we believe in the one God gave, we will have eternal life. And yet, while we may be familiar with the words of John 3:16, often its truth fails to grip our hearts. After all, many people don't think that God is loving and giving; isn't he demanding and

impossible to please? And what does it mean to 'believe in' Jesus anyway?

Earlier in John 3, Jesus is talking with Nicodemus, a man at the top of the social totem pole. He is educated, he is influential, he is impressive. But Jesus tells him that unless he begins life from scratch – until he is born again by the Spirit of God – he can't even begin to understand what life is all about. So how can Nicodemus, who Jesus is speaking with (or any of the rest of us) gain access to this new life from the Spirit of God?

Jesus points him back to a story from the days of Moses. The people of Israel were camped in a place where many of them were being killed by deadly snakes. They cried out to God for help, and he instructed Moses to make a bronze snake skewered by a spear and lift it up. (This may sound strange to our twenty-first-century ears – but those listening to Jesus would have been reminded of God's great promise that he would crush the head of the serpent that had originally led humanity into rebellion against him.) When the people were bitten by the snakes, the instruction was simple: don't try to suck out the

poison, don't try to find a nurse or look for an ancient ambulance, just look at the snake on the spear. Look and live. It was an act of absolute trust. In fact, it was a non-act. Do nothing. If you try, you die.

So, Jesus told Nicodemus, 'Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him' (Jn. 3:14–15). To believe in Jesus is not about *doing* something: we are not supposed to make resolutions, turn over new leaves or fix our ways. To believe in Jesus is to simply look and live – that is, to fix the gaze of our hearts on the one who was lifted up for us. It is an act of absolute trust. But really, like the Israelites in the desert, it is a non-act. Do nothing. Just look and live.

The only way to become a Christian is to place all your trust in Jesus – in who he is and what he has done. And the only way to grow consistently as a Christian is to keep the gaze of your hearts fixed on Jesus.

The best forms of Christianity have always made much of Christ. Christianity without Christ at the centre is an anomaly. It doesn't

make sense. And yet, throughout history many have drifted away from a central focus on Christ. Perhaps lazy theology creeps in, and God is treated as a generic deity instead of the Trinity of true Christianity. Or perhaps emphasis is placed on Jesus' mother, Mary, and suddenly biblical references to Christ's saving work are wrongly attributed to her. Or perhaps the Holy Spirit's role of pointing us to Christ is replaced by something more self-centred, such as making his main role to empower me for my ministry. Maybe we simply get caught up with ourselves again, just like we were before we were saved. How easily Christianity can lose Christ; how easily he can become a mere resource to get our prayers answered, or a sculpted figure to venerate.

This little book has one simple aim: to nudge you to think about Jesus – more than that, to find him at the centre of your identity, your worship, your affections and your life. Whether this is your first exposure to Jesus, or you have known him for years, this little book is all about getting to know Jesus better and delighting in him more.

While each chapter is short, it will hopefully stir thoughts that can be pondered at length. Each chapter will conclude with a Bible passage, a couple of questions, and a song you might like to sing or meditate on. For centuries, Jesus has stirred his followers to burst into songs of worship, adoration and devotion.

May we truly live with Jesus as the centre of everything. May it be your growing experience to live with the very gaze of your soul fixed on him and your heart singing in delight because of all that you see!



## THE SON

Jesus has many titles scattered throughout the Bible, all of which point to some aspect of his person or mission. He is the great prophet, priest and king. He is Immanuel, the Saviour of the world, the Lion of Judah, the Servant of Yahweh, the Lord of Glory, the Alpha and the Omega, the Word, the Light of the World, the Nazarene, the Bridegroom, the Great and Good Shepherd, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, the Christ, and dozens more. We could ponder all of these at length, and we will spend time with some of them later in this book. But let's start here. Of all his titles, none offers more for us to unpack than this: the Son.

To say that Jesus is the Son is to begin before the beginning. Before anything had

been created, before there was anything that needed to be ruled, what existed? The Bible tells us that, in the beginning, there was God. Here we have to be careful. It is easy for us to think of a solitary being thinking about himself. That is because we are fallen sinners who are used to thinking about ourselves as more important than everyone else. Actually, the Bible reveals a far more thrilling glimpse into eternity past.

In John 17, Jesus is praying to his Father just before he is arrested, tried and killed. Look at these words and see what they reveal about the eternity that is beyond our time:

*‘Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world*

*began. I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world’ (Jn. 17:1b).*

*‘I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one – I in them and you in me – so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world’ (Jn. 17:22–24).*

The whole prayer is incredibly revealing, but even in just these few verses, notice what we are told about the eternal realm of God’s glory. We see that glory is given by the Father to the Son, and then by the Son to the Father. The Son is the ‘revealer’ of the Father, and what he reveals is a beautiful, love-driven glory giving that was forever there, even before the world was created. To say that Jesus is the Son is a glimpse into something truly wonderful. He is the Son because there is a Father, and their relationship

is vibrant and loving. And, amazingly, their relationship is now being shared with us!

Before there was anything else, there was a Father loving his Son, and the Son responding in love to his Father. This Father and Son were forever glorifying each other by the Spirit who united them perfectly as one. This is the God of Christianity – the Father and Son united in perfect harmony by the Spirit. Three persons, one God. This is a tri-unity or, if you push the words together, the Trinity.

Do not get discouraged by your mathematical inability to do the sums, the Trinity is not a mathematical conundrum. The Trinity is the most delightful and thrilling reality. For thousands of years, humans have generated all sorts of alternative gods, but none of them are anywhere near as thrilling as the one true God, the Trinity.

We do not have space to plumb the depths of the richness of the Trinity, but let's scratch the surface and briefly introduce each person in the Trinity. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he begins with a description of the Trinity at work in our salvation.

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will – to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfilment – to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.*

*In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be*

*for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of his glory (Eph. 1:3–14).*

First, the Father is the one who blesses us, who chooses us, who initiates, who has plans 'in accordance with his pleasure and will' (v. 5). When we speak about the will of God, it is the Father's plans that we are describing. God has eternal purposes to work out, and verse 6 tells us that these plans are going to lead 'to the praise of his glorious grace'.

The Father's purposes are worked out by sending his Son into his creation. In verses 7–12, Paul explains that the Son has bought us back with his blood and will one day unite all things under his rule. After the Son, then the Father sends forth his Spirit – see verses 13–14, where Paul describes how the Spirit is the guarantee of all that we are to receive in Christ.

So, the Son is the forever 'revealer' of the Father. If we want to know what God is like, we need only look to the Son, who perfectly represents the Father (Jn. 14:7). The Son is also the Saviour sent into our world to work out God the Father's gracious plan to rescue and redeem us by the shedding of his blood (Eph. 1:7). The Son's obedience to the Father's plan is perfect, and the Father's desire is to bring everything together in the Son, because it is the Son who is to be at the centre of everything (Eph. 1:10).

The Holy Spirit is sent forth to communicate the heart of the Father by pointing sinners to the Son, so that they can see the Father in Jesus (Jn. 15:26; 16:14). The Spirit is the great communicator. He seems to be the very love of the Father and Son communicated back and forth, then spilling out toward us in God's good plans. The Spirit never competes with the Son, but instead will always point us toward him, confirming and reassuring us that we are his until the day when we are forever with our Lord.

The good news of Christianity is *great* news because of who God is. We are invited into the loving fellowship of the Trinity. Actually, there is

no Christianity without the Trinity – you simply cannot give an adequate explanation of the good news, the gospel, without all three persons of the Trinity working together perfectly.

So the Son reveals the Father’s heart-desire to save sinful humanity. When we start to grasp the Son’s role in the Trinity, we find great comfort. Why? Because we have a God who is not hiding; he can be known. We are not dealing with a distant and dark deity that hides away from mere mortals like us. We have a God who can be known in and through his Son. Not only does Jesus reveal the Father’s loving heart to us, but Jesus also makes it possible for sinners like us to be brought into the loving community of the Trinity.

Jesus, the Son, reveals God’s heart to us. Think about Jesus making God known, and know the comfort that can only come from the great assurance that God truly loves you.

### **A PASSAGE TO PONDER: EPHESIANS 1**

The first part of this chapter, from verses 3–14, states that everything God has done is ‘to the praise of his glorious grace’. What have the Father, the Son and the Spirit done for you, according to these verses?

The second part of the chapter, from verses 15–23, is a prayer that Paul prayed for the Ephesian believers to grow closer to God. Why not pray that the truths in that prayer would grip your heart more and more as you read your Bible (and as you read this book).

### **A SONG TO SING**

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!  
O what a foretaste of glory divine!  
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,  
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

*This is my story, this is my song,  
Praising my Saviour, all the day long;  
This is my story, this is my song,  
Praising my Saviour, all the day long.*



Perfect submission, perfect delight,  
Visions of rapture now burst on my  
sight;  
Angels descending bring from above  
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

*This is my story, this is my song...*

Perfect submission, all is at rest  
I in my Saviour am happy and blest,  
Watching and waiting, looking above,  
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love.

*This is my story, this is my song...*

**Fanny Crosby, 1820—1902**



## THE DELIVERER

Out of the spreading goodness of God's giving nature flowed creation (see Genesis 1 – 2) ... and then, redemption (see the rest of the Bible)! His creation was gloriously diverse and united in perfection, with God's image-bearers (humans) representing his loving rule to all the creatures. However, the first couple did not represent God well. Already in the third chapter of Genesis, we find Eve in a slippery conversation with the crafty serpent:

*'You will not certainly die,' the serpent said to the woman. 'For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'*

*When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves (Gen. 3:4–7).*

The cunning serpent easily led them astray into disbelieving God's Word and turning their love away from God and onto themselves. They turned from the good God to a different kind of goodness – a self-defined goodness wrapped up in being self-loving mini gods.

Adam and Eve took the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But, until that point, all they had known was good, good, good. So effectively, the only thing that they added to their first-hand knowledge of good was this: evil. They were sold the lie that they would be like God, but instead of becoming deities, they discovered only the disappointing inadequacy of their own nakedness.

Here is the tricky thing about being fallen: we are utterly inadequate, and yet we cling to the nonsense that we can do something about it by covering up that inadequacy and shame with fig leaves! You probably don't have fig leaf garments in your wardrobe, but we all default to presenting ourselves with our inadequacies carefully concealed!

Adam and Eve instinctively covered themselves as soon as they became sinfully self-aware. God then walked into the garden to speak with them. They had swallowed the great lie about becoming like God, but now God wanted to offer some clarity to them. He told them of the consequences of their sin. He demonstrated the price of sin in providing garments of death to cover their woefully inadequate and naked bodies (Gen. 3:21). And he promised them a deliverer:

*So the Lord God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this,  
Cursed are you above all livestock  
and all wild animals!  
You will crawl on your belly*