



"GLIMPSES INTO REALITY!"

(As I Understand It)

**“Miscellaneous Essays, Messages,
and Outlines on a Variety of
Important Topics”**

**By
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CHAPTER 1
**“WHAT DOES IT MATTER WHO THE
INSTRUMENT IS?”**

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“WHAT DOES IT MATTER WHO THE INSTRUMENT IS?”

In terms of humility, I once read a few excerpts from the diary of the young woman (who died when she was only 24) who was Catholic, and had been honored by Pope John Paul II, whose name is St. Therese of Lisieux. This lady was so much in love with Jesus that she was “indifferent whether God chose her, or anyone else, to do his work”. (Divine Providence by Francis Cardinal Arinze; pg. 53) In her diary she wrote, “What does it matter to me that it be I or another person to show this way to souls; as long as it is shown, what does it matter who the instrument is?”

What a Christ-centered, others-oriented, self-forgetful, (and liberating) way to live! It matters not who the instrument is (me or someone else) that God chooses: to preach, to teach, to evangelize, to disciple, to do missionary work, to do linguistic work of Bible translations. Or to write great books, to administrate great colleges or seminaries, to compose great music, to sing heart-touching songs, to raise large amounts of money for missions, to think brilliant theological thoughts, to found and develop great Christian movements, to speak daily on the radio or television about Christ to millions of folks!

As this true young saint said before her death at only 24, “What does it matter who the instrument is?”

Someone said that he believed in heaven every redeemed person will enjoy the accomplishments of other redeemed persons, as if those accomplishments were his very own accomplishments! No envy, jealousy, covetousness, comparison, competition, strife in heaven, between the heavenly citizens, but only mutual love, appreciation, sharing, caring, and enjoyment of each other. There will be only profound respect and total self-giving, with no condescension, no pride (in personal accomplishments). Everyone sharing the God-given gifts with each other, and everyone (with vast diversity of personality, experience, and talent) joining in corporate, united, and totally harmonious praise of the matchless and altogether beautiful Saviour! This is what I think it will be like in heaven – perfect peace, harmony, love, and total humility. Everyone will be learning from one another without intimidation, humiliation, or belittlement. But learning together with great discernment, dignity, appreciation, and love. “All for each and each for all” – praising the great Tri-une God. God who has stamped His image upon every human being in that Celestial City!

But on earth, I have found that, at times, I have not adequately and consistently lived out that reality (of humility), namely: “What does it matter to me that it be I or another person to show the way to souls; as long as it is shown, what does it matter who the instrument is?”

Billy Graham (the greatest evangelist of the 20th century) acknowledges that he has simply been ‘God’s instrument’ to declare the Good News of Salvation. Moreover, what a most amazing, effective, consistent, faithful witness he has been for about 60 years!

I have sought during my relatively short time in the pastoral ministry (1967-1994) to be “God’s instrument”, specifically in five areas (which I hope it is not an act of pride to have placed on my tombstone):

1. Prayer Warrior. I have spent much time, for many years, in prayer, but I know .
2. Soul Winner. I tried to intentionally—through “appointments” - win souls to Christ, and God allowed me to pray the “sinner’s prayer” with about 350 persons, over a period of about 20 years in my pastoral ministry – but there are many – like Billy Graham – who have won millions to Christ, while I have won only a few persons.
3. Preaching. I prepared and preached many hundreds of sermons during my nearly 27 years of pastoral ministry, but the great preachers (like John Wesley) preached thousands of sermons (Wesley, about 40,000; E. Stanley Jones – about 60,000 sermons).
4. Teaching. I prepared hundreds of Sunday school lessons, and other lessons for many groups – for many years, but the great teachers have prepared and delivered far more lessons – with greater brilliance.
5. Writing. I have worked hard at writing (authoring/compiling approximately 40 Books), but none of my books have been published, while the greater writers have sold millions of their books.

Why have I found it so difficult to say (in light of the accomplishments of others who have been more fruitful than I, in all areas of life):“What does it matter who is the instrument that God chooses to use?” Those whom God is able to use so effectively are the same ones who have learned “self-forgetfulness” and “true humility”. Ones who are not concerned who gets credit for the work that has been, or is being done, for God. No self-seeking and no pride for results (visibly) that God allows the servant to have - and no jealousy when God chooses to use another servant to accomplish more (visible) results in some area that I am less qualified and less talented to do! Just fitting into the “Master Plan” of Christ (who desires to redeem the entire world)! No running away from the “high profile leadership” (of a large Church or a large Christian organization, etc.), if God calls one of his servants to that place of awesome responsibility! Also, gladness to stay hidden in an obscure place of service, if God calls a servant to do the hard, menial tasks of caring for the neglected and poor persons in God’s world. No pride on one hand, and no self-pity on the other hand. Each servant finding his “Christ-given assignment”, doing it humbly, cheerfully, faithfully, hopefully, confidently, and prayerfully, but working for the Master –

not for the praise or recognition of man! Using the spiritual gifts that God has allotted to his servants – and saying, “What does it matter who the instrument is?”

Never drawing attention to yourself, and never being envious of another fellow servant (whom God seems to have favored with more or better gifts)! What does it matter whom God has chosen to do certain things – better than what you can do them? Better preaching, better teaching, better administration of a much larger local Church, better evangelistic outreach with more souls won to Christ, better music than you can ever even begin to produce, etc., etc..

What does it matter whom God chooses to use to get His work done? Why is there so much temptation to comparison, competition, envies, jealousy, strife, and ill feelings? None of these attitudes and feelings is pleasing to God! All are carnal feelings, condemned by the Father of love who has an assignment (a wonderful and Christ-honoring assignment) for every one of His children. A “yoke” that is “custom-made” for each of His children!

I, in Heaven, will probably enjoy those accomplishments of all the heavenly citizens, as if those accomplishments were my very own. Can I progressively approximate that same attitude towards all fellow Christians while I am still here on earth?

“What does it matter to me that it be I or another person to show the way to souls’? As long as it is shown, what does it matter who the instrument is?” (No wonder this mature young 24-year-old lady was considered a saint!)

I increasingly must learn to get my eyes off the instruments (i.e., myself or all the other multitudes of instruments), and instead “focus” on the Master whose sovereign right it is to choose the instruments that He wisely deems best for every “job” he desires to perform. I think most of the instruments will be used, in less visible places and in seemingly ordinary settings (Particularly in the homes of millions of persons). Yes, the Master has chosen a few high profile instruments to do important “up front” leadership-type jobs (preachers and evangelists before millions of people, in person or through media), but God also takes great delight in using instruments to minister to the homeless ones in darkened alleys in large cities. God uses instruments (like myself) to write several books which will probably be read by only a “handful” of), but God has other instruments (professional writers) whose books will be read by millions of readers. Does it matter that my books (which took much time and effort to write) will have a ‘small audience’ of readers, while other writers (instruments), will be used of God to touch the lives of millions? No! It does not matter at all – as long as I attempt to make myself available to God as a well-equipped (yet imperfect) instrument!

All that matters in the end is, that Christ is glorified and that God’s people are edified (i.e. built up in the “Holy Faith”)! All are to use their gifts for these two purposes – Christ’s glory and the Church’s edification – but is Christ the Master, who, alone, has the right to give the specific assignments to each member of His Body. Each of us is only ONE CELL in the Body (no more and no less).

Yes, it is true that God will reward every person hereafter (in eternity) according to the degree and quality of works, which each person (on earth) has performed. Only God (in mercy) is qualified to Judge on that “Great Day of Evaluation”. There will be different degrees of levels of rewards in heaven – based on the quality of life each person has lived for Christ on earth. But,

with this awesome “judgment of Evaluation” in mind (which every Christian must anticipate and prepare for, however, each Christian must not panic or become competitive for greater “success” (fruitfulness) on earth (in order that he might get greater rewards in heaven, for himself). Why do we work on earth, as Christians? To build up a greater “store” of accomplishments, so that we will be assured of greater rewards hereafter? Surely not! For is not such reasoning an expression of “egotism” and “selfishness”? We work because we deeply love Christ and sincerely love others! Love is the greater motivator of our actions (good works).

I should use my gifts gladly, in a self-forgetful way (not in a self-conscious or proud way, seeking the recognition and applause of my fellow-believers). I should “work at” enjoying the gifts of others and the God-ordained place and position of others, and learn to enjoy their gifts “as if those gifts were my own gifts”. NOT covet their gifts, but truly appreciate their gifts, and even to develop joy in their expression of their gifts. Perhaps on earth (different from heaven) I will never completely be able to enjoy their gifts s if their gifts were my own gifts.

Nevertheless, I at least can practice such humble grateful and glad attitudes, which are attitudes that reflect a deeper understanding of the mysterious and mystical nature of the organic “Body of Christ”, where all cells are interdependent.

CHAPTER 2

**“TURNING OVER THE ‘TITLE DEED’ TO
CHRIST”!**

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In his devotional book “In Christ”, E. Stanley Jones has this prayer (regarding full surrender): “O Jesus my Lord, I let Thee bind the strong man within me – my very self. Having that Thou hast my all. Now with the center in Thy hands, we can together mop up the areas of continued resistance. The rest is a victory march. I thank Thee, Amen.” (Page 375)

Of course, Jones is not (in this prayer) explicit or detailed in explanation of what possible “areas of continued resistance” are subject to serious and continuing attention, after a believer surrenders the ‘Self’ into the hands of God (in the experience of what many term “Entire Sanctification”). *“²³ May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (I Thessalonians 5:23)

There has been much discussion and debate among sincere believers regarding the nature of inbred sin (i.e., inward sin in the life of Christians, following conversion) and regarding the Biblical treatment of inward sin (carnal nature). I think (along with many other ‘holiness’ advocates) that it has been a serious mistake to think that inbred sin is like some physical element that can be (at the time of entire sanctification) once and for all permanently eliminated or excised or eradicated. Inward sin is an attitude of resistance against God’s perfect will, an attitude of double-mindedness. With full (entire) sanctification – i.e., at the time of total surrender of one’s Self to God, through faith – these conflicting (resistant and self-centered) attitudes can be removed from one’s thinking and disposition. Deeper harmony and peace and full-souled desire to love God and do His will (to the best of one’s finite understanding) can wonderfully be experienced, when one surrenders his entire being to Almighty God! Wrong attitudes can be righted. Wrong affections can be redirected in deep love for God and one’s fellow men. Humility can replace pride. Trust can replace worry. Hope can replace despair. Love can replace indifference. Single-mindedness can replace double-mindedness. A single focus on loyalty towards God can replace divided loyalties and conflicts of interests and worldly-mindedness. A loving regard for others and their needs can replace a jealous striving for prestige and position among one’s peers. A desire for generosity and giving can replace a strong pull for selfish accumulation of personal wealth and selfish indulgence with the world’s goods. A commitment for wholehearted and enthusiastic public worship can replace a thoughtless, routine, and ritualistic involvement in mere Church services.

Yes, great changes take place when a believer comes to the place of full surrender, and when he believes God for the baptism of the Holy Spirit (entire sanctification). But the believer, who receives this wonderful experience, as a result of his yielding himself to Christ to enjoy His

Lordship, must nevertheless acknowledge that after he gives Christ the “title deed” of his life, there may be “areas of continued resistance” (E. S. Jones) in his life that will have to be specifically yielded to the control of Jesus the Lord. The yielded “title deed” acknowledges that the believer is no longer the owner of his life, but rather the “tenant” who is totally accountable to Christ the Owner of his life. But Christ (as Owner - based upon the fact of His creation of all persons and based upon the fact of His redemption of all persons on the Cross) has the right to bring all things under His subjection and control – the believer’s time and talents and treasures and desires and recreation and relationships and goals, etc., etc. The Owner – the triune God – has a right to “clean up” (purify and sanctify) every “room” of the believer’s life. After the initial “blanket surrender” to Christ, all the “areas of continued resistance” (E.S. Jones), must be yielded and surrendered to the Lord Himself. This aftermath (i.e., the time following the experience of entire sanctification) is a time of continuing cleansing (as the “light of truth” regarding the breadth and depth of a believer’s life – following the experience of entire sanctification – is more clearly understood, as a result of the thorough and continuing work of the gracious and revealing and sanctifying Holy Spirit). At the time of a believer’s experience of entire sanctification, the believer surrenders to Christ “all he knows and all that he doesn’t know” – and there likely is a lot that the believer doesn’t know in terms of the implications of “full surrender” in specific areas of his life. When Christ claims “ownership of the title deed” of a believer’s life, the believer must agree that Christ (as Lord) has the right to clean up the believer’s life – his kitchen, his living room, his bedroom, his recreational room, and even his attic.

The initial act of cleansing (sanctification) which the Spirit does at the time of Entire Sanctification, is truly wonderful, but this very important experience (while it should never be minimized as to its powerful affects, is the experience that gives the New Owner (Holy Spirit) the authority to investigate, and to renovate, and to thoroughly clean every “room” in the life of the newly surrendered believer! To cleanse the mind from a carnal mind to become a “Christianized mind”, to cleanse the emotions that are worry-worn to become emotions that are integrated around the peace and serenity of the Lord of circumstances. To cleanse the sexual instincts from uncontrolled and unreliable passion to sexual drives that are controlled, restrained, and deeply fulfilling and that are used in a totally unselfish manner. To cleanse the tendency towards gluttony (overeating) to a controlled appetite that properly and nutritiously ministers to health of the body. To cleanse the tendency towards either over-activity or under-activity regarding the exercise of the body and the pursuit of pleasure to instead find proper balance to enjoy legitimate recreation and helpful physical conditioning.

Again, let it be emphasized that the carnal nature (inbred sin) is NOT ERADICATED, if by this word one thinks that the inner nature of sin was some kind of physical organ and it was physically removed when one was entirely sanctified. If the questionable term “Eradication” is used to describe the removal of inward sin (at the time of entire sanctification), then let it be understood what is meant! I think it means that the Spirit cleanses (initially and progressively following Entire Sanctification) the heart, the mind, and the spirit of un-Christlike traits and characteristics and attitudes. Depending on the awareness of the believer, the faith of the believer, and the sovereign choice of the Holy Spirit, yielded believers receive varying degrees of deliverance and cleansing at the time of “entire sanctification”.

The Lord (new Owner) receives the “title deed” from every consecrated (surrendered) believer at the time of his “Second Work of Grace” (Entire Sanctification), but the Spirit decides and He

knows what are “the areas of continued resistance” – various resistances that the newly sanctified believer is probably not fully aware of. The “blanket surrender” has been sincerely made, and the “title deed” has been sincerely delivered in humility and repentance and faith to the new Owner (the Holy Spirit), but all the “individual rooms” may not yet be fully cleansed (i.e., specifically looked at and dealt with and purified). This process of careful cleansing of each “room” in the life of the believer may take the Spirit time to accomplish. This careful examination and cleansing (and rearrangement of “furniture” or even disposal of furniture and equipment – like unbecoming music and questionable pictures, etc.) may be rather “painful” for the newly consecrated believer. However, the believer, at the time of his full surrender to the Lordship of Christ, agreed to allow Christ full ownership of his life and full cleansing from everything that would cause Christ sorrow and cause the world to look with disrespect at the believer (who professes so much).

All of life in the journey of the earnest believer demands keeping himself consecrated to the Lord of All. Just as a married couple must maintain their marriage covenant for an entire lifetime through mutual surrender, faith, obedience, trust, humility, confession of errors and failures (or even sins), and regular renewal of sacrificial love, so a consecrated Christ-follower must “trust and obey, for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey”. Jesus said, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.”

Entire Sanctification is a consecrated life of love - supreme love for God and sincere and caring love for others. The unmistakable evidence that a believer is truly sanctified (as taught in I Thessalonians 5:23) is the possession and the expression of God-like, holy love (I Corinthians 13; Galatians 5:22-23). “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have loved one for another.” (Jesus) Said the pagans (in the early centuries) regarding the Christians, “Behold, how they love one another!”

“There is no greater love than this that a man (Jesus) laid down His life for His friends!” (Also, for His enemies). Throughout the believer’s entire life, it would be wise and helpful if he would daily pray: “*Lord, shed abroad your love in my heart, through the power of your Holy Spirit.* (Romans 5:5) May your divine type love enable me to ‘think your thoughts after you’, to ‘feel your compassion for hurting people with you’, to ‘choose to always be a small but significant part of your master plan to help you fulfill the ‘Great Commission’ – to make disciples of all people since you have a deep and undying love for every human being. Help me to daily consecrate myself to you and to appropriate the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, that I might be a ‘fit vessel for the Master’s use’ – a truly sanctified believer who brings pleasure to my blessed Lord whom I serve with gratitude, humility, and joy. In the name of my great Savior and Sanctifier. Amen.”

I started out this short article by quoting from E. Stanley Jones. I finish this article with a quotation from E. Stanley Jones: “After a full surrender there are areas which keep cropping up that have not yet been surrendered. We surrender all we knew at the time, but fuller knowledge and light show further areas to be brought under His sway. So no one can say ‘I have surrendered all’ – full stop. The best that he can say is, ‘I have surrendered all I know’. That makes for an allness and gradualness.” (Mastery by E. Stanley Jones; pg. 338)

The following insight by F. J. Huegel on the subject of sanctification will provide a deeper and more practical understanding of personal holiness: “Take the question of Sanctification, which sooner or later agi-

tates the Christian who would be out-and-out for God. Nothing more biblical than the doctrine of Sanctification; nothing more dynamic or more blessed than the experience; but now Satan enters upon the scene to tell you what Sanctification really means. It means ‘eradication.’ However, the term is not found anywhere in the New Testament in relation to Sanctification. But the Devil quotes his texts which seem to support that view, one of which is I John iii. 9. However, the whole body of New Testament doctrine is against such a view. There may be uprisings of the sinful nature in the sanctified Christian; but according to Romans VI. 1, he reckons himself dead to sin and alive unto God in Christ, and consequently in the power of the Holy Spirit overcomes. Which is a horse of another colour. This is what Sanctification means, as a sane interpretation of the New Testament reveals. “He that overcometh...” Thus, spoke Jesus to the Seven Churches of Asia.

Now the Devil comes along and says, “No! it means that you will never sin again.” But complete victory over the flesh, and the world and the devil comes as a result of union with Christ. The Holy Spirit applies the power of His death and of His resurrection to our inner life and we are liberated. But this victorious life has its laws; we go forward rejoicing in a full-orbed victory as we fulfill certain conditions. Should we fail to fulfill these conditions, the old self-life would quickly manifest itself again. The truth of the matter is that Christians who have long been walking in the highway of holiness, do at times get out of focus with Christ, allowing Self to creep in. Sanctified folk have been known to get impatient, to become irritated, and to manifest a lack of love. Christians who have reached the very highest levels of the spiritual life, as a matter of fact, at times are often un-Christlike.

Or as they grow in grace and a knowledge of Jesus Christ the Lord, they may look back on former attitudes held in the sanctified walk and from this high ground judge them as wrong. But if they accept a false interpretation of holiness, they dare not call sin, sin. Satan has told them that there is no longer any such thing in them. He has told them that it has been taken out by the roots, never to grow again. He proves it by juggling texts. In connection with this read I John 1:8. Of we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” Note that the aged apostle, sanctified, of course, included himself.

And so with the false interpretation, pride creeps in. With pride comes a hard, critical attitude toward those who have not attained such “heights.” And finally such an attitude will breed fanaticism, and Satan scores a victory.”

(Taken From “That Old Serpent, The Devil”, by F. J. Huegel; pgs. 79, 80)

CHAPTER 3

**“WILL THERE BE MANY, FEW, OR NO
ONE IN HELL?”**

CHAPTER 3

“WILL THERE BE MANY, FEW, OR NO ONE IN HELL?”

Of course, only God knows who will be saved in the end, and how many persons, but it is gratifying to know that the God of the universe is a “God of Love”, as demonstrated by the Incarnation (i.e., the compassionate life, sacrificial death, and glorious resurrection of God’s Son who best demonstrates that the “wideness of God’s love” is indeed very wide!)

The fact that God’s light (of truth) shines, and with varying degrees of brightness, upon every person, at all times and under all circumstances, and the fact that God works in the conscience of every person (who has an innate sense of ‘right and wrong’), and the fact that God is “not willing that anyone should perish”, and the fact that God’s Spirit (short of coercion) is powerfully influencing everyone to repent of sin and to turn in faith to the Creator God – these are some of the realities about God’s character and merciful actions which cause me to rejoice that I will (by God’s keeping grace) someday enjoy the presence of countless multitudes of persons who were ushered into heaven ‘on the merits of Christ alone’, even though these multitudes of persons were not fortunate enough on earth to hear about Christ and to make a personal and knowledgeable volitional commitment to Him as Savior. They were saved, not because they had proper or full knowledge of Christ on earth, but because their hearts responded to the “Light of Truth” (which was “Christ Concealed”), as they received God’s Truth through “General Revelation” (nature, Conscience, partial truth in various non-Christian Religions, etc.). It is not the accuracy of head knowledge, but the receptivity of the heart to the “light of God” (even if that “light” is very incomplete), that determines the ultimate destiny of the human soul – and only God, in the end, will be the Judge of each personal spiritual condition!

However, is there clearer “Biblical Grounds” for believing that, in the End, most (if not the overwhelming majority) of people will be “Saved” – and enjoy the glories of heaven (which was God’s intention at the time He created the human race)?

John Stott, a long-time pastor and a highly respected Biblical scholar, preacher, writer, and evangelist, in his extensive commentary on the Book of Romans, shares most wonderful insights on the “Wideness of God’s Mercy” (when he expounds the meaning of Romans 5:12-21). “Romans 5:12-21 gives us solid grounds for confidence that a very large number will be saved and that the scope of Christ’ redeeming work although not universal, will be extremely extensive. Although, Adam’s disobedience led to universal sin and death, there has been a lavish extravagance about the grace of Christ, in both quality and quantity, which was entirely absent from Adam and all his works. The work of Christ will in the end be seen to be much more effective than the work

of Adam; that Christ will raise to life many more than Adam will drag to death; and that God's grace will flow in more abundant blessings than the consequences of Adam's sin. He (Paul) is affirming that Christ's work is superior to Adam's not only in the nature of his action and achievement, but in the degree of its success." (Romans, God's Good News for the World; pgs. 159-161)

One highly respected theologian/writer of a bygone day, but whose writings are still read with great profit (Charles H. Hodge – The greatest theologian of the 19th century) affirms his belief in the "Wideness of God's Mercy". With conviction, he writes, "The number of the saved shall doubtless greatly exceed the number of the lost. We have reason to believe that the lost shall bear to the saved no greater proportion than the inmates of a prison do to the mass of the community." (Ibid; pg. 161)

Fulton Sheen, the highly respected T.V. and radio speaker too many millions, and probably the best known Catholic communicator during the 20th century, wrote some thought-provoking and insightful comments on Jesus' words regarding compassion, in Matthew 25:31-46. "His (Jesus' words even imply that philanthropy has deeper depths than is generally realized. The great emotions of compassion and mercy are traced to Him; there is more to human deeds than the doers are aware. He identified every act of kindness as an expression of sympathy with Himself. Either all kindnesses are done explicitly or implicitly in His name, or they are refused explicitly or implicitly in His name. Only an Omniscient Will could ever judge the motives behind all philanthropy to decide when it was charity, and when it was self-praise. That He claimed He would do and with such finality that the repercussions would be eternal." (Life of Christ, pg. 209)

If we understand the amazing impact of Jesus' teaching in Matthew 25, it seems quite apparent that Jesus, as a Judge in the End, will judge each person's HEART RESPONSE to the needs of one's fellow men, even if some of the compassion givers do not have a so-called 'evangelical conversion'. Jesus said of the compassionate persons (who do all kinds of good deeds) that 'inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' There will be those, after they have died physically, who will be surprised that they were welcomed into God's eternal abode (heaven). It is the condition of the HEART (whether it is compassionate or not; whether it is self-preoccupied or instead others-oriented), not the theological accuracy of the MIND. It is not how much we know about God (although mental comprehension is not to be despised), but how available we are to love others. We must be DOERS of the Word, and not simply HEARERS.

A TENDER HEART, which issues forth in COMPASSIONATE ACTIONS, determines the authenticity of our lives – and (apparently from Jesus' teaching in Matthew 25) it will be the tender heart and the active hand that will determine the eternal destiny of each person. I believe (according to Jesus' teaching in Matthew 25) that there will be countless multitude of persons in heaven who did many works of compassion on earth, without them truly understanding that their motivation for these loving and kind deeds was the 'heart of God'. Without realizing it, they were 'walking in all the light' that they had, without realizing that it was the Compassionate Christ who was the One who gave them both the desire to do loving acts and also the power and energy and zeal and endurance to consistently do their 'acts of mercy'. Many will be surprised that in eternity, they were praised and accepted by the Christ of Mercy, whom they ignorantly imitated imperfectly, but sincerely on earth!

Only compassionate persons make it to heaven, but there are many truly compassionate people on earth who will go to heaven when they die – because their heart was a ‘channel of Christ’s mercy’ on earth, even though they did not have a personal ‘evangelical conversion’. Some compassionate persons are truly born again (living compassionate lives, pale but sincere reflections of Christ’s compassion), but these same persons could never be able to outline theologically the ‘steps in becoming a Christian’.

All they know is that they desire to help people, to alleviate their terrible sufferings, to befriend the lonely, to give a listening ear to the troubled words of persons, to give a generous portion of their money to help the poor, to visit those who are grief-stricken, to share their presence with those in prison, to give away their talents to bless the despairing, and so much more. You may respond to these compassion-oriented persons that they could not do all these ‘acts of charity’ unless they are ‘born-again Christians’. Precisely! These ‘fruits of godliness’ come not from mere ‘sentimental inclinations’. No. The one who is humbly compassionate (i.e., the one who has sincere motives, not to glorify his own ‘ego’, but instead to genuinely help others, with no desire for personal profit or praise) – I say, the one who is humbly compassionate is the same one who is a ‘child of God’ – truly ‘born again’. Such a person has surrendered his heart and his will to others – to serve, to care, to empathize, and to be an instrument of healing. Such a person (and there are multitudes of these kinds of persons, among all classes and races and religious affiliations throughout the world) whose life is largely defined by voluntary works of charity, who would be dumbfounded if you asked him if he had been ‘born again’. Because such persons cannot ‘pinpoint’ a time of personal conversion, and they cannot intelligently describe the meaning of ‘repentance’, ‘confession’, ‘justification’, ‘regeneration’, and all the other difficult theological (salvation) terms, does NOT mean that these persons are unconverted. When I accepted Christ (many years ago), all I said was “Save my Soul!” (I repeated that simple prayer about 4 times).

My life was drastically changed – resulting in a great desire to pray, to read, and to memorize the Bible. (The next few years following my conversion, I spent hundreds of hours alone, memorizing large portions of the New Testament, and praying and meditating, in a quiet environment near an old creek on an old rock; God changed my desires radically, and I was no longer a dull and purposeless individual). Therefore, I believe heaven will be inhabited, not only by the well-informed and deeply spiritual evangelicals, but also by the compassionate persons who are saved (even if they would be unable to properly describe the ‘how’ and the ‘when’ of their genuine connection with God). Whether we know a lot (theologically) with our HEADS or not, the only persons who will enter the ‘pearly gates’ of heaven are those whose HEARTS are tender and compassionate.

One thing is certain – the multitudes of compassionate-oriented persons in our world (i.e., those who obviously minister to the hurting ones, in a selfless and genuinely caring way) – these persons are the servants of Christ, doing the work of Christ, energized by the power of Christ, affirmed by the praise and blessing of Christ. When did these selfless persons meet Christ? When did they become ‘born again’? In the ‘case’ of many of these compassionate persons, with no ‘evangelical connection’, perhaps they were ‘converted’ when they first laid their eyes upon some suffering person. We don’t know the ‘how’ and ‘when’ of their conversion, but Jesus said, “By their fruits ye shall know them”. The fruit of Christ-like compassion means that they definitely belong to Christ.

Although, of course I cannot prove it, I personally believe (based on the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 25), that there will be a multitude of persons in heaven who, while they lived on earth, did not profess a deep and personal relationship with Christ, but who are in heaven (apparently to their own surprise), because they ‘walked in all the light of truth’ that they knew – namely, the ‘light of true compassion’ towards their fellow man on earth. They did not realize, while they carried on their active life of compassion on earth, that the very origin (fountainhead) of their compassion was the ‘compassionate heart of Jesus Himself’! such persons responded to the ‘saving grace’ of Jesus rather ignorantly, when they committed their entire life and energies and talents and skills and training and motivations to caring for the imprisoned and the starving and the weak and the oppressed and the widow and the poor and the injured, etc., etc. They manifested the ‘fruits of Christlikeness’, so, indeed, they surely possessed the very person of Christ (the Holy Spirit) in their hearts, even though they never really understood the (theological) dynamics of ‘evangelical conversion’. Even though some ‘sheep’ in the Shepherd’s fold may not personally know the Shepherd very well (intellectually), nevertheless all ‘sheep’ who are doing the will of the Shepherd (i.e., loving acts of compassion towards their fellow man) definitely ‘belong’ to the Shepherd and are loved by the Shepherd, and all sheep, regardless of the uniqueness of their ‘condition’, will be wonderfully rewarded (Matthew 25) after they die physically.

Jesus said, “By their fruits you shall know them.” Yes, it is not hard to discern the ‘fruits of godliness’ in the lives of many Christians (and even in the lives of many ‘God – fearing persons’ like Cortnelius in Acts 10, who believed in God before he believed in Jesus). But Jesus also said, “*Judge not that ye be not judged.*” (Matthew 7:1) No one is wise enough, holy enough, or powerful enough to judge the ‘spiritual life’ of any other human being. C. S. Lewis believed that, regardless of the outward appearances of people, no one knew for sure just, where another person was in his ‘spiritual life’. Lewis believed that all persons, at all times, were either ‘getting closer to God’ or were ‘moving farther away from God’ – and that some of the ‘most religious ones’ might be the very ones who, in reality, were ‘moving away from God’ at that time! In his very popular book ‘Mere Christianity’ this greatest of the Christian apologists of the 20th century, wrote: “The world does not consist of 100 percent Christians and 100 percent non-Christians. There are people (a great many of them) who are slowly ceasing to be Christians but who still call themselves by that name; some of them are clergymen.

“There are other people who are slowly becoming Christians through they do not yet call themselves so. There are people who do not accept the full Christian doctrine about Christ but who are so strongly attracted by him that they are his in a much deeper sense than they themselves understand. There are people in other religions who are being led by God’s secret influence to concentrate on those parts of their religion which are in agreement with Christianity, and who thus belong to Christ without knowing it. For example, A Buddhist of good will may be led to concentrate more and more on the Buddhist teaching about mercy and to leave in the background (though he might still say he believed) the Buddhist teaching on certain other points. Many of the good Pagans long before Christ’s birth may have been in this position. And always, of course, there are a great many people who are just confused in mind and have a lot of inconsistent beliefs all jumbled up together. Consequently, it is not much use trying to make judgments about Christians and non-Christians in mass. When we are comparing Christians in general with non-Christians in general, we are usually not thinking about real people whom we know at all, but only about two vague ideas.” (Mere Christianity; C.S. Lewis; pgs. 63, 164; 1952; Macmillan Company)

God judges all persons on the basis of the light they have received and how they have responded (and are responding) to that light. The great Presbyterian scholar, J. Gresham Machem, said, “No one knows how little a person can believe and still be saved.” Let’s leave the determination of people’s ‘eternal destiny’ in the hands of the all-wise, all knowing, all loving, and all – merciful God!

There are certain “foundation stones” upon which the entire superstructure of salvation rests. Namely: (1) God loves every person whom He has created, even though all are creatures of a “fallen race”. (2) God wants to save every human being from the “bondage of sin”, in life and after this earthly life. (3) Jesus alone provides salvation for the human race, through His atoning death and His powerful resurrection. (4) Every person (sinner) is “savable”, that is, capable of being saved by Christ – all because of God’s gift to every person of “prevenient grace” – the grace that “goes before” to prepare every human being for the convicting and convincing works of the Spirit, which are prerequisites to a person being saved. (5) The Holy Spirit gives the gift of repentance and the gift of faith to every human being, but each human being (a God-created “free moral agent”) is capable of either accepting or of rejecting God’s gift of saving grace.

God has a “perfect will”, namely, the salvation of every human being. God has no “mysterious, divine decree” by which He decided (elected before the “foundation of the world”) to save a select number of humans and consequently to damn the remainder of humans in His creation! Such explanation of “God’s predestination” is both unbiblical and blasphemous and is an outrage against both God’s justice and His love!

In light of everything that has previously been ‘discussed’ in this short paper, is it possible to give any definitive and Biblically based answer to the lead question (title of this paper) – “Are there many, or few, or no one in Hell?” This question, I suppose, has been debated endlessly through the ages of Christianity, but it appears from a careful study (especially Romans 5, carefully expounded by the famous John R.W. Stott) of Biblical passages that the grace of God is so great and the persuasive (not coercive) influence of the Holy Spirit is so great, that the vast majority of human beings (in the end) will finally be in heaven! Only God knows, obviously, but the focus in the Scriptures is not on sin but on God’s grace. “Where sin abounds, grace super abounds.” What we humans lost in the ‘first Adam’, we more than gain in the ‘second Adam’ (Jesus Christ).

The Bible does not explicitly teach that there will be no human in hell, but the bible clearly teaches that it is not God’s will that any human being should perish in hell. God is doing everything He can (short of coercion) to keep every person out of hell! His grace is much stronger than sin. Christ’s victory over Satan is offered to every human being. We may share in Christ’s victory – the victory of His resurrection. Satan is a defeated foe, and someday he will be a totally vanquished foe (in the Lake of Fire). Hell was not prepared for human beings, but only for Satan and his demons.

Even though we cannot dogmatically and Biblically declare that no human being will ever go to hell, we (as loving Christians) can at least HOPE that, finally, God’s grace shall in some way persuade all humans (in the end) to surrender to God’s love and, thus be rescued from eternal destruction. God is so merciful that I believe, as long as there is human breath in a person (and any kind of rationality, consciously, or unconsciously), the blessed and merciful Spirit of God offers forgiveness and eternal life to a dying sinner. Again, (as I like to repeat) “God is not will-

ing that any should perish, but that all come to repentance.” I am sure that, like the dying thief on his cross, near to Jesus’ cross, who was ‘saved’ in the last moments, there have been multitudes of dying sinners who have found mercy and forgiveness in their last hours, because they ‘confessed their sins’ in contrition and surrender. Even though the ‘life’ of the thief was ‘lost’, nevertheless his ‘soul’ was saved for eternity! Christ loves the ‘foulest’ of sinners, and died to save them. Christ died for all persons – ‘up-and-out-sinners’ and also ‘down-and-out –sinners’! There is ‘level ground’ at the ‘foot of the Cross of Christ’! God loves all, and Jesus died for all, and everyone is capable (by God’s grace) of being saved!

What about those loving (saintly) persons throughout history, who have strongly HOPED that, in the end, no one would be in hell? Is it wrong (unbiblical) for such persons to hope and to pray that, because of God’s very powerful grace (persuasive wooing), ALL humans will finally yield to God’s love and grace and mercy – and thus be saved from the horrible destiny of hell?

The “Church Doctor Catherine of Siena” (1347-1380) writes, “If I were wholly inflamed with the fire of divine love, would I not then, with a burning heart, beseech my Creator, the truly merciful One, to show mercy to All my brethren (fellow humans)? How could I ever reconcile myself, Lord, to the prospect that a single one of those whom, like me, you have created in your image and likeness, should become lost and slip from your hands? No, in absolutely no case do I want to see a single one of my brethren (fellow humans) met with ruin, not a single one of those who, through their like birth, are one with me by nature and by grace. I want them all to be wrested from the grasp of the ancient enemy, so that they all become yours to the honor and greater glorification of your name.”

Hans Urs Von Balthasar (a prolific writer) was considered one of the very greatest Christian theologians of the 20th century. In his insightful book entitled “Dare We Hope ‘That All Men Be Saved’”, he struggles a lot with the issue of eternal punishment (seemingly taught at times in the New Testament), and the issue of widespread (if not even universal) salvation of mankind (which seems to have a serious ‘backing’ by many other New Testament Scriptures). How can these two seemingly, ‘different sets of Scriptures’ (that on one hand, speak of eternal punishment, and, on the other hand, speak of possible universal salvation) be reconciled? No place, of course, for dogmatism on this crucial issue (regarding eternal punishment), but this ‘deep’ and thoughtful theologian believes there is at least “Some Strong Hope That Most, If Not All, Persons Will Some Way Finally Be Saved For Heaven!”.

This tension (between eternal punishment and ultimate universal salvation) is real in the New Testament. A very great scholar and writer (Karl Rahner notes, “We have to preserve alongside one another...the power of God’s general will for salvation, the redemption of all men through Christ, “The Duty To Hope For The Salvation Of All Men”, and the principle of the real possibility of becoming eternally lost.”

Notes Hermann-Josef Lauter, “Will it really be all men who allow themselves to be reconciled? No theology or prophecy can answer this question. But love hopes all things (I Corinthians 13:7). It cannot do otherwise than to hope for the reconciliation of all men in Christ. Such unlimited hope is, from the Christian standpoint, not only permitted but commanded.”

The Holy Spirit cannot coerce (force) persons (sinners) to repent and to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, for salvation, but the Spirit nevertheless has great persuasive influence in His convicting

and in His convincing powers and sinners. I believe the bible teaches that the Spirit cannot, finally, override and overpower the will of sinners. In the end, Christ will have to say to God-rejecters, to the rebellious and the unrepentant ones – “Not my will, but thine be done” (as C. S. Lewis points out). No one can really understand the mystery of the human will – why some choose wisely to respond to Christ’s love and offer of life, and why others choose foolishly to refuse Christ’s offer of eternal life. However, the Spirit wills that all repent, and the Spirit uses great influence (and reason) to try to persuade ALL sinners to surrender to Christ. “Come, let us reason together”, saith the Lord. “Though your sins be as scarlet, they can be made pure and white as snow. Your sins can be hid in the ‘sea of God’s forgetfulness”.

The Holy Spirit convicts of sin, showing the nature, the reality, the horror, and the consequences of sin. Seeing what sin and Satan do to a person should be very convincing to sinners that it does not pay to live in sin. Simple reason should compel a hell-bound person to turn to Christ, who alone can forgive, reconcile, and impart abundant life! Why would anyone want to be a “double loser” instead of a “double winner”? To live in sin may give temporary pleasure, but soon sin results in a miserable life – a life that eventually leads to greater misery after physical death! Though Christians have their trials and their temptations and their sorrows in this mortal life (and sometimes have even the inflictions of unexplainable tragedies, similar perhaps to the afflictions of the ancient Job), a Christian is nevertheless promised an abundant life on this earth, followed by an indescribable life of joy after physical death! This observation of the way of the sinner compared with the way of the godly person, should be a strong incentive for all sinners to run to the arms of the all-loving and all-merciful Savior, who died for all and who desires all to be saved.

The reasoning and loving and influential God draws us to the Savior for salvation – draws us, not irresistibly, but nevertheless strongly. As Balthazar notes, God strongly appeals to our human free will, using man’s God-given ability to reason. “Tentatively, we can say this: that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of absolute freedom, allows us to see, within our Free Spirit, what our own true freedom would be, that is, by confronting us with our self, with our own highest possibility. We would not be able just to say ‘Yes’ to ourselves; also, the meaningfulness of such a ‘Yes’ and the desire for it are set before us, indeed, inspired in us. Do you really want to exist forevermore in contradiction with yourself?” (Dare We Hope “That All Me Be Saved”? Pg. 209)

The Spirit will do everything He can - using all the influence of love, and fear, and justice that is possible – to bring every person to the “foot of the Cross of Christ” for forgiveness and for glorious salvation! But the Spirit, in the final analysis, cannot use brute force or coercion to compel any person to accept Christ’s offer of eternal life! It is the fool, among fools, who would refuse the tender voice of Christ, and who would coldly turn his back, in unbelief, away from the One, who died for the sins of the entire world, and who is the Essence of Holy Love! If any person finally decides in the end to spurn the boundless love and mercy of God and the multiple invitations from the Spirit to enjoy eternal life - thus making it his choice to dwell in the pits of Hell – then one thing is sure: the Holy Trinity will be the ‘chief mourner’ for that ‘wretched person’!

There is, according to Jesus’ standards for His followers (disciples), a ‘high cost’ in serving Christ (self-denial and active obedience to Christ), but there is a ‘higher cost’ in not serving Christ (loss of personhood, loss of fullest potential, loss of significance and meaning, etc.). Why would anyone want sorrow instead of joy, loneliness instead of fellowship, discord instead of peace,

heartbreak instead of healing, frustration instead of fulfillment, weakness instead of strength, and inferiority instead of confidence? Shame instead of dignity, self-despising instead of self-respect, poverty instead of prosperity, despair instead of hope, self-centeredness instead of Christ-centeredness, confusion instead of clarity, ignorance instead of wisdom, doubt instead of assurance, sacrilege instead of sanctity? Boredom instead of creativity, division instead of unity, cruelty instead of kindness, hard-heartedness instead of tender-heartedness, double-mindedness instead of single-mindedness, chaos instead of order, hate instead of love, grudge-bearing instead of forgiveness, indifference instead of compassion, sorrow instead of joy, wickedness instead of righteousness, lust instead of moral purity, death instead of life?

Simple reason would say that, to turn down Christ's offer of an abundant life here and an eternal life hereafter, would be the height of foolishness – the greatest tragedy possible! Christ requires certain steps in order for a human being to be saved: (1) Grand Awakening, (2) Grand Repentance, (3) Grand Confession, (4) Grand Surrender, (5) Grand Faith and Trust, (6) Grand Restitution (asking forgiveness of others that you have wronged), and (7) Grand Obedience as a true disciple of God.

Yes, there are seven steps that must be taken (decisively in some cases, and over a longer period of time in other cases), but, because the "price" is never too great for a person in order for him to receive a whole new life, a person (sinner) must experience the "godly sorrow" before that glorious new life can be found. There is some "pain" involved in becoming born again, but that "pain" is productive and that "pain" issues forth in new life, whereas the "pain" of sin leads to destruction and death! James (the brother of Jesus), talking about the necessity of sincere repentance, uses vivid language in his short letter: "Weep and howl" over your sins, in a spirit of true repentance – rather than being light-hearted ("laughing" about your sins!) There is an abundant life coming for the sinner who "pays the price" of genuine repentance, and who has a humble spirit – "a broken and a contrite heart". Putting one's faith (trust) in Christ will eventually bring a new confidence, dignity, and joy to the Christ-follower.

The "pain" of repentance, (as well as the various other kinds of "pain" connected with the other steps in one's movement towards God), will eventually and sometimes rather quickly be over. Instead of feeling the 'necessary pain' that is involved in becoming a true Christian, there will be in its place a glorious pleasure and freedom and joy and peace, and so much more! Jesus said, "I am come that ye might have life, and have it more abundantly." Yes, there are many kinds of afflictions and adversities that a Christian experiences during his/her lifelong journey towards heaven. Jesus did not deny this reality. He said that, "In the world ye shall have many tribulations, but be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world." Amidst trials, Christ shares His victory with His followers. He promised that He would never leave us, nor forsake us, during life's pilgrimage. He said that His grace (strength) was sufficient for every loss and every grief and all heartbreaks and all adversities and temptations.

Yes, we have (as believers) a cross to bear, but Jesus said He would give us power to cope, to endure, and to overcome. He promised to give us strength for each day, wisdom for every decision, joy amidst all our tears, fellowship amidst our loneliness, and endurance for every trial and loss. He said His "yoke is easy" and His "burden is light". He promised a great reward for those who faithfully follow Him until the end of life. "Be thou faithful until death, and I will give thee a crown of life." I think it was Paul who wrote, "It has not entered into the mind of man, what

God hath prepared for those who love Him.” Heaven (as God’s reward for those who truly love Him) will be more wonderful than the mind of man can imagine! God has not promised His followers (children) that life would always be ‘easy’, but He did promise that His grace (strength) would be sufficient for every one of the trials, test, and temptations, which Christ-followers would confront.

There is an old song that my wife’s grandfather liked often to have sung during the worship services (or prayer meetings) at the little country Church where he worshiped in the sand hills of Nebraska, for several decades. He lost his wife when he was middle-aged, and he was a widower for many years. He knew what hardship was, but he was (because of God’s grace) one of the most vital and happy Christians that anyone could know. A few of the words of that old song (his favorite song), are as follows:

“God hath not promised sun without rain,
Joy without sorrow, life without pain.”
“God hath not promised smooth roads
And wide; flower-strewn pathways.”

Refrain:

“But God hath promised strength for the day,
Rest for the labor, light for the way.”

With all of these offers from the loving Savior, why would anyone want to say ‘No’ to Him? Who wants to choose evil rather than good, death rather than life, misery rather than joy, and happiness and contentment and excitement and creativity and significance? Who wants to choose the bondage (slavery) of Satan rather than the glorious freedom found in Christ alone?

Joshua (Old Testament leader who took Moses’ place after the latter died) said to all of the Israelites (some of whom were engaged in terrible idolatry): “Choose you this day whom ye will serve. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

“God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should repent” and be saved for time and for eternity! God loves all! Jesus died for all! The Holy Spirit calls all to repentance! The gift of “prevenient grace” has been given to all, making all persons savable! “Today is the day of salvation; now is the accepted time.” As one famous Christian declared, (Corrie ten Boon): “There is no pit so deep but what His love goes deeper yet.” Or, we could similarly say, “There is no sin stain so deep, but what the blood of Jesus goes deeper yet.” If Paul said of himself that Christ wonderfully saved him, and he called himself the ‘chiefest of sinners’, should we not conclude that Christ is able to save any other sinner? It cannot be reiterated enough: “Where sin abounds, grace super abounds!

God is able to save to the uttermost, because Christ’s uttermost sacrifice on His Cross satisfies the justice of God. Because of Christ’s ‘finished work’ on the Cross of Calvary, God is now (forever) reconciled unto the entire human race! God’s arms of reconciliation and forgiveness are extended widely, to receive ‘whosoever will come’. God hates sin, but He is not angry with any sinner. He strongly pleads with every sinner to receive the gift of a new life – abundant life here and heavenly life hereafter. He does not want one single person to perish, to lose out on God’s Grand Offer of total life in Christ! Whether it is the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit who is

making strong overtures of love toward lost persons, it is obvious throughout both the Old and New Testaments that the Trinity desires all to accept the offer of salvation.

Says God to the lost ones, through the prophet Isaiah, “Say there! Is anyone thirsty? Come and drink – even if you have no money! Come, take your choice of wine and milk – it’s all free! Why spend your money on food that doesn’t give you strength? Why pay for groceries that do you no good? Listen and I’ll tell you where to get good food that fattens up the soul! Come to me with your ears wide open. Listen, for the life of your soul is at stake. I am ready to make an everlasting covenant with you, to give you all unfailing mercies and love that I had for King David.” (Isaiah 55:1-3, Living Bible)

Jesus cared deeply for the souls of lost persons. He wanted to comfort, to heal, and to save all persons. He said, “*Come to me and I will give you rest – all of you who work so hard beneath a heavy yoke. Wear my yoke – for it fits perfectly – and let me teach you; for I am gentle and humble, and you will find rest for your souls; for I give you only light burdens.*” (Matthew 11:28-39, Living Bible)

Some of the very last words from the Holy Bible are dedicated to God’s invitation to all persons to come to God for eternal life! “*The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’ Let each one who hears them say the same, ‘Come’. Let the thirsty one come – anyone who wants to; let him come and drink the Water of Life without charge.*” (Revelation 22:11, Living Bible)

When the burden of guilt (caused by sin) is so heavy it is almost unbearable to carry, day-in-day-out, is there any solution, any relief, any possibility of change? No solution except God Himself! Even before the ‘finished work’ of Christ on the Cross, God provided (in mercy) forgiveness to those who truly repented and who turned humbly to God in faith and surrender (all because of the eventual atonement for all sins, made possible only through Christ’s work on the Cross). “*O people of Israel, you are saying: ‘Our sins are heavy upon us; we pine away with guilt. How can we live?’ Tell them: As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; I desire that the wicked turn from his evil ways and live. Turn, turn from your wickedness; for why will you die, O Israel?*” (Ezekiel 33:10-11)

In God and in God alone is there the salvation of the human soul! Says God (emphatically) through His prophet Isaiah, “*Let all the world look to me for salvation! For I am God; there is no other.*” (Isaiah 45:22)

Christ persistently ‘knocks’ on the heart’s door of every human being, waiting for a positive response from each person, desiring to enter the heart and home of every soul. But when Jesus enters the human heart (home), He intends to be, not a mere ‘guest’, but instead the Lord of the heart of that person. He wants the ‘title deed’. Why? Because He created, each person and He purchased each person – at the high cost of His own atoning blood! By right of creation and by right of His atoning death, Christ has the right of total Lordship of all human beings! So, when you hear Him knocking at your heart’s door, gladly and humbly answer that knock and invite Christ into your life to be the Lord of all! Says Jesus, “*Look! I have been standing at the door and I am constantly knocking. If anyone hears me calling him and opens the door, I will come in and fellowship with him and he with me.*” (Revelation 3:2)

Several times, we have noted in the paper that it is God's desire to seek and to save the lost ones – not a portion of predestinated humanity, but every single person (sinner without exception). Paul the Apostle wrote about the universal provision of Christ's salvation, many times. He believed that all could be saved – even himself 'the chiefest of sinners'! Wrote Paul: *"This is good and pleases God our Savior, for he longs for ALL to be saved and to understand this truth: That God is on one side and all the people on the other side, and Christ Jesus, himself man, is between them to bring them together, by giving his life for ALL mankind."* (I Timothy 2:3-5, Living Bible)

One thing is certain: God wants heaven to be greatly populated by "redeemed sinners", and He wants hell to be empty of All human beings, for "hell was only prepared for the devil and his demons" – "Not For God's Human Creatures!" God is doing everything, short of coercion, to "Keep Every Human Being Out Of Hell!". Are we, His followers, doing the same?

CHAPTER 4
***“IN MY FATHER’S HOUSE ARE
MANY MANSIONS”!***

CHAPTER 4

“IN MY FATHER’S HOUSE ARE MANY MANSIONS”!

Someone said, “DEATH is the most democratic institution on earth. It comes to all men regardless of color, education, wealth, or rank. It allows no discrimination, tolerates no exception. The morality rate of mankind is the same the world over: one death per person.” (Fred Duehner)

Not only is death the one universal fact of life, but death is the one fact of life that forces every person to make a choice!

A choice between what? Death compels everyone to choose between faith and despair. “Either we despair, or we believe. There is no middle course, no razor-edge of non-committal on which to balance precariously.” (Whale) “The man who has no faith in God is likely to say the same thing as the man of the world, who said regarding death: *“The wise man is remembered no longer than the fool, for, as the passing days multiply, all will be forgotten. Alas, wise man and fool die the same death.’ So I came to hate life, since everything that was done here under the sun was a trouble to me; for all is emptiness and chasing the wind.*” (Ecclesiastes 2:16-18)

The atheist, Bertrand Russell, said, “That no intensity of thought and feeling can preserve an individual life beyond the grave. That all the labors of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of man’s achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins.” (Quoted by Stewart in “The Gates of New Life”; pg. 29)

“Only he who believes in God wins the victory over despair. Only the infinite mercy of the Eternal Love, incarnate, suffering, dying, raising from the dead, is big enough for the tragedy of human existence.” (Whale)

The Christian with strong faith in God knows that death does not end it all, but that the perishability of death will someday be swallowed up in the imperishability of eternal life. With the Apostle Paul, the true Christian declares, *“This perishable being must be clothed with the imperishable, and what is mortal must be clothed with immortality. And when our mortality has been clothed with immortality, then the saying of Scripture will come true: ‘Death is swallowed up; victory is won.’ ‘O Death, where is your victory? O Death, where is your sting?’ The sting of death is sin; and sin gains its power from the law; but, God be praised, he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (I Corinthians 15:53-57)

Death will inevitably cause you to say one of two things, either “All is emptiness and chasing after wind, or “God be praised, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Death compels everyone to choose between faith and despair.

The person of faith is the one who believes that there is glorious life after death. Christians believe not only in the resurrection of the personality of the believer, but also in the resurrection of the body of the believer. Let us look at the teaching of God’s Word regarding the resurrection of the Body, or “Life after Death”.

“Don’t be Troubled in Your heart”, said Jesus. (John 14) How often these circumstances tend to trouble us! The thought of separation from loved ones trouble us, just as the thought troubled the disciples. Sorrow is legitimate for Christians, for feelings are a real part of being human. When we shed tears, Jesus sheds tears with us.

However, when we believe, put trust in Jesus, our sorrows are soothed, our broken hearts are mended and our voids of loneliness are filled.

What is the basis of our comfort in sorrow?

Contemplation of our Heavenly Father! The Father has a mansion ready for us and we need not fear. There is a place for us!

Where we feel at home, not alone, a feeling of belonging, (like we felt when, as a child, we put total trust in our earthly father’s provision.) There will be nothing strange about heaven!

Where there is plenty abundance. There are mansions in heaven, especially suited to each of us. There is no lack in heaven. Our every need will be supplied, our every desire fulfilled, and our every capacity developed. No overcrowding in heaven, there is room for all! There is neither positioning nor deprivation! There we will have total fellowship with one another! There will be no isolation or loneliness in heaven! To a far greater extent than is true of the fellowship between loving family members in the best of earthly homes, there will be deep and blessed fellowship in heaven with loved ones who have gone on before us, and will come after us. It is our ‘Father’s House’ where we will dwell, and this speaks of intimate and warm fellowship and sharing, no competition but fullest cooperation.

The Heavenly Father loves all His heavenly children equally, never favoring one above another. I believe, however, that because of varying moral capabilities among the heavenly children, there will be varying degrees of responsibility in heaven. In addition, while mutual care for one another will be the normal loving relationship between heavenly children, it is entirely conceivable that there will be (as it were) more mature heavenly children caring for less mature heavenly children. This is only conjecture, but a conjecture that makes sense when one realizes that the saints in heaven will have differing degrees of moral capacity. Capacities that are developed differently on earth, but are experienced differently in heaven.

Heaven is more than a mere state of being; also, heaven is not a materialistic place as we think of ‘places’ on earth. But, this Scripture (John 14) seems to teach that Heaven is a localized place, a place where all will be known and recognized, a place of sweet and conscious fellowship, a place where redeemed spirits have been embodied with a new and resurrected body like as to their resurrection Lord. A place also where there is unspeakable joy, relaxation, total health, and at times hilarious laughter! Remember, Jesus had a sense of humor on earth, and we are God-like creatures with the ability to laugh! We will have spiritual, localized, and recognizable bodies that are similar, if not identical, to the body of the Resurrected Lord! Heaven has a local habitation, and is a place in the great universe of God. Jesus Christ has at this moment a human body, glorified.

There are “many” mansions in heaven! This means that there is room for all in heaven. The Bible describes heaven as a place where there is an innumerable company of saints, and yet a place where there is room for all and where each inhabitant is treated tenderly and personally. No one is lonely, no one is ‘lost in the crowd’, no one is intimidated, and no one is, or will be, treated impersonally. Heaven is big enough to contain every earthly inhabitant, for it is God’s will that none should perish, but that all should come to repentance. It is the Father’s good pleasure to give the Kingdom of heaven to all persons, but only those whose repentance and faith are genuine will find a place in heaven.

“There will be a great many occupants of the mansions in heaven that Christian men here on earth – the most catholic of them will be very much surprised to see them, and thousands will find their entrance there that never found their entrance into any communities of so called Christians here on earth.” (Ibid; 268)

This is to say that there will be those in heaven, who never had the joy of hearing of the Christ, but who walked in the lesser lights of God revealed to them in nature or through the conscience, or even through inferior systems of religion. But all who walk in all the light of truth they receive nevertheless make it to heaven (and make it to heaven by the merits of Christ’s righteous sacrifice) whether or not they have had opportunity personally to respond to the best and the only perfect light of God, which light is Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God. All who make it to heaven make it to heaven because of Jesus Christ, whether or not they had opportunity to respond to Jesus Christ personally.

John Newton once said that if he ever entered heaven, he might probably meet three great wonders: (1) Finding some there whom he had supposed would not be there. (2) In not finding some there, whom he had expected would be there. (3) But, most of all in finding himself there.” (Binney’s Theological Compend; 147)

A chamber in the great (heavenly) Temple waits for each of us, and the question is, shall we occupy it, or shall we not?” (Ibid; 268)

Comforting are the words from the pen of Robert Murray McCheyne (highly respected minister of the early 19th century, who died a premature death at the age of 30): “Christ doesn’t intend for us to live here always; He has gone on a far journey in order to prepare a place for us. Oh Christians, believe in Christ preparing a place for you. It will greatly take away the fear of dying. It is an awful thing to die, even for a forgiven and sanctified soul, to enter a world unknown, unseen, and untried. One thing takes away fear; Christ is preparing a place quite suitable for my soul. He knows all the wants and weaknesses of my frame. I know He will make it a pleasant home for me.” (The Best of Robert Murray McCheyne; pg. 76)

During my more than 25 yearlong pastorate in Fort Collins, Colorado, I had the privilege of knowing many saintly persons who left this earthly life with victory in their souls. I will never be the same, for having experienced fellowship with these loving persons. One person, Sharon Atwood, lost her heroic battle with cancer when she was only 55 years old. She was a radiant, beautiful, vivacious Christian lady, that was deeply dedicated to her noble husband, and to her caring family members. She was one of the most liked persons in our small, but growing, local Church. Shortly before Sharon died of her devastating disease, she shared that she was troubled – not troubled because of any doubts regarding her sure entry into heaven, since she had deep faith in Christ as her Savior, but troubled because she wondered how, amidst the vast crowd in heaven, she would be able to find (to locate) her loved ones when she entered the “gates of heaven”. She was troubled and disturbed for several days before her “welcome death” (for she was suffering terribly). Then, as is always true of “God’s mercy and provision”, Sharon was given what might be called a “glorious vision” – a “vision of reassurance”.

God gave her an “overwhelming assurance that, as soon as she left this “earthly realm of existence” and entered the “land of glory”, she would be immediately greeted by all her loved ones who would welcome

her to her “heavenly home.” She would not need to worry that she could not find her loved ones in heaven, amidst the throngs of sainted people. She would immediately feel at home in heaven. Her loved ones, who would be there to welcome her, alongside Jesus Himself, would first greet her! What glorious assurance was given to her, during her closing hours here on earth! Heaven is where we first meet our blessed Savior who will gather our dearest ones to us, to welcome us to our Heavenly Home.

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One of the most respected and best known Catholic authors of the 19th century, was Cardinal John Henry Newman. This perceptive writer shared the following brief crisp statements regarding his understanding of heaven. “If we live well, and die in the grace of God, we shall, all of us, hereafter be taken up by our Incarnate God to that place where angels dwell; that our bodies shall be raised from the dust, and be taken to heaven; that we shall be really united to God. That we shall be partakers of the Divine nature, that each of us, soul and body, shall be plunged into the abyss of glory which surrounds the Almighty. That we shall see Him, and share His blessedness, according to the text, ‘Whosoever shall do the will of My Father that is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.’” (Meditations and Devotions by Cardinal John Henry Newman; pg. 128)

Heaven is described as a glorious city, and likened to pure gold and clear glass.

Heaven is God’s dwelling place prepared for those earthlings who love and who serve Christ, a place of holiness and beauty and unity and perfection and joy.

Heaven is a place where there are no tears of sorrow and grief, and no sickness or pain or death. A place where there is no sin, temptation, trials, or hard tests.

Heaven is a place where there is no need for the sun or the moon, for Christ Himself is the source of all light. In heaven, there is no night. There is no aging. No separation from those we love.

Heaven is a place where the focus of all is on Christ alone. A place where there is no competition or comparison among jealous-ridden persons, all of whom are seeking selfish glory and praise and applause. A place where all serve each other with holy love and gladness. A place of perfect harmony and unity where ‘all is for each, and each is for all’. Serving each other without the physical limitations of a human body.

Heaven is a place of joyful singing and happy serving and constant learning. A place where all the saints will learn from one another and all will learn forever from the ‘Master Teacher’ Himself – the Lord Jesus Christ.

Heaven is a place where each will become more like God forever – without, of course, ever actually becoming gods. The excitement of eternal growth in knowledge, holy wisdom, and understanding! No longer seeing reality as if peering through a hazy glass, but instead seeing reality with our spiritual eyes as a result of being given a ‘spiritual body’.

Heaven is a place where we will no longer walk by faith, but a place where we shall behold Christ, face to face in all His glory!

Death for the believer is like going from the basement of the house to the top story of the house. Death allows the Christian to reach his destination. Death for the Christian is like crossing the “finish line” after a long marathon run.

Death is not a loss for the believer; death is the doorway into eternal life in heaven. Paul wrote, “*For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain!*” *Christians are only pilgrims on the planet. Dying allows the believer to ‘go home’!* John 14:1-3 reads, “*Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also.*”

Placing your faith in the Deathless One – Jesus Christ – you shall never die! Of course, your body will die and return to dust, but you as a believer will never die! Said Jesus, “*If a man keep my saying he shall never see death.*” (John 8:5) “*Whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die.*” (John 11:16) Notes J.B. Phillips, “It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the meaning that Christ intended to convey was that death was a completely negligible experience to the man who had already begun to live life of the eternal quality.” (The Newborn Christian; pg. 212)

Said the great 19th century evangelist D.L. Moody, “Someday you will read in the papers that D.L. Moody of East Northfield is dead. Don’t you believe a word of it. At that moment, I shall be more alive than I am now. I shall have gone up higher, that is all, out of this old clay tenement into a house that is immortal; a body that death cannot touch, that sin cannot taint, a body fashioned like unto His glorious body. That which is born of flesh may die, that which is born of the Spirit will live forever.” (Quoted in Angels by Billy Graham, pgs. 162, 163)

Concerning the ‘glory’ of heaven for which all true Christians ‘hunger and thirst’, the famous author C.S. Lewis writes: “The promise of glory is the promise, almost incredible and only possible by the work of Christ, that some of us, that any of us who really chooses, shall actually survive that examination, shall find approval, shall please God. To please God, to be a real ingredient in the divine happiness, to be loved by God, not merely pitied, but delighted in as an artist delights in his work or a father in a son, it seems impossible, a weight or burden of glory which our thoughts can hardly sustain. But so it is.

For glory means good report with God, acceptance by God, response, acknowledgement, and welcome into the heart of things. The door on which we have been knocking all our lives will open at last.

“Apparently, then, our lifelong nostalgia, our longing to be reunited with something in the universe from which we now feel cut off, to be on the inside of some door which we have always seen from the outside, is no mere neurotic fancy, but the truest index of our real situation. And to be at last summoned inside would be both glory and honour beyond all our merits, and also the healing of the old ache.

“We are to shine as the sun; we are to be given the morning star.

“We want something else which can hardly be put into words – to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it.

‘At present we are on the outside of the world, the wrong side of the door. We discern the freshness and purity of morning, but they do not make us fresh and pure. We cannot mingle with the splendors we see. But all the leaves of the New Testament are rustling with the rumor that it will not always be so. Someday, God willing, we shall get in.

“The whole man is to drink joy from the fountain of joy. As St. Augustine said, the rapture of the saved soul will ‘flow over’ into the glorified body.” (Portions from C. S. Lewis’s sermon entitled “The Weight of Glory”)

Wrote Paul, “*For we know that when this tent we live in now is taken down – when we die and leave these bodies – we will have wonderful new bodies in heaven, homes that will be ours forevermore, made for us by God himself, and not by human hands. How weary we grow of our present bodies. That is why we look forward eagerly to the day when we shall have heavenly bodies which we shall put on like new clothes. For we shall not be merely spirits without bodies. These earthly bodies make us groan and sigh, but we would not like to think of dying and having no bodies at all. We want to slip into our new bodies so that these dying bodies will, as it were, be swallowed up by everlasting life. This is what God has prepared for us and, as a guarantee, he has given us His Holy Spirit.*” (2 Corinthians 5:1-5, Living Bible)

God loves the human race, including the “least”, the “last”, the overlooked, the “most unworthy”. The high and the low, the most gifted and the least gifted, the wealthy and the poor, the beautiful and the ugly, the powerful ones the weak ones, the high profile ones and the obscure ones, the highly educated ones and the most illiterate ones. The highly positioned ones and the most overlooked ones, the unusually beautiful ones, the out rightly repulsive ones, the young adults, the decrepit aging ones, the up-and-out moralistic sinners, and the down-and-out immoral, and ‘raw’ sinners!

If God would have His way, there would not be one person who would die in his (unrepeated) sin! If God had His way (that is, if His “perfect will” were carried out) there would be universal, spiritual health, as the result of the forgiveness of every sin of every person! None would perish, and all would enjoy abundant life on this earth (amidst problems and trials) and enjoy eternal life hereafter! Hell was prepared for the devil and his fallen angels (demons) – NOT for human beings! God is doing everything in His power (short of coercion) to keep every soul out of hell, and to take every human to heaven! But one’s eternal destiny depends upon one thing, and one thing only – the kind of “heart response” that a person gives to God’s revelation of Light that He gives to a person (even if that “Light” comes in a diminished form of “General Revelation” and not “Special Revelation”). Those only will be in heaven who have, honestly and positively, responded in their hearts to God’s revelation of “Light” (whether it is response to the “Concealed Christ or response to the “Known Christ”)!)

It is encouraging for us members of a “Fallen Race” to know that God did not abandon us when, through our Race’s Representative, the entire human race miserably “fell into sin!” Through a rather long and complex plan (over a period of many centuries), God finally brought His Son into the world to accomplish His plan for “world redemption”. No human can fully understand the “mystery of iniquity (sin);, or the “mystery of divinely – accomplished redemption through the cross and resurrection”, or the “mystery of the human free will” – but God nevertheless, mightily “works his miracles” of human transformation! There are millions of persons today, throughout the world in probably every country, who are ‘openly acknowledging and serving Christ’, and doubtless (because of the universal “work of the Holy Spirit”, there are also many more persons whose hearts are turned toward the Living God, seeking Him as best as they know with their very limited knowledge and with their narrow opportunities, spiritually speaking.

We humans seem to be impressed (even awe-struck) by large crowds – whether they are in an athletic stadium, or at a political convention, or even in a large sanctuary at a “mega-Church”! but the “large crowd” surrounding the “Throne of God” in heaven will be “mammoth” (huge, awe-inspiring, overwhelming compared to any human crowd on earth. God of that great gathering of the Saints gave the apostle John a vision for all the ages! He wrote, “After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘*Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.*’” (Revelation 7:9-10)

Based on an understanding of the “wideness of God’s mercy” which encompasses every human being on earth, - that mercy being extended to “*every nation, tribe, people, and language.*” (Revelation 7:9),

through the light that lighteth every person who comes into the world”, revealing either the “concealed Christ” or the “known Christ” – it is likely that the vast majority of the entire human race will compose that “vast multitude that no one could count” around the throne of God, all praising the “Lamb of God”!

I believe that when (only by the grace and mercy of God) I become a participant in that vast crowd of “praising saints” in heaven, I shall come to know, throughout the “endless ages of eternity”, the millions of God’s children, from every century and from every nation and tribe and people group. I believe that many of them will be persons who learned about Jesus for the very first time, when they took their first “celestial breath” from heaven’s atmosphere! I believe that there will be many who will make heaven their eternal home, who put their trust in God, as God was revealed to them on earth (unfortunately) “Very faintly” (through “General Revelation” instead of through “Special Revelation”). But these persons, whose hearts were most responsive to these “lesser forms of divine Light” (Nature, Truth from non-Christian Religions, untrained Conscience, Ethical Teachings of Philosophers like Aristotle and Plato, the truth of God faintly revealed through all forms of worldly Beauty, etc.). These persons with “God-honoring and sincere hearts” (but without accurate head knowledge based on “Special Revelation”) – will be standing beside the more fortunate Christians who responded on earth rightly with both their heads (knowledge) and their hearts (emotions) to “Special Revelation” of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection! Both will be there – the persons who on earth were deprived of Special Revelation (but who responded sincerely with their little knowledge to a “General Revelation”), and those who were fortunate enough to know God’s “Special Revelation” (Incarnation) and to respond with both their head and heart to that greatest revelation! None will be excluded from heaven, simply because of ignorance. God only expects people on earth to respond to the “degree” of “light” which they have been given – whether it is the much lesser “light” of “General Revelation” (which is “Christ concealed”), or whether it is the greatest degree of “light” which is “Special Revelation” (which is “Christ clearly revealed”)!

All will be in heaven who on earth “walked in the light of truth” as God gave them light. Some will enter heaven, possessing so much more knowledge of Jesus than others who received so much less light on earth and who possessed little or no accurate knowledge of Jesus. What God will judge, in the end of human existence, for every person, are not the accuracy of mental knowledge about God, Man, Sin, and Jesus Christ and the intricacies of Salvation (atonement, justification, regeneration, sanctification, etc.). However, it will be the condition of the human heart (receptivity to the Holy Spirit’s multiple work of enlightenment, conviction, offer of forgiveness and new life, etc.).

If a person’s heart is right with God (and only God can fully and accurately determine this), then that person will be welcomed into God’s eternal kingdom, to enjoy the glories of heaven, along with the saints who early in their lives responded to the “revealed Christ” of “Special Revelation”! Both the ‘privileged ones’, and the ‘much less privileged ones’, will be together in heaven!

No person, regardless of the amount and the accuracy of knowledge that he possesses of Christ, will find out when he gets to heaven, that he possesses very much knowledge regarding the Holy Trinity (the God of Eternity)! All inhabitants of heaven – regardless of how little or how much knowledge of Christ they possessed on earth – will find themselves thrilled with the amount of knowledge of God (mentally and experientially) that they will progressively receive throughout the “Endless ages of eternity”. There will be so much to learn about the infinite love of our eternal God, and God will not only teach us directly, but I believe He will use all His heavenly citizens to “teach each other”! I believe, as Christians of the heavenly kingdom, we will all enjoy sharing and hearing each other’s personal stories of divinely – wrought transformation, which we all experienced on earth, as a result of God’s Light that came to us in unique ways.

If you felt ‘frustrated’ because, on earth, you as a believer had little opportunity (because you were a member of a tiny church in an obscure village, or because you were confined in a prison in Russia for

your 'Faith'), to share God's mercy in your life and your unique testimony for Christ, well, in heaven you will have countless ages to "tell your story" to countless millions of the saints (who will also share their stories with you). Mutual rejoicing and mutual praise for Christ, the Wonderful and Merciful Savior!

Learning more and more about God, and yet never coming to an end in that learning experience – and all of this learning about God will result in more and greater worship of the "Holy Trinity of Love"!

Yes, it is true that God will reward every person hereafter (in eternity) according to the degree and quality of works, which each person (on earth) has performed. Only God (in mercy) is qualified to Judge on that "Great Day of Evaluation". There will be different degrees or levels of rewards in heaven – based on the quality of life each person has lived for Christ on earth. But with this awesome "Judgment of Evaluation" in mind (which every Christian must anticipate and prepare for), however, each Christian must not panic or become competitive for greater "success" (fruitfulness) on earth (in order that he might get greater rewards in heaven, for himself). Why do we work on earth, as Christians? Just to build up a greater "store" of accomplishments, so that we will be assured of greater rewards hereafter? Surely not! For is not such reasoning an expression of "egotism" and "selfishness"? We work because we deeply love Christ and sincerely love others! Love is the greater motivator of our actions (good works).

If Christ has truly begun a good work in you, He will perform it until the day of Christ Jesus. Christ says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End" (Revelation 1:8). "Whenever He begins, He will make an end. Whenever He builds a stone as the foundation, He will preserve it unshaken until the end. Only make sure that you are up on the foundation, that you are reconciled, that you have true peace with God. Then you may look across the mountains and rivers that are between you and that day, and say, "He is able to keep me from falling." You have but two shallow brooks to pass through – sickness and death – and He has promised to meet you, to go with you, foot by foot. A few more tears, a few more temptations, in a few more agonizing prayers, a few more sacraments, and you will stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion!" (The Best of Robert Murray McCheyne; pgs. 172, 173)

"I am persuaded that we begin the next life where we leave off this one, and there will be an eternal growth in the Divine image, the finite forever approaching the growth in the Divine image, the finite forever approaching the infinite in character and life, but never becoming the Infinite. In that, growth in the Divine Image will be our eternal happiness. For our growth in the Divine Image will be our eternal happiness. For we are happy only as we fulfill the laws of our being, and those laws demand growth and creation for their fulfillment. To sit down forever and rest might fit the life of a man of a tropical country who said, "God is good. He made the nights to sleep in and the days to rest in." But it wouldn't be the heaven of an alive man. For to be alive is to be alive to creation and development. God, the eternal Creator within us, would make us eternally creative.

We find, but we find that there is more to be found. Every experience becomes an exploration – for more." (Mastery; by E. Stanley Jones; pg. 39)

"*If a man keep my saying he shall never see death*'.(John 8:51); *Whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die.*' (John 11:26) It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the meaning that Christ intended to convey was that death was a completely negligible experience to the man who had already begun to live life of the eternal quality.

"*Jesus Christ hath abolished death*", wrote Paul many years ago, but there have been very few since his day who appear to have believed it. The power of the dark old god, rooted no doubt in instinctive fear, is hard to shake, and a great many Christian writers, though possessing the brightest hopes of 'Life Hereafter' cannot, it seems, accept the abolition of death. 'The valley of the shadow', 'Death's gloomy portal', 'the bitter pains of death', and a thousand other expressions all bear witness to the fact that a vast number of Christians do not really believe what Christ said. Probably the greatest offender is John Bunyan, writ-

ing in his book, ‘Pilgrim’s Progress’ of the icy river through which the pilgrims must pass before they reach the Celestial city. Thousands, possibly millions, must have been influenced in their impressionable years, by reading ‘Pilgrim’s Progress.’ Yet the ‘icy river’ is entirely a product of Bunyan’s own fears, and the New Testament will be searched in vain for the slightest endorsement of his idea. To ‘sleep in Christ’, ‘to depart and be with Christ’, ‘to fall asleep’ – these are the expressions the New Testament uses. It is high time the ‘icy river’, ‘the gloomy portal’, ‘the bitter pains’, and all the rest of the melancholy images were brought face to face with the fact: ‘Jesus Christ hath abolished death’.

“The fact seems too many to be too good to be true. But if it does seem so, it is because we have not really accepted the revolutionary character of God’s personal entry into the world. Once it dawns upon us that God (incredible as it may well sound) has actually identified Himself with Man. That He has taken the initiative in effecting the necessary Reconciliation of Man with Himself, and has shown the way by which little human personalities can begin to embark on that immense adventure of Living of which God is the Center, death - the discarding of a temporary machine adapted only for a temporary stage – may begin to seem negligible.” (The Newborn Christian; Phillips; pgs. 212, 213)

Christians who die do not lose their identity in eternity. I believe that the believer’s new body will be similar to Jesus’ body after the resurrection, just prior to His ascension. A tangible body, yet a spiritual body: a body not confined to limitations of the material world. When Jesus arose, He “was seen and known.” We, too in heaven will have our personal identity. We shall be known and recognizable. Notes Sam Shoemaker, “‘Because I live, ye shall live also’. He pioneered the way for us. His Resurrection made clear to us what Christian immortality is – not the vague wandering on of lonely and orphaned spirits, floating somewhere between earth and heaven – but the continuation of ourselves, in communion with Him and with one another. We are not a drop that falls into the sea of being and is lost in it, we are individual and responsible souls that return to their Creator. Christ’s Resurrection has immeasurably strengthened our faith in the resurrection of the human soul.” (Twenty Centuries of Great Preaching; vol. 11; pg. 83)

Death is simply a bridge that spans the gulf between time and eternity. One who is a true believer in Christ goes over that bridge into the nearer presence of Christ. For all eternity, the believer will praise and glorify Christ. Heaven is a place of indescribable joy, as all the hosts of heaven join in corporate praise to God.

The apostle John had a vision of heaven: *“After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.”* (Revelation 7:9, 10)

Death for the Christian is the end to earth’s labors, and is the beginning to heaven’s eternal development and labor. Said Victor Hugo, “For half a century I have been writing my thoughts in prose, verse, history, philosophy, drama, romance, tradition, satire, ode, and song – I have tried them all. But I feel I have not said the thousandth part of what is in me. When I go down to the grave I can say like so many others, ‘I have finished my day’s work’. But I cannot say, ‘I have finished my life’. My day’s work will begin again next morning. The tomb is not a blind alley, it is a thoroughfare. It closes on the twilight to open with the dawn.

CONCLUSION:

“Our earthly bodies, the ones we have now that can die, must be transformed into heavenly bodies that cannot perish but will live forever. When this happens, then at last this Scripture will come true – ‘Death is swallowed up in victory’. O death, where then your victory? Where then your sting? For sin – the sting that causes death – will all be gone; and the law, which reveals our sins, will no longer be our

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY – (As I Understand It)

judge. How we thank God for all this! It is he who makes us victorious through Jesus Christ our Lord! So, my dear brothers, since future victory is sure, be strong and steady, always abounding in the Lord's work, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever wasted as it would be if there were no resurrection." (I Corinthians 15:53-58, Living Bible)

WHAT ABOUT THE DEAD WHO DIE IN CHRIST?

"No, not cold beneath the grasses,
All-forgotten in the tomb;
Rather, in my Father's mansion,
Living, in another room."

"Living, like the one who loves me,
Like yon child with cheeks abloom,
Out of sight, at desk or schoolbook,
Busy in another room."

"Nearer than the youth whom fortune
Beckons where the strange lands loom;
Just behind the hanging curtain,
Working in another room."

DYING WORDS

"The chariot has come, and I am ready to step in." - Margaret Prior

"Eternity rolls up before me like a sea of glory." - Jordan Antie

"How bright the room! How full of angels!" - Martha McCrackin

"I wish I had the power of writing; I would describe how pleasant it is to die." –
Dr. Cullen

"The sun is setting; mine is rising. I go from this bed to a crown. Farewell." -
S. B. Bangs

"Can this be death? Why, it is better than living! Tell them I die happy in Jesus." –
John Arthur Lyth

"I am in perfect peace, resting alone on the Blood of Christ. I find this amply sufficient with which to enter the presence of God." - Trotter

"Oh, that I could tell you what joy I possess! I am full of rapture. The Lord doth shine with such power upon my soul. He is come! He is come!" – Mrs. Mary Frances

(Quotes from Shoe-Leather Faith; by Garth and Merv Rosell; No. 141)

CHAPTER 5

“HOW WIDE IS GOD’S MERCY”!

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“HOW WIDE IS GOD’S MERCY”!

During one period of my life, I spent several months reading the daily devotional book, entitled “In Christ” by the great missionary-evangelist E. Stanley Jones (one of my very favorite authors who has helped me immensely to grow in my knowledge and spiritual understanding for many years).

I read a passage that fascinated me – a passage that was very thought-provoking. That passage is as follows: “Someone asked ‘Why wasn’t Gandhi a Christian’ The reply is that he never really saw Jesus through the racialism of South Africa. The fact is that when Gandhi in that next world sees Jesus as He is, He will probably fall at His feet and say, ‘My Lord and my God.’” (pg. 345)

This quotation by this great writer and evangelist (who, I think, it is said preached more sermons than any person in history – perhaps 60,000 sermons!) brings up questions that, of course, cannot be fully answered. Perhaps there will be multitudes of persons who, like Gandhi “never really saw Jesus” here on earth, because of many factors (like racialism, ignorance of the true Gospel, etc., etc.). Surely, the God of mercy will not turn His back upon these many unfortunate (ignorant) persons who would immediately repent and follow Christ if they would have “really seen Jesus” here on earth. Like Gandhi, (according to E. Stanley Jones’ belief) they will, in the “next world” see Jesus as He is in all His amazing love and mercy and beauty, and they will gladly fall down at His feet and say “My Lord and my God”! In other words, the many on this earth who did not adequately and accurately have a chance to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior, will (after they physically die) have opportunity to behold Jesus for who He really is, and they will fall down and wholeheartedly worship Him! He whom they longed for during their earthly pilgrimage (but failed to find because of ignorance or confusion or misguided seeking), will be there in the presence of Christ who will have outstretched arms to give a warm welcome to eternal life! Why? Because the One who truly knows the heart of all persons who have ever lived, will not allow those to perish who truly yearned for truth and love and intimate fellowship with the true God of the Universe (and with His blessed Son and Spirit), but who remained ignorant of His true personhood while on earth.

The darkness that surrounded such unfortunate souls on earth (who unsuccessfully groped, like Gandhi, after the true God during their hard pilgrimage on this terrestrial planet), will be gloriously introduced to the Light that shines forever – namely, the kind face of a caring and forgiving and understanding and merciful God! Such torn, battered, and ignorant souls will be taken

into the warm embrace of the tender arms of the loving Heavenly Father! No more darkness, but eternal light! No more hurts, but eternal healing and health! No more loneliness but eternal fellowship and friendship! No more sadness and sorrow, but joy and laughter and happiness forevermore! No more confusion and ignorance, but understanding and wisdom and knowledge that shall unfold and increase forever! No more dullness and drabness and monotony, but eternal delights and beauty and creativity and growth in heavenly awareness! Worshiping the triune God forever! Coming gradually to know the heavenly saints, as the ages of eternity unfold. Becoming more like God forever, but never becoming gods. Just heavenly citizens, loving God supremely and loving others joyously and humbly!

Some may criticize this idea because it advances what they think is a concept of a “second chance” after physical death for some people, an idea they think is both unbiblical and heretical. But (along with one of the most evangelical, holiness writers of the 20th century, E. Stanley Jones) we are not advocating a “second chance” for rebellious sinners who die in an unrepentant state.

Rather, we are advocating an “adequate chance” for persons who did not have the mental or spiritual resources on earth to make an understanding (intelligent) commitment to Christ as Savior and Lord. The misconceptions regarding true Christian belief were so great in the life of the godly Gandhi that he was overwhelmingly hindered in making an intelligent decision to accept Christ as his personal Savior – even though he deeply admired Christ and he greatly respected Christ’s “Sermon on the Mount”. Many, like Gandhi, are sincerely “walking in the light of the truth” as they best understand it (such as countless numbers of Muslims and Buddhists and Hindus like Gandhi). God, the all-together merciful One, alone can judge the condition of all persons’ hearts. He will not condemn anyone to hell, simply because of ignorance! All persons, whether on earth or in eternity will be given sufficient knowledge regarding the person and redemptive work of Jesus Christ, to allow every person to exercise his/her will positively to surrender to the Lordship of Christ. Like Gandhi, I believe there will be multitudes of persons who, because they were in the darkness of ignorance regarding the saving power of Christ, and thus made no volitional commitment to accept the Savior, will nevertheless in eternity have their spiritual eyes opened to behold the reality of Christ’s personhood and saving power, and these spiritually-hungry persons will fall on their knees and they will say “My Lord and My God!”

If some emphatically and skeptically declare that this idea is unbiblical – the idea of an adequate chance for many to accept Christ in eternity because they did not have that chance while they lived on earth – let such skeptics (including some evangelical Christians) think long and hard about the meaning and the implications of the “Mercy of our God”. God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance! And why should it be impossible for some (probably many) persons to experience repentance after they have left their bodies? Again, we are not talking about rebellious people - people who have intentionally rejected Christ after adequate opportunities have been given to them – but rather we are talking about the masses of unfortunate (ignorant) people who, on earth, never had unbiased, clear, simple, adequate opportunities to intelligently and honestly accept Christ.

Some may still accuse those (like me) who hold this viewpoint regarding the “wideness of God’s mercy” that they advocate a “second chance” for some people after they die. If critics (including most evangelical Christians) want to accuse me (along with many other such advocates like high-

ly respected evangelical writer-evangelist E. Stanley Jones) of believing in an unbiblical doctrine, “so be it”! What is so wrong (or unbiblical) in believing that God’s Mercy is so wide that it encompasses all persons on earth, in all different kinds of circumstances – including persons who unfortunately have never read the Bible.

Persons who have never met even one true Christian, persons who are surrounded from their birth to their death by pagan people who practice heathen rituals, persons who are “brainwashed” from earliest childhood to think certain ways and to do certain things that are totally alien to the teachings and the practices of true Christianity? Only God knows the heart of every person. God, in mercy and in justice has nothing but love in His great heart for these broken, ignorant, and spiritually hungry persons! Adequate chance for acceptance of Christ will be given all persons – either on this earth or in eternity!

CHAPTER 6

**“HUMILITY WITHOUT HUMILIA-
TION –
DIGNITY WITHOUT PRIDE”!**

CHAPTER 6

“HUMILITY WITHOUT HUMILIATION – DIGNITY WITHOUT PRIDE”!

Unfortunately, since the beginning days of my Christian life (I was saved as an 11 year old child, March 12, 1956), I found that I have struggled with my carnal (non-Christian) tendencies ‘To Compare Myself with Other Persons’ (resulting in wrong attitudes of pride or jealousy or despair). Christ’s way is the way of ‘Humility And Servant hood’ – putting others before myself, considering others better than myself, being genuinely interested in the welfare of others, loving others as I love myself, praying more for others than I pray for myself. Not being overly-sensitive to the actions and attitudes and words of offense towards me, overlooking the evil that others would inflict on me, rejoicing in the deserved or undeserved praise that others receive, wishing nothing other than the best for others even if they consider me their enemy, quickly forgiving others and never holding grudges or bitterness towards others. Always building up others and never tearing them down by my words or actions, seeking always to maintain the unity of the faith in the bond of peace with all fellow Christians even if they strongly disagree with me theologically or ecclesiastically. Seeking to be at peace with all persons as much as it depends upon me, learning to acknowledge and accept the vast differences in people’s personalities, preferences, talents, spiritual gifting, ethnic and national and cultural backgrounds, withholding harsh judgments of other persons because only God is wise enough and just enough and loving enough to render any judgments.

Yes, the long list of descriptions of the godly (Biblical) attitudes bring me both rebuke (when I fail), and comfort (when, by God’s grace, I succeed to some extent in my relationships with fellow human beings).

But the Chief Carnal Attitude (as I see It) is “That Battles Against A Godly Lifestyle (Attitudes, Words, and Actions)”, and “The Attitude Of Selfish Competition (i.e., The Attitude Of Self-Centered Attempts To Outdo My Fellow Human Beings).” The horrible (godless) sinful attitude of wanting to “come out on top”, to overcome others, to be at the “top of the heap”, the “king of the mountain”, “the winner” while my competitors are the losers! This self-centered (proud) attitude it’s the very “Essence of Sin”. Pride is the “Hub” – while all other sins which come from this source, are simply (but terribly) “Spokes”! All Sin Originates From Pride, whether it is “Gross Sins” in the lives of admitted Sinners (unconverted persons), or whether it is more “Hid-

den and Subtle Sins”, found in the lives of professing Christians who regularly attend Church services (and such sins of carnal competition are tragically and often committed by Church leaders, including pastors!).

As a long-time pastor, I have to often, found myself in competition with fellow pastors and with local churches – trying to grow a larger Church or trying to preach better sermons, or other such competitive attitudes and actions. Only God truly knew (during my many years of pastoral ministry) my true motives in “Christian service”. I do know I asked God many times to purify my motives and to increase my love for fellow Christians (including my many fellow pastors within the same community that they and I were trying to ‘reach for Christ’). I have had to learn, repeatedly, throughout my now 54 years of ‘Christian Walk’, that “It Is Not Competition, But Loving Servanthood That Defines the Essence of Christian Living!”

John the Baptist felt himself to be small as he looked at himself in light of the person and work of Christ. He saw Jesus as eternal and saw himself as finite and transitory. He saw Jesus as the center figure on the stage of human history, and saw himself as a minor, supportive figure on that stage. Jesus is the Master; John feels that he is not even worthy to be considered a disciple of the Master, but feels that his role is that of a mere slave, one that is not worthy even to untie the shoes of the Master! Jesus is like the Bridegroom, the center of action and attention; John is only the friend of the Bridegroom, one who is in the background, in the shadows, one who fulfills a humble and supportive role in bringing the Bride and the Bridegroom together.

Yes, John feels humbled in the presence of the Saviour. But, while he rightly feels small in the presence of Jesus, he did not feel humiliated and shamed in the presence of Jesus. It is possible to feel small without feeling insignificant and it is possible to feel humility, without feeling humiliation. John felt humility as he looked at himself, but he felt pride as he looked at his Saviour, and this sense of pride in the Saviour saved John from the feelings of humiliation and shame. Dignity is found, not in claiming to be something we are not, but in accepting the humble, yet important role, which is ours because of our relationship to Jesus!

What is our relationship to Jesus – a relationship that both keep us humble, and yet which gives us a sense of dignity and importance?

It is the relationship of Message and Messenger. Note John 1:23, “*John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, I am the voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Make straight the way for the Lord.’” Jesus is the Message; as believers we, like John, are the messengers, sounding forth the declaration of repentance and faith. We are the voices, which call out to people to turn from their wicked ways and to turn to the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. (v. 29)*

Our place in life may be small, but it is never insignificant! To be a voice for God is a most significant role in life, the very role that will give each of us a sense of dignity, esteem, and importance!

To be a voice for God is important, but it is no basis for selfish pride. It is not who we are that is important, but it is what we say that really matters. We are a voice for God. This gives us both confidence and humility. “If ever our witness begins to be to ourselves or to make ourselves very prominent something is going wrong with it...It is not ourselves but our witness to Him for

which we want to claim attention. Never mind who or what I am; but do listen when I speak to you of Christ.” (Readings in St. John’s Gospel Temple; pgs. 21-22)

Humble we must be, but humiliated we need never be, for we are, messengers who are communicating the greatest news that mankind can ever hear! We are VOICES in the wilderness of earth’s weary ways, telling lost men to ‘make straight the way for the Lord.’ (v. 23) Telling people to make their lives right with God through genuine repentance! To help prepare people for the coming of Christ into their lives! No greater role can any of us fulfill than that of being a voice for God in a world that desperately needs to hear something other than the mere opinions of men!

To bring Christ and a sinner together is the greatest privilege that can be given to a human being. Only Christ is the Bridegroom, only Christ is the center of attention; but to be the friend of the Bridegroom is the greatest privilege known to man. Trying to take the place of the Bridegroom constitutes the grossest of sins, and is the epitome of pride. There is no place for pride, trying to be something we are not meant to be. But if there is no place for pride, there is also no need for humiliation in the Christian life.

What is the basis for humility in the Christian life? Realizing that we are only the messenger, not the Message (John replied in the words of the prophet Isaiah: *“I am a voice shouting in the wilderness, ‘Clear the way for the LORD’s coming!’”* John 1:23); realizing that we are only the friend of the Bridegroom, not the Bridegroom (*“It is the bridegroom who marries the bride, and the best man is simply glad to stand with him and hear his vows. Therefore, I am filled with joy at his success. He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less. “He has come from above and is greater than anyone else. We are of the earth, and we speak of earthly things, but he has come from heaven and is greater than anyone else. He testifies about what he has seen and heard, but how few believe what he tells them! Anyone who accepts his testimony can affirm that God is true. For He is sent by God. He speaks God’s words, for God gives him the Spirit without limit. The Father loves his Son, and has put everything into his hands. And anyone who believes in God’s Son has eternal life. Anyone who doesn’t obey the Son will never experience eternal life but remains under God’s angry judgment.”* John 3:29-30); realizing that we are only disciples of the Master, not the Master (*“Though his ministry follows mine, I’m not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandal.”* John 1:27)

What is the basis for dignity in the Christian life? Realizing the importance of the role of the messenger of the disciple or the friend of the Bridegroom. These roles give us dignity, a sense of importance, a sense of significance. We are not wonders, claiming to be something we are not (claiming to be the Message, claiming to be the Master, claiming to be the Bridegroom). No, to claim these positions of uniqueness, or acting as if we were the Message, or the Master, or the Bridegroom is to claim positions that belong to God Himself. This is the epitome of pride, and pride is the grossest of sins for it is the sin of presuming to be what God alone is inherently! Pride tries to usurp the place of God Himself. This is why Hitler (and anyone like him) is so horrible as we look at him, for he claimed, in all of his pride, to be the Message, to be the Master, to be (as it were) the Bridegroom (the center of all attention). Pride controlled his life! Pride is the worst of all sins, for it is the sin that blindly claims inherently to be something we are not. We are not the Message, we are not the Master, and we are not the Bridegroom. Those positions are solely and uniquely Christ’s! Therefore, those who claim to be something they are not, will be

brought down. Says the Scriptures about the proud or haughty men: “*God saves the humble but brings low those whose eyes are haughty.*” (Psalms 18:27)

What is the ‘sin’ for which the Lamb of God came to die in order to take it away? (v. 29) “For there is only one sin, and it is characteristic of the whole world. It is the self-will which prefers ‘my’ way to God’s – which puts ‘me’ in the centre where only God is in place.” (Temple; pg. 24)

Pride is the will of man centering on the self, rather than on the Saviour! Humility says: “Glory to God in the highest”; not “Glory to man in the highest.” Christ alone is the Message! Christ alone is the Master! Christ alone is the Bridegroom! He alone is the Wonder of God!

However, if we are not Wonders, neither are we Worms! If there is no place for pride, there is also no need for humiliation! Humility – Yes! Humiliation – No!

There is a basis for dignity! We are the messengers, preparing the way for the coming of Christ into people’s lives. With greatest humility, and yet with greatest dignity, we can say, “*I am the voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Make straight the way for the Lord.’*” (John 1:23)

There is a basis for dignity! We are the disciples of Jesus. We may not feel worthy to even stoop down to untie the shoestrings in the shoes of our Master; nevertheless, we are disciples of Jesus. We are not the Master, but we are the servants, and to be a servant of the Master is a great privilege, a privilege that gives esteem, and dignity, and significance to our lowly lives! To serve the Master – what greater role can a human fulfill!

There is a basis for dignity! We are not the bridegroom, but we are the friend of the Bridegroom. The role of the friend is to bring the Bride and the Bridegroom together. The role of every believer is to bring the sinner and God together. We are ministers of reconciliation, bringing unholy men and the holy God together. To serve as a liaison between man and God is the greatest privilege possible. Knowing that we are a friend of the Bridegroom should give us a sense of importance, esteem, value, significance, and dignity. No place for selfish pride, but a wonderful place for dignity and self-esteem.

It is not WHO we are, but WHOSE we are, that gives us a basis for dignity. We are nothing within ourselves; therefore, there is no basis for haughty pride. We are something significant within Christ; therefore, there is a solid basis for healthy self-esteem and dignity. We belong to Christ, and Christ is the Eternal One – transcendent and holy – and Christ is also the Incarnate one – immanent and identified with mankind’s sins because He is the Lamb of God. Knowing who we serve gives us at one and the same time, a sense of profound humility and a sense of profound dignity!

Let us continue to see Christ for who He really is – the Eternal Son of God (transcendent) and the Suffering Servant and Lamb of God (immanent), and let us continue to see ourselves for who we really are – messengers declaring the Message, disciples following the Master, and friends of the Bridegroom. Seeing ourselves for who we truly are, in light of who Christ truly is, will make us both humble in our dignity, and dignified in our humility!

This is what it means to be a humble servant of God!

CHART SHOWING HUMAN DEPENDENCE UPON GOD.

(Several Biblical Analogies Used) - Basis for True Humility

MAN	GOD
BRIDE (Church)	BRIDEGROOM (Christ)
SON (Child)	FATHER
BRANCH	VINE
STONE	CORNERSTONE
SUBJECT	KING
CELL	HEAD OF BODY
SHEEP	SHEPHERD
SINNER	SAVIOUR
CREATURE	CREATOR
MORTAL	IMMORTAL
TRANSIENT	ETERNAL
PHYSICAL	CELESTIAL

CHAPTER SEVEN

“GOD’S PLAN FOR OUR SALVATION”!

(ILLUSTRATED)

A GREAT MAN ONCE SAID:

"Man is Restless until He Finds His Rest In God!"



*"In this house of stony dome, floored
with gentile plains and seas, shall I
never feel at home, never wholly be
at ease!"*

THE BIG QUESTIONS OF LIFE:

- (1) WHO AM I?
- (2) WHERE DID I COME FROM?
- (3) CAN I FIND PEACE OF MIND?
- (4) WHAT IS MY PURPOSE FOR LIVING?
- (5) WHERE AM I GOING AFTER I DIE?
- (6) CAN I KNOW GOD IN A PERSONAL WAY?

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY – (As I Understand It)

EVERY PERSON HAS A GOD-SHAPED VACUUM WITHIN HIM!

MANY ARE TRYING TO FILL THAT GOD-SHAPED VACUUM WITH SUBSTITUTES
FOR GOD:

PLEASURE!
MONEY!
POWER!
RELIGION!
MORALITY!
DRUGS!
PROPERTY!
ALCOHOL!
SEX!
ENTERTAINMENT!

*("O God, don't let me be disillusioned into thinking that
earth's treasures and pleasures can satisfy me!")*

HOW SERIOUS IS SIN?

"For The Wages of Sin is Death!" (Romans 6:23)

Definition:

"Wages: That which is paid for work or services."

SIN BRINGS MISERY AND UNHAPPINESS!

"Fleeting pleasures of sin" (Hebrews 11:25)

"I have no pleasure in them" (Eccles 12:1)

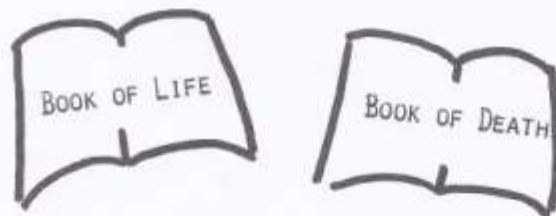
"When I kept silent about my sin, my body
wasted away through my groaning all day long"
(Psalms 32:3)

"Our iniquities, like the wind,
take us away" (Isaiah 64:6)

"There is no peace", says my God, "for the wicked." (Isaiah 57:21)

"There is a way which seems right to a man, but it's
end is the way of death." (Proverbs 14:12)

SINNING LEADS TO ETERNAL SEPARATION FROM GOD!



(Revelation 20:11-15)



IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT
TO KNOW THAT YOUR NAME IS
WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF LIFE!

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY – (As I Understand It)

FOCUS ON:	ACTIONS ATTEMPTING TO SOLVE HUMAN PROBLEM;	RESULTANT STATE OR RELATIONSHIP
Outward Circumstances	Give up business which has evil companions; abandon evil reading; move into new locality; establish new environment.	OUTWARD Reformation
Personal Habits	No longer Drink or Smoke, or Lie, or Curse.	Personal Reformation
Personal Discipline	Exercise, Eat well, Develop the arts, perform good deeds, self-improvement	Self-Improvement Cultivation
Personal SINS	Confession; Repentance, Faith in Christ alone; Restitution, 'Means of Grace'	Outward and Partial Transformation (Conversion)
Unsundered SELF	Total Surrender of Self (emotions, intellect, will) in Faith to Sovereign Lord.	Inner Purity and Love, and outer Power to Witness. (Increasing conformity to Christ-likeness).

CAN MY SINS BE FORGIVEN?



"As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us!" (Psalms 103:12)

Buried our sins in the sea
Sea of His forgetfulness

East ←————→ West

"I will forgive their iniquity, and their
sin I will remember no more!"
(Jeremiah 31:34)

"The Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins!" (Matthew 9:6)

FORGIVENESS IS THE LOVELIEST WORD IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE!

FOR WHOM DID CHRIST DIE?



I Timothy 2:4-6

I Timothy 4:10

II Peter 3:9

John 6:33, 51

Colossians 1:20



EVERYONE!

Romans 5:18

Romans 11:32

II Corinthians 5:19

Titus 2:11

John 7:37, 38

John 3:14-17

Revelation 22:17

Acts 17:30

I John 2:2

GOD IS A GOOD GOD WHO HAS GIVEN HUMAN BEINGS EVERYTHING
RICHLY TO ENJOY! (I Timothy 6:17b)

A BEAUTIFUL WORLD TO LIVE IN (Genesis 1:1)

Light

Firmament (Heavens)

Land and Seas

Trees and Plants

Sun, Moon, Stars

All Creatures Big and Small

A Creative Job To Perform (Genesis 2:15)

A Loving Companion To Enjoy (Genesis 2:18)



All Things Bright and Beautiful!
"It was Good!" (Genesis 1:31)



A Trusting Relationship With God
(Genesis 1:26-27)

A Big World To Rule Responsibly,
(Genesis 1:28)



"It is not good for the man
to be alone. I will make a
helper suitable for him."
(Genesis 2:18)

AGREE OR DISAGREE? TRUE OR FALSE?

- T God wants to save all persons. It is not God's will that any person perish. (11 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4).
- T Christ died for all persons, thus providing a universal atonement which is adequate for the whole human race generally and every man individually. (1 Timothy 4:6) (1 John 2:2)
- T Man is corrupted by sin or totally depraved, but God extends to every person a grace which enables him to turn to Christ for forgiveness. (Isaiah 45:22)
- T Because every person is a free moral agent, he may, if he chooses, resist the grace of God (Joshua 24:15; John 1:11, 12)
- T Every person everywhere is commanded to repent of his sins and believe in Christ (Acts 16:31; 17:30)
- T No person is excluded from salvation unless he excludes himself by willful unbelief.
- T Because Christ died for all persons, all persons are in a saveable relationship with God, but only those persons who initially exercise personal faith in Christ and continue to exercise personal faith in Christ as Saviour will actually and ultimately be saved.
- F Before the human race was created, God unconditionally chose some persons to be saved and some persons to be lost.
- F God gives the gift of saving faith only to those persons whom He has chosen to save.
- T Ultimate assurance of personal salvation is impossible apart from conscious, deliberate perseverance in faith.

SIN MARRED GOD'S BEAUTIFUL CREATION!

WHAT IS SIN? ? ? ?

- Disobeying Holy Laws of God (Genesis 3:1-5) (I John 3:4)
- Gratifying Selfish Desires Apart From God (Genesis 3:6)
(Galatians 5:19)
- Breaking Loving Relationship With God (Genesis 3:8 (Romans 3:21))

WHAT IS THE ESSENCE OF ALL SIN? ? ? ?

Self-Centered PRIDE

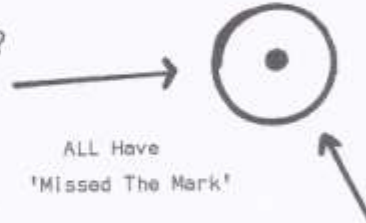


Do Decent People Need Saving?

"The thing that is deeply wrong with human nature is not that some people commit adultery, and some steal, but that all of us are self-centered - the decent and the indecent, the nice and the nasty. Manners, polish, refinement, and culture only cover that disease, like rouge on the face of a woman dying of anemia. They can't affect the deadly disease underneath. To be saved is to be saved from that disease. We all have it; therefore we all need to be saved."

- William Sangster -

WHAT IS THE EXTENT OF SIN? ? ?



Definition: Harmertia (Greek word for 'sin')
'Missing the Mark' as when a spear is thrown at a target.

"There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. ALL have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." (Romans 3:10-12)

JEWS AND GENTILES ALIKE ARE ALL UNDER SIN! (Romans 3:9)
All Persons are Sinners by Nature (Psalms 51:5) (Genesis 6:3)
All Persons are Sinners by Choice (Isaiah 64:6)

SIN IS BOTH

(Matthew 5)

OUTWARD

A WRONG ACTION

(Cheating, Lying, Stealing, Adultery)

Murder
Adultery
Stealing

&

A WRONG ATTITUDE

(Anger, Lust, Hatred, Resentment, Greed, Jealousy)

INWARD

(Ephesians 5:3-7) (Matthew 15:19)

Anger
Lust
Coveteousness

SIN IS FAILING TO DO WHAT IS GOOD!

"Anyone who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, SINS." (James 4:17)

WHAT ARE THE RESULTS OF SIN? ? ?

SHAME! (Genesis 3:7)

HIDING FROM GOD!
(Genesis 3:8)

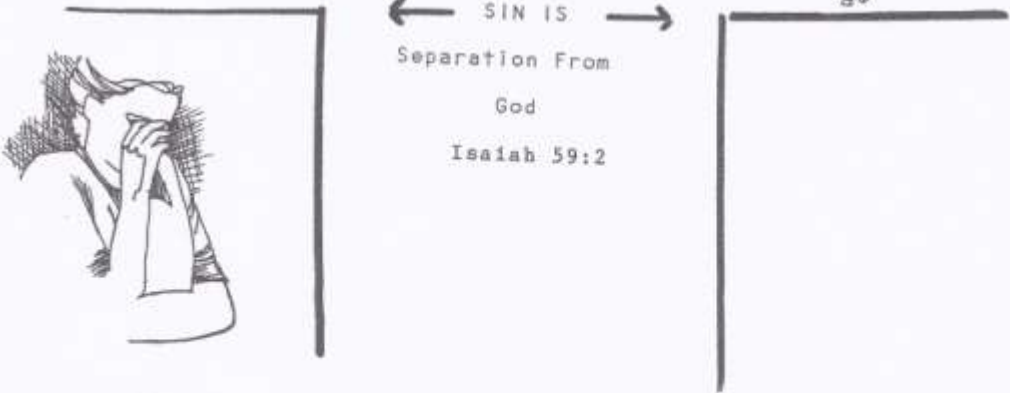
GUILT!

BLAMING OTHERS! (Genesis 3:12-13)

FEAR! (Genesis 3:10)

KNOWLEDGE OF EVIL! (Genesis 3:22)

KNOWLEDGE:
ALIENATION FROM GOD! (Genesis 3:23-24)





GLIMPSES INTO REALITY – (As I Understand It)!

WHAT CONDITIONS MUST I MEET TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S SALVATION? ?

AWAKENING - Right Attitude Toward Your Condition
(John 16:8-11) ("I am a sinner and in need of a Savior!")

REPENTANCE - Right Attitude Toward Your Sin
("I am deeply sorry for my sins and want the direction of
(Luke 15:11-32) my life to change!")

FAITH - Right Attitude Toward Your Saviour
("I trust Christ alone to forgive my sins and to change my
life!")
(Romans 5:1-5
Living Bible)

SURRENDER - Right Attitude Toward Your Self
("I turn over the full controls of my life (my will, my
intellect, my emotions) to Christ, and will allow Christ
(Galatians 2:20 initially and daily to exercise His Lordship in my life!")
Luke 14:25-33
Living Bible)

LET'S LOOK AT THESE CONDITIONS MORE CAREFULLY:

"Growing a Godly Life" Devotional Series



AWAKENING!

John 16:8-11

GOD'S HOLINESS

MAN'S SINS

(John 1:4-9)

- ___ A 'Collision' With God!
- ___ Realizing I Am On The Wrong Road!
- ___ Admitting I Have A Spiritual Need!
- ___ No Longer Rationalizing My Sins!
- ___ Seeing My True Moral Condition!
- ___ Recognizing That I Need To Be Saved!

"The Word that God speaks..... exposes the very thoughts and motives of a man's heart." (Hebrews 4:12-13 Phillips)

“Growing a Godly Life” Devotional Series

REPENTANCE I

(Luke 18:9-14)



- ___ A Moral 'U - Turn'
- ___ Sincere Sorrow Over My Sins (II Corinthians 7:9,10)
- ___ Accepting Responsibility For My Sins
- ___ Turning My Back On My Old Way Of Life
- ___ Humbly Confessing To God That I Have Been Wrong
- ___ Acknowledging My Personal Moral Bankruptcy

DEFINITION OF REPENTANCE:

A change of mind, from an attitude of embracing sin to an attitude of forsaking sin, resulting in a change of direction, from a life of practicing sin to a life of practicing righteousness.

"Growing a Godly Life" Devotional Series

FAITH

(Romans 4:1-5
Living Bible)



- ___ Turning From Sin To The Saviour
- ___ Transfere Of Trust From Myself To The Saviour
- ___ Putting Myself Into The Care and Keeping of The Saviour
- ___ An Intellectual Assent To Truth Coupled
With A Life Commitment To The Saviour
- ___ Putting My 'Weight' Down On The Saviour

- ___ Total Commitment Of My Total Self To Christ

DEFINITION OF FAITH:

Entrusting yourself totally to God, like a man sinking in quick sand who ceases to struggle to save himself and instead clasps the saving hand of the man who is standing on the solid ground near by.

“Growing a Godly Life” Devotional Series



SURRENDER
(Luke 14:25-33 Living Bible)
(Galatians 2:20)

FOLLOWING CHRIST

- Matthew 7:13-14
- Matthew 16:24

'The Way'

- ___ Forsake My Own Selfish Ways
- ___ Follow In The Footsteps Of Jesus
- ___ Turn Over the 'Title Deed' of My Life To Christ
- ___ Put Christ on The Throne Of My Life
- ___ Allow Christ To Use My Talents In His Service
- ___ Learn To Live A Life Of Obedience & Love

*"Were the whole realm of nature mine that were a present far too small!
Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my ALL!"*

“Growing a Godly Life” Devotional Series

THE WAY TO ETERNAL LIFE

1. WEALTH CANNOT BUY IT!
2. WORLDLY PLEASURES (EMOTIONS) CANNOT BRING IT!
3. HUMAN REASON (INTELLECT) CANNOT GRASP IT!
4. HUMAN EFFORT (WILL) CANNOT ACHIEVE IT!



BUT

FAITH ALONE CAN RECEIVE IT!

(Ephesians 2:8-9)

(Everyone Places His Faith In Someone Or Something)

The OBJECT of Your Faith Determines

The VALUE of Your Faith.

CHRIST Alone Is A Trustworthy Object For Your Faith.

(Titus 1:1,2)

"Growing a Godly Life" Devotional Series

REVIEW:

1. GOD IS GOOD - "And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good." (Genesis 1:3)
2. MAN IS A SINNER - "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)
3. SINNING HAS SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES - "Evil thoughts lead to evil actions and afterwards to the death penalty from God." (James 1:5) (L.B.)
4. ALL HUMAN ATTEMPTS AT SALVATION ARE FUTILE - "There is a way which seems right to a man, but it's end is the way of death."
(Proverbs 14:12)
5. CHRIST ALONE CAN FORGIVE SINS AND GIVE SALVATION - "Jesus said, 'I am the way, and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through me.'
(John 14:6)

EACH INDIVIDUAL MUST MEET CERTAIN CONDITIONS TO BE
SAVED!

"Growing a Godly Life" Devotional Series

6. EACH INDIVIDUAL MUST MEET CERTAIN CONDITIONS TO BE SAVED

- AWAKENING ("I Need A Saviour!")
- REPENTANCE ("I Turn From My Sins!")
- FAITH ("I Place My Trust Alone In Christ For Salvation!")
- SURRENDER ("I Am Willing Obediently To Follow Christ Forever!")

WHEN YOU SINCERELY MEET THESE CONDITIONS IN YOUR HEART CHRIST WILL:

- A. Forgive you (the sins you remember, and the sins you don't remember!)
- B. Make You God's Child (John 1:12)
- C. Come Into Your Life And Establish Fellowship (Revelation 3:20)

LET'S MAKE A COMMITMENT TO
JESUS CHRIST NOW!

“Growing a Godly Life” Devotional Series

A PRAYER FOR SALVATION:

“Dear God, I acknowledge that you are altogether trustworthy in your character, and faithful to your promises. Abandoning all hope for salvation in myself, I cast myself helplessly and hopefully in your mighty saving arms! I realize that I am a sinner and in need of a Saviour! I acknowledge that you alone can forgive my sins. I am genuinely sorry for my sins, and I desire to change the direction of my life, from a life of embracing sin to a life of forsaking sin! I now confess all my sins to Jesus Christ, the sins I remember and the sins I don't remember. I place my trust in Christ alone for my Salvation. Thank you for forgiving my sins as you promised. Thank you for coming into my life. I intend to live for you the rest of my life with You as my Helper! In Jesus Name! Amen.”

IS THERE ANYTHING ABOUT THIS PRAYER YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND?

DOES THIS PRAYER HONESTLY EXPRESS THE DESIRE OF YOUR HEART?

"Growing a Godly Life" Devotional Series

YOU PRAYED:

"I now confess ALL my sins to JESUS CHRIST"

1. Was Your Prayer A Sincere Prayer?
2. If So, What Has Happened To Your Sins?
3. How Do You Know Your Sins Are Forgiven?

(REMEMBER! WE ARE SAVED BY FAITH, NOT BY FEELINGS!)

ASSURANCE OF ETERNAL LIFE!

I John 5:12 Says:

"He (Jim, Sue, John, Mary, etc.) that HAS
(present tense reality) the SON HAS Life ---- NOW!"

(ETERNAL LIFE is not only a Future State Of Continuing Existence, but
Eternal Life is a PRESENT Quality of NEW LIFE in Relationship With CHRIST!)

___ NEW Attitudes

___ NEW Desires

___ NEW Relationships

___ NEW Direction

___ NEW Goals

(John 10:10)

(II Corinthians 5:17)

NEW!

NEW!

NEW!

“Growing a Godly Life” Devotional Series

WHAT MUST I DO NOW THAT I AM SAVED?

FOLLOW CHRIST ONE STEP AT A TIME!



1. DAILY CONFESS ALL SINS TO CHRIST...TO EXPERIENCE CLEANSING
(I John 1:9)
2. DAILY READ THE BIBLE TO LEARN SPIRITUAL TRUTHS
(II Timothy 2:15, Acts 17:11)
3. DAILY PRAY TO THE FATHER TO DEVELOP LOVE RELATIONSHIP
(Matthew 7:7-11)
4. SHARE YOUR FAITH WITH YOUR FRIENDS ... TO HELP FULFILL
CHRIST'S GREAT COMMISSION
(Matthew 28:19-20)
5. ATTEND CHURCH REGULARLY...TO RECEIVE ENCOURAGEMENT FROM
FELLOW BELIEVERS
(Hebrews 10:25)
6. LEARN TO PRACTICE TITHING.... TO HONOR GOD AND TO SUPPORT
HIS WORK
(Malachi 3:8-10)

CHAPTER 8

**“DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT
TEACH –
‘CONDITIONAL ETERNAL
SECURITY’”?**

CHAPTER 8

“DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACH – ‘CONDITIONAL ETERNAL SECURITY’?”

During the early days of Christianity, when a bitter persecution was being waged against many Christians, Polycarp (the aged and godly bishop of Smyrna) was brought before the Roman proconsul who commanded him to deny Christ, saying, *"Consider thyself, and have pity on thy own great age."* The Roman proconsul urged Polycarp to 'swear by the fortune of Caesar'- to 'repent' that he was a follower of Christ. Said the proconsul to this aged and influential Christian bishop: "Swear, and I will release thee; reproach Christ." With unflinching and steadfast faith in the living Christ, Polycarp gave his never-to-be-forgotten answer: "Eight and six years have I served him, and he never once wronged me; how then shall I blaspheme my King, who hath saved me?" The proconsul again urged him, "Swear by the fortune of Caesar." Polycarp replied, "Since you still vainly strive to make me swear by the fortune of Caesar as you express it, affecting ignorance of my real character, bear me frankly declaring what I am - I am a Christian- and if you desire to learn the Christian doctrine, assign me a day, and you shall hear." Hereupon the proconsul said, "I have wild beasts; and I will expose you to them, unless you repent." Replied Polycarp: "Call for them, for repentance with us is a wicked thing, if it is to be change from the better to the worse, but a good thing if it is to be change from evil to good." Then the proconsul said: "I will tame thee with fire since you despise the wild beasts, unless you repent." Then said Polycarp, "You threaten me with fire, which burns for an hour, and is soon extinguished; but the fire of the future judgment, and of eternal punishment reserved for the ungodly, you are ignorant of. But why do you delay? Do whatever you please." After his persecutors had gathered wood for his burning, they next planned to fasten him to the stake, but Polycarp said: "Leave me as I am; for he who giveth me strength to sustain the fire, will enable me also, without your securing me with nails, to remain without flinching in the pile." His persecutors bound him without nailing him, and this courageous old man prayed: "O Father, I bless thee that thou hast counted me worthy to receive my portion among the number of martyrs." As soon as Polycarp had uttered the word "amen", the officers lighted the fire. It is then recorded: "The flame, forming the appearance of an arch, as the sail of a vessel filled with wind, surrounded, as with a wall, the body of the martyr; which was in the midst, not as burning flesh, but as gold and silver refining in the furnace." (Foxe's Book of Martyrs; pages 22-24)

Promises the Lord of the Church: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life!" Polycarp left his burning flesh behind, to take his place at the feet of the Saviour, along with all the Christian martyrs of the ages. The aged bishop of Smyrna enjoys the ever-enlarging company of those who have chosen to sacrifice their earthly lives for Christ, rather than denying their Lord. It is reported that there were more Christians who died for 'the Faith' in the twentieth century than in all the other centuries put together! Recently it was reported that there were more than 150,000 Christians who died because of their faith in Christ - in one year alone!

One of the great modern martyrs was Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a key German figure who arose as a witness to Christian faithfulness against the evil onslaughts of Hitler during the Second World War. Because of his bold stand against the Nazi regime, he was imprisoned along with many other uncompromising believers among the "confessing Church" (of which Bonhoeffer was a 'key figure'). In the gray dawn of Sunday, April 9, 1945, just before the end of the War, Dietrich Bonhoeffer whispered to his fellow prisoners as he left his cell to be hanged on the Flossenburg gallows, "This is the end for me, the beginning of life."

As he awaited his own martyrdom in a Roman prison, the apostle Paul wrote the following words to Timothy, Paul's 'son in the Faith': "*And so I solemnly urge you before God and before Christ Jesus - who will someday judge the living and the dead when he appears to set up his Kingdom- to preach the Word of God urgently at all times, whenever you get the chance, in season and out, when it is convenient and when it is not. Correct and rebuke your people when they need it, encourage them to do right, and all the time be feeding them patiently with God's Word. Stand steady, and don't be afraid of suffering for the Lord. Bring others to Christ. Leave nothing undone that you ought to do. I say this because I won't be around to help you very much longer. My time has almost run out. Very soon now, I will be on my way to heaven. I have fought long and hard for my Lord and through it all I have kept true to him. And now the time has come for me to stop fighting and rest. In heaven, a crown is waiting for me, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that great day of his return. And not just to me, but to all those whose lives show that they are eagerly looking forward to his coming back again.*" (2nd Timothy 4:1-8, Living Bible)

What is the 'key' to a truly successful life? Remaining True to the Lord Jesus, amidst all the changes and chances of life, amidst all the trials and tests and temptations and persecutions of daily living! Not only starting the race for Christ, but also finishing the race with Christ! Exhorted Paul to the Corinthian believers: "*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*" (I Corinthians 15:58)

Perhaps I will never forget that period of time in my pastoral ministry when I purposed to preach a long series of messages on the great 'Faith Chapter' of the Bible- Hebrews 11. I prepared long and hard and believed that- as the weeks came and went and I came to the end of chapter 11 in my series of sermons - my congregation of attentive listeners was growing by 'leaps and bounds' spiritually in the 'Faith of Christ'- partly because of my 'great sermons' on Biblical Faith (faithfulness). As I finished the last message in that long series, I returned to my home after the Late Morning Worship Service, exuberant though weary as a result of preaching in both services. The telephone rang, and one of my parishioners - distraught, angry, and accusing – was on the 'other end of the line'. He said something like this to me: "My family and I are leaving your church!" I

was dumb-founded! Here was a parishioner who (with his wife) became a believer as a result of a 'Home Bible Study', which I had conducted in his home a few years before! Grappling for words, I finally was able to respond to his declaration. I said, "Why, what is wrong?" He said, "We're leaving the Church because you don't preach 'Faith'! I wasn't present at the Service this morning, but my wife told me that you declared in your message on Faith that it is not always God's will to heal a person! I believe that if one has enough 'Faith', God will always heal a believer. It is never God's will for one of His children to be sick! The only reason why Christians are sick is because they haven't exercised enough 'Faith', or because they have unconfessed sin in their lives, or because they haven't been taught to 'bind Satan'. We can no longer be a member of a church that doesn't practice 'Faith'!" No amount of reasoning on my part, and no quotation of Scriptures (especially Hebrews 11:35b-40 and 2 Corinthians 12:7-10) could convince my angry friend that it is not always God's will to physically heal Christians. I pled with him not to leave our local church, where he had attended for several years. I reminded him that he had not even heard my sermon on 'Faith' earlier that day, and that he was reacting to information that was reported to him 'secondhand' by his wife. I told him my family felt 'close' to him and his family, and that I felt God led him into my life (after all, was it not I who took time 'to lead him and his wife to Christ?') I reminded him that some of the greatest 'saints' throughout history - persons of abounding 'faith' - were persons whom God had not willed to heal physically. Was not even the great apostle Paul- 'a giant' in the Faith- entitled with a 'thorn in the flesh'? When I mentioned Paul's 'thorn in the flesh', my now-estranged 'friend' launched into a 'verbal battle' with me, as he tried hard to convince me that Paul's 'thorn in the Flesh' was definitely not 'physical'. That conversation took place several years ago. I learned that a 'charismatic' friend, with whom he had been daily 'car-pooling' to work, shared with him some tapes on 'Faith' - tapes with a strong emphasis on the 'Name It-Claim It' brand of 'Faith'. Yes, that friend and his family left our local church and he never returned. As far as I know, for some time, he attended a large, independent, 'charismatic' church where "faith is preached", "prosperity is claimed", and "wonderful miracles regularly happen". After all these years (since he left the church), I occasionally see that former friend. We hold no bitterness towards each other, so it is rather easy to talk to one another and to express 'Christian love' to each other.

Allow me to share a few 'points' from the message on 'Faith', preached many years ago, to which my previously mentioned 'friend' reacted so strongly, resulting in his leaving my church. The following are a few 'quotes' from that message: Faith means trusting God regardless of whether or not our prayers to Him give us the results that we desire. Notes Paul Rees, "No faith is mature if it thinks only of answers to prayer that come in the form of escape from loss and sorrow and pain. If this shakes us and threatens to turn confidence into cynicism, we should review the Bible's magnum opus on faith, the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. True, it tells of those *who 'through faith escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to fight the armies of the aliens'* (verse 34). But have you noticed the significance of a little phrase of two words that occurs twice- 'and others'? 'And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance. And others had trials of cruel mocking and scourging, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword." (Hebrews 11:35-37)

I continued in that sermon on 'Faith', preached several years ago, to which my 'friend' so negatively reacted: Problems come to the greatest Christians. Those in Hebrews 11:35-38 remained faithful to God, even unto death, without judging God or holding God responsible for their diffi-

culties. Remember, when faith and prayers do not remove the mountains, God intends to use the mountains to strengthen our spiritual 'muscles' while we are climbing over the mountains! The problems may cause many tears and bring many questions to mind. But remember, God never allows His children to shed 'needless tears'. God is a God of perfect love - He wants what is best for you. When my brother lost his 15 year old daughter so tragically and suddenly, on August 14, 1981, he said, the very night of her death, "God makes no mistakes." His faith in God did not prevent his daughter's terrible death, but my brother did not judge his God. His faith enabled him to believe in a good God, in spite of adverse circumstances. That is the greatest miracle of all! To believe, even when circumstances defy reason! Faith enables us to accept difficult circumstances, as God's gymnasium for character development! If faith seems to go unrewarded on this planet and in this life, there will be an ultimate reward granted to the persons of faith after this life (Hebrews 11:39, 40).

I continued that sermon on 'Faith' with great fervency, as I neared the climax of the message: Faith means being faithful to God and never judging God, regardless if the prayers of faith do not change the circumstances of the faithful one. The faithful one can be assured that faith will be ultimately rewarded in heaven and that God will be close to the faithful one during his pilgrimage on earth. *"God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never I will forsake you. ' So we say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?'"* (Hebrews 13:5, 6) If you are going through difficult times, keep your faith in God. He won't forsake you. He loves you. He is not removing your mountain or problems for a reason - a loving and redemptive reason.

Don't fall from God. Don't start judging God or become bitter towards God. *"So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to Persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For in just a very little while, 'He who is coming will come and will not delay. But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him. ' But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved."* (Hebrews 10:35-39)

John the Baptist's faith resulted in John being beheaded by a wicked king! His faith did not deliver him from adversity, but his faith did keep him true rather than denying the Master, and his faith ushered him into heaven with all the rewards that heaven alone can give to the man of faith! We too often see only today with today's problems, and we fail to see the ultimate victory promised to persons of Persevering Faith. God's purpose may be to deliver his children from the fiery furnace (Daniel 3:16-18), or it may be to allow His children to burn up in the fiery furnace. Either way, the man of faith is victorious! Paul said, *"For me to live is Christ and to die is gain."* The man of faith can't lose! It may be God's will to change our circumstances, or it may be God's will that we simply remain faithful to God in the midst of our difficult circumstances. Perhaps the greatest heroes of faith are not those who saw mighty feats through their faith, but those who remained true to God even when their faith resulted in their persecution and eventual death (Hebrews 11:35-38). Whatever the immediate result of faith, the ultimate victory always belongs to God's people of faith!

I then concluded my message on 'Faith' with these words: Faith can move a mighty mountain or faith can enable us to climb over our mountains! Faith can remove the darkness, or faith can give us a song during our nights. Faith, in brief, is faithfulness to God, whether or not circumstances

change and whether or not we can understand the purposes in the present God-allowed circumstances. Faith does not judge God. Faith in God reassures one that God ultimately rewards all persons of faith- partially on earth and totally in heaven!

It was these above quoted words (and others like them) which I preached on that Sunday, at the conclusion of my long sermon series on 'Biblical Faith', which were the 'occasion' of my 'friend' to decide to 'leave my church' (and never return).

I continue to believe that 'faith in God' means 'faithfulness to God' -amidst all the challenges and troubles and losses of life. I continue to believe that it is 'persevering faith' in God and in God's wisdom and power and love which will 'carry' a believer throughout his life, until he passes through 'the pearly gates' of heaven!

Amidst all the severe trials of Paul's life, he was able confidently to declare (at the end of his courageous life): *"That is why I am suffering here in jail and I am certainly not ashamed of it, for I know the one in whom I trust, and I am sure that he is able to safely guard all that I have given him until the day of his return."* (2 Timothy 1:12, Living Bible)

Paul believed that divine enabling power was sufficient to keep every believer from falling away from God, in spite of the great suffering which believers are called to endure. Wrote Paul *"And he (God) is able to keep you from slipping and falling away, and to bring you, sinless and perfect, into his glorious presence with mighty shouts of everlasting joy."* (Jude 1:25, Living Bible)

"I know not what of good or ill
May be reserved for me,
Of weary ways or golden days,
Before his face, I see.
But 'I know whom I have believed,
And am persuaded that he is able
To keep that which I've committed
Unto him against that day."
(I Know Whom I Have Believed)

During my lifetime, I have known many godly persons who have consistently followed the Lord for many years, whose lives have 'stood the test of time'. They learned the 'secret' of daily victory - through prayer, and meditation, and obedience, and resistance of temptation. These precious ones demonstrated to me that they were 'single-minded' in their devotion to Christ, 'whole-hearted' in their commitment to a lifestyle of holiness.

As a pastor for 27 years in one local church, it was my privilege to serve several hundreds of persons, most of whom were earnest believers, persevering in their 'daily walk of faith'. At the funeral services of many older 'saints', I experienced great joy as I offered 'tributes' regarding the unusual faithfulness of these followers of Christ. Yes, I have known so many persons who 'lived well' and who 'died well'! They 'crossed the finish line of life' with the love of God as the constant and unwavering and driving 'force' of their lives! They remained faithful to their Lord, until physical death separated their spirit from their body, and now they are crowned with the 'crown of eternal life' in heaven!

Even though the trials are severe, the persecutions are bitter, the temptations are strong, the losses are great, the mysteries, inequities, and injustices in the world are widespread, and the sorrows of life are deep, God's grace is all-sufficient and His power is unmatched and His love is unconditional. God is able to guard His children from the onslaughts of the 'evil one' (devil). Wrote Paul, "*The Lord is faithful; he will make you strong and guard you from satanic attacks of every kind.*" (2nd Thessalonians 3, 4, Living Bible) "*No temptation is irresistible. You can trust God to keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it, for he has promised this and will do what he says. He will show you how to escape temptation's power so that you can bear up patiently against it.*" (I Corinthians 10:13, Living Bible)

A few months ago, one of my newest friends wrote to me and asked if I would explain what I meant by my reference to the 'Perseverance of the Saints'. The following is my written reply to her request:

Dear

I have read considerably (and written quite a bit) on the subject of the 'Perseverance of the Saints' (as it is called in Christian Theology). Suffice it to say at this point (in this brief communication) that the Bible emphasizes at least three features (regarding Salvation)- (1) Promises to be claimed, (2) Conditions to be met - in initially receiving salvation and in maintaining a vital saving relationship with God, (3) Warnings - addressed to truly saved persons- to be heeded (or 'traps' of sin to be avoided). The faithfulness of God and the 'keeping power' of God are NEVER to be questioned or doubted or debated, but the on-going faithfulness (obedience) of the believer is, of course, always to be 'questioned' (i.e., the Christian must, throughout his/her entire life, continue to 'abide' in the Son). The Lord declares, "*Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*" As long as a human (including a believer) has the capacity to choose (because of free will agency which God grants to all believers), there is always the possibility (if not the probability) that a believer could 'fall from grace' and go back into a life (practice) of willful sinning (called backsliding or apostasy). That is a 'horrible' thought, but the Bible definitely teaches (through the countless warnings to believers) that such is a 'possibility'. (Otherwise, the many warnings addressed to believers do not make 'any sense'.) I definitely believe in 'eternal security' for believers (but only for 'believers'- i.e., those persons who CONTINUE to believe and trust in Christ as their only Saviour and who keep up to date in their confession of any sins in their lives). Therefore, I do not believe the Bible teaches UNCONDITIONAL (or 'automatic' or 'irrevocable') eternal security- but instead CONDITIONAL ETERNAL SECURITY. Of course, the Bible teaches that backslidden persons (who were one-time believers) can 'come back' to Christ in deep repentance and faith (trust), and thereby be wonderfully restored to both relationship and fellowship with Christ (I John 1:7, 9 and 1 John 2:1-2). However, it is possible for a believer to drift away from God through negligence (Hebrews 2:1-2) or through outright rebellion (continued disobedience) and eventually to sever his/her relationship with God (John 15 teaches that branches which no longer abide in Christ the Vine are eventually severed because they are withered and dead - and cast into the fire!). John 15 teaches that good branches are pruned (chastened and disciplined, etc. in order to produce even more fruit), but that fruitless branches (i.e., branches that no longer abide in obedience - no longer attached in vital union to the Vine) are cut off and destroyed. So, fruitful branches (which are vitally attached

to the Vine) can become barren, severed, and destroyed branches! A fearful possibility, but hopefully not a high probability. I want to emphasize the importance of abiding in Christ and maintaining faithfulness (in response to God's constant faithfulness and keeping power). I want to emphasize the importance of a life of continuing abiding in the Son - finding 'staying power' in living the Christian life to the very end. There are many, many other Scriptures (nearly a hundred Scriptures altogether in the New Testament) which deal with 'conditional eternal security'. Again, the grace of God or the keeping power of God or the forgiving love of God- none of these truths are questioned at all.

The only thing that is always open for 'change for the worst' is the free will of man/woman (including the will of believers). God treats believers with the greatest of dignity by allowing believers (Christians) to daily exercise a positive volition (saying 'yes' with one's will to God's daily call to 'deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me'). None of what I have said is intended to 'take away the peace and security and confidence' of true believers, but with the multitude of Promises in God's Word, there are also Conditions listed (for the fulfillment of those God-given Promises), as well as many Warnings addressed to Christians. Always remember: 'The faithfulness of God cannot cover for or take the place of the unfaithfulness of man' (even a Christian). A believer need never 'Fall from Grace', for God is able to keep him unto the end - and preserve him unto eternal life (glory!)- but a Christian must take, not only the Promises of God seriously, but must also seriously accept the Conditions and the Warnings of the Holy Scriptures. It is this 'Biblical balance', which I am 'after'. Thanks for letting me briefly share this aspect of Biblical insight with you. God bless you richly as you victoriously live for your wonderful Master.

With Christian Love,

Ron Christian

Someone said that the 'biggest word in the English language' is IF. The following illustration vividly demonstrates the truth of this assertion. Freeborn Garretson, an American-born, itinerant Methodist preacher who traversed the Atlantic seaboard on horseback, kept a journal that contains the following record of his heavenly vision, dated July 30, 1780. "Sunday 30, Brother Cromwell and family accompanied me. At seven o'clock, we had a love-feast; about two hundred of brethren were present, and our Saviour was in the midst. Afterwards I preached in the Dutch church. About thirty of our friends accompanied me about eight miles to another Dutch church, where I preached to many with freedom. Many went with me three miles further to Mr. Vaun's, where we had a watch night. The labors of this day were wearisome to the body, but I was strong in faith, and willing to give my little all to God. The next day a crowded audience assembled at the same place; some time before, and whilst the people were gathering, my mind was uncommonly exercised:but I found great freedom whilst enforcing, 'Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.' The cloud was dispersed, and I felt myself uncommonly sweet and comfortable. This dear family drink deeply into the blessed Spirit. I went to bed very happy:but my night visions were uncommonly strange:I thought I was taken dangerously ill, and expected shortly to be in eternity.

I doubt not, but I felt just as dying persons do. I appeared to be surrounded with thousands of evils, who were all striving to take from me my confidence; and for a time it seemed almost

gone. I began an examination from my first awakenings - then my conversion - my call to preach - the motives, which induced me to enter this great work, my intention, and life from the beginning. In the time of this examination, every fear was dismissed, and every fiend vanished; and a band of holy angels succeeded with the most melodious music that I ever heard. I then began to ascend, accompanied by this heavenly host; and thought every moment the body would drop off, and my spirit take its flight. Meter ascending a vast height, I was over-shadowed with a cloud as white as a sheet; and in that cloud I saw a person the most beautiful that my eyes had beheld. I wanted to be dislodged from this tabernacle, and take my everlasting flight. That glorious person, more bright than the sun in its meridian brilliance, spake to me as follows, 'If you Continue Faithful To The End, this shall be your place; but you cannot come now; return, and Be Faithful: there is more work for you to do.'

Immediately I awoke, and my spirit was so elevated with a sense of eternal things, that I thought I should sleep no more that night. Great, and glorious discoveries have been made to me, both sleeping and waking; but all the Promises of heaven and eternal glory, Have Been Conditional. In scriptures we have a little, but significant word, If - If You Are Faithful Until Death, you shall have a crown of life. I would advise all the children of God, to be very careful and watchful, and Continue in well-doing until death." (Quoted in 'Discover the Secrets of Heaven' -A Guideposts Book; pgs. 24, 25)

I believe in the "power of positive thinking", but I also believe there is (rarely) such a thing as the "positive power of negative thinking". There is the 'dark side' of truth, as well as the 'bright side' of truth. Jesus came to earth to seek and to save the lost ones.

His ministry was one of positive affirmation and great comfort. He declared, "*Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give thee rest.*" (Matthew 11:28) To the broken-hearted, Jesus always offered healing, and to the contrite in spirit, Jesus always offered forgiveness and peace. But Jesus did not only come to 'comfort the disturbed'; He came also to 'disturb the comfortable'. Witness this truth as you read the many "woes" which Jesus pronounced against the hypocritical Jewish leaders (as recorded in Matthew 23). The fact that there are many Warnings to be heeded and many Conditions to be met (as well as many Promises to be claimed) speaks to the fact that there is 'negative' truth as well as 'positive' truth, revealed in the New Testament.

There is the 'positive' truth which declares that all sinners who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved from their sins (i.e., they are no longer in a state of 'condemnation and guilt' before Almighty God). There is the 'negative' truth, which declares that any believer who falls into a life of sinning (apostasy) loses both his fellowship and his relationship with Almighty God, and such a person will be eternally lost if he refuses to repent and if he rejects God's offer of forgiveness and restoration and peace and reconciliation.

It has often been said, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Spiritually speaking, it is far better for a believer never to fall into sin (i.e., into a state of backsliding), than for a believer to backslide and have to go through the painful (and often time-consuming) process of repentance and restitution and reconciliation. It is also often said, "To be forewarned is to be forearmed."

Spiritually-speaking, it is wise to be aware of dangers, snares, and perils, which threaten to defeat and destroy his spiritual life, than to be ignorant of such snares and to be off-guard, unprepared, and unarmed when Satan attacks! To think about the 'wiles of the devil' and 'the weakness of the human flesh' and the 'warnings against apostasy' may all seem to be 'very negative'. But this kind of 'negative thinking' is also very wise and definitely 'Biblical thinking'. It might seem 'more positive' to entertain thoughts of a believer's 'unconditional' ('irrevocable') 'eternal security' (i.e., that it is 'impossible' for a true believer ever to 'lose his relationship with God'), but such false reasoning (and 'false security') is both unwise and unbiblical!

In my rather thorough examination of the New Testament's teaching on the 'perseverance of the believer' (and the related doctrine of the 'security of the believer'), I discovered that there are many 'perils' (snares) which every earnest believer must avoid, during his earthly pilgrimage. In summary form, the following are some of those 'perils' (snares) which every believer must avoid if he is to live a victorious Christian life: (1) Unforgiving spirit; (2) Deception by false teachings or by evil spirits; (3) Spiritual neglect and procrastination (spiritual 'drifting' or gradual hardening or 'lukewarmness'); (4) Spiritual carelessness and shallowness (lack of vigilance); (5) Yielding to temptation, leading to backsliding or apostasy; (6) Preoccupation with worldly interests and with the pursuit of material possessions and earthly riches; (7) Faithlessness and lack of spiritual endurance (disobedience and unbelief and bitterness); (8) Shallow attitude towards 'sin' and towards 'grace' (Antinomianism); (9) Insensitivity to and neglect of the spiritual 'Means of Grace'; (10) Offense by fellow believers; (11) Attitude of ingratitude, grumbling, and division; (12) Self-confidence and pride; (13) Resort to religious performance instead of embracing God's grace alone (leading to Legalism); (14) Discouragement and despair during trials and persecutions, and hardening one's heart during God's chastisements (losing of 'heart'); (15) Rejection of the 'dictates' of the Conscience; (16) Temporal irresponsibility to one's Dependents (family and relatives); (17) Spiritual 'profession' without spiritual 'performance' (lack of 'Good Deeds' and 'Good Conduct').

William Barclay notes that Jesus Himself emphasized the 'perseverance of believers' in His teaching. Says Barclay, "Jesus declared that entry to the Kingdom can never be automatic, and that it is the result and the reward of a struggle. *'Keep on striving to enter'*, said Jesus. (Luke 13:24) The word that is used for 'striving' is the word from which the English word 'agony' is derived. The struggle to enter in must be so intense that it can be described as an agony of soul and spirit. We run a certain danger. It is easy to think that, once we have become members of the church by profession, we have reached the end of the road, that then we can, as it were, sit back like those who have arrived and who have achieved their goal. There is no such finality in the Christian life. A man must ever be going forward or necessarily he is going backward. The Christian way is like a climb up a mountain pathway towards a peak! which will never be reached in this world. It was said of two gallant climbers who died on Mount Everest, 'When last seen they were going strong for the top.' It was inscribed on the grave of an Alpine guide who had died on the mountain-side, 'He died climbing.' For the Christian life is ever an upward and an onward way." (Daily Study Bible; Luke; William Barclay; pgs. 188, 189)

What is the 'secret' to maintaining a life of faithfulness and perseverance in the Christian life? Is it not being daily filled with the Holy Spirit, whose ministry is to 'shed abroad the love of God' in the heart of every believer? He who has a passionate love for Christ is he who remains close to the "heart of God", amidst all the changes and chances of life, amidst all the "ups and downs" of

life, amidst all the successes and failures of life, amidst all the joys and sorrows of life. Love keeps him close to the heart of God, and love for others makes the believer's trials and losses bearable. A love-filled person "values the real", for love sees beyond the temporary to the eternal! Wholehearted love for God keeps one 'trucking' in life, keeps one 'in the saddle', keeps one from 'throwing in the towel' and quitting! "Men have wondered what kept John Wesley in the saddle for fifty-three years 'contesting the three kingdoms for Christ' they have wondered what kept David Livingstone in the jungle of Africa for thirty-three years, and Peter Claver tending the poor slaves at Cartagena for thirty-eight. None of these men retired. Death alone ended their labors. it is not in normal nature to love like that; it is a 'given' love. They had sought it and received it from God and they were consumed by its scorching flame." (Daily Readings; William Sangster; pg. 134)

There is a "strange reasoning" among some earnest believers who consider themselves "Calvinist" (in terms of their theological 'persuasion'). Some 'Calvinists' believe that a backslidden believer (who is 'out of fellowship' with the Lord, but who nevertheless 'maintains relationship' with the Lord because he is among the 'chosen' of God) will go to heaven even if he dies while he is 'living in sin'. These persons believe that such a 'backslidden believer' will be ushered into heaven, regardless of how many unconfessed sins he has at the time of his physical death ("for he who was once saved in the past is always saved forever" irrevocably, regardless of the sins he commits subsequent to his initial conversion). Even though this appears to be a rather widespread belief among many 'Calvinist-oriented' teachers, it is doubtful (when reading from the actual writings of John Calvin) that John Calvin himself would declare that a man living in sin when he dies was ever a 'true believer' (an 'elect one'). John Calvin believed that the only ultimate 'proof that a person was among the 'elect of God' was the final perseverance in the faith of Christ of the person who claimed to be among God's 'elect'. Perseverance in the faith meant, to Calvin, faithfulness to Christ and Christ's ways. Wrote Calvin, "For God is said to give us to the Son so that each may know himself an heir of the heavenly kingdom So Long As He Abides In Christ, apart from whom death and destruction beset us on every side." (Quoted in 'Elect In The Son'; Robert Shank; pg. 216) Calvin seems to be saying that only the person (professing Christian) who truly abides in Christ to the end of life will enjoy heaven as his inheritance. This (among other similar statements by Calvin) would seem to refute anyone who claims assurance that he will go to heaven, while he is, at the same time, deliberately practicing sin and refusing genuinely to repent of his sins.

Notes Robert Shank, "Despite his erroneous definition of election, Calvin was on solid ground in his ultimate conclusion that valid assurance of election and salvation is impossible apart from conscious, deliberate perseverance in faith." (Elect In The Son; pg. 215) The 'classical' Calvinist theology - popularly taught today - believes that those whom God 'elected' to eternal salvation will inevitably persevere in the Faith to the end of life.

The 'elect' (chosen) ones must ultimately be saved in heaven, because (according to this theology) God chose them "before the foundation of the world" to be members of Christ's chosen followers. And yet, even some Calvinist teachers and writers, when they honestly study the Holy Scriptures directly (without undue influence from their Calvinist presuppositions) acknowledge that perseverance to the end in the Christian life is NOT inevitable! John Eadie, a Calvinist scholar, writes:"While the perseverance of the saints is a prominent doctrine of Scripture and a perennial source of consolation, it is not inconsistent with exhortations to permanence of faith and

warnings of the sad results of deviation and apostasy. He who stops short in the race, and does not reach the goal, cannot obtain the prize. He who abandons the refuge into which he fled for a season is swept away when the hurricane breaks upon him. The loss of faith is the knell of hope." (Quoted in 'Elect In The Son'; Robert Shank; pg. 214)

Strangely enough, this Calvinist scholar believes that a one-time believer can "fall from grace" (or, as he says "abandon the refuge into which he fled for a season" or have a "loss of faith"), and as a result "be swept away when the hurricane breaks upon him" and experience the "knell of hope".

This teaching by this respected Calvinist scholar does not sound like the typical Calvinist who adamantly contends for "unconditional eternal security" ("once saved, always saved" doctrine). According to this Calvinist scholar, the believer who "stops short in the race and does not reach the goal" cannot, at the same time, retain his Christian hope for eternal security!

Comments Robert Shank (regarding some earnest Calvinist scholars): "When men get close to the Scriptures, they often get far from their theology. Eadie has it right: much is suspended on Perseverance, according to the Scripture - all theology to the contrary notwithstanding." ('Elect In The Son'; Robert Shank; pg. 214) Fortunately, there are even many Calvinists who seriously disagree that so-called "backslidden believers" who die while they are living a life of sin, have Biblically-based assurance that they will safely enter heaven! The doctrine of 'unconditional eternal security', based on 'unconditional particular election' of specific persons, is totally unscriptural, and (thank God) there are even Calvinist scholars (because of their direct study of the Scriptures) who are seriously questioning this erroneous doctrine!

Some sincere believers who declare with great conviction that *"it is impossible for a true believer ever to ultimately fall away from God and finally be eternally lost"*, quote John 10:28-29 as the Scriptural 'proof'. Said Jesus, *"I give them eternal life and they shall never perish. No one shall snatch them away from me, for my Father has given them to me, and he is more powerful than anyone else, so no one can kidnap them from me."* (Living Bible)

Indeed, this is one of the most thrilling and comforting Promises ever given to Christians. But, those who sincerely quote these verses as 'proof' of the 'eternal security of the believer' fail to quote the previous verse - John 10:27 - which states the Condition for the fulfillment of the Promise. To whom does Jesus promise 'eternal life' and 'protection from harm' (security)? These promises are given Only To Sheep. And who are Christ's 'Sheep'? John 10:27 answers that question: *"My sheep recognize my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."* Only those who hear the voice of the Shepherd, who know the voice of the Shepherd, and who follow (obey) the Shepherd can justly claim 'security' and 'protection'. Can a one-time believer who no longer hears or knows the voice of the Shepherd, and who no longer follows (obeys) the Shepherd, claim 'security' and 'protection' from the Shepherd? A person who does not presently meet the conditions cannot claim the promises! He who refuses to accept the responsibilities of being a 'sheep', cannot presently enjoy the benefits, which the Shepherd has to offer!

An internationally respected New Testament scholar, I. Howard Marshall, gives the following fitting and Biblically-balanced summary to this important subject of "Perseverance of the Believer". He notes: "The believer is not told that he is one of the elect and therefore cannot fall away, nor is there any particular character of his faith which indicates that he is the kind of per-

son who cannot fall away. He is simply told to continue in obedience and faith and to trust in the God who will keep him from falling.

He perseveres by persevering. Perseverance is not some particular quality of faith or something to be added to faith, but the fact that faith continues. To speak of the need to develop endurance, as the New Testament does, is the same thing as saying that one must continue to believe despite every temptation to disbelieve.

"Such persevering faith is faith in God through Jesus Christ and is at all times a response to His grace. It is faith in the God who keeps, establishes, and strengthens believers, committal of oneself to His Lordship and His care. But such committal does not mean that the believer no longer needs to watch lest he stumble and fall. He must still beware of temptation. The fact that he can still fall into sin shows that he is not preserved miraculously by God from falling, although God is able to keep those who trust in Him from falling and never refuses His grace to those who seek it. God's power enables men to battle against temptation, but does not relieve them from temptation or from the necessity to fight against it. The way to victory is by constant submission to God.

"Alongside the imperatives stand the promises. We do not need to fear in the midst of temptation, for we know that if we trust in God, His power will preserve us. When the believer puts his trust in God, he is entitled to be confident. The New Testament most certainly teaches that God strengthens the faith of the believer so that he may withstand temptation; He does not forget those who trust in him. Hence, while the New Testament knows the possibility of failure to persevere, it also knows the fact of growth in grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ so that the Christian can attain to a confidence, which lifts him above the fear of falling away. It is perhaps in this idea of growth and development in faith that the key to the problem is to be found. Faith is something, which grows and becomes stronger and consequently more removed from the fear of failing. And yet this does not mean that the assurance of perseverance is for a spiritual elite; it is for the weakest believer who is prepared to cry, 'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.'

"In short, we cannot go beyond the teaching of the New Testament which places side by side the possibility of failure to persevere and the greater possibility of a confidence in God and a continuing faith which, as it is sustained by God, is preserved from the fear of falling away. There is a confidence, which can grow and deepen, and hence the possibility of the faith that God will preserve us for His heavenly kingdom. It is possible, therefore, to maintain the confidence of the believer without committing ourselves to a watertight logical system of irresistible grace and unconditional election to final salvation, and at the same time to give a realistic meaning to the warnings of the New Testament.

"We can say firmly that, while it is possible for a Christian to fail to persevere after a genuine experience of salvation, yet, with all the promises of a faithful God to sustain those who trust in Him, the main emphasis of the New Testament is on confidence and assurance of final salvation." ('Kept By the Power of God'; I. Howard Marshall; pgs. 208-210)

WEAK AND HELPLESS

Son of God, thy blessing grant;
Still supply my every want;

Tree of life, thine influence shed;
From thy fullness, I am fed.
Tenderest branch, alas! am I,
Wither without thee and die;
Weak as helpless infancy;
O confirm my soul in thee!
Unsustained by thee, I fall;
Send the help for which I call;
Weaker than a bruised reed,
Help I every moment need.
All my hopes on thee depend;
Love me, save me to the end;
Give me persevering grace;
Take the everlasting praise. (Charles Wesley)

Adam Clarke, a contemporary of the famous John Wesley, was the greatest Wesleyan/Armenian theologian of his time. The following constitute excerpts from his article, simply titled “Apostasy”, continued in the book simply titled “Christian Theology:(pgs. 360-367):

“God uniformly treats man as a free agent; and on the principle the whole of divine revelation is constructed as is also the doctrine of future rewards and punishments.”

“If a man be incapable of willing God and willing evil, he is incapable of being saved as a rational being; and if he acts only under an overwhelming compulsion, he is as incapable of being damned.”

“The power to will and the power to act must necessarily come from God, who is the Author both of the soul and the body, and of all their powers and energies; but the act of volition and the act of working come from the man. God gives power to will: man wills through that power; God gives power to act and man acts through that power. Without the power to will, man can will nothing; without the power to work, man can do nothing. God neither wills for man, nor works in man’s stead, but he furnishes him with power to do both; he is, therefore, accountable to God for these powers.”

“Christ is the author of eternal salvation to all them that Obey him.”

“It is not for want of holy resolutions and heavenly influences that men are not saved, but through their own unsteadiness; they do not persevere, they forget the necessity of continuing in prayer, and thus the Holy Spirit is grieved, departs from them, and leaves them in their own darkness and hardness of heart. When we consider the heavenly influences, which many receive who draw back to perdition, and the good fruits, which, for a time, they bore, it is blasphemy to say, they had no genuine or saving grace. They had it, they showed it, they trifled with it, and sinned against it; and therefore are lost.”

“What a comfortable thought it is to the followers of Christ, that neither men nor demons can act against them but by the permission of their heavenly Father, and that he will not suffer any of those who trust in him to be tried above what they are able to bear, and will make the trail end in their greater salvation, and in his glory!”

“Slothfulness is natural to man; it requires much training to induce him to labour for his daily bread: if God should miraculously send it, he will wonder and eat it; and that is the whole. “Strive to enter in at the strait gate,” is an ungracious word to many; they profess to trust in God’s mercy, but labour not to enter that rest. God will not reverse his purpose to meet their slothfulness: they alone who overcome shall sit with Jesus on his throne. Reader, “take unto thee the whole armour of God, that thou mayest be able to stand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand.” And remember that he only who endures to the end shall be saved.”

“He that is self-confident is already half fallen. He who professes to believe that God will absolutely keep him from falling finally, and neglects watching unto prayer, is not in a safer state. He who lives by the moment, walks in the light, and maintains his communion with God, is in no danger of apostasy.”

“He who changes from opinion to opinion, and from one sector party to another, is never to be depended on; there is much reason to believe that such a person is either mentally weak, or has never been rationally and divinely convinced of the truth.”

“Every believer in Christ is in danger of apostasy while any remains of the evil heart of unbelief are found in him. God has promised to purify the heart and the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin. It is, therefore, the highest wisdom of genuine Christians to look to God for the complete purification of their souls; this they cannot have too soon, and for this they cannot be too much in earnest.”

“As a preventive of backsliding and apostasy, the apostle recommends mutual exhortation. No Christian should live for himself alone; he should consider his fellow Christian as a member of the same body, and feel for him accordingly, and love, succor, and protect him. When this is carefully attended to in religious society, Satan finds it very difficult to make an inroad on the Church; but when coldness, distance and want of brotherly love take place, Satan can attack each singly and, by successive victories over individuals, soon make an easy conquest of the whole.”

“Here (2nd Peter; 2) is a sad proof of the possibility of falling from grace, and from very high degrees of it too. These had escaped from the contagion that was in the world; they had had true repentance, and cast up “their sour-sweet morsel of sin.” They had been washed from all their filthiness, and this must have been through the blood of the Lamb; yet, after all, they went back, got entangled with their old sins, swallowed down their formerly rejected lusts, and rewallowed in the mire of corruption. It is no wonder that God should say, “The latter end is worse with them than the beginning:” reason and nature say, “It must be so;” and divine jus-

tice says, "It ought to be so;" and the person himself must confess that it is right that it should be so. But how dreadful is this state! How dangerous, when the person has abandoned himself to his old sins! Yet it is not said that it is impossible for him to return to his Maker; though his case be deplorable, it is not utterly hopeless; the leper may yet be made clean, and the dead may be raised. Reader, is thy backsliding a grief and burden to thee! Then thou art not far from the kingdom of God; believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved.

"A soul cut off from the flock of God is in an awful state! His outward defense is departed from him; and, being no longer accountable to any for his conduct, he generally plunges into unprecedented depths of iniquity, and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. Reader, art thou without the pale of God's Church! Remember, it is written "Them that are without, God judgeth."

"In a state of probation, everything may change. While we are in life, we may stand or fall. Our standing in the faith depends on our union with God; and that depends on our watching unto prayer, and continuing to possess that faith that worketh by love. The highest saint under heaven can stand no longer, than he depends upon God, and continues in the obedience of faith. He that ceases to do so will fall into sin, and get a darkened understanding and a hardened heart; and he may continue in this state till God come to take away his soul. Therefore, let him who most assuredly standeth take heed lest he fall, not only partially, but finally."

One of the greatest (most respected) Biblical expositors of all times, Alexander Maclaren, had the following to note about the importance of maintaining one's personal faith in Christ. He definitely believed in "Conditional Eternal Security".

"THE GRADUAL EXTINCTION OF GOD'S LIGHT IN THE SOUL."

Our lamps are gone out. Matt. 25:8.

Let us take the lesson. There is nothing in our religious emotions, which has any guarantee of perpetuity in it, except upon certain conditions. We may live, and our life may ebb. We may trust, and our trust may tremble into unbelief. We may obey, and our obedience may be broken by the mutinous risings of self-will. We may walk in the paths of righteousness, and our feet may falter and turn aside. There is certainty of the dying out of all communicated life, unless the channel of communication with the life from which it was first kindled be kept constantly clear. The lamp may be "a burning and a shining light," or, more accurately translating the phrase of our Lord, "a light kindled and" (therefore) "shining," but it will only be light "for a season," unless it is fed from that from which it was first set alight" and that is, from God Himself

"Our lamps are going out." A slow process that! The flame does not all die into darkness in a minute. There are stages in the process. The white portion of the flame becomes smaller and the blue part extends; then the flame flickers, and finally shudders itself, as it were, off the wick; then nothing remains but a charred red line along the top; then that line breaks up into little points, and one after

another these twinkle out, and then all is black, and the lamp is gone out. And so, slowly, like the ebbing away of the tide, like the reluctant long-protracted dying of summer days, like the dropping of the blood from some fatal wound, by degrees the process of extinction creeps, creeps, creeps on, and the lamp that was going is finally gone out.

The infinite mercy of God is not mere weak indulgence, which so deals with a man's failures and sins as to convey the impression that these are of no moment whatsoever. And the severity which said, "No! Such work is not fit for such hands until the heart has been 'broken and healed,' "is of a piece with the severity which is love." "Thou want a God that forgavest them, and didst visit them for their inventions." Let us learn the difference between a weak charity, which loves too foolishly, and therefore too selfishly, to let a man inherit the fruit of his doings, and the large mercy which knows how to take the bitterness out of the chastisement, and yet knows how to chastise."

(Taken From "Music for the Soul" by Alexander Maclaren)

KEEPING IN STEP WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

Sweet. It only lasted a moment, but that moment should be described as sweet. To really appreciate this Amilestone, I need to travel back to 1988. The most disturbing decision my wife and I made was choosing to buy a new car after our current vehicle was on a death's bed. The ad to which we responded claimed a guaranteed trade-in amount whether one had to push, pull, or tow the car in. Unknown to each other, Vicki and I were lifting silent prayers. All we wanted God to do was deliver us safely into the car lot. We did not care if the car fell apart at the dealership; we just wanted to get there and get rid of that old lemon.

God more than answered our prayers. Not only did we arrive safely, we were allotted more for our old car than we expected. We purchased a smaller car, but one with a solid reputation. As we drove out of the lot with our brand new Honda Civic, I noticed that the odometer was equipped with an extra space. Older model cars, when they turned over 100,000 miles would simply read 0 again. I was struck by the confidence of the manufacturer to place that additional column on the odometer.

This week, our car turned 150,000 miles old. Sweet! I have never owned a car, which has traveled so well. We plan to keep this car for many years to come. To what do I attribute this taste of triumph? First, to a car well built, second, to keeping an eye on routine maintenance. And third, to fair driving habits.

Nothing is new under the sun: these three principles apply to all areas of life. What you care for will take care of you. For instance, how is your spiritual walk: is God taking care of you? Of course, perhaps He is only dealing with you as well as you are taking care of what He has entrusted to you.

Here's how to get a lot of mileage out of your relationship with God:

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First, realize that you are well built. As the little child said, "God don't make junk." Second, have routine maintenance checks. Is your faith running in time with the Spirit? Have you been renewed by the oil of His faithfulness? Do you recharge your spiritual battery in worship and praise? And third, is your lifestyle in harmony with God's Word? Are you cruising within the vast boundaries of God's grace, or are you speeding through the dark alleys of temptations? When you take care of the things of God, He will take care of you.

Lord, am I guilty of not maintaining the faith You have given to me? Have I misused Your grace? Forgive me, Father, for not paying closer attention to our relationship. Check my spirit, fill me with Your Holy Spirit, and renew joy as I worship and praise Your name. Through Christ, Amen.

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:

A relationship with God is mutual. God will keep His Word if we maintain our faith in Him. Depend upon the Holy Spirit to keep your relationship fresh.

- Thomas Duckworth -

<u>PROMISES</u>	<u>CONDITIONS</u>	<u>WARNINGS</u>
<p>Hebrews 1:1-14</p> <p>Jesus is creator and sustainer of universe (1:1, 2). Heir of God (1:1) Incarnate manifestation of God’s glory (1:3, atoning sacrifice for sin (1:3), resurrected and exalted Son (1:3).</p> <p>Jesus is superior to the angels in every way. (1:5-14) (Warranted by Scriptural support), as demonstrated by His everlasting reign (1:8) by His creative power (1:10), by His everlasting person (1:11), by His immutability (1:12), by His victorious kingly reign (1:13), angels are servants of the redeemed (1:14).</p> <p>Message was transmitted by angels. (2:2)</p> <p>The message was “declared at</p>	<p>Hebrews 2:1-4</p>	

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<p>first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him.” (2:3)</p> <p>Jesus’ incarnation and atoning death (2:8-9) is the basis of restoring man to a proper relationship with God by which man is enabled to resume his God-given role of Domination over the universe (“putting everything in subjection under his feet” (2:5-8)</p> <p>Jesus’ identification with mankind through the incarnation and Jesus’ atoning sacrifice for mankind, is the basis for the believer’s victory over sin (2:15) and over temptation. (2:18)</p> <p>Holy brethren, who share in a heavenly call” (3:1)</p> <p>Jesus was faithful to him who appointed him.” (3:2)</p> <p>Jesus as Son of God’s House is superior to Moses as servant of God’s House. (3:3-6)</p>	<p>“We must pay closer attention to what we have heard”. (2:1)</p> <p>We (believers) must not neglect the great salvation of the Lord. (2:3)</p>	<p>... Possible to “drift away” from the message believers have heard.</p> <p>If believers neglect the great salvation Of the Lord, they shall not escape! (2:3)</p>
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	<p>“Holy brethren, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession.” (3:1)</p> <p>“And we are his house <u>if</u> we hold fast our confidence and pride in our hope.” (3:6)</p> <p>“Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion. Etc.,” (3:7-11)</p>	<p>It is possible for believers, like as in the case of the Israelites in the wilderness, to succumb to sin and to harden their hearts (to go astray in their hearts verse 10). “Take care, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.” (3:12)</p> <p>Just as the unbelieving rebellious, disobedient Israelites (who broke</p>
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<p>“We have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens.” (4:14)</p> <p>We (Believers) have a sympathizing and merciful High Priest, (4:1- 5) and, therefore, “we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need”. (4:16)</p> <p>“...being made perfect (through suffering) he became the source of eternal salvation...being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.” (5:9, 10)</p>	<p>“Let us therefore strive to enter that rest.” (4:11)</p>	<p>The thoughts and intentions of the hearts of all men are exposed by God’s powerful, penetrating Word; “All are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do”. (4:12, 13) (Implied: Disobedience (4:11) cannot be concealed, and a final accountability must motivate the believer to “strive to enter the rest. (4:11)</p>
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<p>The land can receive a blessing from God. (6:7)</p>	<p>“...let us hold fast our profession.” (4:14)</p> <p>“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace.” (4:16)</p> <p>Jesus, the Son, is the source of salvation “<u>to all who obey him</u>”. (4:9)</p> <p>Believers’ obedience (learned, as in the case of Jesus, through suffering. 5:7, 8) must be practiced in order to keep them from relapsing into spiritual infantilism (5:12, 13), and in order for them to become mature in their ability to understand the deep truths of God’s word, and in order for them to be mature in their ethical dis-</p>	<p>It is possible for one-time vital believers ((those who ‘have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come.’ (6:4-6) to commit apostasy, (which is described as a condition of persistent (note the use of the Greek present participles) hostility to Christ, i.e., crucifying the Son of God by continuing ‘to hold him up to contempt.’ (6:6)</p> <p>Note the marginal reading of the American Standard Version: “It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance, the while they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame.” (“The present condition of deliberate, open hostility may conceivably be remedied and the persons renewed to repentance and salvation... The ground which has yielded only thorns and thistles has already been adjudged worthless. (v. 8), and is not rejected; but it is said to be only ‘near to a curse’. It awaits eventual burning; but that fate yet is only in prospect. Perhaps it may be averted.” (Life In The Son; Shank; pgs. 318, 319)</p>
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<p>God will not overlook “your work and the love which you showed for his sake in serving the saints”. (6:10)</p> <p>Domination over the universe (“putting everything in subjection under his feet” (2:5-8), especially verse 8).</p> <p>Jesus’ identification with mankind through the incarnation and Jesus’ atoning sacrifice for mankind, is the basis for the believers’ victory over sin (2:15) and over temptation (2:18).</p> <p>“Holy brethren, who share in</p>	<p>cernment. (5:14)</p> <p>“For land <u>which has drunk the rain</u> that often falls upon it, and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God.” (6:7)</p>	<p>It is possible for believers, like as I the case of the Israelites in the wilderness, to succumb to sin and to harden their hearts (to go astray in their hearts verse 10). “Take care, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart,</p>
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<p>a heavenly call.” (3:1)</p> <p>Jesus “was faithful to him who appointed him.” (3:2)</p> <p>Jesus as Son of God’s House is superior to Moses as servant of God’s House. (3:3-6)</p>	<p>“And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness in realizing the full assurance of hope until the end.”</p> <p>“Holy brethren, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession.” (3:1)</p>	<p>leading you to fall away from the living God.” (3:12)</p> <p>Just as the unbelieving rebellious, disobedient Israelites (who broke the covenant obligations laid down in the Mosaic covenant) reaped the judgment of God, so believers, whose hearts have become hardened and disobedient, will also reap the judgment of God. Such apostates will never receive God’s promised inheritance (in the heavenly ‘promised land’ of rest). (3:12-19)</p> <p>It is possible (like as in the case of the unbelieving Israelites) for believers to receive the good news but subsequently to fail to enter God’s eternal rest (heaven) because of falling into a state of persistent unbelief (and hardening of the heart). (4:5-7)</p>
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“We have great high priest who has passed through the heavens.” (4:14)

We (believers) have a sympathizing and merciful High Priest, (4:15) and, therefore, “we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need”. (4:16)

“...being made perfect (through suffering) he became the source of eternal salvation...being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.” (5:9, 10)

“...let us fear lest any of you be judged to have failed to reach it.” (4:1)

The good news of the message must “meet with faith in the hearers”. (4:2)

“...let us hold fast our profession.” (4:14)

“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace.” (4:16)

<p>“So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he interposed with an oath so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us.” (6:17-18)</p> <p>God’s trustworthy character and promises and mediatorial provisions are the basis for the believer’s steadfast hope (“sure and steadfast anchor of the soul” (6:19)</p>	<p>Jesus, the Son is the source of salvation <u>“to all who obey him.”</u> (4:9)</p> <p>Believers’ obedience (learned, as in the case of Jesus, through suffering, 5:7, 8) must be practiced in order to keep them from relapsing into spiritual infantilism (5:12, 13), and in order for them to become mature in their believers are to be imitators if of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” (6:12)</p> <p>Just as Abraham “having patiently endured, obtained the promise:so believers are to follow his example. (The Abrahamic Covenant was conditional: Abraham had to patiently endure if the promise was to be fulfilled!)</p> <p>(Quote from “Life In The Son” by Shank)</p> <p>“Patient, enduring faith, like that of Abraham, is presented (6:11 ff/) as the sole alternative of the apostasy cited in verses 4-8. Such apostasy, and present</p>	
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The lesser (Abraham, representing Levi and the total Aaronic priesthood), paid tithes to the greater (to Melchizedek, representing Jesus Christ). This shows subordination and inferiority of the Aaronic Priesthood to the priesthood of Christ, as symbolized by Abraham's ancient actions toward Melchizedek (7:9-11). The greater (Melchizedek, representing Christ) blessed the lesser (Abraham, representing the Old Testament priesthood with its human weaknesses and sins). This shows the mighty saving purposes and redemptive blessings of the priesthood of Christ which has come to replace the weak Aaronic priesthood. (7:6)

The superior and eternal priesthood of Christ has replaced the inferior and transient Aaronic priesthood (as shown by the fact that, humanly-speaking, Christ was descended from the tribe of Judah, not the priest-tribe of

peril for the writer and his readers, was a peril also for Abraham. If he and "Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise" (11:9), had grown weary of "looking for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (verse 10) And pilgrims on earth:(verse 13) seeking "a better country, that is, an heavenly" (vs. 14, 16), they could have returned to "that country from whence they came out". (v. 15) Growing weary of setting their affection on things above, they could have returned to both the literal and the spiritual Ur of the Chaldea's, dismissing the anticipation of "an heavenly country" and a "city which hath foundations" as of no practical consequence for the present."

"Consequently (because of the superior priesthood of Christ) he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them." (7:25)

Levi) (7:12-228) The New Covent of Grace, based on Christ’s superior Heavenly priesthood (8:1-6), (as fore-told in Jeremiah 31:31-34) has replaced the Old Covenant of Law. The New Covenant results in the forgiveness of sins and in a change of the human heart those issues forth in willing obedience to God’s commands. (8:7-13)

The transforming blood of the New Covenant is the blood of Christ, which blood was shed once-and-for-all as the eternally efficacious atonement for sins, in contrast to the oft-repeated blood sacrifices of animals in the Old Testament ritualistic sacrificial system (which was only a shadow of the heavenly tabernacle). Hebrews 9:1-10; 18)

We have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God...(10:9-21)

“...how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (9:14)

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“...he who promised is faithful.” (10:23)

“For if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a

	<p>...let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” (10:22)</p> <p>“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering...and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” (10:23-25)</p>	<p>sacrifice for sins, but a fearful prospect of judgment, and a fury of fire which will consume the adversaries.” (Hebrews 10:27) Note: “The word ‘sin’ is in the present participle which denotes not a single act of unbelief, but a state or condition of unbelief. Those described are those who...turn away from Christ and continue...to turn away...just as long as we continue in this state of willful apostasy we put ourselves beyond the possibility of forgiveness.”</p> <p>(Studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews by Daniel Shepherdson, pgs. 457-461)</p> <p>It is possible for one-time believer to succumb to sin and to “spurn the Son of God and profane the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and outrage the Spirit of grace”, and as a result reap the terrible judgment of God. (10:29) (It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (10:31)</p>
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“You knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.” (10:34)

“But we are not of those who shrink back.” (10:39)

...and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.” (10:38)

Those who shrink back are destroyed (10:39). Perseverance in the faith (i.e., continuing to trust the Lord for everything, throughout one’s entire lifetime) is the condition for the fulfillment of God’s promise of final salvation to believers (10: 35-39) and is patterned for present – day believers after the exemplary faith of godly ancestors, some of whom, as a result of their faith, enjoyed victory through deliverance from death (11:1-35a), and some of whom, as result of their faith enjoyed ultimate victory in spite of physical death. (11:35b-40)

<p>The promises and blessings afforded to the faithful are multiple (as related in Hebrews 11):</p> <p>Divine approval (verse 2), approved by God as righteous (verse 4), escape from death (special case of Enoch. (v. 5), pleasing God's), becoming an heir of God's righteousness (v. 7) a God prepared city (heaven) (v. 6), etc., etc.</p>	<p>“But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, etc.” (20:32-33)</p> <p>Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that you may do the will of God and receive what is promised.” (10:35-36)</p> <p>...but my righteous one shall live by faith. (10:38)</p> <p>Believers must “have faith and</p>	
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<p>“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses...”</p> <p>“Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God”. (12:2)</p> <p>“...he (God) disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.” (12:10)</p>	<p>keep their souls”. (10:39)</p> <p>“For by it (faith) men of old received divine approval.” (11:2)</p> <p>“...through (faith) he (Abel) received approval as righteous, God bearing witness by accepting his gifts”. (11:4)</p> <p>“By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death.” (11:5) Enoch pleased God through his faith. (11:5)</p> <p>“And without faith it is impossible to please him. For whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.” (11:6)</p> <p>By faith, Noah saved his household from death (in the flood) and became an heir of the righteousness which comes by faith.” (11:7)</p>	<p>It is possible for a “root of bitterness” to spring up and cause trouble in a believer’s life, resulting in the many becoming defiled.” (12:15)</p>
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<p>“You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel.” (12:22-24)</p>	<p>The success of the life of Abraham and Sarah was because of the exercise of their faith in God (obedience to God) (11:8-12, 17:19)</p> <p>The roll call of faith continues throughout the entire eleventh chapter of Hebrews.</p> <p>...let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus...” (12:2)</p> <p>“Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted.” (12:3)</p> <p>“My son, do not regard lightly the disciple of the Lord, nor lose courage when you are punished by him.” (12:5)</p> <p>“Lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.” (12:12, 13)</p> <p>“Strive for peace with all men,</p>	<p>“For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less shall we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven.” (12:25)</p>
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GLIMPSES INTO REALITY – (As I Understand It)

“Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken...”

and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.” (12:14) “See to it that no one fail to obtain the grace of God; that no ‘root of bitterness’ spring up and cause trouble and by it the many become defiled; that no one be immoral or irreligious like Esau.” (12 15, 16)

“...for our God is a consuming fire.” (12:29)

See that you do not refuse him who is speaking.” (12:25)

“...for God will judge the immoral and adulterous.” (13:4)

“He has said, ‘I will never fail

you nor forsake you.’ Hence we can confidently say, ‘The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid what can man do to me?’” (13:6)

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” (13:18)

“Jesus also suffered

Outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.” (13:12)

“...and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe:...”

“Let brotherly love continue.” (13:1)

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers.” (13:2)

Remember those who are in prison...and those who are ill-treated.” (13:3)

“Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled. (13:4)

“Keep your life free from the love of money, and be content with what you have.” (13:5)

<p>“Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever.” (13:20-21)</p> <p>“Grace be with all of you.” (13:25)</p>	<p>“Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith.” (13:7)</p> <p>“Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings for it is well that the heart be strengthened by grace.” (13:9)</p> <p>“Therefore let us go forth to him outside the camp, bearing abuse for him.” (13:13)</p> <p>“Through him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.” (13:15)</p> <p>“Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.” (13:16)</p> <p>“Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account.</p>	
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GLIMPSES INTO REALITY – (As I Understand It)!

	<p>Let them do this joyfully, and not sadly, for that would be of no advantage to you.” (13:17)</p> <p>“Pray for us...I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner. (13:18, 19)</p> <p>I appeal to you, brethren, bear with my word of exhortation.” (13:22)</p>	
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**ITEMIZATION OF THE ‘SNARES’ WHICH CAN CAUSE A BELIEVER TO
FALL FROM GRACE.**

1. Unforgiving Spirit
Matthew 18:21-35
2. Deception by False Teachings or Evil Spirits
Matthew 24:4, 5, 11-13, 23-26
Luke 11:24-28
I Corinthians 10:20
Colossians 2:8, 18, 19
I Timothy 1:3-6
I Timothy 4:1
I Timothy 6:20, 21
II Timothy 2:14-18
II Timothy 3:13-15
Hebrews 13:9
James 1:16
II Peter 3:16, 17
I John 2:26
II John 7, 8, 9
Revelation 22:18, 19
3. Spiritual Neglect and Procrastination (Spiritual Drifting, Gradual Hardening, or Lukewarmness.)
Matthew 25:1-13
Hebrews 2:1-3
Hebrews 3:7-11, 13, 15
Revelation 3:15, 16, 17
4. Spiritual Carelessness and Shallowness (Lack of Vigilance)
Luke 8:12, 13
Hebrews 4:1, 11
II Peter 3:17
5. Spiritual Carelessness and Shallowness (Lack of Vigilance)
Luke 8:13
I Corinthians 6:7-9
II Corinthians 12:21-13:5
Philippians 3:18-19
I Thessalonians 3:5
I Timothy 5:11-15
Hebrews 6:4-9
I John 5:16
Jude 4, 6, 7, 8-10, 12, 24
Revelations 2:18-26
Revelations 3:5, 8-12

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Hebrews 10:28-29
Hebrews 12:16, 17, 25-29
James 1:14, 15, 16
James 5:19, 20
II Peter 2:1-22
I John 3:6

6. Preoccupation by Worldly Interests and Pursuits and Riches

Luke 8:14
I Corinthians 6:6
I Timothy 5:6
I Timothy 6:9-12
James 4:4
I John 2:15, 16, 17
Revelations 3:4

7. Faithlessness and Lack of Spiritual Endurance (Disobedience, Unbelief, and Bitterness.

Luke 12:42-48	Hebrews 3:12, 19
John 15:1-7	Hebrews 4:6, 11
John 6:66-71	Hebrews 6:10-20
John 8:31, 32, 51	Hebrews 10:23, 36, 39
Acts 11:21-23	Hebrews 11:13
Acts 14:21-22	(Ezekiel 33:10-16)
Romans 11:20-22	Hebrews 12:1
I Corinthians 9:23-27	I John 2:17, 25, And 28
I Corinthians 10:22	Jude 5
II Corinthians 11:2-4	Revelation 2:7, 10, 11, 17
Galatians 6:9	Revelation 3:5, 10, 12
Philippians 2:12	Revelation 21:7, 8
Colossians 1:23	
II Timothy 2:12	

8. Shallow attitude towards Sin and towards Grace (Antinomianism)

Romans 6:11-23
Romans 8:12-14, 17
Galatians 6:7, 8
Hebrews 10:26, 27
II Peter 1:5-11
Jude 4

9. Refusal of or Insensitivity to the Spiritual Means of Grace

John 13:8
I Corinthians 11:27-32
Hebrews 10:22-25

10. Offense by Fellow Believers

Romans 13:15-23

11. Attitude of Ingratitude, Grumbling, and Division

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY – (As I Understand It)

- I Corinthians 10:10
Philippians 2:14
12. Self-Confidence and Pride
I Corinthians 10:11, 12
13. Resort to Religious Performance Instead of Grace (Legalism)
Galatians 5:1-4
I Timothy 1:3-6
14. Discouragement and Despair During Trials and Persecutions, or
Chastening. (Lose Heart)
I Thessalonians 3:3, 4
Hebrews 10:32-34
I Peter 1:7
Revelation 12:11
15. Rejection of the Dictates of the Conscience
I Timothy 1:19, 20
I Timothy 4:2
16. Temporal Irresponsibility to Dependents
I Timothy 5:8
17. Spiritual Profession without Spiritual Performance (Lack of Good Deeds
and Good Conduct)
James 1:21-22
James 2:14-26
II Peter 1:6-10

“DOES THE BIBLE TEACH CONDITIONAL ETERNAL SECURITY?”

“The cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seem healthy, full heads.” (Genesis 41:4-7)

This dream should be a warning to each of us. Yet, it is possible for the best years of our life, the best experiences we have enjoyed, the best victories we have won, and the best service we have rendered, to be swallowed up by times of failure, defeat, dishonor, and uselessness in God’s kingdom. Some people whose lives offered exceptional promise and achievements have come to such an end. It is certainly terrible to imagine, but it is true. *“Yet it is never necessary.”*

Samuel Dickey Gordon once said that the only safe assurance against such a tragedy is to have a “fresh touch with God daily – or even hourly”. My blessed, fruitful, and victorious experiences of yesterday have no lingering value to me today. In fact, they can be “swallowed up” or reversed by today’s failures, unless I see them as incentives to spur me on to even better and richer experiences today.

Maintaining this “fresh touch with God”, by abiding in Christ, will be the only thing to keep the “ugly and gaunt...cows” and the “thin heads of grain” from consuming my life. (From Message for the Morning Watch)

¹⁰ “Son of man, say to the Israelites, ‘this is what you are saying: “Our offenses and sins weigh us down, and we are wasting away because of [a] them. How then can we live?”’ ¹¹ Say to them, ‘As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, people of Israel?’ ¹² “Therefore, son of man, say to your people, ‘If someone who is righteous disobeys, that person’s former righteousness will count for nothing. And if someone who is wicked repents, that person’s former wickedness will not bring condemnation. The righteous person who sins will not be allowed to live even though they were formerly righteous.’ ¹³ If I tell a righteous person that they will surely live, but then they trust in their righteousness and do evil, none of the righteous things that person has done will be remembered; they will die for the evil they have done. ¹⁴ And if I say to a wicked person, ‘You will surely die,’ but they then turn away from their sin and do what is just and right— ¹⁵ if they give back what they took in pledge for a loan, return what they have stolen, follow the decrees that give life, and do no evil—that person will surely live; they will not die. ¹⁶ None of the sins that person has committed will be remembered against them. They have done what is just and right; they will surely live. ¹⁷ “Yet your people say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ But it is their way that is not just. ¹⁸ If a righteous person turns from their righteousness and does evil, they will die for it. ¹⁹ And if a wicked person turns away from their wickedness and does, what is just and right, they will live by doing so. ²⁰ Yet you Israelites say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ But I will judge each of you according to your own ways.” (Ezekiel 33:10-20)

Like the thief on the cross beside Jesus, who called upon Jesus to remember him when Jesus came into His Kingdom, there will be multitudes of “death bed repentants” in heaven! Only those who repent of their sins and who exercise saving path will get to enter the “pearly gates”! God is not willing that any should perish, but there is only one “passport” to heaven – and that is true repentance and the exercise of

faith in God (as best one understands Him). It is either “repent or perish” – and the wicked one who, at the last minute, repents will gain entrance into Heaven! His life will be ‘lost’, but his soul will be ‘saved’! According to the 33rd Chapter of Ezekiel, it is the spiritual state of one’s soul when he dies that determines that soul’s eternal destiny. Even though the majority of a man’s life has been lived in righteousness, if that righteous man is overpowered by insidious temptations (and if he consistently fails to avail himself of the graciously offered keeping power of the Holy Spirit, and thus yields himself to a pattern of deliberate sinning), then that once-righteous man will be finally lost eternally! On the other hand, if a man who has most of his life lived a very wicked life (like the ‘thief on the cross’), comes to a place in his life when he is “stopped in his tracks” with a “grand awakening by the Holy Spirit” which results in deep repentance and the exercise of simple (sincere) “saving faith” (like, again, the ‘thief on the cross’), then God will graciously and thoroughly ‘save’ that wicked man – and, if this man “keeps the faith”, that once wicked man will be welcomed by Jesus into the eternal paradise (the same as the ‘thief’ was welcomed by Jesus into paradise!).

Yes, as you probably are ‘disturbed’ by this Ezekiel passage (33:10-20), I too ‘feel’ disturbance when I think of the possibility of myself (who have tried to live for God most of my life) finally (in the end when I die) being lost from God and never seeing heaven! But, even though I personally believe that it is highly unlikely that a long-time Christian would “turn his back on God” towards the latter part of his life, I have to say that, even though such a tragedy is not ‘probable’, nevertheless such a tragedy is “possible”! Why? Because every Christian, until the end of his human life on this planet, has the continuing gift (a “frightening gift”) of “Free Will”!

Because Satan attempts, through temptation, to destroy the faith of every Christian, every Christian must continue (until the end of his mortal life) “to watch and to pray”, for the Adversary (though defeated by Christ’s death and resurrection) is “still on the loose”. He wants to defeat, to discourage, to divide, to devour every believer (especially those believers who have lived the longest for Christ)! At any stage of the Christian life, there is need to guard against the lusts of the flesh and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life! How easy it is for a long-time believer to begin to take pride in his moral, spiritual, and ecclesiastical achievements! And, even so-called mature Christians, can be “off their guard” and begin to “think more highly of themselves than they ought to think”.

Mature Christians are capable of “falling into sins”, and it is possible (not probable) that a mature-type believer could “drift away” into all kinds of sins! Let me tell you of one such very sad example of a mature Christian who fell into sin! I believe he repented and that he was restored to a vital faith in Christ, before he was tragically killed in a car accident (just a few years ago). This man appeared to me to be a very mature person, for he had been a long-time pastor, then a conference superintendent, and finally a denominational Bishop! But, even though I don’t know the “vivid details” regarding his “horrible fall”, this now-retired Bishop lost his “ministerial credentials” (as far as I know) – because of his “sexual immorality”! Again, I must say, I believe that this man (Bishop) was repentant, and that he entered heaven (as a forgiven man) when (shortly after his spiritual disaster) he was “ushered into eternity” through a “head on car collision”. “BUT, IF SUCH A “FINE MINISTER” (Head of a holiness denomination) could dreadfully “fall into sin” (as he did), what is to say that any other believer could not fall into some type of sin (lust, pornography, pride, adultery, envy, resentment, bitterness, greed, slander, dishonesty, irreverence, and others)?

It is wonderful to have a personal assurance of one’s salvation, (for the Spirit does witness to our human spirit that we are sons and daughters of our loving Heavenly Fathers)! But there is no total and absolute assurance of our salvation until we arrive in Heaven (where it is impossible to “fall from grace” – praise God!)! We must, on earth, guard against “drifting away from God”. (Hebrews 2) “How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?” (Hebrews 2) There is the peril of pride, and the peril of fleshly lusts

(both of which we just briefly noted). There is also the peril of worldliness, (becoming fascinated and enamored with ‘things’ and ‘possessions’ and ‘worldly pleasures’). Of course, Christianity (more than any other religion, values the material world that God created and that Christ – the Incarnate One – sanctified by His bodily presence on earth for 33 years). Christianity does not condemn the ownership of houses and lands and gadgets and possessions – IF a believer does not worship the “material realm”! “Things” all belong to God, and Christians are simply stewards of “things” – to use all “things” like houses and lands and cars to serve one’s fellowman and to honor God and to moderately enjoy themselves! But, nevertheless, there is a temptation to make a “god” out of things, and, in the process, to focus on “things” rather than to use “things” for one’s own self moderately, and to use “things” generously to enhance the lives of other needy persons, and thus gladly to bring glory and honor to the “Owner of all things”! A keen sense of stewardship must always be maintained by sincere Christians, whether they have little of this world’s “goods”, or they have much of the world’s “good”! In the material world in which every Christian lives, there is a continuing temptation to become “worldly minded” (i.e., to change one’s focus from worshipping the Creator of Matter, to worshipping matter itself!).

Paul had many faithful companions and partners “in the Faith”, and he often names some of them in his various New Testament letters (epistles). But one such companion (very faithful at one time) apparently got his “eyes” off Christ’s work, and he put his “gaze” instead on the “things of this temporal world”! Paul says, “*Demas, in love with this present world, hath forsaken me!*” A backslider who forsook Paul and the “*Work of the Kingdom!*” How sad! How very sad! Did Demas every “get back to the Lord”? No one knows!

Even one of the close friends of the famous evangelist, Billy Graham, departed from “the Faith”. This young man was highly gifted in Gospel (evangelistic) preaching, and (like Graham) he was in great demand as a speaker! But something “tripped up” this promising young preacher! I don’t know all the details surrounding his “fall from grace and Christian belief”, but it is my understanding that this young evangelist (highly talented) allowed himself to become disillusioned regarding the faith of Christianity because of his serious doubts that he nourished regarding the “Problem of Human Suffering”! Doubts, which he failed adequately to deal with, drove him away from preaching the simple (but powerful) message of Christ and Salvation! He finally decisively left the “fold of God and His people”. He became so cynical regarding Christianity, that this one-true effective evangelist and now backslider agnostic (perhaps atheist) ridiculed Christianity and eventually he even wrote books that sought to repudiate the faith of Christians! Compassionate-minded Billy Graham tried to “reach out in love” to this apostate person, but apparently he and no one else was able to persuade him to “return to the Father’s house”!

As we have mentioned, many perils threaten to destroy the ‘faith’ of believers (perils such as pride, lust, worldliness, doubt). These perils are real, and they must be avoided! I believe that the longer one is a believer and the closer one’s “walk” is with God, the less likely is it that such a believer will be enticed by temptation and “fall from grace”! However, as long as there is such a thing as ‘free will’, there is always a possibility of sinning! This human life is a life of probation, but God is able to keep the believer until the end of his journey!

²⁰ for if, after they have escaped the corrupting ways of the world through a full knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they again become entangled in them and are conquered by them, then their last condition is worse than their former one. For it would have been better for them never to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command committed to their trust. In them is verified the truth of the proverb, “A sow that has washed herself goes back to wallow in the mire.” (II Peter 2:20-22, Williams’ Translation)

Only God can be the final Judge of every person, in time and in eternity, but while it is forbidden by Jesus for any of His followers to “judge” (i.e., to declare the final outcome of another person’s soul), it is permitted (and encouraged) by Jesus for His followers to “test the fruit” of those around them. Jesus said, Christians are right to be ‘fruit inspectors’!

And it is important to note, that believing in Jesus is a progressive, continuing relationship of love, not a one-time-only experience. Those who are presently living in sin are sinners, even if their previous experience with God was truly “Christian” (characterized by “godly traits and virtues”). It is one’s present, up-to-date experience that determines one’s relationship with God. When a Christian’s occasional sins are faced and confessed to God (I John 1:9; 2:1), then that “failed Christian” is quickly restored to fellowship with God. However, when a believer in Christ continues deliberately to sin, the day comes when he not only loses his fellowship with God, but his very relationship with God is forfeited! Eternal life is not some kind of “deposit” that a person receives at conversion, a “deposit” (gift) that is irrevocable and unconditional. It is the person who believes in Christ and continues to believe in Christ, who is saved for time and eternity! “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life!” God’s promise is to persevering believers! Eternal life is a relationship of love with the Savior, and (as in a human relationship of love) the love of a believer for his God must be nurtured and maintained for an entire lifetime! A believer who chooses no longer to commune with God in prayer, and who chooses no longer to allow his God to speak to him through the Bible, and who chooses no longer to obey God’s commands, and who chooses no longer to humble himself to learn from his fellow believers (both in positive guidance and in gentle rebuke), and who chooses to “close his heart of compassion” to suffering persons (and who decides instead selfishly to spend his money to “indulge his own desires”) – I say, such a Christian (just described) has “sold his birthright for a pot of stew”! Such a Christian is well on his way to “forsaking the faith of his ancestors”! Such a Christian is fast losing his precious relationship with God! He is in a “backslidden state!”

It is tragically true that any believer has the capacity of making “shipwreck of his faith.” There are multiple perils that Christians must avoid – the “lust of the eyes”, the “lust for money”, and “the pride of life” (to name a few)! “*So the man who thinks he stands securely must be on the lookout not to fall.*” (I Corinthians 10:12) “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit of man indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak!” This verse does not say that the flesh is wicked, but it is weak! The flesh (which represents “innocent desires” like the “sex desire”) can become the “bridgehead for sin” (that is, the “entrance for sin” into your life). For instance, the God-given “sexual desires” are meant to be the “holy directives” to lead you to a beautiful, chaste, God-centered wife, but if the “sex drive” is not disciplined and surrendered to the Creator of that “sex drive”, then this beautiful wholesome drive will be the “entrance of sin” into your life! What was intended to be a beautiful God-given gift will turn out to be the instrument that leads to misery and ugliness!

Probably the most basic Biblically-taught truth regarding the unique creation of humans, is the truth (a glorious yet sobering truth) that God created humans with “Free Will”. God did not want “robots”; God wanted creatures (made in His own “image”) created with the capacity to enjoy the Creator in a deep loving relationship! And there is no such thing as a meaningful loving relationship without the capacity of choice (i.e., “Free Will”). You cannot “force” someone to love you; another person must freely choose to love you!

And the greatest exercise of human “Free choice” is the exercise of a sinner (by the enabling grace of God) choosing to repent and to believe in Jesus as his/her Savior and Lord! But, what is important to understand (from the Bible’s perspective) is this: a person’s initial choice (by God’s grace) to believe in Christ as personal Savior, must be affirmed and maintained throughout one’s entire earthly life!

“Be thou faithful unto her until death us do part” is the commitment of an earnest groom, when he takes his marriage vows. But one who initially enters into a “saving relationship” with God, must determine (by God’s grace) to be faithful to God for his entire lifetime!

But, we all know (sadly) that a large number of couples become divorced (because of lack of faithfulness, in one way or another). And, in all honesty, (as the Scriptures indicate, John 15; 2 Peter 2:20-22), we have to sadly acknowledge that there are some believers who “turn back from following their Lord”! Unfaithful to their Lord! Backsliding and apostasy are words that describe a spiritual reality that is most sad (tragic)! God can “keep” every believer from “falling away”, but not even God can “force straying Christians” to make the right choices!

The Holy Spirit, who strongly warns straying Christians to “guard against temptations”, and to “rush back to the caring arms of the Good Shepherd” – this blessed Holy Spirit can (tragically) be “grieved”; He can be “quenched” or “resisted”! There is no human behavior (by a believer or by a non-believer) that is more dangerous or more soul-destroying than the behavior of “resisting or ignoring the powerful and the tender Holy Spirit!” The Spirit does everything, just short of coercion, to draw a “drifting believer” back to the blessed Savior. The Spirit knows clearly where the path of sinning will lead to – namely, to an earthly life of misery, and eventually (unless there is true repentance in the heart of the drifting Christian) to an eternal destruction, a destruction too horrible to imagine.

God’s faithfulness to me cannot avail for my own unfaithfulness! God’s faithfulness is established (i.e., God will never leave me, nor forsake me)! But, as long as I am a “free will agent” on this earth (in a state of testing, probation, and character building for heaven), my faithfulness to God is always “in question”! In heaven, my faithfulness to God (i.e., my faithfulness, made possible by my effort and by God’s sustaining grace) will be “sealed forever”! No temptation; No testing; No trials - in Heaven! No more probation in Heaven! God will have tested my faithfulness to Him (and to my fellow-human beings) long enough on earth! The sweetest words in the Universe (for humans) will be those words from the lips of the Tri-une God when he shall give His glorious evaluation for His “faithful child”: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant!”

A heavenly (eternal) reward given for a godly life and for “staying true” to the Living God on the probationary planet! A godly life is one that seeks God’s will! When a believer realizes he has not fully done God’s will (because of his mistakes or even because of his sins), he quickly “pleads the blood of Jesus Christ” as his “atoning sacrifice”. He claims God’s forgiveness in humility and in repentance, and he then continues with his life of faithfulness – seeking to carry out God’s will for his little (but significant) human life. God rewards persons (believers) who “keep up-to-date” in their love relationship with Him (i.e., persons who keep “short accounts with God” – confessing sins quickly when believers become aware that they have “missed the mark” in their actions, in their attitudes).

Only those persons get to hear God’s “Well Done” at the end of their lives, who have maintained a growing “love relationship with God!”

This means that such a person continues to believe in Jesus until the time of his physical death. This means that such a person continually casts all of his admitted frequent failures and his occasional sins into the “cleansing stream of Jesus’ powerful blood”! “The blood, the blood, O hallelujah it cleanses me!” Let the precious blood constantly cover you! Then you will have no need to worry that your name will ever be “erased from the Book of Life”! Daily confession (of shortcomings or even of occasional sins) and daily cleansing of your entire life (mind, emotion and will) gives you an up-to-date assurance that you are in a vital “love relationship” with the Tri-une God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), and that you are ready any time to receive your Lord’s call to that “Heavenly Shore” where there will be to be peace and joy and love in a much larger measure than anything you have ever known on earth, ever in your closest

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY – (As I Understand It)

times of fellowship with your matchless Savior and your tender Holy Spirit and your Kind Heavenly Father! Daily communion with God will prepare you for heavenly communion – a communion which could come at any time (even at an unexpected time)! Staying close to God gives you strength for life’s trials and temptations and tests, and it is the best “antidote” against spiritual drifting or dangerous backsliding. Your God is able to keep you, if you are willing to be kept. His power is limitless, if you have a whole-hearted willingness!

SECURITY FOR BELIEVERS

SUMMARY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHINGS ON "PERSEVERANCE OF BELIEVERS"

There are scores of New Testament Scriptures which encourage Christians to 'persevere in the Faith' (i.e., not to succumb to temptations and other pressures in life, but to remain true to the Lord until 'the end of life').

Even though the theme of Christology (the doctrine of the 'person and nature of Christ') is a great theme of the Book of Hebrews, the primary theme of Hebrews is 'Perseverance of the Saints' (i.e., 'let us hold fast'). Notes Robert Shank (regarding the proper understanding of the theme of the Book of Hebrews): "The phrase 'let us go on' appears but once (Hebrews 6:1). '*Let us go on*', he writes, 'unto perfection'. The writer may have reference to his intention to proceed to the advanced development of the doctrine of Christ to which he proposes to lead them in the course of his letter. Or it may be a call to his readers to advance from spiritual infancy in which he found them (Hebrews 5:11-13) toward the maturity (v.14) which is possible for all who will grasp it. Actually, both things are within the writer's purpose. Certainly, it is his intention to proceed toward the fuller development of his Christology. But the presentation of his Christology is not an end in itself. The principal burden of the letter is not 'let us go on', but 'let us hold fast'. In contrast with the exhortation 'let us go on unto perfection', which occurs but once, the exhortation 'let us hold fast our confession' occurs twice:(Hebrews 4:14; 10:23) and the epistle abounds with cognate exhortations:*'if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end'* (3:6); *'if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end'* (3:14); *'lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God'* (3:12); *'lest any of you he hardened through the deceitfulness of sin'* (3:13); *'lest at any time we should slip away'* (2:1); *'if we neglect so great salvation'* (2:3); *'harden not your hearts'* (3:8,15); *'lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief'* (4:11); *'show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end'* (6:11); *'let us keep on drawing near with a true heart in full assurance of faith'* (10:22); *'cast not away therefore your confidence'* (10:35); *'for ye have need of patience, that... ye might receive the promise'* (10:36); *'the just shall live by faith:hut if he draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him'* (10:38) ;*lest ye he wearied and faint'* (12:3); *'despise not the chastening of the Lord nor faint when thou art rebuked of him'* (12:5); *'be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live'* (12:9); *'lest that which is lame he turned out of the way'* (12:13); *'lest any man fail of the grace of God'* (12:15); *'lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who sold his birthright'* (12:16); *'if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven'* (12:25); *'be not carried away with divers and strange doctrines'* (13:9); *'let us keep going forth unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach'* (13:13).

Any emphasis in the Epistle to the Hebrews on going on toward spiritual maturity is secondary. The burden of the writer's 'word of exhortation', is that his readers 'hold fast the confession of their hope' in Jesus Christ as the only Savior and 'the Source of eternal salvation unto all who obey Him.'" (Life In The Son; Robert Shank; pgs. 231-234)

The highly respected writer (from the early 20th century), James Denney, in his well known book 'The Death of Christ', believed the main thrust of the Book of Hebrews was 'conservation of the Faith'. He writes, "The author (of Hebrews) was not an evangelist so much as a pastor, and it is not the initiation of Christianity, but its conservation, with which he deals throughout" The internationally-known New Testament scholar, William Barclay, agrees. He writes: "When we sum it all up, we can say that Hebrews is a letter written by a great teacher, written by a man whom we would call a professor, to a little group or college of Christians in Rome. He was their teacher; at the moment he was separated from them; he was afraid that they were drifting away from the faith; and so he wrote this letter to them."

When studying the New Testament, it is helpful to look at larger sections of Scripture with three thoughts in mind: (1) Promises to be claimed, (2) Conditions to be met, (3) Warnings to be heeded. With these three ideas in mind, let us briefly 'scan' some of the relevant New Testament passages, all of which deal with the important subject of the 'perseverance of believers' and the 'security of believers'. Space will not permit the quotation of many Scriptures, but I will attempt a brief summary of the 'key' points in several of the New Testament passages.

In Matthew 18:21-25, God promises total forgiveness of one's total 'debt' to God, provided that one is willing to forgive those who have sinned against him. A lack of mercy and forgiveness of others incites the wrath of the Lord, and actually forfeits one's own forgiveness.

In Matthew 24:4, 5, 11-13, 23-26, the Lord promises to save those who 'endure to the end' (v. 13). Believers are warned of the possibility of being led astray by false 'Christ's'. Multiplied wickedness in the earth can cause the 'cooling' of a believer's love for God (v. 12). In Matthew 25:1-3, in Christ's parable of the Marriage Feast, believers are warned against neglecting to purchase 'oil', thus resulting in their lamps going out when Christ comes (v. 8), and being shut out of the marriage feast while trying too late to purchase on (vs. 10-12).

In Luke 8:11-15, believers are taught that spiritual fruitfulness and productivity (v. 15) is the result of hearing the Word, holding it fast in an honest and good heart, and patiently enduring. Christians must guard against the devil stealing the Word from their hearts. They must guard against shallowness and falling away during temptation (v. 13), and they must also guard against their lives being choked by the 'cares and riches and pleasures of life' (v. 14).

In Luke 11:24-28, persons whose lives have been initially cleansed from evil must guard against evil spirits which are seeking re-entrance into the lives of those who had previously experienced deliverance. This Scripture apparently is teaching that, following one's cleansing from sin, there must be positive 'infilling' of one's life with the blessed presence of the Holy Spirit (to prevent re-entry of any 'evil spirits').

In Luke 12:42-46, the Master (Christ) sets believers over his 'household' and over all his possessions. Faithfulness and wise management of God-entrusted responsibilities is expected from all servants. The servants (believers) are exhorted not to become impatient at the delay of the Master's coming. Impatience can lead to mistreatment of those persons who have been entrusted to their stewardship, leading to a 'life of debauchery' (v. 45). Such faithless stewards will be punished with a severe 'beating' and assigned to the 'place of the unfaithful' (vs. 46, 47).

John 6:66-71, teaches that believers must continue to follow Christ, rather than 'drawing back' and no longer going with Him (v. 66). There is a possibility (as in the case of Judas Iscariot) of a one-time believer 'betraying' Jesus (vs. 70, 71).

In John 8:31-32, Jesus states that persons can be His disciples (and 'know the truth which shall set them free') if they hold to his teachings and continue in His Word. John 8:51, states that a person shall never see (spiritual) death if he keeps God's Word. Act 14:21-22, reveals that a large number of persons became disciples to the Lord. It is recorded that Paul strengthened the disciples and encouraged them to 'remain true to the faith'. Paul taught that Christians 'must go through many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God'.

In Paul's popular teaching in Romans 6:11-23, he teaches that it is possible for one's 'body parts' to be yielded as 'instruments of sin and wickedness' (vs. 12, 13). Paul warns against believers entertaining a shallow attitude toward God's grace, and a casual attitude towards sinning, and he exhorts believers never to claim that grace quickly provides for one's practice of sinning (v. 15). Paul says that offering one's self to obey sin results in final spiritual death (v. 16). In Romans 8:13, Paul says that one will die if he lives according to his 'sinful nature'.

Romans 11:20-22, teaches that a person enjoys a 'standing in Christ' if he has 'faith', 'humility', 'godly fear' and 'reverence' - and provided that he continues 'in God's kindness'. God will not spare those who persist in unbelief. Unbelief causes the branch to be broken off the Vine. Those who do not continue in God's kindness will be cut out (v. 22).

Romans 14:15-23, teaches that a believer must act in love by carefully refraining from anything that is a source of stumbling to his fellow Christian. A Christian must guide his life and actions by 'righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit' (v. 18). It is possible for a believer to be offended by and even destroyed by a fellow believer. It is possible for a believer to destroy the work of God and to cause a fellow Christian to stumble by his insensitive and offending actions (vs. 20, 21). It is possible for a believer to sin as a result of doing things with doubt rather than with faith (v. 23). I Corinthians 9:23-27, teaches that a person (believer) will enjoy "a crown that will last forever" (v. 25) if he is willing to undergo God's strict training and if he runs the spiritual race with 'aim and purpose' (i.e., 'beat my body and make it my slave'). Paul (wholesomely) feared that "after I have preached to others, I myself will be disqualified for the prize" (v. 27).

Serious warnings are issued to believers in I Corinthians 10:1-22. It is possible, after a believer has experienced many spiritual blessings, for God no longer to be pleased with him (v. 5). It is possible for one who has experienced 'spiritual food and drink' to set his heart on evil things (as the Israelites in the wilderness did- verse 6). It is possible for a believer to fall into idolatry and sexual immorality, and consequently to be destroyed by God (vs. 7, 8). It is possible for a believer to 'test' (over-tempt) the Lord and to be destroyed by the Lord (v. 9). It is possible for a believer to fall into a life of grumbling against the Lord and to be 'killed by the destroying angel' (v. 10). Wrote Paul, "*These things happened to them (the Israelites in the wilderness) as examples and were written down as warnings for us. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!*" (vs. 11, 12) "*I do not want you (believers) to be participants with demons.*" (v. 20) *Don't arouse the Lord's jealousy* (v. 22).

I Corinthians 11:27-32, notes that it is possible for a believer to become insensitive to the spiritual significance of 'The Lord's Supper', and consequently to sin 'against the body and blood of the Lord' and bring 'judgment on himself' (vs. 27, 29). Some even died in the Early Church because they insensitively partook of the Lord's Supper (v. 30).

I Corinthians 15:1-2, teach that if one does not hold firmly to the word, which he received for initial salvation, he has 'believed in vain' (v. 2).

2 Corinthians 11:2-4, teaches that a gullible believer can deceptively be led away from his pure and single-hearted devotion to Christ, into false teachings (as illustrated by Eve's deception by Satan- 2 Corinthians 11:3-4).

2 Corinthians 12:21-13:5, teaches that it is possible for a one-time believer to sin grievously (impurity, sexual sin, debauchery) without being activated to repentance.

Paul warns believers against reverting to a life of 'legalism', after having been initially set free from sin through God's mighty grace. With great sadness, Paul writes to the Galatians Christians who had reverted to 'legalism'; *"You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; You have fallen away from grace"* (Galatians 5:4).

Someone said, "If a believer takes one step towards God, God takes a thousand steps toward the believer!" God is the 'God who acts' - the God who initiates, the God who is 'eager to respond' to any person who demonstrates any degree of desire to 'know God'. Someone wisely said, "It is not hard to live the Christian life; it is impossible - unless, of course, God's Spirit indwells and empowers the believer." Philippians 2:12-16 contains both Promises and Conditions, as these relate to one's salvation. As a believer, you can be encouraged, for *"God works in you to will and do what pleases Him."* (v. 13) Because of the inward work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer, he can become 'blameless and pure', a child of God 'without fault in a crooked and depraved generation', and he can be a *'shining star in the universe'* (v. 15). But, with the promises and divine provisions, there are some conditions to be met: *"Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling"* (v. 12). Christians are to *'do everything without complaining or arguing'* (v. 14).

Colossians 1:21-23, speaks of both a wonderful Promise to be claimed, and a serious Condition to be met. "God has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation. If you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel.

"Colossians 2:4-8, contains all three- the Promise (divine provision), the Condition, and the Warning. The Promise (the divinely-given provision)- *"You received Christ Jesus as Lord"* (v. 6). The Condition- *"Continue to live in Christ, rooted and built up him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness"* (vs. 6, 7). The Warning- *"See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ"* (v. 8)

Colossians 2:18-19, warns believers against the possibility of falling 'prey' to a deceptive philosophy (v. 18), the result of which is disqualification for the spiritual prize. It is possible for a believer to succumb to the teachings and practices of a false philosophy, and consequently to lose *"connection with the Head (Christ)"*. (v. 19)

I Thessalonians 3:1-8, teach that it is possible for believers to be unsettled by the inevitable trials and persecutions which all believers are destined to experience. (vs. 3, 4) It is possible for a believer to fade during temptation and to lose his faith, resulting in the efforts of the soul-winner becoming 'useless'. (v. 5)

Paul urges Timothy (Paul's young 'son in the Faith') to *"fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience."* (I Timothy 1:18-19) Paul teaches that it is possible for a believer to turn to false doctrines (I Timothy 1:3). It is possible for a believer to 'fall from grace' and to begin promoting controversial doctrines (regarding law keeping) rather than promoting the work of God, which is faith (I Timothy 1:4). It is dreadful to think about, but it is possible for a believer to wander away from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith, and to turn to "meaningless talk". (I Timothy 1:6) It is possible (as in the case

of Hymenaeus and Alexander) to reject faith and a good conscience, and thus to make 'shipwreck' of one's faith. (I Timothy 1:19-20)

I Timothy 4:1-16 contains wonderful Promises, multiple Conditions, and serious Warnings. The Promises - Godliness holds *"promise for both the present life and the life to come."* (v. 8) The Living God saves those who believe. (v. 10) The Conditions - *"Train yourself to be godly."* (v. 7) *"Set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity."* (v. 12) *"Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift."* (vs. 12, 14) *"Watch your life and doctrine closely. PERSEVERE in them, because IF you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers."* The Warnings - It is possible to *"abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons."* (v. 1) *It is possible for one's conscience (apparently even the conscience of a one-time believer - according to the context of the Scripture) to become "seared as with a hot iron."* (v. 2)

I Timothy 5:8, teaches that it is possible for a believer to 'deny the faith' and, as such, to become 'worse than an outright unbeliever'. I Timothy 5:6, 11-15, contain some serious warnings for Christians. It is possible for sensual desires to overcome a believer's dedication to Christ. (v. 11) It is possible for believers to break holy pledges, and to fall into hurtful habits, and thus to incur the judgment of God. (vs. 12-13) It is possible for a believer to turn away from the faith "to follow Satan." (v. 15) It is possible for a believer to begin living for pleasure and thus to die spiritually. (v. 6)

I Timothy 6:9-12, believers are urged to flee from the 'love of money', which is the 'root of all kinds of evil'. (vs. 10-11) Believers are urged to pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. (v. 11) Believers are urged to *"fight the good fight of the faith."* (v. 12a) Believers are urged (commanded) to *"take hold of the eternal life to which you were called."* (v. 12) This portion of Scripture also contains a serious warning (especially relevant to modern-day Christians who live in a materialistically-oriented society). I Timothy 6:9-10 teaches that it is possible for believers to fall in love with money, resulting in *"wandering from the faith and piercing themselves with many griefs"*, and plunging themselves into *"ruin and destruction"*. In order for the materially wealthy believer to *"take hold of the life that is truly life"* and to establish *"a firm foundation for the coming age"*, he/she is required to be generous and *"rich in good deeds"*. The selfish and the greedy person will be judged by the Lord. (I Timothy 6:17-19)

According to I Timothy 6:20-21, it is possible for believers to succumb to the godless talk and foolish arguments of worldly 'knowledge' and, consequently to 'wander from the faith' ('lose their faith' - J.D. Phillips' translation).

"We (Christians) will live with him and we will reign with him (Christ). IF we died with him, and IF we ENDURE." (2 Timothy 2:11-12) It is possible for a believer to "disown Him" (God), with the result, that God will disown that person (v. 12). In such a case, the faithful character of God does not stand in question (v. 13). *"Quarrelling about words only ruins those who listen."* (2 Timothy 2:14). *It is possible for a believer (as in the case of Hymenaeus and Philetus), to engage in 'godless chatter' and consequently to 'wander from the truth' and to cause others to have their faith destroyed.* (2 Timothy 2:16-18)

Hebrews 2:1-3, teaches that it is possible for believers to 'drift away' from 'what we have heard' (the message of faith). (v. 1) It is possible for believers to neglect and to ignore God's 'great salvation', resulting in just punishment. (vs. 2, 3)

Hebrews 3:6-19, contains Promises, Conditions, and Warnings. The Promises- *"Christ is faithful over God's house"* (which are believers). (v. 6) *"We are his house"* (that is, Christ lives in us), and *"we have come to share in Christ."* (v. 14) The Conditions *"Encourage one another daily, so that none of you may*

be hardened by sin's deceitfulness." (v. 13) "If we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast." (v. 6); "If we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first." (v. 14) The warnings it is possible for believers to harden their hearts, and to stray away from God's ways, with the tragic result of never entering God's rest. (vs. 7-11) It is possible for 'brothers' (believers) to have a "sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God." (v. 12) It is possible for a believer to become "hardened by sin's deceitfulness." (vs. 13, 15) It is possible for one-time believers to disobey God so grievously that they never enter into God's rest. "They were not able to enter, because of their unbelief." (v. 19) To enter the rest which God has prepared for His people, believers must *"Like every effort, so that no one will fall by following the Israelites' example of disobedience."* (Hebrews 4:11)

Hebrews 10:19-31, is full of Comfort (blessings and provisions for believers), but there are also multiple Conditions which believers must fulfill, and there are some serious Warnings for believers to heed! The Divine Provisions - "We have confidence to enter the most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus." (v. 23) The multiple Conditions (and commands to believers) - "Let us keep on drawing near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water." (v. 22) "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess." (v. 23) "Spur one another on toward love and good deeds." (v. 24) "Let us not give up meeting together (as some are in the habit of doing)." (v. 25) The Warnings -It is possible to deliberately keep on sinning after a person has received the knowledge of the truth, with dire consequences involved - "a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God." (vs. 26-27) It is possible for a one-time believer to trample the Son of God under foot and to treat as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and to insult the Spirit of grace with the consequent punishment of dying without mercy. (vs. 28-29)

Hebrews 10:32-39, teaches that a believer needs to PERSEVERE in the faith in spite of severe persecution (public exposure to insult, and imprisonment for the faith, and confiscation of personal property), (vs. 32-34). Maintenance of confidence and PERSEVERANCE in the faith are necessary in order to "receive what God has promised." (v. 36) A believer must choose to believe and thus to be saved, rather than to shrink back from the faith and finally be destroyed. (v. 39)

Hebrews 11, is called the 'Faith Chapter' of the Bible (listing the 'heroes of the Faith'). *"All these people were still living by faith when they died."* (v. 13) (It is very important to read Ezekiel 13:10-16).

In Hebrews 12, believers are commanded to throw off everything that hinders them and the "sin which so easily entangles them." (v. 1) Believers must run with PERSEVERANCE the race marked out for them. (v. 1) Believers must fix their eyes on Jesus, who is the Pioneer and Perfecter of the Faith and who is the believer's Intercessor before the Father. (v. 2) As a believer you must "consider him (Christ) who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." (v. 3) The believer must 'struggle against sin'. (v. 4) A believer must willingly receive the Lord's discipline in his life (v. 5) and he must submit to the Father in order to live. (v. 9) The believer must endure hardship as discipline. (v. 7) If a believer expects to share in God's holiness, he must be willing to receive discipline from the Lord. (v. 10) There is a 'harvest of righteousness and peace' for those believers who have been trained by the painful discipline of the Lord (v. 11) *"Strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. Make level paths for your feet, so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed."* (vs. 12, 13) *"Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord."* (v. 14) *"See to it that no one misses the grace of God."* (v. 15) *"See that no one is sexually immoral."* (v. 16) Serious Warnings are here also. It is possible for the lame Christian to become disabled rather than to be healed. (v. 13) It is possible for a believer to 'miss the grace of God'. (v. 15) It is possible for a 'root of bitterness' to spring up in a believer's life, causing trouble and defilement to many. (v. 16) It is possible for a believer to become godless (like Esau) by selling out his spiritual inheritance. (vs. 16, 17)

According to Hebrews 12:25-29, God speaks to mankind from heaven, revealing His holy will and nature, and warning men to follow the Lord of Heaven. (v. 25) *"We are receiving a Kingdom that cannot be shaken."* (v. 28) Christians are commanded: *"See to it that you do not refuse him (God) who speaks."* (v. 25) It is possible for us believers to "turn away from him who warns us from heaven", rather than continue to "worship God acceptably with reverence and awe", with the result that we will be punished by God who is "a consuming fire". (vs. 28, 29)

According to Hebrews 13:9, it is possible for believers to be "carried away by all kinds of strange teachings." Christians must be on their 'alert' during times of temptation. Jesus said *"Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit (of man) indeed is willing, but the flesh (of man) is weak."* *It is possible for a believer to be tempted, to succumb to 'his own evil desire', and to be 'dragged away and enticed', and to indulge in outright sin (which, when it is full-grown, gives birth to spiritual death).* (See James 1:14-15)

It is possible for a believer to fall into the evil pleasures and friendships of the unsaved world. A one-time believer who "chooses to be the world's friend makes himself God's enemy" (James 4:4).

The often overlooked last two verses of the Book of James contain some vital (and sometimes misunderstood) truths. Writes James (the half-brother of Jesus): *"Dear brothers, if anyone has slipped away from God and no longer trusts the Lord and someone helps him understand the Truth again, that person who brings him back to God will have saved a wandering soul from death, bringing about the forgiveness of his many sins."* (James 5:19-20, Living Bible) As in the case of Simon Peter who denied the Lord three times (and thus, fell into a terrible 'backslidden' condition), so it is possible for any believer to 'fall into sin' and to wander away from the Lord (thus destroying his 'fellowship' with the Lord, and eventually severing his 'relationship' with the Lord). However, according to James, it is possible for such a backslidden believer (as in the case of Simon Peter) to repent of his sins and to be restored to relationship with Christ. However, if it is possible to be restored, it is also possible not to be restored! It is possible for a believer to slip away from the Lord and no longer to trust the Lord, and ultimately (if the backslider is not turned back to the Lord) to experience spiritual death!

God's promises to believers are real, and those promises are most wonderful, but promises cannot be fulfilled unless certain conditions are met by believers. This fact is well established, time and time again in the New Testament. Take I Peter 1:5-9, 13 as an example of this repeated truth. *"You are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time ... THROUGH FAITH."* (v. 5) The faith of believers must be proved genuine (at the time of Christ's return), through suffering all kinds of trials. (v. 7) Believers are being filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, because they are being saved *"THROUGH THEIR LOVE AND FAITH IN THE SAVIOUR."* (vs. 8, 9) You Christians must "prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed." (v. 13) Promises and Conditions are inseparably connected!

According to 2 Peter 1:5-11, a person (sinner) finds his 'standing in Christ' (justification) by Saving Faith. However, faith is only complete and effective when one increasingly adds to it the other great qualities of goodness, knowledge, self-control, PERSEVERANCE, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. (vs. 6, 7) If a believer does not possess these listed ethical qualities, "he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins." (v. 9)

According to 2 Peter 3:16-17, a believer enjoys a 'secure position' in Christ. But, a believer is to be on his guard against the 'error of lawless men'. It is possible for a believer to relax his watchful guard and consequently to "be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from his secure position." (v. 17)

I John 1:5-2:11, contains very precious truths regarding God's provisions for believers, but these provisions are not given automatically. Certain conditions must be met. We (Christians) have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus cleanses from every sin. If we walk in the light, as he is in the light (v. 7); God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. IF we confess our sins to God and IF we continue to maintain an attitude of constant need for God's forgiveness (Note:'Confess' is in the 'present tense' in the Greek language, and therefore 'confession' is an ongoing and continuing attitude which must be maintained for all life). "Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did." (v. 6) He who claims to be a 'Christian' must continue to walk as Jesus walked- in humble dependence on the Heavenly Father, and in daily obedience.

According to I John 2:15-28, believers are given the promise that they will live forever, IF they "PERSEVERE in doing God's will" (v. 17, Williams' translation) *"See that what you have heard from the beginning REMAINS in you. IF it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father."* (v. 25) *"And now, dear children, CONTINUE in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming."* (v. 16) It is possible for believers to be 'led astray' (v. 26) by 'antichrists'.

I John 2:29, teaches that the reality of the 'New Birth' is evidenced by the practice of righteous actions. One can only remain a child of God as he CONTINUES ('present tense' in the Greek language) to love his brothers. (I John 3:10)

Can a person claim to be a 'Christian' if he is 'living in sin' (i.e., if he is habitually practicing sin -living a 'sinful lifestyle')? The answer is rather 'obvious'. Wrote John:

"So if we stay close to him, obedient to him, we won't be sinning either; but as for those who keep on sinning, they should realize this:They sin because they have never really known Him or become His." (I John 3:6, Living Bible) The Greek 'perfect tense', properly translated, refers to persons whose present practice of sinning shows that their 'profession of faith' was false from the beginning. By implication, I believe that this Scripture also refers to persons whose present practice of sinning reveals that they are apostates who have departed from true saving faith in Christ. I believe that this verse teaches that the believer who does not stay close to Christ and who does not remain obedient to Christ, is the person who will (by his 'denial' of Christ) 'be sinning'. He who 'practices' sinning is he who cannot, at the same time, be 'born of God'. The two conditions (i.e., the condition of 'standing begotten of God' and the condition of 'habitually sinning') are totally incompatible and contradictory and cannot exist in a person at the same time. (v. 9) A person (a one-time believer) who reverts to a 'practice of sinning' (and who fails to repent of his sins) destroys his relationship with God (i.e., he is no longer 'begotten of God' or 'saved'). These above-stated truths are rather clearly stated in God's Word! A 'sinning Christian' is a 'contradiction in words!' This is not to say that a Christian will never sin but when he sins, he quickly repents and confesses his sins to Christ, and he is quickly restored to fellowship and relationship with Christ. He does not allow the re-entry of a 'life of sinning' (i.e., a practice of a sinful lifestyle), for he keeps daily 'short accounts' with His loving God. When He sins, he 'claims the blood of Christ' as His immediate (constant) remedy. Thus, he remains 'cleansed from all sin', for he 'keeps himself under the blood of Jesus'. Wrote John to Christians:*"If we (believers) are living in the light of God's presence, just as Christ does, then we have wonderful fellowship and joy with each other, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from every sin."* (I John 1:7, Living Bible) He continues:*"My little children, I am telling you this so that you will stay away from sin. But if you sin, there is someone to plead for you before the Father. His name is Jesus Christ, the one who is all that is good and who pleases God completely. He is the one who took God's wrath against our sins upon himself, and brought us into fellowship with God; and he is the forgiveness for our sins, and not only ours but all the world's."* (I John 2:1-2, Living Bible)

In 2 John 1:8, Christians are told to "watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully."

Jude is a small book with big warnings! Those whom God honors and delivers, He can later destroy because of their persistent unbelief (v. 5), or because of their rebellion against God's authority (v. 6), or because of their indulgence in gross sin (v. 7). It is possible (as in the case of the apostates that Jude warns against) for one-time believers to become "godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord." (v. 4) The actions of apostasy are most brazen and violent and deceptive (vs. 4, 8-10), but these actions will invoke God's ultimate destruction and judgment (v. 10). Notes Robert Shank, "'Twice dead' (v. 12) can only refer to the fact that men who once were alive in Christ have again become spiritually dead by severing their union with Him 'who is our life'." (Life In The Son; pg.174) It is gloriously possible for believers to experience eternal life (v. 21). Through Christ's mighty power, believers can be kept from falling into sin (v. 24). But, it is not only God who is able and responsible to 'keep believers from falling into sin'; it is also the responsibility of believers to 'keep themselves from sinning'. It is a cooperative relationship between the Almighty God and the obedient believer. Commands Jude to Christians: "Stay always within the boundaries where God's love can reach and bless you. Wait patiently for the eternal life that our Lord Jesus Christ in his mercy is going to give you." (Jude 1:21, Living Bible)

God will "give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God...to him who overcomes." (Revelation 2:7) Believers need not be afraid during times of suffering (Revelation 2:10). Believers will be given the 'crown of life'. IF they are faithful "even to the point of death". (Revelation 2:10) Believers will "not be hurt at all by the second death". IF they will be over comers. (Revelation 2:11) 'Hidden Manna' and 'a white stone with a name written on it' will be given to the believer who overcomes. (Revelation 2:17) Christ commands Christians to "hold on to what you have until I come" (Revelation 2:25) Says Christ to believers: "I will give authority over the nations to him who overcomes." (Revelation 2:26) However, it is tragically possible for believers to tolerate compromise, and it is possible for even God's servants to fall into sexual immorality, causing intense spiritual suffering and eventual spiritual death, "unless they repent". (Revelation 2:20-23)

Believers "will walk with Christ, dressed in white, for they are worthy" , IF they do not "soil their clothes" (Revelation 3:4-5).

The believer will be 'dressed in white', and his name will remain in the Book of Life, and his name will be acknowledged before the Father and His angels. IF he continues to overcome. (Revelation 3:5)

God places before the believer "an open door that no one can shut", but believers must keep God's Word and not deny God's name. (Revelation 3:8)

God will keep believers from the hour of trial. IF they keep God's commandment "to God will keep believers from the hour of trial. IF they keep God's commandment "to endure patiently". (Revelation 3:10) Christians are told to "hold on to what you have so that no one will take your crown." (Revelations 3:11) Christ will make the believer "a pillar in the temple of my God", and the believer will never leave it, and the believer will have the name of God and the name of the Holy City written on him. IF he continues to overcome. (Revelation 3:12)

It is dreadfully possible for believers to become 'lukewarm' spiritually, invoking God's anger, and the possible judgment of being 'spit out of God's mouth'. (Revelation 3:16)

Believers are greatly loved by God, but they must be willing to receive God's rebukes and His discipline, which are meant to lead them to earnestness and to repentance. (Revelation 3:19)

It is possible for one-time believers to become self-sufficient, proud, and self-deceived (not realizing that they have become "wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked"). (Revelation 3:17)

Christ will give the believer the right to sit with Him on His throne, IF he continues to overcome. (Revelation 3:21)

The believer *"will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son "*. *IF he continues to overcome.* (Revelation 21:7) *"But the cowardly who turn back from following me, and those who are unfaithful to me, their doom is in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur. This is the Second Death."* (Revelation 21:8, Living Bible)

God promises a share in the 'Tree of Life', and in the 'Holy City'. "IF the believer does not add or subtract from *"the words of the prophecy of this book."* (Revelation 22:18)

Many times, in the forgoing Scriptures, where we have looked at the 'perseverance of the believer' and the 'security of the believer', the 'contingency word' IF has appeared. " IF you will do this", says the Lord, "then I will do that". Fulfilled promises because of kept conditions! No person becomes a Christian initially without meeting certain 'conditions', and no one remains a Christian without meeting certain 'conditions' (and all the 'conditions' are God-given). Spiritual life (both in 'obtaining' and in 'maintaining') is based on 'contingencies'. Salvation, while it originates with God alone, is nevertheless a cooperative relationship between the initiating Saviour and the responding believer.

SUMMARY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHINGS ON "PERSEVERANCE OF BELIEVERS"

There are scores of New Testament Scriptures which encourage Christians to 'persevere in the Faith' (i.e., not to succumb to temptations and other pressures in life, but to remain true to the Lord until 'the end of life').

Even though the theme of Christology (the doctrine of the 'person and nature of Christ') is a great theme of the Book of Hebrews, the primary theme of Hebrews is 'Perseverance of the Saints' (i.e., 'let us hold fast'). Notes Robert Shank (regarding the proper understanding of the theme of the Book of Hebrews): "The phrase 'let us go on' appears but once (Hebrews 6:1). '*Let us go on*', he writes, 'unto perfection'. The writer may have reference to his intention to proceed to the advanced development of the doctrine of Christ to which he proposes to lead them in the course of his letter. Or it may be a call to his readers to advance from spiritual infancy in which he found them (Hebrews 5:11-13) toward the maturity (v.14) which is possible for all who will grasp it. Actually, both things are within the writer's purpose. Certainly, it is his intention to proceed toward the fuller development of his Christology. But the presentation of his Christology is not an end in itself. The principal burden of the letter is not 'let us go on', but 'let us hold fast'. In contrast with the exhortation 'let us go on unto perfection', which occurs but once, the exhortation 'let us hold fast our confession' occurs twice:(Hebrews 4:14;10:23) and the epistle abounds with cognate exhortations:*'if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end'* (3:6); *'if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end'* (3:14); *'lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God'* (3:12); *'lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin'* (3:13); *'lest at any time we should slip away'* (2:1); *'if we neglect so great salvation'* (2:3); *'harden not your hearts'* (3:8,15); *'lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief'* (4:11); *'show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end'* (6:11); *'let us keep on drawing near with a true heart in full assurance of faith'* (10:22); *'cast not away therefore your confidence'* (10:35); *'for ye have need of patience, that... ye might receive the promise'* (10:36); *'the just shall live by faith:but if he drawback, my soul shall have no pleasure in him'* (10:38); *'lest ye be wearied and faint'* (12:3); *'despise not the chastening of the Lord nor faint when thou art rebuked of him'* (12:5); *'be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live'* (12:9); *'lest that which is lame be turned out of the way'* (12:13); *'lest any man fail of the grace of God'* (12:15); *'lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who sold his birthright'* (12:16); *'if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven'* (12:25); *'be not carried away with divers and strange doctrines'* (13:9); *'let us keep going forth unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach'* (13:13).

Any emphasis in the Epistle to the Hebrews on going on toward spiritual maturity is secondary. The burden of the writer's 'word of exhortation', is that his readers 'hold fast the confession of their hope' in Jesus Christ as the only Savior and 'the Source of eternal salvation unto all who obey Him.'" (Life In The Son; Robert Shank; pgs. 231-234)

The highly respected writer (from the early 20th century), James Denney, in his well known book 'The Death of Christ', believed the main thrust of the Book of Hebrews was 'conservation of the Faith'. He writes, "The author (of Hebrews) was not an evangelist so much as a pastor, and it is not the initiation of Christianity, but its conservation, with which he deals throughout" The internationally-known New Tes-

tament scholar, William Barclay, agrees. He writes: "When we sum it all up, we can say that Hebrews is a letter written by a great teacher, written by a man whom we would call a professor, to a little group or college of Christians in Rome. He was their teacher; at the moment he was separated from them; he was afraid that they were drifting away from the faith; and so he wrote this letter to them."

When studying the New Testament, it is helpful to look at larger sections of Scripture with three thoughts in mind: (1) Promises to be claimed, (2) Conditions to be met, (3) Warnings to be heeded. With these three ideas in mind, let us briefly 'scan' some of the relevant New Testament passages, all of which deal with the important subject of the 'perseverance of believers' and the 'security of believers'. Space will not permit the quotation of many Scriptures, but I will attempt a brief summary of the 'key' points in several of the New Testament passages.

In Matthew 18:21-25, God promises total forgiveness of one's total 'debt' to God, provided that one is willing to forgive those who have sinned against him. A lack of mercy and forgiveness of others incites the wrath of the Lord, and actually forfeits one's own forgiveness.

In Matthew 24:4, 5, 11-13, 23-26, the Lord promises to save those who 'endure to the end' (v. 13). Believers are warned of the possibility of being led astray by false 'Christ's'. Multiplied wickedness in the earth can cause the 'cooling' of a believer's love for God (v. 12). In Matthew 25:1-3, in Christ's parable of the Marriage Feast, believers are warned against neglecting to purchase 'oil', thus resulting in their lamps going out when Christ comes (v. 8), and being shut out of the marriage feast while trying too late to purchase on (vs. 10-12).

In Luke 8:11-15, believers are taught that spiritual fruitfulness and productivity (v. 15) is the result of hearing the Word, holding it fast in an honest and good heart, and patiently enduring. Christians must guard against the devil stealing the Word from their hearts. They must guard against shallowness and falling away during temptation (v. 13), and they must also guard against their lives being choked by the 'cares and riches and pleasures of life' (v. 14).

In Luke 11:24-28, persons whose lives have been initially cleansed from evil must guard against evil spirits which are seeking re-entrance into the lives of those who had previously experienced deliverance. This Scripture apparently is teaching that, following one's cleansing from sin, there must be positive 'infilling' of one's life with the blessed presence of the Holy Spirit (to prevent re-entry of any 'evil spirits').

In Luke 12:42-46, the Master (Christ) sets believers over his 'household' and over all his possessions. Faithfulness and wise management of God-entrusted responsibilities is expected from all servants. The servants (believers) are exhorted not to become impatient at the delay of the Master's coming. Impatience can lead to mistreatment of those persons who have been entrusted to their stewardship, leading to a 'life of debauchery' (v. 45). Such faithless stewards will be punished with a severe 'beating' and assigned to the 'place of the unfaithful' (vs. 46, 47).

John 6:66-71, teaches that believers must continue to follow Christ, rather than 'drawing back' and no longer going with Him (v. 66). There is a possibility (as in the case of Judas Iscariot) of a one-time believer 'betraying' Jesus (vs. 70, 71).

In John 8:31-32, Jesus states that persons can be His disciples (and 'know the truth which shall set them free') if they hold to His teachings and continue in His Word. John 8:51, states that a person shall never see (spiritual) death if he keeps God's Word. Acts 14:21-22, reveals that a large number of persons became disciples to the Lord. It is recorded that Paul strengthened the disciples and encouraged them to

'remain true to the faith'. Paul taught that Christians 'must go through many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God'.

In Paul's popular teaching in Romans 6:11-23, he teaches that it is possible for one's 'body parts' to be yielded as 'instruments of sin and wickedness' (vs. 12, 13). Paul warns against believers entertaining a shallow attitude toward God's grace, and a casual attitude towards sinning, and he exhorts believers never to claim that grace quickly provides for one's practice of sinning (v. 15). Paul says that offering one's self to obey sin results in final spiritual death (v. 16). In Romans 8:13, Paul says that one will die if he lives according to his 'sinful nature'.

Romans 11:20-22, teaches that a person enjoys a 'standing in Christ' if he has 'faith', 'humility', 'godly fear' and 'reverence' - and provided that he continues 'in God's kindness'. God will not spare those who persist in unbelief. Unbelief causes the branch to be broken off the Vine. Those who do not continue in God's kindness will be cut out (v. 22).

Romans 14:15-23, teaches that a believer must act in love by carefully refraining from anything that is a source of stumbling to his fellow Christian. A Christian must guide his life and actions by 'righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit' (v. 18). It is possible for a believer to be offended by and even destroyed by a fellow believer. It is possible for a believer to destroy the work of God and to cause a fellow Christian to stumble by his insensitive and offending actions (vs. 20, 21). It is possible for a believer to sin as a result of doing things with doubt rather than with faith (v. 23). I Corinthians 9:23-27, teaches that a person (believer) will enjoy "a crown that will last forever" (v. 25) if he is willing to undergo God's strict training and if he runs the spiritual race with 'aim and purpose' (i.e., 'beat my body and make it my slave'). Paul (wholesomely) feared that "after I have preached to others, I myself will be disqualified for the prize" (v. 27).

Serious warnings are issued to believers in I Corinthians 10:1-22. It is possible, after a believer has experienced many spiritual blessings, for God no longer to be pleased with him (v. 5). It is possible for one who has experienced 'spiritual food and drink' to set his heart on evil things (as the Israelites in the wilderness did- (verse 6). It is possible for a believer to fall into idolatry and sexual immorality, and consequently to be destroyed by God (vs. 7, 8). It is possible for a believer to 'test' (over-tempt) the Lord and to be destroyed by the Lord (v. 9). It is possible for a believer to fall into a life of grumbling against the Lord and to be 'killed by the destroying angel' (v. 10). Wrote Paul, "*These things happened to them (the Israelites in the wilderness) as examples and were written down as warnings for us. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!*" (vs. 11, 12) "*I do not want you (believers) to be participants with demons.*" (v. 20) *Don't arouse the Lord's jealousy* (v. 22).

I Corinthians 11:27-32, notes that it is possible for a believer to become insensitive to the spiritual significance of 'The Lord's Supper', and consequently to sin 'against the body and blood of the Lord' and bring 'judgment on himself' (vs. 27, 29). Some even died in the Early Church because they insensitively partook of the Lord's Supper (v. 30).

I Corinthians 15:1-2, teach that if one does not hold firmly to the word, which he received for initial salvation, he has 'believed in vain' (v. 2).

2 Corinthians 11:2-4, teaches that a gullible believer can deceptively be led away from his pure and single-hearted devotion to Christ, into false teachings (as illustrated by Eve's deception by Satan- 2 Corinthians 11:3-4).

2 Corinthians 12:21-13:5, teaches that it is possible for a one-time believer to sin grievously (impurity, sexual sin, debauchery) without being activated to repentance.

Paul warns believers against reverting to a life of 'legalism', after having been initially set free from sin through God's mighty grace. With great sadness, Paul writes to the Galatians Christians who had reverted to 'legalism'; *"You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; You have fallen away from grace"* (Galatians 5:4).

Someone said, "If a believer takes one step towards God, God takes a thousand steps toward the believer!" God is the 'God who acts' - the God who initiates, the God who is 'eager to respond' to any person who demonstrates any degree of desire to 'know God'. Someone wisely said, "It is not hard to live the Christian life; it is impossible - unless, of course, God's Spirit indwells and empowers the believer." Philippians 2:12-16 contains both Promises and Conditions, as these relate to one's salvation. As a believer, you can be encouraged, for *"God works in you to will and do what pleases Him."* (v. 13) Because of the inward work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer, he can become 'blameless and pure', a child of God 'without fault in a crooked and depraved generation', and he can be a *'shining star in the universe'* (v. 15). But, with the promises and divine provisions, there are some conditions to be met: *"Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling"* (v. 12). Christians are to *'do everything without complaining or arguing'* (v. 14).

Colossians 1:21-23, speaks of both a wonderful Promise to be claimed, and a serious Condition to be met. "God has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation. If you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel.

"Colossians 2:4-8, contains all three- the Promise (divine provision), the Condition, and the Warning. The Promise (the divinely-given provision)- *"You received Christ Jesus as Lord"* (v. 6). The Condition- *"Continue to live in Christ, rooted and built up him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness"* (vs. 6, 7). The Warning- *"See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ"* (v. 8)

Colossians 2:18-19, warns believers against the possibility of falling 'prey' to a deceptive philosophy (v. 18), the result of which is disqualification for the spiritual prize. It is possible for a believer to succumb to the teachings and practices of a false philosophy, and consequently to lose *"connection with the Head (Christ)"*. (v. 19)

I Thessalonians 3:1-8, teach that it is possible for believers to be unsettled by the inevitable trials and persecutions which all believers are destined to experience. (vs. 3, 4) It is possible for a believer to fade during temptation and to lose his faith, resulting in the efforts of the soul-winner becoming 'useless'. (v. 5)

Paul urges Timothy (Paul's young 'son in the Faith') to *"fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience."* (I Timothy 1:18-19) Paul teaches that it is possible for a believer to turn to false doctrines (I Timothy 1:3). It is possible for a believer to 'fall from grace' and to begin promoting controversial doctrines (regarding law keeping) rather than promoting the work of God, which is faith (I Timothy 1:4). It is dreadful to think about, but it is possible for a believer to wander away from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith, and to turn to "meaningless talk". (I Timothy 1:6) It is possible (as in the case of Hymenaeus and Alexander) to reject faith and a good conscience, and thus to make 'shipwreck' of one's faith. (I Timothy 1:19-20)

I Timothy 4:1-16 contains wonderful Promises, multiple Conditions, and serious Warnings. The Promises - Godliness holds *"promise for both the present life and the life to come."* (v. 8) The Living God saves

those who believe. (v. 10) The Conditions - *"Train yourself to be godly."* (v. 7) "Set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity." (v. 12) "Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift." (vs. 12, 14) *"Watch your life and doctrine closely. PERSEVERE in them, because IF you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers."* The Warnings - It is possible to *"abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons."* (v. 1) *It is possible for one's conscience (apparently even the conscience of a one-time believer - according to the context of the Scripture) to become "seared as with a hot iron."* (v. 2)

I Timothy 5:8, teaches that it is possible for a believer to 'deny the faith' and, as such, to become 'worse than an outright unbeliever'. I Timothy 5:6, 11-15, contain some serious warnings for Christians. It is possible for sensual desires to overcome a believer's dedication to Christ. (v. 11) It is possible for believers to break holy pledges, and to fall into hurtful habits, and thus to incur the judgment of God. (vs. 12-13) It is possible for a believer to turn away from the faith "to follow Satan." (v. 15) It is possible for a believer to begin living for pleasure and thus to die spiritually. (v. 6)

I Timothy 6:9-12, believers are urged to flee from the 'love of money', which is the 'root of all kinds of evil'. (vs. 10-11) Believers are urged to pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. (v. 11) Believers are urged to "fight the good fight of the faith." (v. 12a) Believers are urged (commanded) to "take hold of the eternal life to which you were called." (v. 12) This portion of Scripture also contains a serious warning (especially relevant to modern-day Christians who live in a materialistically-oriented society). I Timothy 6:9-10 teaches that it is possible for believers to fall in love with money, resulting in "wandering from the faith and piercing themselves with many grief's", and plunging themselves into "ruin and destruction". In order for the materially wealthy believer to "take hold of the life that is truly life" and to establish "a firm foundation for the coming age", he/she is required to be generous and "rich in good deeds". The selfish and the greedy person will be judged by the Lord. (I Timothy 6:17-19)

According to I Timothy 6:20-21, it is possible for believers to succumb to the godless talk and foolish arguments of worldly 'knowledge' and, consequently to 'wander from the faith' ('lose their faith' (J.D. Phillips' translation).

"We (Christians) will live with him and we will reign with him (Christ). IF we died with him, and IF we ENDURE." (2 Timothy 2:11-12) It is possible for a believer to "disown Him" (God), with the result, that God will disown that person (v. 12). In such a case, the faithful character of God does not stand in question (v. 13). *"Quarrelling about words only ruins those who listen."* (2 Timothy 2:14). *It is possible for a believer (as in the case of Hymenaeus and Philetus), to engage in 'godless chatter' and consequently to 'wander from the truth' and to cause others to have their faith destroyed.* (2 Timothy 2:16-18)

Hebrews 2:1-3, teaches that it is possible for believers to 'drift away' from 'what we have heard' (the message of faith). (v. 1) It is possible for believers to neglect and to ignore God's 'great salvation', resulting in just punishment. (vs. 2, 3)

Hebrews 3:6-19, contains Promises, Conditions, and Warnings. The Promises- "Christ is faithful over God's house" (which are believers). (v. 6) "We are his house" (that is, Christ lives in us), and "we have come to share in Christ." (v. 14) The Conditions "Encourage one another daily, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness." (v. 13) "If we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast." (v. 6); "If we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first." (v. 14) The warnings it is possible for believers to harden their hearts, and to stray away from God's ways, with the tragic result of never entering God's rest. (vs. 7-11) It is possible for 'brothers' (believers) to have a "sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God." (v. 12) It is possible for a believer to become "hardened by

sin's deceitfulness." (vs. 13, 15) It is possible for one-time believers to disobey God so grievously that they never enter into God's rest. "They were not able to enter, because of their unbelief." (v. 19)

To enter the rest which God has prepared for His people, believers must *"Like every effort, so that no one will fall by following the Israelites' example of disobedience."* (Hebrews 4:11)

Hebrews 10:19-31, is full of Comfort (blessings and provisions for believers), but there are also multiple Conditions which believers must fulfill, and there are some serious Warnings for believers to heed! The Divine Provisions - "We have confidence to enter the most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus." (v. 23) The multiple Conditions (and commands to believers) - "Let us keep on drawing near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water." (v. 22) "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess." (v. 23) "Spur one another on toward love and good deeds." (v. 24) "Let us not give up meeting together (as some are in the habit of doing)." (v. 25) The Warnings -It is possible to deliberately keep on sinning after a person has received the knowledge of the truth, with dire consequences involved - "a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God." (vs. 26-27) It is possible for a one-time believer to trample the Son of God under foot and to treat as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and to insult the Spirit of grace with the consequent punishment of dying without mercy. (vs. 28-29)

Hebrews 10:32-39, teaches that a believer needs to PERSEVERE in the faith in spite of severe persecution (public exposure to insult, and imprisonment for the faith, and confiscation of personal property), (vs. 32-34). Maintenance of confidence and PERSEVERANCE in the faith are necessary in order to "receive what God has promised." (v. 36) A believer must choose to believe and thus to be saved, rather than to shrink back from the faith and finally be destroyed. (v. 39)

Hebrews 11, is called the 'Faith Chapter' of the Bible (listing the 'heroes of the Faith'). *"All these people were still living by faith when they died."* (v. 13) (It is very important to read Ezekiel 13:10-16).

In Hebrews 12, believers are commanded to throw off everything that hinders them and the "sin which so easily entangles them." (v. 1) Believers must run with PERSEVERANCE the race marked out for them. (v. 1) Believers must fix their eyes on Jesus, who is the Pioneer and Perfecter of the Faith and who is the believer's Intercessor before the Father. (v. 2) As a believer you must "consider him (Christ) who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." (v. 3) The believer must 'struggle against sin'. (v. 4) A believer must willingly receive the Lord's discipline in his life (v. 5) and he must submit to the Father in order to live. (v. 9) The believer must endure hardship as discipline. (v. 7) If a believer expects to share in God's holiness, he must be willing to receive discipline from the Lord. (v. 10) There is a 'harvest of righteousness and peace' for those believers who have been trained by the painful discipline of the Lord (v. 11) *"Strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. Make level paths for your feet, so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed."* (vs. 12, 13) *"Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord."* (v. 14) *"See to it that no one misses the grace of God."* (v. 15) *"See that no one is sexually immoral."* (v. 16) Serious Warnings are here also. It is possible for the lame Christian to become disabled rather than to be healed. (v. 13) It is possible for a believer to 'miss the grace of God'. (v. 15) It is possible for a 'root of bitterness' to spring up in a believer's life, causing trouble and defilement to many. (v. 16) It is possible for a believer to become godless (like Esau) by selling out his spiritual inheritance. (vs. 16, 17)

According to Hebrews 12:25-29, God speaks to mankind from heaven, revealing His holy will and nature, and warning men to follow the Lord of Heaven. (v. 25) *"We are receiving a Kingdom that cannot be shaken."* (v. 28) Christians are commanded: *"See to it that you do not refuse him (God) who speaks."* (v. 25) It

is possible for us believers to "turn away from him who warns us from heaven", rather than continue to "worship God acceptably with reverence and awe", with the result that we will be punished by God who is "a consuming fire". (vs. 28, 29)

According to Hebrews 13:9, it is possible for believers to be "carried away by all kinds of strange teachings." Christians must be on their 'alert' during times of temptation. Jesus said *"Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit (of man) indeed is willing, but the flesh (of man) is weak."* *It is possible for a believer to be tempted, to succumb to 'his own evil desire', and to be 'dragged away and enticed', and to indulge in outright sin (which, when it is full-grown, gives birth to spiritual death).* (See James 1:14-15)

It is possible for a believer to fall into the evil pleasures and friendships of the unsaved world. A one-time believer who "chooses to be the world's friend makes himself God's enemy" (James 4:4).

The often overlooked last two verses of the Book of James contain some vital (and sometimes misunderstood) truths. Writes James (the half-brother of Jesus): *"Dear brothers, if anyone has slipped away from God and no longer trusts the Lord and someone helps him understand the Truth again, that person who brings him back to God will have saved a wandering soul from death, bringing about the forgiveness of his many sins."* (James 5:19-20, Living Bible) As in the case of Simon Peter who denied the Lord three times (and thus, fell into a terrible 'backslidden' condition), so it is possible for any believer to 'fall into sin' and to wander away from the Lord (thus destroying his 'fellowship' with the Lord, and eventually severing his 'relationship' with the Lord). However, according to James, it is possible for such a backslidden believer (as in the case of Simon Peter) to repent of his sins and to be restored to relationship with Christ. However, if it is possible to be restored, it is also possible not to be restored! It is possible for a believer to slip away from the Lord and no longer to trust the Lord, and ultimately (if the backslider is not turned back to the Lord) to experience spiritual death!

God's promises to believers are real, and those promises are most wonderful, but promises cannot be fulfilled unless certain conditions are met by believers. This fact is well established, time and time again in the New Testament. Take I Peter 1:5-9, 13 as an example of this repeated truth. *"You are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time ... THROUGH FAITH."* (v. 5) The faith of believers must be proved genuine (at the time of Christ's return), through suffering all kinds of trials. (v. 7) Believers are being filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, because they are being saved, **THROUGH THEIR LOVE AND FAITH IN THE SAVIOUR.** (vs. 8, 9) You Christians must "prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed." (v. 13) Promises and Conditions are inseparably connected!

According to 2 Peter 1:5-11, a person (sinner) finds his 'standing in Christ' (justification) by Saving Faith. However, faith is only complete and effective when one increasingly adds to it the other great qualities of goodness, knowledge, self-control, PERSEVERANCE, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. (vs. 6, 7) If a believer does not possess these listed ethical qualities, "he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins." (v. 9)

According to 2 Peter 3:16-17, a believer enjoys a 'secure position' in Christ. But, a believer is to be on his guard against the 'error of lawless men'. It is possible for a believer to relax his watchful guard and consequently to "be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from his secure position." (v. 17)

I John 1:5-2:11, contains very precious truths regarding God's provisions for believers, but these provisions are not given automatically. Certain conditions must be met. We (Christians) have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus cleanses from every sin. IF we walk in the light, as he is in the light (v.

7); God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. IF we confess our sins to God and IF we continue to maintain an attitude of constant need for God's forgiveness (Note:'Confess' is in the 'present tense' in the Greek language, and therefore 'confession' is an ongoing and continuing attitude which must be maintained for all life). "Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did." (v. 6) He who claims to be a 'Christian' must continue to walk as Jesus walked- in humble dependence on the Heavenly Father, and in daily obedience.

According to I John 2:15-28, believers are given the promise that they will live forever . IF they "PERSEVERE in doing God's will" (v. 17, Williams' translation) "*See that what you have heard from the beginning REMAINS in you. IF it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father.*" (v. 25) "*And now, dear children, CONTINUE in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.*" (v. 16) It is possible for believers to be 'led astray' (v. 26) by 'antichrists'.

I John 2:29, teaches that the reality of the 'New Birth' is evidenced by the practice of righteous actions. One can only remain a child of God as he CONTINUES ('present tense' in the Greek language) to love his brothers. (I John 3:10)

Can a person claim to be a 'Christian' if he is 'living in sin' (i.e., if he is habitually practicing sin -living a 'sinful lifestyle')? The answer is rather 'obvious'. Wrote John:

"So if we stay close to him, obedient to him, we won't be sinning either; but as for those who keep on sinning, they should realize this:They sin because they have never really known Him or become His." (I John 3:6, Living Bible) The Greek 'perfect tense', properly translated, refers to persons whose present practice of sinning shows that their 'profession of faith' was false from the beginning. By implication, I believe that this Scripture also refers to persons whose present practice of sinning reveals that they are apostates who have departed from true saving faith in Christ. I believe that this verse teaches that the believer who does not stay close to Christ and who does not remain obedient to Christ, is the person who will (by his 'denial' of Christ) 'be sinning'. He who 'practices' sinning is he who cannot, at the same time, be 'born of God'. The two conditions (i.e., the condition of 'standing begotten of God' and the condition of 'habitually sinning') are totally incompatible and contradictory and cannot exist in a person at the same time. (v. 9) A person (a one-time believer) who reverts to a 'practice of sinning' (and who fails to repent of his sins) destroys his relationship with God (i.e., he is no longer 'begotten of God' or 'saved'). These above-stated truths are rather clearly stated in God's Word! A 'sinning Christian' is a 'contradiction in words'! This is not to say that a Christian will never sin but when he sins, he quickly repents and confesses his sins to Christ, and he is quickly restored to fellowship and relationship with Christ. He does not allow the re-entry of a 'life of sinning' (i.e., a practice of a sinful lifestyle), for he keeps daily 'short accounts' with His loving God. When He sins, he 'claims the blood of Christ' as His immediate (constant) remedy. Thus, he remains 'cleansed from all sin', for he 'keeps himself under the blood of Jesus'. Wrote John to Christians:"If we (believers) are living in the light of God's presence, just as Christ does, then we have wonderful fellowship and joy with each other, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from every sin." (I John 1:7, Living Bible) He continues:"My little children, I am telling you this so that you will stay away from sin. But if you sin, there is someone to plead for you before the Father. His name is Jesus Christ, the one who is all that is good and who pleases God completely. He is the one who took God's wrath against our sins upon himself, and brought us into fellowship with God; and he is the forgiveness for our sins, and not only ours but all the world's." (I John 2:1-2, Living Bible)

In 2 John 1:8, Christians are told to *"watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully."*

Jude is a small book with big warnings! Those whom God honors and delivers, He can later destroy because of their persistent unbelief (v. 5), or because of their rebellion against God's authority (v. 6), or because of their indulgence in gross sin (v. 7). It is possible (as in the case of the apostates that Jude warns against) for one-time believers to become "godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord." (v. 4) The actions of apostasy are most brazen and violent and deceptive (vs. 4, 8-10), but these actions will invoke God's ultimate destruction and judgment (v. 10). Notes Robert Shank, "'Twice dead' (v. 12) can only refer to the fact that men who once were alive in Christ have again become spiritually dead by severing their union with Him 'who is our life'." (Life In The Son; pg.174) It is gloriously possible for believers to experience eternal life (v. 21). Through Christ's mighty power, believers can be kept from falling into sin (v. 24). But, it is not only God who is able and responsible to 'keep believers from falling into sin'; it is also the responsibility of believers to 'keep themselves from sinning'. It is a cooperative relationship between the Almighty God and the obedient believer. Commands Jude to Christians: "Stay always within the boundaries where God's love can reach and bless you. Wait patiently for the eternal life that our Lord Jesus Christ in his mercy is going to give you." (Jude 1:21, Living Bible)

God will *"give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God...to him who overcomes."* (Revelation 2:7) Believers need not be afraid during times of suffering (Revelation 2:10). Believers will be given the 'crown of life'. IF they are faithful *"even to the point of death"*. (Revelation 2:10) Believers will *"not be hurt at all by the second death"*. IF they will be over comers. (Revelation 2:11) 'Hidden Manna' and 'a white stone with a name written on it' will be given to the believer who overcomes. (Revelation 2:17) Christ commands Christians to *"hold on to what you have until I come"* (Revelation 2:25) Says Christ to believers: *"I will give authority over the nations to him who overcomes."* (Revelation 2:26) However, it is tragically possible for believers to tolerate compromise, and it is possible for even God's servants to fall into sexual immorality, causing intense spiritual suffering and eventual spiritual death, *"unless they repent"*. (Revelation 2:20-23)

Believers *"will walk with Christ, dressed in white, for they are worthy"*. IF they do not *"soil their clothes"* (Revelation 3:4-5).

The believer will be 'dressed in white', and his name will remain in the Book of Life, and his name will be acknowledged before the Father and His angels. IF he continues to overcome. (Revelation 3:5)

God places before the believer *"an open door that no one can shut"*, but believers must keep God's Word and not deny God's name. (Revelation 3:8)

God will keep believers from the hour of trial. IF they keep God's commandment *"to God will keep believers from the hour of trial. IF they keep God's commandment "to endure patiently"*. (Revelation 3:10) Christians are told to *"hold on to what you have so that no one will take your crown."* (Revelations 3:11) Christ will make the believer *"a pillar in the temple of my God", and the believer will never leave it, and the believer will have the name of God and the name of the Holy City written on him. IF he continues to overcome.* (Revelation 3:12)

It is dreadfully possible for believers to become 'lukewarm' spiritually, invoking God's anger, and the possible judgment of being 'spit out of God's mouth'. (Revelation 3:16)

Believers are greatly loved by God, but they must be willing to receive God's rebukes and His discipline, which are meant to lead them to earnestness and to repentance. (Revelation 3:19)

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY – (As I Understand It)

It is possible for one-time believers to become self-sufficient, proud, and self-deceived (not realizing that they have become "wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked"). (Revelation 3:17)

Christ will give the believer the right to sit with Him on His throne. IF he continues to overcome. (Revelation 3:21)

The believer *"will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son "*. IF he continues to overcome. (Revelation 21:7) *"But the cowardly who turn back from following me, and those who are unfaithful to me...their doom is in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur. This is the Second Death."* (Revelation 21:8, Living Bible)

God promises a share in the 'Tree of Life', and in the 'Holy City'. IF the believer does not add or subtract from *"the words of the prophecy of this book."* (Revelation 22:18)

Many times, in the foregoing Scriptures, where we have looked at the 'perseverance of the believer' and the 'security of the believer', the 'contingency word' IF has appeared. "IF you will do this", says the Lord, "then I will do that". Fulfilled promises because of kept conditions! No person becomes a Christian initially without meeting certain 'conditions', and no one remains a Christian without meeting certain 'conditions' (and all the 'conditions' are God-given). Spiritual life (both in 'obtaining' and in 'maintaining') is based on 'contingencies'. Salvation, while it originates with God alone, is nevertheless a cooperative relationship between the initiating Saviour and the responding believer.

SECURITY FOR BELIEVERS!

I was eighteen. I had a great desire to study about my faith. So I enrolled in a correspondence course distributed through A Bible institute in Los Angeles. I scored perfectly on each of the rather easy tests.

One lesson was labeled "The Position of the Believer." It taught an irreversible (eternal) security for anyone who accepted Christ. I gave the expected answers on the test. But I also wrote a letter expressing my objections to the teaching. I received a short letter assuring me that if I read the enclosed brochure I could not fail to be convinced.

The brochure said there were two views about the security of one's salvation.

One view was illustrated by the way a cat carries its young. The other view was illustrated by the way the monkey carries its young.

My Calvinistic friends who advocated irreversible and eternal security said their view was illustrated by the cat. A cat carries its kittens by mouth. If the kitten falls, it is the mother cat's fault.

The other view (supposedly mine) was illustrated by the monkey. If the little fellow fell off the back of its mother, it had no one to blame but itself. It should have hung on and been more careful.

That presentation demanded my response. So I wrote that the cat illustration probably was adequate for the view they taught. But the monkey illustration would never do for that which others and I believed.

Illustrations are helpful aids to understanding. But they must be carefully selected and carefully used. The Bible uses many illustrations. Often a single word or term is in fact an illustration, metaphor, or analogy. "Born again" is one of those illustrating words.

With this caution regarding illustrations or analogies in mind, I suggested to my teachers that their cat illustration taken seriously was a violation of plain biblical teaching. There could be no view of salvation, which relieved the individual believer of resistibility for his relationship to God. Nor is it biblical or reasonable to blame God for our sins, apostasy, and neglect of Him. Indeed, one cannot save themselves, but neither can one be saved apart from himself. We were created by God to be responsible and respond-able."

Grace is the picture of Gods givingness, of His reach out to savingly touch us. Faith is my response to His reach. My faith response is an acknowledgment of my sin, my inability to save myself, my need of a Saviour. *"As therefore you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so live in Him,*

rooted and built up in him and established in the faith. " (Colossians 2:6) What was required of me to "receive" Jesus is always required to continue and live (walk) in Him.

The cat illustration taken seriously makes God responsible for any break in the relationship with God. It relieves the individual of responsibility for continuing to respond to the grace of God. In many forms, this error is spread today by well-intentioned but misled teachers. The Bible never relieves the individual believer of his responsibility for constant response to the grace (givingness) of God.

But what about the monkey illustration? It was a complete misunderstanding of what the Bible taught and of what I believed. Certainly, I know of no evangelical who believes that my security is dependent alone on what I can do. But indeed my security is dependent on my response to what God can do for me. The monkey illustration is a distortion. God does not force me to be a believer or a receiver of Christ. But once I receive Christ and thereby begin a relationship with Him, I am not a little monkey hanging on for dear life. The illustration fails to indicate the believer's relationship to Christ.

I suggested an alternative illustration for what I and multiplied thousands believe. I said that while understanding the limitations of illustrations I would prefer that of the willing handclasp.

God offers His hand. He takes the initiative (grace). I respond by willingly placing my hand in His (faith). A new relationship is begun. He holds me as long as I want my hand to be in His. My security is illustrated by this common interlocking of hands by friends. The Bible vividly portrays the reconciliation which makes God and me friends.

But to suggest that God, having taken my hand, now says to me, "Ah, now I've got you; just try to get away; nothing you can ever do again can get you loose from me," is clear violation of the total biblical thrust and of the nature of relationships. My security in the sustaining of our relationship, which has most of the characteristics of a human one except there is one party to the covenant who is unfailing and unchanging. God is constant and unchanging in His attitude and acts of "steadfast love." The constancy of our Lord does indeed beget a growing constancy in us as we "walk" or "live" in Christ.

I believe in the security of the believer. But it is conditional rather than unconditional. I am secure while I keep on believing, trusting, and responding. To be secure in any other fashion would violate all that is meant by personal relationship and covenant.

I believe in the "perseverance of the saints" if they persevere in their relationship with Jesus as both Saviour and Lord. I believe that all the resources for persevering that were available to Jesus - the Holy Spirit, communion with the Father - are available to us. Indeed, we have the Word of God, the grace of God, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and the church to help us persevere. We should most certainly be secure. But at no point in our personal history does God intend to depersonalize us by destroying our will, our power to choose, our capability of responding positively or negatively to our relationship with God.

The Bible beautifully uses marriage as an analogy of relationship to Christ. Christ, the Bridegroom, wants to give himself fully to the bride - the church. The meaning is both corporate

(church) and individual. Commitment is two-way. The resulting covenant is two-way. The Bible also speaks of the violation of this relationship. Israel's going a whoring is an eloquent though horrible illustration of the facts of life. No one is unconditionally secure until he is ushered into the presence of Jesus to be with Him forever.

The teachers of unconditional security hold out false security in the name of the Bible. They appeal to illustrating Bible words. So they argue if you are once "born", you can't be "unborn." But "born" is used to beautifully illustrate the newness of life which the Christian experiences in a saving relationship with Jesus, not to erect a doctrine of false security. Once in a family as a son or daughter, always a member of the family is a similar distortion of analogy. In our natural life, we had nothing to say about being born or becoming a member of a family. In our spiritual life we do, in fact, have the final say. We must be alert to the misuse of analogy, metaphor, and biblical illustration.

Proponents of unconditional security often appeal to John 10:27-29. The clincher is "shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand." True. No force outside the person can break the relationship. The same applies to their appeal to Romans 8:38-39. Indeed nothing can separate us from the love of God - except ourselves. (Read the previous verses and discover that the words are addressed to "more than conquerors," not violators of a relationship with Christ.)

Appeal is also made to the theory of imputation of righteousness. That means that we are not responsible for righteousness but that Christ's righteousness is by religious magic made ours despite our own flaws, sins, or apostasy. This makes a farce of the Christian faith by removing it from reality. Advocates say, "When God looks at you He does not see you, for Christ stands between you and God. So your dirty rags are never seen, only the white raiment of Jesus." The trouble is that God sees us as we are at all times. We are not saved merely positionally. We are either really saved, transformed, and made new, or Christianity is hypocrisy. The righteousness of Christ is continually imparted to me as I respond to Him and permit the Holy Spirit to work within me. I can have a clean heart!

There are Bible passages, which should shock those still clinging to the error of unconditional eternal security. Look at a few.

Examine the strong attack of Peter against false teachers who once clearly knew Jesus as Saviour and Lord. II Peter 2:20-22 is a direct and conclusive contradiction of the teaching of unconditional security. Christians "escaped" but became "entangled" again in the "defilements of the world," and their "last state has become worse for them than the first." Compare this with II Peter 1:9-11, "...if you do this you will never fall." Clearly, "to fall" is so possible that warnings are necessary. One need not fall "if"!

The book to the Hebrews was written as a check against threatening apostasy. Genuine Christians are addressed (6:10 and 10:32-34), nevertheless warning is appropriate. Note especially 10:23 which urges holding "fast the confession of our hope without wavering" and follows up with a severe picture of punishment if they do not (10:26-29).

Apostasy - utter and final - is possibly for "those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit" (6:4-6). No wonder the writer concludes "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (10:31). Jesus twice said, "He who endures to the end will be saved" (Matthew 10:22; 24:13).

We observe Paul is anxiety for his converts who had received the Spirit (Galatians 2:2-5) and were running well yet later were not obeying the truth (5:7). He was alarmed. His labor could be in vain (4:11). See also I Thessalonians 3:5). Paul did not doubt the reality of his own conversion, but he still disciplined himself lest he should fail or fall (I Corinthians 9:27).

And finally, the words to the church at Ephesus found in Revelation 2:4,5 should cause us to reject reliance in false security: "I will come to you and remove your lamp stand from its place, unless you repent."

The Bible teaches conditional security. But what a wonderful security it is. God is always for me - every moment. Christ died for me. Christ rose for me. Christ sits at the Father's right hand praying for me. The Holy Spirit is for me. The Bible is given to me as my guide. The church was instituted of God for me. What security!

But Bible and reason tell me if I ignore all that is for me, I have no right to expect God to treat me as though He had given me a lifelong irrevocable life insurance policy.

If we walk in the Spirit by faith and obedience - if we maintain our relationship with Christ - God and heaven is ours forever!

Biblical quotations from Revised Standard Version.

Light and Life Series, No.1

Writer:Lloyd H. Knox

THE DOUBLE WILL OF GOD!

God's perfect will is the salvation of all, but the exercise of God's perfect will is not determinative, absolute, irresistible, inevitable, unconditional. God's perfect will (i.e., the salvation of all persons) must always be studied with God's permissive will in view (i.e., God permits any man to reject His salvation, and, as a result, reap God's judgment), Is God's perfect will ever frustrated? Yes. For if, it were not, all men would be saved! His perfect will is frustrated to the extent that wicked men, who are capable of repentance~ refuse to repent! When men refuse to repent (or when I, a believer, refuse to resist the devil and instead succumb to sin even though divine resources are available to me), God's perfect will is frustrated and God's permissive will is operative. God limits Himself by permitting the genuine exercise of human will.

God has foreknowledge of my sins, but He does not in any way determine my sins. His perfect will is holiness of life for every man, but His permissive will allows men to disobey and to sin and ultimately to be lost!

God wills that all men be saved! He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (II Peter 3:9). When the Bible describes God's will for universal salvation, the 'universal I must not be reduced in meaning to "some". God wills to save all; Christ died for all; the Holy Spirit calls all to repentance. Why are not all going to be saved in the end? Because God 'permits' man to exercise free will in rebellion against God's saving purpose. God's perfect will is the salvation of all, but the exercise of God's perfect will is not determinative, absolute, irresistible, inevitable, and unconditional. The realization of God's perfect will is determined by the reception of God's universal offer of salvation by all men.

Calvin's doctrine of predestination of the righteous necessarily involves God's predestination of the wicked! The God of Calvin is arbitrary, unjust, cruel, and tyrannical when God's actions are not concealed behind the cloud of 'God's inscrutable purposes'. Much is incomprehensible concerning God, but not God's universal saving purpose and Christ's unlimited atonement! Every man can be saved if he will. Christ is able to save to the uttermost - and this includes everyone! God cannot desire the salvation of all persons (the Biblical teaching regarding God's desired or perfect will) and at the same time determine the sin and perdition of some men! Notes Robert Shank:"Calvin's thesis of unconditional particular election and reprobation is predicated on a misapprehension of the import of Romans 9:6-29 which is in radical contradiction of both context (9:30 - 11:36) and the central thesis of the Epistle to the Romans, 'The just shall live by faith! (1:17).'" (Elect in the Son; pg. 223) From the fatal misapprehension of Romans 9:6-29 is derived the assumption of monotheism - determinism, the concept so apparent in Calvin's definition of election ... Calvin's doctrine of election and the unwarranted assumptions of monotheism – determinism - monergism on which it is predicated must be rejected. Confounding predestination with election, denying the authentic agency of Christ in election in full dimension, positing as in abstracted election in which the atonement is symbolic and accessory, Calvin's doctrine of election rests on serious misapprehensions and misconstructions of scripture." (Elect In The Son; by Robert Shank; pgs. 223, 224, 226)

"It is difficult to read at length from Calvin without concluding that he was master at eating his cake and having it too. The left hand giveth, and the right hand taketh away. Calvin's difficulty stemmed from the fact that he labored under an erroneous fundamental assumption. His cardinal error was his failure to acknowledge that the will of God has more than a single aspects which led to his consequent denial that

God desires to have all men to be saved. It is apparent from his writings that Calvin reasoned thus: If God truly wished all men to be saved, then all men would be saved. But most men are not saved. Therefore, we must conclude that God does not wish all men to be saved. Calvin's logic is unassailable; but it is based on the erroneous assumption that the will of God has but a single aspect.

"Calvin deplored the fact that his opponents 'recur to the distinction between will and permission, the object being to prove that the wicked perish only by the permission, but not by the will of God'. Certainly, anything within His permission is within God's will. But this does not establish the fact that His will has but a single aspect. All that occurs in the universe is within the permissive will of God. Neither men nor angels nor devils can go beyond the limits of God's permissive will. But it is by no means true that all that occurs is in accord with the perfect will of God.

"One may argue that, since the world is filled with greed, lust, violence, debauchery, hatred, and impenitence. God evidently wishes it to be so and is well pleased. But the scriptures declare otherwise. Although God allows these things to exist in the world, He has revealed His displeasure and wrath with respect to all such things and has commanded all men to repent. Thus, it is evident that there are two aspects of the will of God with respect to sin: His permissive will allows it; but His perfect will forbids it and will bring all sin into judgment.

"There are two aspects of the will of God for men with respect to salvation. Numerous scriptures reveal God's perfect will to have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth' (I Timothy 2:4); but the fact that not all men are saved reflects God's permissive will. If a man is saved, it is in accordance with God's perfect will that all men should be saved; if a man is lost, it is in accordance with God's permissive will that men, being free moral agents rather than mere puppets, may refuse to obey Him. The latitude between God's perfect will and His permissive will is the area within which men function with freedom as responsible moral intelligences accountable before God in solemn judgment. God is at work in humanity 'bringing many sons unto glory' (Hebrews 2:10) through the redemptive process rooted in His grace and wrought in Christ. But as moral intelligences created in His image, men must of their own free will concur in God's redemptive process if they are to share His everlasting glory as His sons. The fact that men are responsible, as free moral agents, is a corollary of the fact that the will of God has two aspects, rather than one.

"The fact that the will of God has two aspects, rather than one, is fully apparent in numerous passages of scripture. Consider the following: '*If any man wills to do His will, he shall know ..*'" (I John 7:17). 'Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father I (Matthew 7:21). 'But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel (boule, purpose) of God for them, being not baptized of John' (Luke 7:30). According to the scriptures, much that happens is contrary to the will of God; it is evident that the will of God has two aspects, rather than one."

Life In The Son, by Robert Shank, pgs. 347-349

CHAPTER 9
“WHY BELIEVE IN MIRACLES?”

CHAPTER 9

“WHY BELIEVE IN MIRACLES?”

INTRODUCTION:

Why believe in the existence of God?

- (1) The existence of an intelligent order points to an intelligent Creator;
- (2) the one-to-one correspondence between internal logic and external laws points to a common Source of origin – God;
- (3) the inclusion of mind within nature as an integral part of nature results in explaining nature essentially in terms of mind, which implies a Super-mind behind the Universe;
- (4) The consistent decrease in the quantity of energy in nature points to an original source of all energy – God.

One needs to be assured that God not only exists but that He is a personal God. The evidence from moral experience points to a personal God. The moral argument in brief is this:

- (1) A sense of Moral ‘Oughtness’ is universal in man.
- (2) This sense of Moral ‘Oughtness’ is meaningless without an objective Moral Law.
- (3) The source of this Moral Law is a Personal, Superhuman Mind.

The evidence from religious experience also definitely points to a personal God. The testimonies are so many, the occasions so varied, the claims so uniform, and the lives of the claimers so pure, that it is extremely foolish and arrogant to disregard religious experience as further evidence for God’s personal existence.

PROPOSITION:

This message is concerned about contrasting the two views of Reality in terms of the Naturalistic view verses the Super-naturalistic view. In this message, I will briefly state why I believe in a supernatural God.

I. NATURALISTIC VIEW OF REALITY

- A. Definition of Naturalism – Fatalistic, deterministic conception of Reality, which believes that the Universe is ‘mechanical’ and ‘close-ended’, and like a perpetual-motion machine with fixed laws over which God has no control. Denies the possibility of any independent or spontaneous event that would supersede the fixed, interlocking ‘laws’ of Nature.
- B. Application of Naturalistic Theory – Denial of Miracle.
1. Prayer for healing – useless, for viruses and germs will follow their normal course that leads to infection and destruction.
 2. Virgin Birth – impossible, for Nature’s ‘Laws’ demand the meeting of sperm and egg for fertilization and human conception.
 3. Resurrection – impossible, for Nature’s ‘Laws’ say that cessation of life spells death.
 4. Reports of Providence – Untrue, for all events of history are predetermined by Nature (“Whatever will be, will be”). Man is helpless to do anything about the circumstances of life.
- C. Metaphoric Picture of Naturalism – A picture of the naturalistic view of reality might be a line of dominos, set on their ends in a row. When the first domino is knocked down, every other domino in the row successively falls down. Thus, similarly, every event and happening is determined by the Whole. There is no independent action on the part of man. He cannot choose or create independently of the Whole, and he cannot escape the influence of the Whole. As the Whole goes, so goes each part in the Whole.
- D. Fatalistic Expression of Naturalism – Philosopher Bertrand Russell expresses a deterministic view of reality, when he says, “Brief and powerless is man’s life. On him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way.”

II. SUPER NATURALISTIC VIEW OF REALITY.

- A. Definition of Supernaturalism – Purposive view of Reality which comprehensively includes Nature’s ‘Laws’ (Mechanical Reality), but allows for novelties and irregularities as a part of Reality, if such uncommon occurrences are necessary to fulfill the goals of that larger Purpose. Allows the acceptance of both Nature’s ‘Laws’ (which are uniform and regular) and Report of Miracles (which are uncommon and irregular) without necessary conflict or contradiction. The Purposive (Super naturalistic) view of Reality is broader and more comprehensive; for mechanism can be used to serve purpose.
- B. Application of Super naturalistic Reality – Constancy in General with Flexibility in Specific. Illustrations of Principle:

1. Personality – The general trend in one’s moral development can be predicted, but not the specific decisions, since decisions fall into the area of purpose and are made, not on the basis of efficient causation, but on the basis of Good as apprehended.
 2. Nature – Although there is uniformity in Nature’s ‘Laws’, Nature shows flexibility in the changing of seasons, and in the variety of days. Constancy, but not identity.
 3. Man’s Various Processes – Man’s physiological processes are mostly mechanical, but man’s mental processes are purposive; therefore, man’s mind not only supercedes his body, but guides it.
- C. Rational Plausibility of Supernaturalism – Just as the body is the medium of expression for the rational mind, so the world with its uniform laws can be the medium for the activity of Divine Mind, Who can supersede nature’s laws if it serves His Purpose. Nature is regular because Mind is self-consistent, but novelty is understandable when an intelligent adaptation to meet a changing circumstance is necessary to serve Purpose or Reason. This world, with its laws, is a subsidiary system, subject to God’s will and eternal purposes.
- D. Supernatural Events To Accomplish Divine Purpose.
1. Incarnation (Virgin Birth) – Intelligent adaptation of Nature’s Laws to cope with man’s failure in human history.
 2. Resurrection – Divine superceding of Natural Law to accomplish God’s purposive demonstration of God’s power over death and Sin.
 3. Miracle – a conspicuous exception to a natural law to achieve the eternal purpose of God, and is therefore not supernatural (but normal), as seen from God’s viewpoint.
 4. Providence – Human History (which includes some irregularities and ‘unexplainable’ happenings from the viewpoint of Naturalism) is simply one of the possible several Stages where Divine Purpose and activity are enacted and manifested. Because God is the Sovereign Ruler of the Universe and the Creator of all natural laws, it is natural event if it would serve His eternal purposes.

CONCLUSION

One who accepts the purposive, super naturalistic view of reality can accept, without contradiction, both the regularity of Nature’s ‘Laws’ and the irregularities of uncommon events. The unique birth, miracles, and resurrection of Jesus are not only historical validities, but also rational feasibilities. Many find miracles difficult to believe, not because of insufficient evidence from history, but because of an inadequate view of reality. The mechanical, fixed naturalistic view of reality is mentally confining because of its forced denial of important facets of reality.

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY – (As I Understand It)!

The one who believes in Supernaturalism, with its revelation of Divine Redemptive Purpose, sees God as one who is intimately involved in human history, including individual destiny. He who believes in a Purposive God sees history moving to a divine climax and consummation.

CHAPTER 10
***“HOW TO DEAL WITH REAL AND
FALSE GUILTS!”***

CHAPTER 10

“HOW TO DEAL WITH REAL AND FALSE GUILTS!”

SCRIPTURE: Psalms 51

INTRODUCTION:

There are some real guilt's and there are some false guilt's, each of which can cause untold misery. Real guilt's are the result of breaking objective moral standards and thus are very serious. False guilt's are the result of false notions, personal impressions, or satanic insults – and must be dealt with differently than real guilts.

PROPOSITION:

It is important to distinguish between the two types of guilt – false and real – and understand the causes and the cures for both. Only as guilt is properly dealt with – be it real guilt or simply guilt feelings – can there be true peace and joy in life.

I. REAL GUILT

A. Causes

1. Transgression against the Known Laws of God. (I John 3:4; Psalms 32:3, 4)
2. Coming Short of Perfect Standard of God.
 - (a) None can attain to the Perfect Standard of God's Righteousness.
 - (b) Some feel that love for God is incompatible with confessions of sin and thus such persons accumulate guilt because of a lack of daily confessions of mistakes as well as sins. (A daily 'soul-purging' is needed by all.)
 - (c) All need daily cleansing of mistakes and failures, even though these are not sins, strictly speaking.

B. Cures

1. Acknowledgement of Transgressing Life. (Psalms 32:5)
Anxiety and guilt come, not from acts which the individual would commit but dares not (Freudian psychology), but from acts which he has committed but wishes that he had not (Christian view).
2. Acceptance of the Son as Saviour. (John 1:12; 3:18; John 1:9; John 5:12; Mark 2:10)
3. Daily Confession of Sins and Mistakes.
 - (a) The doctrine of Perfect Love (Matthew 5:43-48) proclaims only the possibility of not sinning, not that one cannot sin.
 - (b) The doctrine of Perfect Love does not assure perfection in judgment and conduct. Unintentional errors always call for need of confession to God and man.
 - (c) Jesus taught His followers to pray, 'Forgive us our debts' (Matthew 6:12) which humbly acknowledges the constant presence of the 'Earthen Vessel'.
4. Forgive Yourself of Your Past Sins.
 - (a) Refusal to forgive yourself of past sins is a type of concealed spiritual pride, which says, in effect:(1) 'My moral values are superior to the values of Almighty God'; (2) 'I find it hard to believe that someone as 'great' as I could ever have sinned.'
 - (b) Recognize that the Sovereign God is able mysteriously to use even your past sins to serve His purposes and your redemptive interests.

II. FALSE GUILTS

A. CAUSES

1. Notions and convictions induced by others who have an overly sensitive Conscience or false ideas.
 - (a) Illustration: Some have said that sex feelings are sinful or that attraction to the beauty of the opposite sex is sinful. These feelings and attractions are not lust or sin but are part of our normal, healthy life – everybody has them, saint and sinner. However, lust is sin, for lust is a perversion of a normal sexual desire.
 - (b) Illustration: Some have said that self-love is sinful, but self-love is God-given and God-commanded, and to act as if you had none is to indulge in hypocrisy.
 - (c) Illustration: Some have said that ambivalent feelings by teenagers toward parents is wrong, thus causing uneasy guilt-feelings, but such feelings are normal in the unconscious struggling for adult individualism.

- (d) Need for an Objective Moral Standard: The Conscience, by itself, is not a reliable guide to determine right or wrong actions or attitudes. The conscience simply stands guard over the values that one puts into his moral nature, and therefore the conscience itself cannot determine objective rightness or wrongness of a moral value.

One must refer to an objective moral standard (not dependent upon cultural, social, or personal preferences) to determine the actual rightness or wrongness of moral values.

Where does one find the right moral values to feed into his moral nature, over which the conscience merely stands guard? The Holy Scriptures and the Holy Spirit who applies those Scriptures to one's life through the channels of prayer and meditation.

One must always evaluate his conscience to determine the source of its training – whether or not the Trainer of the conscience is reliable.

B. CURES

1. Look to Jesus, rather than to others, for a standard for Personal Convictions. (Romans 8:34; 14:5b; 14:22; I John 3:20, 21)
2. Recognize that you are made worthy and acceptable 'in the Beloved' and have been made an inheritor of the riches of grace; and in response to these unspeakable blessings to be full of good works. (Titus 2:14)
3. Commit Satan's accusations to the Lord who has the power to rebuke the Evil One (Jude 9), and commit yourself quietly and confidently to the protection of the Holy One. (II Thessalonians 3:3, 4; Isaiah 30:15; 41:10.

CONCLUSION:

Jesus has not come to condemn but to save; He has not come to plague us with guilt but to give us a sense of forgiveness; He has not come to make us miserable but to give us a genuine sense of well being. Jesus has come to be our intercessor to plead our case before the Father. It is Jesus' blood, which cleanses from all unrighteousness. You need never feel guilty. When guilt comes, try to find out if it is real or false guilt. Throw your false guilt's into the 'moral wastebasket,' and plead the blood of Jesus for your real guilt. You don't have to earn God's forgiveness; you only need to claim that forgiveness which God makes available to you constantly because of Christ's once-and-for-all sacrifice. You stand forgiven before God if you will but accept that forgiveness humbly and gratefully.

CHAPTER 11

“THE GOD-ORIENTED LIFE!”

- I. CONDITION BEFORE CONVERSION
 - A. COMPLACENCY – Ephesians 2:1-3
 - B. CONVICTION - John 16:8-11

- II. POWER OF CONVERTED LIFE
 - A. EXPERIENCE OF CONVERSION
 - 1. Cause – Incurred Guilt – (John 3:36; I John 3:4)
 - 2. Need – Forgiveness for what I have done (Acts 26:18)
 - 3. Means – Confession (I John 1:9) and Faith (Acts 16:31)

 - B. DESCRIPTION OF CONVERTED LIFE
 - 1. Relationship with God
 Sons of God – John 1:12
 Justified in God’s Sight – Romans 5:1
 Peace with God through Christ
 - 2. Condition of Self
 Peace within (Philippians 4:7)
 Eternal Life Within (I John 5:13)
 Victorious Over Sin (I John 3:6a)
 - 3. Relationship with World
 Good Example (I Timothy 4:12)
 Witness to world of God (Matthew 5:13)

- II. THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE (Ephesians 3:19b; 5:19b)
 - A. NEED FOR SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE
 - 1. Inconsistency of Disciples - Who Is Greatest? Luke 22:24-26.
 - 2. Jesus’ Prayer for Disciples’ Cleansing - John 17:16-17

3. Carnality of Christians – John 17:16-17
Carnal Mind – Romans 8:6
Duplicity of Mind – James 1:7, 8
4. Imperfection of Love in Christians – I Thessalonians 3:9-13
5. Examples in Book of Acts of people who were saved and then later were cleansed and Spirit-filled:
 - (a) Samaritans were converted – Acts 8:5-8
Samaritans were later, as believers, filled with Spirit - Acts 8:14
 - (b) Paul initially submitted to Christ – Acts 9:6
Paul later filled with Spirit – Acts 9:17
 - (c) Cornelius was a devote, God-fearing man – Acts 10:1, 2 . Cornelius later filled with Spirit – Acts 10:44, 45
 - (d) Apollos, a mighty believer, knew only ‘baptism of John – Acts 18:24
 - (e) Twelve men in Ephesus were definitely disciples, not knowing the Holy Spirit – Acts 19

These examples show that there is a definite and second crisis experience. The second crisis experience after the first (conversion) is reserved for God’s children – just Christians.

B. CONDITIONS FOR BEING SPIRIT-FILLED

1. Human Response
 - (a) Consecration – Romans 12:1 (of time, talents, reputation, money, possessions, friends, education, marriage, and vocation.)
 - (b) Faith – Acts 15:8, 9; “Every step in the direction of the fullness is a step of faith. There is a faith of conviction – the fullness is for me. There is a faith of courage – I must have it. There is a faith of committal – I will have it at all cost. There is the faith of clasping – I have it.” (J. Paul Taylor)
2. God’s promised gift
 - (a) Promised – in Old Testament (Luke 1:3-75), and at time of Christ. (Matthew 3:11-12)
 - (b) Fulfilled through Christ’s Sacrifice – Ephesians 5:25b-27.
 - (c) Described preceding Ascension – John 14:16-17, 26.
 - (d) Given by loving, faithful Father – Luke 11:13;
I Thessalonians - 5:23-24.

C. DESCRIPTION OF SPIRIT-FILLED EXPERIENCE AND LIFE

1. Spirit-Filled Experience
 - (a) Purity (Symbolized by Fire – Acts 2:3).

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY – (As I Understand It)

- Means to “Will One Thing” (totally sincere, “passionate eagerness to please God in all things.” Paul Rees.
- Perfection In Love – Mark 12:30, 31.
- (b) Power (Symbolized by Wind – Acts 2:2).
 - To make Christ Central (I Corinthians 1:23,-28).
 - Perfection of Love - I John 4:11-18.

Jesus spoke of Christian perfection which is perfection of love. Perfect love is perfect in quality – no alloy, love filling the whole heart, passionate eagerness to please God. Perfect love is constant love – constant preference for God, despite circumstances or feelings. Perfect love is progressive love – no increase in purity but in quantity or capacity. (Ephesians 3:17)

- (c) Fruit of the Spirit – Galatians 5:22-23.
- (d) Wisdom from Above – James 3:17-18.

D. GROWTH IN SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

1. Conditions for Growth
 - (a) Ernest Endeavor – Philippians 3:12-15; 2:12.
 - (b) Consistent Obedience – John 15:14; I John 3:24a.
 - (c) Resisting of Temptation and Devil – James 4:7; I Peter 5:9.
 - (d) Walking In The Light of Truth – I John 1:7.
2. Content of Growth
 - (a) Knowledge of God – Colossians 1:10.
 - (b) Love for God and Man – I Thessalonians 3:12.
 - (c) Harvest of Righteousness – II Corinthians 9:10.
 - (d) Fruits of Spirit – II Peter 1:5-8.
 - (e) Daily Conformity to God’s will – Romans 12:2.

E. LIMITATIONS IN SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

1. Internal Problems – Weaknesses of Mind and Body (Earthen Vessels – II Corinthians 4:7-10)
 - (a) Weaknesses show Christian’s need for God’s help - Hebrews 4:15.
 - (b) Weariness of body can cause neglect in spiritual life – Matthew 26:41.
 - (c) Weakened mind can lead to misjudgment or misunderstanding – Colossians 3:12-14.
 - (d) Normal desires carried too far or in the wrong direction become sin.

2. External Problems – Trials of circumstances and temptation of Satan.

- (a) Satan is seeking Christian's downfall – I Peter 5:8, 9.
- (b) Temptations present allurements to the flesh – James 1:14, 15. No room for over confidence - I Corinthians 10:12.
- (c) Trials come to test Christian's faith – James 1:12.

*** MISCELLANEOUS CONSIDERATIONS ***

***SCRIPTURES POINTING TO ORIGINAL SIN ***

Genesis 6:5, 12	Jeremiah 17:9	Mark 7:21-22	Psalms 51:5
Romans 5:12	Ephesians 2:3, 5	Psalms 14:2, 3	Psalms 58:3

*** SCRIPTURES POINTING TO MORAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR PERSONAL SINS ***

Deuteronomy 24:16	Proverbs 11:19	Ezekiel 18:4, 20
Jeremiah 31:30	Romans 1:21, 21	John 3:19, 20

*** PERCEPTIVE COMMENTS ON TOPIC OF ORIGINAL SIN ***

“The first sin of the first man changed his whole moral nature, from a Holy to a sinful state; which changed condition, being hereditary, has entered into all his descendents. Yet, everyone is responsible for his own sin.” (Amos Benney in Theological Compend; pg. 111)

“Since our first parents' crime was treason – for the purpose of putting themselves up as their own masters – the infection shows up in us in much the same way. Its symptoms are violent independence, selfishness, self-assertiveness, pride – anything which puts oneself on the throne.” (Don Joy in the Holy Spirit and You; pgs. 84, 85)

“What is meant by the term, original sin? It is that evil tendency with which every individual is born, a tendency which disposes him to do wrong and thus to become not only by nature but by personal choice a sinner. This is explained by the personal exercise of his own free will fall into sin, thus becoming a sinner. The son born to him was like him not only in physical structure but in his moral image as well. From Cain to the present all his descendents have inherited from him a nature depraved and prone to sin like his own.” (Donald Bastian in the Mature Church Member; pg. 31)

CHAPTER 12
***“SYNTHETIC OVERVIEW OF THE
EPISTLE OF I JOHN!”***

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The Book of Ist John is a Book of contrasts. Contrasting words or concepts appear throughout the entire book (light and darkness, love and hate, truth and falsehood, life and death, sin and righteousness, Spirit of God and Spirit of antichrist, love of world and love of God, etc.).

The basis and source of fellowship is described, interrelating the three main stands of arguments in various ways. Three main tests for authentic Christian experience are applied and interrelated (1) The Doctrinal Test (Propositional belief in the Incarnation of Jesus), (2) The Moral Test (Ethical practice in terms of obedience to God’s commands), (3) The Social Test (Relational life in terms of genuine love of the brethren). Like a rope with three strands, these three tests for Christian fellowship are carefully and uniquely interwoven. Nearly all, if not all, paragraphs (or divisions) in the Book can be related to one or more of these tests, i.e., the doctrinal test, the social test, or the moral test.

One might look at the Book of Ist John as a ‘circling ascending staircase’, with the three tests forming the cyclic motion and the study of these three tests in various interrelated ways as the ‘progressive ascension’ in the total arguments of the Book.

1st John 1:1-4 Doctrinal Foundation For Fellowship. (Doctrinal Test; Propositional Truth Regarding Jesus; Accepting The True Person Of Jesus!

Who is Jesus Christ? Did Jesus live before He was born in Bethlehem? Was Jesus really a human being, or did He just appear human? Probably against the background of the subtle Gnostic heresy, John immediately finds it necessary to establish the true person and nature of Jesus, both as to His pre-existence and as to His true humanity.

Basic to all true fellowship with the Father is acceptance of Jesus as the true God-Man that Jesus claimed Himself to be. All claims to fellowship with the Father, apart from experiential knowledge of the Son, are invalid and fallacious.

“That which was from the beginning” (v. 1) (reminiscent of John 1:1) speaks of Jesus’ pre-existence, and thus his deity. Jesus existed consciously, personally, continuously, and intimately in communion with the Father before all time. Jesus, then, is eternal.

The basis and source of fellowship is not only an acceptance of Jesus’ deity (the Gnostics entertained a mystical view of Jesus which in some ways accepted his deity, but they denied his true humanity; therefore John must take great pains to establish the true humanity of Jesus, using a series of four verbs – Heard, Seen, Beheld, and Handled).

John asserts that the basis of fellowship with the Father, and subsequent joy, is acceptance of the Incarnation. Human flesh (considered evil by the Gnostics) is what Jesus took upon himself when He became a man. Jesus did not merely ‘Seem’ to be human (as some Gnostics declared) but He was fully human. Jesus was not a purely spiritual being, but He had a flesh and blood, physical, human body. Jesus – the pre – existent, eternal one – became a human and, while remaining a true human throughout his entire earthly existence, died as a true human. John makes it very clear that Jesus was truly human and that Jesus was one, and the same, as Christ, existing with God eternally.

John’s use of the four verbs (Heard, Seen, Beheld, and Handled) shows a progression in thought in demonstrating the concreteness of Jesus’ humanity (the acceptance of which proves the incarnation and provides the basis for true fellowship with the Father).

The four verbs that John uses to establish the fact of Jesus’ humanity are interesting:

- (1) Heard – (perfect tense). I would translate the phrase as follows: “What we heard from the very human lips of Jesus in the past is continuing to have a profound affect on us.”
- (2) Seen – (Perfect tense). Hearing is good, but seeing is better. I would translate this phrase as: “That which we have seen as we looked at Jesus has never been forgotten but it stills abides in our memory, for what one sees can never be unseen.”

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- (3) Beheld (aorist tense). This Greek word does not mean merely to look at Jesus, but rather to gaze at Jesus. Gazing and closely observing Jesus made the disciples even more certain that Jesus was truly human.
- (4) Handled – (aorist tense). To make no mistake that Jesus was human, the disciples actually felt, touched, and handled Jesus. This was conclusive proof of material reality. Jesus was truly human, with human flesh and bones.

The last two verbs are in the aorist tense, and therefore the words refer to a particular past time, perhaps after the Resurrection when the disciples had opportunity both to gaze at and to handle the Lord Jesus. These two verbs (behold and handle) express a definite and careful investigation by the observer.

1st John 1:5-2:2; Ethical Purity As A Basis For True Fellowship. Moral (Ethical) Test)

Not only is doctrinal soundness regarding the person Jesus a foundation for fellowship, but ethical purity regarding one's attitude toward and experience of sin is a foundation for fellowship with the Father. John moves from the doctrinal (propositional argument) to the ethical (personal and behavioral argument). Not only must one think right doctrinally regarding the person of Jesus, but one must live right ethically regarding one's behavior.

There is no sin or darkness (ethically speaking) in God, but only Light (1:5). There is no sin in God's character or nature. Therefore, those who claim to have fellowship with God (as the Gnostic heretics were claiming to have) must reflect the same type of behavior as God reflects, namely holy and righteous and pure behavior.

Living in sin destroys all fellowship with God (1:6). Because they are walking in ethical darkness, John is bold enough to call the false teachers liars. Because the Gnostics believed that they could indulge the flesh without morally polluting the spirit, their daily walk was characterized by gross sinning. Because they were habitually ordering their behavior in a life of unrighteousness, their claim to intimate fellowship and special knowledge of the Father was totally invalidated. He who claims to have fellowship with the Father must live like the Father!

It is the physical shed blood of Jesus (11:7) (a reference to Jesus' genuine humanity; another way of refuting the dangerous Gnostic heresy, which stated that all physical matter, including a physical body, was inherently evil) which is the basis for atonement of sin and which forms the basis for fellowship with the Father! Not only does God forgive sins, but He erases the very stains of sin – a thorough description of the ethical affects of the atoning work of Christ. Far from practicing sin (as the Gnostics were doing), Jesus' blood not only pardons from sin but also cleanses from the pollution of sin!

Apparently, the Gnostics were denying the existence of sin. Their attitude towards the human body (that it is inherently evil) resulted in them disregarding ethical commands. If the spirit is pure and body is evil, these same Gnostics concluded that the body's passions could be indulged (I John 2:15-17 is an exposition of the passions of the 'flesh') without affecting the purity of the spirit. Thus, if the body's actions (behavior) had no affect on the spirit's spiritual condition, the Gnostics could claim to have intimate fellowship with the Father at the same time as their bodies were being indulged (from the Christian viewpoint) in all kinds of sin. If such (unrighteous) behavior was morally and ethically irrelevant, then practically speaking, sin did not even exist for the Gnostics.

But John contends that ethical behavior is the evidence of spiritual fellowship with the Father. Therefore, the denial of the existence of sin is evidence of self-deception, and results in calling God a liar! (1:8, 10)

Sin is a reality. Sin destroys one's fellowship with the Father. The atonement of Christ is the basis of establishing fellowship with the Father.

To practice sin is to lose all fellowship (and relationship) with the Father. To deny the existence of sin is to call God a liar, is to deny the Truth, is to be self-deceived.

So, while sin is not to be practiced (as the Gnostics were doing even though they denied the existence of sin, 1:8, 10), the possibility of sinning is not to be denied by the true believer whose doctrine (1:1-4) is sound and whose ethical practice is basically righteous (1:5-7).

What is the solution to the problem of sin in the life of a true believer? Confess your sins and God will forgive and cleanse from all sin (1:9).

Recognizing that the Christian norm is to live without any willful sinning (2:1), the reality of the situation is that believers do sin (aorist tense indicates occasional acts of sin instead of habitual sinning, (1st John 3:4-10). This is possible because Jesus is both advocate and propitiation (2:1, 2).

**1st John 2:3-11; Tests For Authentic Fellowship -
(The Moral Test (2:3-6) And The Social Test (2:7-11)).**

John's discussion of ethical behavior (regarding one's wrong attitude toward sin, which issues forth in a practice of sinning) (1:5-2:2) is now further discussed in terms of obedience to God's commandments. There is a steady progression of thought in John's arguments for authentic Christian experience. After discussing doctrinal soundness (1:1-4), he moves into a discussion of ethical practice (1:5-2:2) (and defines the motivation for ethical practice in terms of the character of God and in terms of the commandments of God (2:3-6).

One's claim of having fellowship and union with God must be backed with a life which imitates the life of God (2:6). Just as knowledge of God involves obedience (the moral test), so union with God involves imitation.

Imitation of God's character means not only obedience to propositional truths (doctrines), but is best demonstrated by love in human relationships (2:7-11). There is a progression from the doctrinal (1:1-4), to the moral (ethical) (1:5-2:6), to the social (personal relationships) 2:7-11). Thinking right about Jesus leads one to act right regarding ethical obedience to God's commands, but the latter is concretely expressed in practical human relationships in terms of loving his brother (2:10). One's claim of having fellowship and union with God must be backed with a life which imitates the life of God (2:6). The test of the genuineness of Christian profession of love is one's life.

1st JOHN 2:12-17: Practical Application of Previously – Stated Truths.

The next two paragraphs are practical applications of the three previously expounded tests for authentic Christian experience.

After discussing, the doctrinal test (1:1-4). The moral (ethical) test (1:5-26), and the social (personal) test (2:7-11). John affirms those in the Christian fellowship whose lives evidence that they pass all three tests.

Children experience forgiveness through the name of Jesus. This means that the reality of sin has not been denied (1:8, 10). This means that the blood of Jesus has been applied in the personal atoning of sin (1:7, 9; 2:1-2).

Young men have overcome the evil one. This means that the real presence of sin, the power of Satan, and the provision of Christ have all been acknowledged (all facts that the Gnostics denied).

Fathers have known him that is from the beginning. This knowledge is a true experiential knowledge (in contrast to the false claims of knowledge and fellowship of the Gnostics). The father's knowledge of God has come because of accepting the person of Jesus (1:1-40, because of experiencing the forgiveness and cleansing of sin (1:5-2:2), and because of being in loving relationships with their fellowmen (2:7-11).

The practical application of the doctrinal, moral, and social tests to the family of believers (2:12-14) is very positive and edifying. After John affirms the family of believers in this section and commends them for application of the tests in their lives, John moves into a section of warning (2:15-17).

Probably the Gnostics (whose lives demonstrated unethical and disobedient behavior and whose evil influence was being felt in the Christian fellowship) were in mind when John wrote 2:15-17 (a description of worldliness and its consequences).

The Gnostics were practicing worldliness (lusts of flesh, lusts of eyes, pride of life – reminiscent of both the original fall and the threefold temptations of Jesus in Matthew 4). Because the Gnostics had denied sin, the result was a practice of gross sinning in their daily lives. Even though they claimed to be in intimate fellowship with the Father through their system of special revelation and knowledge, John declares that they are in reality far from God. To live a lifestyle of sinning (the same subject that will later be reiterated in the 'revolving staircase' of truth, in 1st John 3:4-10) is to perish eternally. Of special revelation and knowledge, John declares that they are in reality far from God. To live a lifestyle of sinning (the same subject that will later be reiterated in the 'revolving staircase' of truth, in 1st John 3:4-10) is to perish eternally. Only those who do the will of God (moral obedience) will abide forever (2:17)!

1st John 2:18-27; Doctrinal Soundness Is The Basis For True Fellowship

Those who claim (like the Gnostics) to have fellowship with the Father (to abide) and yet who deny the person of Jesus (that He is the divine Christ) are called antichrists. As the letter moves from descriptions of the doctrinal, moral, and social tests (1:1-2;11), to positive and negative applications of the tests (2:12-17), to refined expositions and emphasis of the tests (2:18-5:21), an intensification in the argument for authentic Christian experience is felt.

John increasingly becomes bold and daring in the pictures he gives of the false professors (2:18-25) of truth, and of the true possessors of truth (3:1-3). In the former case, he boldly asserts that they are antichrists (2:22). In the latter case, he dares to call them children of God (3:1) whose destiny is gloriously wonderful (3:2, 3)!

As the letter progresses, the description of both the true believer and the false professor becomes more intense and focused. In 1st John 2:18-27, by way of contrast, John identifies the true Christian. A true Christian believes in and experiences the Holy Spirit's anointing (2:20, 21). A true Christian believes in the Incarnation. To deny the incarnation is to be diabolical (antichrist). He who denies the incarnation denies "the Father and the Son." (Again, the recurring theme of fellowship with the Father is stated). A true Christian is one who believes and knows by experience that there is no way to truly know God except through the Son. A true Christian is one who does not accept new doctrines, ideas, and traditions of men, but rather he adheres to and practices the authoritative message of the early Church, as recorded in Scripture. The Word of Jesus, which is the Word of truth, is the objective safeguard against falsehood. The subjective safeguard against falsehood is the indwelling Holy Spirit (2:20).

**1st John 2:28-3:10: Character Of The Christian Ethically Described –
(Positively And Negatively)**

With a progressively greater intensity, John applies the tests for authentic Christian experience. He applies (both positively and negatively) the ethical (moral) test, and he then applies in greater detail the social (love) test (3:11-24).

The application of the moral test, positively, is found in 2:28-3:3, and the application of the moral (ethical) test, negatively, is found in 3:4-10.

Note the positive application of the moral test (2:28-3:3).

An added dimension to the moral test (not yet mentioned in the letter), as regards motivation for righteous living, is found in 2:28. John says that a spur to righteous living and faithful service is the knowledge that Christ is coming to earth again (v. 28). Living righteously will give confidence when Jesus returns,. Those whose lives are characterized by righteousness are called children of God, because the righteous ones reflect the character of the Righteous One.

The character of the Christian is ethically described, negatively, in 3:4-10. The begotten one (wonderfully described in 3:1-3) does not practice sinning (3:4-10). John has already refuted the heretics who claimed to be beyond the possibility of sinning (1:8, 10). While they denied the existence of sin, they were in reality ordering their behavior in sinful ways. But true believers, while they never deny the reality of sin doctrinally and ethically speaking, and while they must acknowledge the possibility (and probability?) of actual cases of sinful acts in their lives (2:1-2), must nevertheless realize that an habitual lifestyle of sinning is totally incompatible and contradictory to authentic Christian experience (3:4-10).

Sin is described as lawlessness (3:4), and the very purpose for Christ's first coming was to take away sins (3:5). The way to keep from habitually sinning is to constantly abide in Christ (3:6, 7). The Gnostics claimed to abide in God (to have special 'inside' knowledge of God and intimate fellowship with God), but their evil moral behavior (practicing sin) was such that all their high claims must be repudiated on the basis of their low moral performance! In other words, a person is known, and best described, by his character. The one who habitually practices righteousness (in spite of occasional sin which is immediately atoned for because of the propitiatory work of Christ, 1st John 2:2) is of God. The one who habitually sins is of the Devil. As long as one appropriates the nature and benefits of Christ, it is impossible to 'be' righteous (as the Gnostics claimed) without bothering to practice righteousness. (Note: There is a popular, perverted doctrine today that claims that one is saved 'in' his sins, not 'from' his sins, that he can be 'imputed' righteous without any evidence of actual change of behavior. This doctrine is an application of the Gnostic heresy that one can be considered righteous in God's sight apart from an habitual practice of righteous deeds. The Bible teaches that justification – i.e., being reckoned righteous – is inseparably connected with regeneration – i.e., being made righteous through God's divine empowering.) "If even isolated sins are so incongruous, what is utterly impossible is persistence in sin, 'a character, a prevailing habit, and not primarily an act.'" (Westcott).

1st JOHN 3:11-24; Character of the Christian Relational Described (Self – Giving Love)

John proceeds to describe in considerable detail the dynamics of love as the authenticating and climaxing test for true Christian profession. With increasing emphasis in the latter half of the letter, John dwells upon the greatest of the three main tests for authentic Christian experience. The refrain of Christian love is repeated in 4:7-21. So in two long passages (3:11-24 and 4:7-21) John emphasizes the dynamics and the application of Christian love. The abstract and doctrinal (belief in the Incarnation) becomes more concrete in the moral (obedience to God's commands), and the concrete could not become more concrete than in that which John emphasizes at great lengths – the practical expressions of love in human relationships (3:11-24), a love patterned after the very love of God Himself (4:7-21).

Between the two long passages on love is inserted a concise application of the moral test (as it is applied to testing the spirits, 1st John 4:1-6).

Self giving love (the social test for authentic Christian experience) is described in the following ways (3:11-24):

- (1) Personal love (3:11-15) – this love is not abstract, general love for all the world, but it is personal, individual love for specific persons. This personal love will produce righteous works (the social test and the oral test are interwoven here) which will be a silent rebuke to the ungodly, even incurring the murderous wrath of the ungodly (3:12-15).
- (2) Perfect love (3:16a) This love is perfect for several reasons:
 - (a) Perfect because this love is God's love (agape love);
 - (b) Perfect because this love cannot be purchased or achieved on the basis of human effort;
 - (c) Perfect because growth in this love is without limitations, from God's perspective. (Note: although this love is perfect in source and quality, it is not perfect in expression, for this love is contained in "earthen vessels").
- (3) Practical love (3:16b-18) – A Christian must possess self-sacrificing love, patterned after Christ's self-giving love.
- (4) Productive love (3:19-24) – The one who experiences the divinely imparted love can be assured that he is of the Truth, and therefore he can have a tranquil heart. Whatever the source of condemnation – be it false or true – God is greater than the condemnation and can restore the believer to true confidence.

The love-filled, confident Christian constantly and habitually keeps God's commandments (3:22-24) – (this is another instance of John interweaving the social and the moral tests for authentic Christian experience). The product of love is confidence – confidence in fearlessly facing God the Father, and confidence in expecting and receiving answers to prayer.

1st John 4:1-6; Application Of The Moral Test In ‘Testing Spirits’.

Before John continues with a further discussion of the Social test (the dynamics of brotherly love, 1st John 4:7-21), John makes another cycle (in the ‘circling, ascending staircase’ of truth) as he inserts a concise description of the practical application of the doctrinal test. In the opening verses of the letter (1st John 1:1-4), John gave a concrete affirmation of Jesus’ true humanity (which is the doctrinal foundation for fellowship with the Father). John has already shown that denial that Jesus is the Christ is evidence that one is an antichrist. John will later return to the doctrinal test when he declares that confession of Jesus’ divine Sonship is evidence of God’s indwelling (4:14, 15), evidence of spiritual birth (5:1a), and the objective basis for belief (5:6-10). In this section, the need for testing the spirits is resumed (4:1) and then the method for testing spirits is described (4:2, 3, 5, 6).

The Christian faith is not an indiscriminate faith. “True faith examines its object before reposing confidence in it.” (Stott) The value of one’s faith is determined by the object of one’s faith.

1st John 4:2, 3 notes that if a teaching or a teacher confesses and adheres to the incarnation, the teaching and teacher are of God. 1st John 4:5, 6 describes another way the moral test can be applied in the ‘testing of spirits’. Is the message accepted by Christians and rejected by non-Christians?

Not only are the need and the method for testing spirits described, but the wonderful results of successful application of the doctrinal test to heretics is described. “O Little children, you are of God, and have overcome them; for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” (1st John 4:4).

“Have overcome” – i.e., stand presently victorious (perfect tense) because of the exceeding power of Christ, which works within.

The doctrinal test has not only intellectual significance, but it has personal significance. The believer’s personal, spiritual existence depends upon the successful application of the doctrinal test in the face of fierce satanic opposition. The many antichrists in the world (2:18) are described (4:3) and defeated (4:4), because He (God) who makes His residence in the Body of the Church is greater than the Evil One who expresses himself in the world (2:15-17) and through the activities of the many antichrists in the world (2:18).

1st John 4:7-21; The Operation Of Agape Love.

After spending a short time on the Doctrinal test, John returns to his favorite theme – the expression of agape love as the greatest evidence that one has true fellowship with the Father.

- (1) Motivation for brotherly love (why love?)
 - (a) God's very nature is love and the origin of all true love is God.
 - (b) God manifested His love perfectly by sending His Son to die for mankind. This portion of Scripture indicates that two great things were accomplished through Christ's coming to earth: The saving work of redemption was accomplished (vs. 9, 10, 14) and an example of concrete loving in terms of active self-giving was given to man (v. 11).
- (2) Meaning of brotherly love (what is love?). The meaning of love is seen in three statements:
 - (a) The practice of love is evidence that one is born of God and knows God (4:7b, 8);
 - (b) Loving one another is evidence of God's indwelling and wonderful presence (4:12);
 - (c) God's love in us is brought to completion, or as Stott says, "God's love for us is perfected only when it is reproduced in us."
- (3) Method of brotherly love (How to realize love?): (a) Conversion to Christ and abiding in Christ is made possible through God's gift of the Holy Spirit. (4:13); (b) "The only way to love (v. 16), as the only way to believe (v. 15), is by dwelling in God and God in us." (Stott)
- (4) Measure of brotherly love (How much love?). Love must be perfected. "John is not suggesting that any Christian's love could in this life be flawlessly perfect, but rather developed and mature, set fixedly upon God." (Stott)

1st John 5:1-12; Basis For The Victorious Life.

John combines all three tests in his argument for authentic Christian experience in 1st John 5:1-2. Doctrinal test (“believeth that Jesus is the Christ”), Social test (“everyone that loveth him”), Moral test (“and keep His commandments”).

After expounding in detail the various tests (the Doctrinal, 1:1-4; 2:18-23; the Social, 3:11-24; 4:7-21; the Moral, 1:5-2:2; 2:28-3:10), John combines the arguments in a concise statement (1st John 5:1-2). He says that love for God is evidenced by love of the brethren (v. 2). He says that belief that Jesus is the Christ is the basis for the new birth. (v. 1) He says that we may know that we love the brethren when we are keeping God’s commandments. The latter is both interesting and significant. Ethical obedience to God’s commandments is the source of our confidence that we are indeed realizing agape love in our relationships with others. We may know that we possess love for others, whether or not we ‘feel’ love for others. Love is not a mere feeling; love is an ethical commitment to another. Ethical obedience to God’s commands and relational commitment in love expressions are inseparable connected.

1st John 5:1-3 outlines the evidence of spiritual victory: (a) the new birth, (b) Love for God and love for other Christians.

1st John 5:4-12 outlines the pathway to victory. The victory that overcomes the world is faith (v. 4), or, to put it more concretely, ‘belief that Jesus is the Son of God’ (v. 5). That is, to overcome all the inner and outer powers that are opposed to God (the meaning of ‘world’), one must believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

The one who is born of God finds that God’s commandments are not burdensome. Why is this? Because his new birth gives him a new nature. (The laws of God are written no longer on tablets of stone but on the tablet of his heart, Hebrews 8:10).

Why should one commit his life to Jesus? What is the objective basis for believing in Jesus? While there are various interpretations given for 1st John 5:6-8, the latter passage appears to mean that the Spirit witnesses to the Divine – human personhood of Jesus, that is, that Jesus was divine not only between His Baptism and Crucifixion, but that He was divine before and during His Baptism (“water”) and during and after His Crucifixion (“blood”). These verses (vs. 6-8) contend that a total incarnation is vital to a total redemption. (A recurrence of the doctrinal test; a refutation of the Gnostic heresy, which taught that the Divine ‘Christ’ entered the earthly Jesus at the Baptism and left the earthly Jesus before his Crucifixion).

Added to the three-fold witness (Spirit, water, and blood) is the witness of God Himself who also witnesses to the Divine – Human person of Jesus. (Added to the witness of the disciples to the Divine – Human person of Jesus in 1:1-4, is the three-fold witness in 5:8 and the witness of God Himself in 5:9). The witness of God to Jesus has abiding validity in the present and future (note the use of the Greek perfect tense).

What is the result when one denies God’s witness to the Divine – Human person of Jesus?

- (1) “He who does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne to His Son” (v. 12b)

What is the result when one accepts God’s witness to the Divine – Human person of Jesus?

- (1) “He who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself.” (v.10a)

“That is (the believer) is given a yet deeper assurance by the inward witness of the Spirit that he has right to trust in Christ.” (Stott)

- (2) “And this is the testimony that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life.” (vs. 11-12a)

1ST John 5:9-21; The Christian's Assurance.

Perhaps the most appropriate way for John to climax his letter is with an affirmation of Christian assurance. The Gnostic heretics prided themselves in claiming 'to know' God. John declares that personal, experiential knowledge is a reality, but he has taken pains to make clear the conditions for such fellowship. After discussing (in a recurring, repetitious manner) the three main tests for authentic experience, he wraps up his letter with words of certitude for those who have met the tests!

1st John 5:13 speaks of assurance of eternal life. 'Know' is in the present tense – i.e., a possession here and now of a present certainty of received life in Christ. 'Have' is in the present tense – i.e., eternal life is not only a future anticipation but a present reality! 'Eternal life' is the 'life of God', for God alone inherently possesses and inhabits eternity! "What we are promised is that here and now there can be given to us a share in the very life of God". (Barclay)

The condition for maintaining present assurance of eternal life is described in the phrase 'to the ones believing' – i.e., a continuing commitment to Jesus Christ.

The subject of assurance is extended to that of answered prayer. Assurance is given to the believer that God is waiting lovingly and expectantly for the believer to come to Him to ask for good things. All requests must be made earnestly, persistently, and in accord with God's will. Such petitions are immediately granted although many times the results of the granting are perceived in the future. (5:14, 15)

After speaking of assurance of eternal life (v. 13), assurance of answered prayer (vs. 14, 15), John turns to another illustration of assurance. John assures the Christian that if a brother Christian sins, the faithful Christian should pray for the restoration of the fallen one "and God will give him life for those whose sin is not mortal". (v. 16)

Assurance of God's fellowship is a key theme of John in his letter; John wants his readers to guard against sinning (1st John 2:1, 3; 6-10) and live a regenerated life, looking forward to future glory (3:1-3). Such a person is protected against Satan (5:18), as contrasted to the world, which is in the grasp of the Evil One (5:19). He who accepts the Son is living according to truth and reality, and keeps himself from the false idols of the world (5:20-21). Such a person is truly alive!

CONTRASTS IN THE BOOK OF I JOHN

Light 1:5,7;2:8,9,10

Darkness - 1:5,6; 2:8,9,11

Love 2:5;2:9,10;3:14,16,17,18;4:7,18

Hate - 2:9,11; 3:14,15; 4:7,19

Truth - 1:8; 2:8; 2:20,27; 3:19; 4:19

Falsehood (liar) - 1:6, 8, 10; 2:4, 21; 2:22, 23, 27

Life - 1:2; 2:17; 2:25; 3:14

Death - 2:17; 3:14

Sin(Guilt)-1:8;2:1;3:9,12,20;2:12;3:6,8

Righteousness (Forgiveness, confidence) -

1:9; 2:2; 2:12; 3:6, 7, 12, 20, 21

Spirit of God - 4:2, 4, 6

Spirit of Anti-Christ - 4:3, 4, 6

Love of World - 2:15, 16

Love of God - 2:15

Spiritual Group(God's children)-2:19,27;3:10;4:6;5:10

Deceptive Group (Satan's children) - 2:19, 26; 3:10; 4:5, 6 ; 5:10

Courage-2:28

Shame - 2:28

Work of Son-3:8

Work of Satan - 3:8

EVIDENCES OF CONVERSION (BOOK OF 1st JOHN)

1

Experimental knowledge of Jesus =

Evidence of Jesus' Deity (1:1-4)

- 1. Doctrinal Test - Belief in Incarnation and Uniqueness of Jesus (Intellectual approach - "Mind" - "Knowing") = Identification of antichrists (2:18; 4:1-6)
- 2. Denial that Jesus is Christ = Condition for spiritual abiding(2:24-27) confidence for Christ's coming (2:28)
- 3. Maintenance of "anointed" spiritual truth = Evidence of God's indwelling (4:14, 15)
- 4. Confession of Jesus 'Divine Sonship' = Evidence of Spiritual Birth (5:1a)
= Objective Basis for Belief (5:6-10)

II Social Test - love of the Brethren (Emotional approach "Emotions", "Feeling")

darkness (2:9) and blindness (2:11)

1. Hatred of Brethren

2. Love of Brethren

= Evidence of Spiritual abiding (2:10)

3. Perversion of Human Desires

Evidence of Love's Perfection (4:12,16)

4. Actions of Sacrificial love

Evidence of Spiritual Birth (3:10b-15; 4:7-12; 5:1 b)

5. Indwelling of Holy Spirit

= Evidence of Worldliness

6. Perfection of love

(2:15,17)

7. Love for God

= Evidence of authentic profession (3:16-18)

= Witness of Spiritual Sonship (4:13)

=Evidence of Spiritual

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY – (As I Understand It)

=Confidence for Christ's
coming (4:17)

Evidenced by obedience to commandments (5:3)

Casteth out fear (4:18)

=Evidenced by love for

Brethren (4:19-21)

Evidence for love of the

Brethren (5:2)

III MORAL TEST - OBEDIENCE TO COMMANDMENTS OF GOD (VOLITIONAL RESPONSE – "WILL", "DOING")

1. Walking in Light = Condition for Fellowship (1:5-7)
2. Confession of Sinful Actions= Condition for forgiveness (1:8-10)
3. Appeal to Christ's Advocacy= Condition for Restoration (2:1-2)
4. Obedience to Commandments = Condition for Experimental Knowledge (2:3-4; 7-8; 3:24)
Condition for Confidence (3:19-24)
Condition for Answered Prayer (3:22)
Evidence of Love for Brethren (5:2)
5. Imitation of Christ = Condition for Spiritual Abiding (2:6)
6. Personal Volitional Response to God = Condition for Vital victorious living (2:12-14; 3:1-3; 5:18-21)
7. "Doing" will of God = Evidence of Spiritual Birth (2:29) Condition for Eternal Abiding in God (2:17)
8. Habitual Practice of Sin = Evidence of Spiritual Death (3:4-10)
9. Overcome the World = Accomplished by Faith of Believer (5:4)
Accomplished by Belief in Jesus' deity (5:5)
10. Ask in Faith = leads to Confidence in God (5:14)
Prayer answers conditioned by God's will (5:15)
Results in restoring fallen brother

CHAPTER 13

LIFE AFTER DEATH - I Corinthians 15

CHAPTER 13

LIFE AFTER DEATH - I CORINTHIANS 15

I. FACT OF THE RESURRECTION BODY

1. Resurrection of the Personality (that part of you that lives on forever). That which identifies you as you! That part of you that gives you uniqueness! I vividly remember the twinkle in my Dad's eyes, his watchful and tender care, his sacrificial gifts, his exuberant and positive voice – His personality was exciting to me through the years, even though outwardly his frame was changing. Will the personality of that one who was so dear to you, continue to live in eternity? Christianity declares that the personality of the Christian will live forever!
2. Resurrection of the Body
 - a. Because the body is created by God and is considered sacred to God. "In biblical thought the body is not a tomb for the soul but a temple of the Holy Spirit; man is not complete apart from the body. Therefore the future blessedness of the believer is not merely the continued existence of his soul, but includes as its richest aspect the resurrection of his body." (The Bible and the Future; Anthony Hoekema; pg.91)
 - b. Because to be spirits alone would leave us incomplete. A body is necessary to express one's personality. The personality lives on forever, but a new body is needed as a vehicle of expression for the personality.
 - c. Because Jesus arose Bodily. The disciples saw him (I Cor. 15:5,6), they touched Him (Thomas the doubter), and Jesus even prepared breakfast for them one morning (John 21:9ff). He could go through closed doors; He could go instantly from place to place.
 - d. Because the Bible declares that Christ is the first fruits of the resurrection (I Corinthians 15:20) "As the first ripe apple in the orchard gives promise of the day when all apples in the orchard will be ripe, so Christ's resurrection gives promise of the resurrection of all believers." (Bastian)

III. NATURE OF THE RESURRECTION BODY

1 Similarities of Earthly Body to Resurrection Body

Jesus' body was identifiable after the resurrection. So, too, our bodies will be recognizable and identifiable in the resurrection.

“³⁵ But someone may ask, ‘How will the dead be raised? What kind of bodies will they have?’ ³⁶ What a foolish question! When you put a seed into the ground, it doesn't grow into a plant unless it dies first. ³⁷ And what you put in the ground is not the plant that will grow, but only a bare seed of wheat or whatever you are planting. ³⁸ Then God gives it the new body he wants it to have. A different plant grows from each kind of seed. ³⁹ Similarly there are different kinds of flesh—one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. ⁴⁰ There are also bodies in the heavens and bodies on the earth. The glory of the heavenly bodies is different from the glory of the earthly bodies. ⁴¹ The sun has one kind of glory, while the moon and stars each have another kind. And even the stars differ from each other in their glory. ⁴² It is the same way with the resurrection of the dead. Our earthly bodies are planted in the ground when we die, but they will be raised to live forever. (I Corinthians 15:35-42a)

Wrote E. Stanley Jones only a few days before he died at the age of 89: "Sometimes I find myself musing in this way: Dear old body - for the past nine decades we've walked the dusty roads together, we've flown across continents, and you've been uncomplaining wven when I've put impossible loads upon you. Thank you for your faithful service, and now you say you'll be faithful till death us do part. When that parting comes, I'll look back at you and salute you and thank you, and I will say to you, 'When I get my immortal body, I hope there will be alot of you there incorporated. Thank you again, for everything.'" (The Divine Yes; pg.149)

In his unique way, Jones continues, "I have often said that when the people stand around and say, 'Well, Brother Stanley is gone,' I want to be able to wink at them, and if I have enough strength I would like to laugh and say, 'Jesus is Lord', Because this will not be death. It will be fuller life. I say this as a half joke, but I believe it will turn out to be reality. Because any person who is In Jesus IS deathless, for he is under the principle and power of resurrection." (The Divine Yes; pg.150)

I Corinthians 15 teaches that God can and does preserve the identity of the small grain seed which is planted and dies. How much more will he preserve the identity of the creatures He loves best! If there is distinctiveness in the different animals (v. 39) and in the celestial bodies (sun, moon, stars), will there not be

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

continuing distinctiveness in the form the resurrection bodies and personalities take?

2. Differences in the Resurrection Body from the Earthly Body. (vs. 42-49)

- a. The Earthly Body is perishable; the resurrection body is imperishable. Said one atheist, "I have within me a deep-seated urge for permanence. I mean a state that is not subject to change and decay."

But atheists and believers alike have bodies that are subject to decay, change, and eventual death! While we are living, we are gradually dying! As humans we have a strong instinct for self-preservation. We fight for life to the very end! We try to preserve our lives, and to postpone death. We try to make ourselves look younger. We avoid going to funerals, hoping to escape the reality of physical death. We have Longevity Centers of health (I read a book one time that reported that if one drank 'distilled water' over a long period of life, one would likely live to be over 100 years old! (So I bought a water distiller.)

But the resurrection body is not subject to change, or decay, or death. The former things of earth will all pass away and the new order of eternal things will be ushered in! "When we've been there 10,000 years. Bright shining as the sun; we've no less days to sing God's praise, than when we've first begun!"

- b. Earthly body ends up in the dishonor of death, but the resurrected body is raised in glory.

I have never yet looked at a pleasant corpse, in spite of what the funeral directors do to beautify it. I have looked at small babes who have died, and the fresh glow of life in their new bodies is gone! I have looked at the bodies of many older people whom I have buried, and the former beauty of their bright countenance is gone from them, as their bodies lay in a beautifully decorated casket!

Death is repulsive to us. It is so undignified! I am shocked when I think of putting what to me was a most beautiful person in the ground, buried under six feet of earth!

But the spiritual body is resurrected to splendor, and glory! The new body is no longer subject to death (Revelation 21:4). We shall have a body like unto the beautiful body of Jesus! (Phillipians 3:21) Jesus was the picture of perfect health following His resurrection. How thankful we can be that Jesus allowed Himself to be seen by so many following His resurrection.

Will not our bodies be like Christ's body – glorious in splendor and yet earthly in appearance?

- c. Earthly body sown in weakness, but spiritual body raised in Power.

As a kid, I used to work out with 'weights', to build my muscles. I admired weight lifters. I used to flex my biceps and compare my muscles with those of neighborhood boys! How I liked to brag about being the strongest kid my age in the neighborhood! But some of those same muscles I used to brag about are now gone, because of lack of consistent use! Using a pencil at a desk does not do what lifting weights used to do for my biceps! Now I would be embarrassed to flex my biceps. In having an arm wrestle with my oldest daughter, I had to really strain to win!

But your spiritual body will be raised in Power (powerful body and mind, not subject to the weaknesses of earthly existence caused by decay and disease!).

(If angels are strong in their spiritual bodies, won't resurrected believers also be strong and healthy?)

- d. Earthly Body is sown a natural body; resurrected body will be a spiritual body.

“The body that is sown is a natural body, but the body to be raised will be a spiritual body. That is, the body we now inhabit is suited to exist in the sphere of nature. In this sense, it shares a common identity with all the creatures of nature from the amoeba upward. It also shares with all of nature the common destiny of death. But the body God will raise will be suited to exist forever in a spiritual realm. No lower creature joins us in this hope.” (Donald Bastian)

CHAPTER 14

“IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS!”

***(A study of the theme of ‘Thanksgiving’
as outlined in the Book of Philippians)***

CHAPTER 14

“IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS”

(A study of the theme of ‘Thanksgiving’ as outlined in the Book of Philippians)

- 1:1-11 Thankful for continuing Partnership with fellow Christians in Gospel.
- 1:12-14 Thankful for God’s Providence during trials.
- 1:15-18 Thankful for Gospel’s Proclamation amidst rivalry.
- 1:19-26 Thankful for Gospel’s Promise of a fruitful life on earth and Prospects of a glorious life in heaven.
- 1:27-30 Thankful for Perseverance amidst persecution.
- 2:1-11 Thankful for Christ’s Participation in human redemption.
- 2:12-13 Thankful for your Personal Potential for greatness through God’s grace.
- 2:14-18 Thankful for the Possibility of Purity in the midst of a perverse generation.
- 2:19-30 Thankful for the Practical Service of fellow workers.
- 3:1-11 Thankful for Personal Participation by faith in the powerful person of Christ.
- 3:12-21 Thankful for the Heavenly Prize of Perfect Redemption through Christ.
- 4:1-7 Thankful for the Power of Prayer to protect and to provide for the trusting believer.
- 4:8-9 Thankful for the Productive results of Positive Pondering of the good.
- 4:10-13 Thankful for God’s steadfast Provision amidst changing circumstances.
- 4:14-23 Thankful for Pleasing Presents from thoughtful friends.

THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL OF CHRIST

Philippians 1

I. PARTNERSHIP IN THE GOSPEL (vs. 1-8)

A. Paul's Salutation (vs. 1-2)

1. From Whom – “Servant of Jesus Christ” (1a)
2. To whom – “To all the saints in Christ Jesus” (1b)
3. Salutatory Blessing (v. 2)
 - a. Grace (Charm, Beauty, winsomeness)
 - b. Peace (total well-being based on God's resources).

B. Paul's Affection (3-8)

1. Motivation – Past Remembrance (v. 3).
 - a. Remembrance of various conversions at Philippi (Lydia, slave-girl, Roman Jailor – Acts 16).
 - b. Remembrance of love (2:12) and liberality (4:15) of Philippian believers for whom Paul had deeper affection than any other Church.
2. Manifestation – Joyful Prayer (vs. 4-5)
3. Confidence – “God will make your lives fit for offering to Christ when He comes” (v. 6)
4. Meaning – Growing affection and not passing sentimentalism (7)
 - a. Partners in sharing the same gift.
 - b. Partners in edifying the Church through teaching the Word.
 - c. Partners in defending the Gospel against common enemies.
 - d. Partners in experiencing persecution for Christ.

II. PURPOSE OF THE GOSPEL (vs. 9-11) – Love

A. Grace of Love (v. 9a)

Because God is giver and man is receiver of divine love (agape) this love is result of God's grace.

B. Growth of Love (vs. 9b-10a)

1. “Knowledge and all Discernment”
 - a. Definition
 - Knowledge based upon mutual experiences
 - Experiential rather than academic

- Practical rather than theoretical
- b. Illustration of Discernment
 - Between God's impressions and man's impressions
 - Between Temptation and yielding to temptation
 - Between weaknesses of flesh (humanity) and sins of spirit (carnality).
 - Between pure motives and ulterior motives
 - Between instantaneous and life-time maturity
- 2. "Approve what Is Excellent"
 - a. Definition – Love enables one to “recognize the highest and the best.” (Phillips)
 - b. Illustrations of examining Priorities
 - Spend more time reading current events or in reading scriptures?
 - Spent time on church promotional gimmicks or in solid prayer?
 - Spend money from income tax returns on household luxury or on missionary needs?
- C. Goodness of Love (vs. 10b-11a)
 - 1. "May Be Pure" – Love perfects inner motives
 - a. Means 'Sun-tested' – Love of Believers is able to stand the heat of man's criticism and the light of men's scrutiny.
 - b. Means 'Sifted by Revolution' – Love of Believer cleanses and sifts out impurities, only to leave pure and sincere motives.
 - 2. "May Be Blameless" – Love negatively guides actions
 - a. Love respects the rights and convictions of others
 - b. Love seeks to live at peace with all men (Short of compromising righteous standards).
 - 3. "Filled With the Fruits of Righteousness" – Love Positively Guides outward actions.
 - a. Love is Active – Not passive.
 - b. Love is Positive – Not negative.
 - c. Love is not mere profession but dynamic possession.
 - d. Love is not religious creed but active deed.
 - e. Love is not good impressions but good expressions.
- D. Goal of Love (v. 11b) – "The glory and praise of God" – God's indwelling love accomplishes three results.
 - 1. Inwardly, it perfects and purifies character.
 - 2. Outwardly, it creates peace and righteousness.

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

3. Upwardly, it brings glory and praise to God.

III. PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL (vs. 12-18)

- A. Principle of Gospel Progress – “Getting the Best out of the Worst”
 1. Illustration from Paul - v.12.
 2. Illustrations from Life
 - a. Illness can give appreciation for good health.
 - b. Sorrow can open new capacities for God’s comfort and enable one to become an understanding comforter to others.
 - c. Financial loss can result in replacing perishable material values with permanent spiritual values.
 - d. Temptation can result in strengthening Christian character.
 - e. Loneliness can result in learning to cultivate a sense of the abiding presence of God.
- B. Power of Gospel Proclamation
 1. Roman Pagans Converted (v. 13) – The rotating guardsmen chained to Paul’s wrist had opportunity regularly to hear Gospel. (Were some of the saints in Caesar’s household – Philippians 4:22 – a result of converted guardsmen?)
 2. Timid Christians Encouraged (v. 14) – “If Paul can be so bold in spite of his adverse circumstances. Should not we be bold to speak for Christ in circumstances that are not nearly as bad?” reasoned Paul’s friends.
 3. Gospel Message Spread (vs. 15-18)
 - a. Paul’s recognized Problem – Competitive contenders for the Gospel (vs. 15-17)
 - b. Paul’s invincible good will – Gladness that Christ Is being proclaimed (v. 18)

IV. PERSONIFICATION OF THE GOSPEL (vs. 19-26)

- A. Principle of winning Life – “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” (v. 21)
- B. Purpose of winning Life – “That I should honor Christ.” (vs. 19,20)
 1. By Confidence in God’s Sovereignty (v. 19)
 - a. Maintenance of Confidence – through prayers of friends and help of Spirit.
 - b. Result of Confidence – “Not be at all ashamed.” (v. 20a)
 2. By Courage in Sacrificial Living – “Whether by life or by death.” (v. 20b).
- C. Problems of Winning Life (Difficult Dilemma) – (vs. 21-23) (Paradoxically, this same great love which was expressed in terms of confidence and courage, was the

same great love which presented Paul with a difficult dilemma between two good experiences.)

1. One Good Experience Is Continuing To Live For Christ On Earth.
 - a. Paul enjoyed sweet fellowship with Christ and was not bitter because of adversity.
 - b. Paul Enjoyed fruitful labor (v. 22).
 - c. Paul enjoyed life because of God's imparted strength (4:13)
2. A Greater Experience Is Departing This Life to Enjoy Christ's Closer Presence (v. 23).
 - a. In heaven there would be no disappointments, no hardships, no physical afflictions, no death.
 - b. In heaven there would be knowledge of Christ by sight instead of knowledge of Christ by faith.

D. Peace of Winning Life (Definite Decision) – (vs. 24-26)

1. Reasons For Decision
 - a. Condition of God's Workers (v. 24).
 - b. Conviction of God's Will (v. 25).
2. Result of Decision
 - a. Rejoicing by workers because Paul will abide right beside them.
 - b. Rejoicing by Paul because of a sense of worthwhileness.

V. POWER OF THE GOSPEL (vs. 27-30)

A. Living In The Truth of the Gospel (v. 27a)

1. Call To Noble Citizenship – “Just as you are very conscious and proud of your Roman citizenship (though far from Rome) and consequently seek always to live the why of your Roman citizenship, so in like manner recognize and be proud of your heavenly citizenship and live in a worthy manner.”
2. Commitment to Noble Citizenship – “Be steadfast in godly living, at all times – with believers or with unbelievers, when praised for faith or persecuted for faith, when enjoying Paul's supportive presence or when absent from Paul.”
3. Motivation for Noble Citizenship – Faithfulness and steadfastness in service, not dependent upon external pressure, but motivated by constraining love and indwelling Spirit.

B. Battling For The Truth of the Gospel (vs. 27b-28).

1. Principle of Proper Priority – ‘Living the truth’ must come before ‘Battling for Truth’, for unless one is living the Truth, verbal battling for the truth is a farce and totally unconvincing to the unbeliever.
2. Illustrations of Modern Battles

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

- a. Humanism – “Glory to man in the highest” is substituted for “Glory to God in the highest.”
 - b. Religious liberalism – A system of denials such as denial of Christ’s deity, denial of Christ’s vicarious atonement, denial of Christ’s bodily resurrection, denial of Christ’s virgin birth.
 - c. Syncretism – System that seeks a reconciliation of all conflicting beliefs from ethnic religions into one organic whole.
 - d. Universalism – Believes that all men everywhere are unconditionally and automatically saved, whether or not they personally exercise faith in Christ, and therefore there is no such thing as hell.
 - e. Cultists – All religions which engage in believing and spreading unbiblical and false doctrines, all of which deny the uniqueness of the Incarnate Son of God.
- C. Suffering For The Truth of the Gospel (vs. 29-30).
1. Perverted Tactic of Persecutors – When the wicked cannot win by rational argumentation, they desire to destroy by physical might.
 2. Illustration from Paul – When the slave girl of Philippi (Acts 16) was converted, Paul’s persecutors imprisoned Paul and beat him.
 3. Productive Use of Suffering – Persecution can be faced fearlessly (v. 28), and glory can be found even in suffering, for the suffering is for the Truth and for Christ.

CHAPTER ONE IN VERSE

“Paul writes to Philippi, wishing them peace.
He that began the good work will not cease.
Some preach of envy, and some of good will;
Christ, notwithstanding, is ministered still.”

-by Alvy E. Ford -

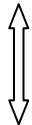
CHAPTER 15
***“AN OVERVIEW OF THE POWERFUL
MESSAGE OF JAMES!”***

CHAPTER 15

“AN OVERVIEW OF THE POWERFUL MESSAGE OF JAMES!”

HOW TO COPE WITH TRIALS – James 1

G O D



1. Sovereign (All-knowing, All powerful, All-loving God “never causes his child needless tears.”).
2. Holy and Blameless (v. 13).
3. Liberal Bestower of Wisdom (v. 5).
4. Giver of good and perfect Gifts (v. 16).
5. Steadfast and Unchanging (v. 17).
6. Spiritual Regenerator (v. 18).

ASK IN FAITH
doing.



1. Means Belief in God’s Attributes, resulting in Total Surrender of (1:6) Emotions – feeling; (2) Intellect – knowing; (3) Will –
Such a person has the qualities of :
 - 1) Stability,
 - (2) Reliability,
 - (3) Single-mindedness,
 - (4) Answered Prayer.

2. Results of Lack of Belief (Doubt) – (vs. 6-8).

WISDOM

- (1) Unstable,
- (2) Unpredictable, (like stormy wave),
- (3) Indecisive,
- (4) (v. 5) Hypocritical,
- (5) Double-Minded,
- (6) No answered prayers.



- (1) Definition of Wisdom: (Ability Practically to know, discern, and practice righteousness)
- (2) Ability to know how to Use Life's experiences to glorify God and benefit man.



1. Definition:
 - (1) To meet life's experiences with Joy;
 - (2) To meet evil's temptations with victory.

TRIALS

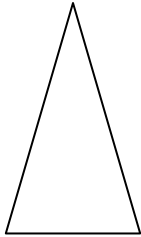
2. Purpose: To test Faith and become approved of God and to produce maturity.

1. Process of using all things and thus gaining God's Approval.

ENDURANCE

2. To Pass the Test means bearing up and not losing heart or courage (1:3b) under trials. ("Keep on keeping on.")

MATURITY is ‘The Process of Becoming’; ‘Christian in the Making’. Results:Verse 4.



1. Perfect – Fitting God’s purpose for which I was Created.
2. Complete – Purging of Character by burning out the dross; removing imperfections of character.
3. Deficient In Nothing – Live more victoriously.

GOAL OF MATURITY IS: CHRISTLIKENESS: CROWN OF LIFE (Heaven) – v. 12.

Explanatory Note to Chart: One who asks in Faith receives Wisdom for the purpose of coping with Trials, which results in building Endurance (i.e., incorporating and using all circumstances to glorify God and to benefit in character development), which Process results increasingly in making a mature character.

THE GOAL OF LIFE – SPIRITUAL MATURITY - (James 1)

I. PURPOSE OF TESTING

- A. To test Faith and to become approved of God (v. 4).
- B. To become Mature (v. 4).

II. SUCCESS IN TESTING

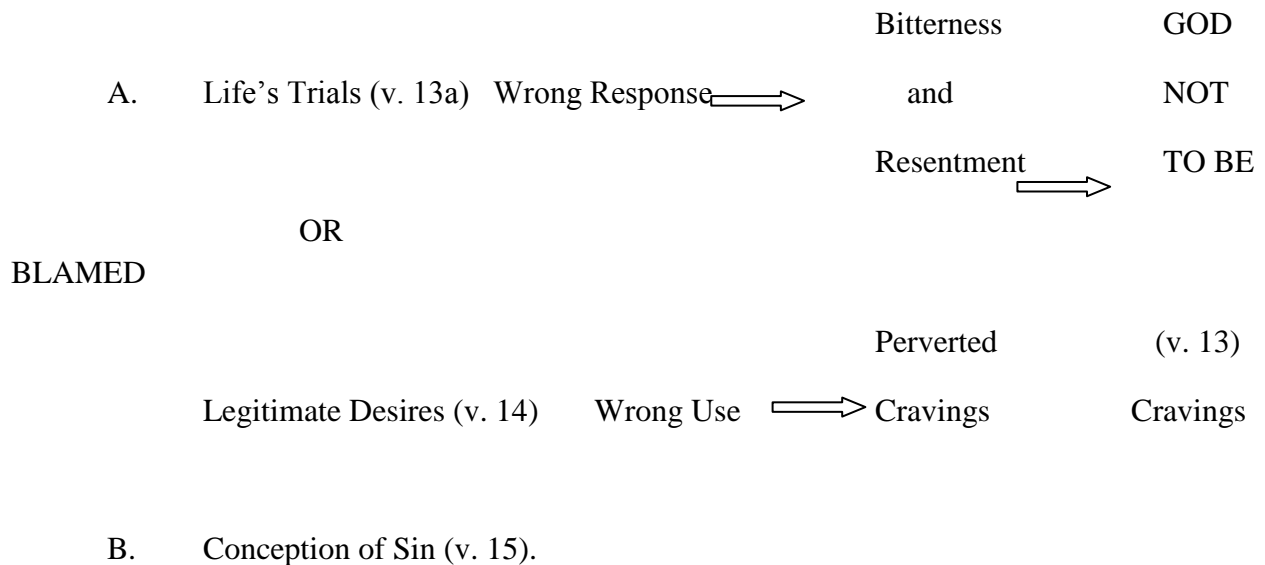
Meet life’s experiences with Joy (v. 2).

Meet evil’s temptations with Victory (v. 3, 12a).

- A. Practice Right Reactions as Children of God’s Family (v.18).
 1. Quick to listen – Slow to speak (v.19).
 2. Slow to anger (for anger never achieves God’s righteous purpose (v. 20)).
 3. Riddance of filthy habits and wicked conduct (v. 21a).

- deception
4. Humble reception of God-implanted, soul-saving message in the heart (v. 21b).
 5. Listen to Word – Practice the Word (Listening without practicing leads to self-deception) – vs. 22-25).
 6. Self-controlled use of tongue (careless tongue is evidence of self- and worthless religion – v. 26).
 7. Practice Pure Religion
 - Care of suffering orphans and widows (v. 26a).
 - Keep morally untarnished by the world (v. 26b).
- A. Illustration of testing
 - B. Brother in Lowly Circumstances exalted through trials, which teach Patience (v. 9).
 - C. Brother in Wealthy Circumstances glory in humiliation caused by change in fortune, (teaching him to rely on unchanging God rather than on unreliable and fading riches (vs. 10-11).

III. FAILURE IN TESTING - Steps Downward



GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

C. Spiritual Death (v. 15).

CHAPTER ONE IN VERSE

“Count it all joy when you’re put to the test.

He who receives, and remembers, is blessed.

Wisdom, if wanted, at God’s hand is sent.

God is not tempted, nor yet will He tempt.”

Alvy Ford -

TESTS OF GENUINE FAITH (James 2)

I. GENUINE FAITH PROVEN BY IMPARTIALITY IN HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS (1-13)

A. Contrast between Rich Man and Poor Man (1-7)

POOR MAN

RICH MAN

<p>1. Wears shabby clothing. (v. 2)</p> <p>2. Treated unfairly and indifferently by being given an inferior seat. (v. 3)</p> <p>3. God has chosen the poor in this world, to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom. (v. 5)</p>	<p>1. Wears fine clothing with gold rings. (v. 2)</p> <p>2. Partiality shown by being given favored seat in Church assembly. (v. 3)</p> <p>3. The rich oppress the poor and blaspheme God's honorable name. (vs. 6, 7)</p>
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B. Contrast between Faith Action and Sin Action (vs. 8-13).

FAITH ACTION

SIN ACTION

<p>1. "Love your neighbor as yourself" (fulfillment of royal law) – (v. 8).</p> <p>2. Law of Liberty – Standard is Mercy and love which triumphs over judgment (vs. 12-13).</p>	<p>1. "Show partiality" (convicted by the law as transgressors) – (v. 9).</p> <p>2. Law of Legalism – Standard is absolute justice, which brings all to judgment (vs. 10-11).</p>
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GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

	Note: The snobbish, the murderer, the adulterer will each be judged.
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II. GENUINE FAITH PROVEN BY PRACTICAL WORKS (14-26).

- A. Practice – Human Extremity Is Faith’s Opportunity (14-17).
- B. Principle – Faith Without Works Is Barren. (A mere ‘theological’ Faith in God’s Existence is barren without accompanying works, for even ‘devils’ believe in this manner – vs. 18-19).

- D. Illustrations:
 - 1. Abraham – Faith actively expressed in obedience through willingness to offer Isaac upon altar. (vs. 20-24)
 - 2. Rahab – Justified by practical expression of faith and compassion in caring for Israelite spies. (vs. 25-26)

CHAPTER TWO IN VERSE

“Have no respect for the rich of this life;
They will oppress you, and render you strife.

Every last bit of the law is in force.

Faith without works is as dead as a corpse.”

Alvy Ford –

THE MARKS OF A MATURE MAN – James 3

- I. SELF-CONTROLLED TONGUE RATHER THAN WILD TONGUE (vs. 1-12)
- A. The Man of Self-Controlled Tongue (vs. 1-2).
1. Man with a sense of accountability (v. 3:1) - (Not overly anxious to teach).
 2. Man with a sensitivity not to offend (v.3:2) - (This mastered skill makes a masterful man).
- B. The Man of Careless Tongue (vs. 3-1-2).
1. Tongue Is Little Member with Powerful Potential (vs. 3-5).
 - (a) Like controlling bit in horses' mouth (v. 3).
 - (b) Like controlling helm in large ship (v. 4).
 - (c) Like tiny spark that sets whole forest ablaze (v. 5).
 2. Tongue Is Little Member with Poisonous Potential (vs. 6-8).
 - (a) Tongue is Hell-inspired instrument of destruction (v. 6).
 - (b) Tongue is tameless in contrast to tameable animals (v. 7, 8a).
 - (c) Tongue is deadly in its spread of poison (v. 8b).
 3. Tongue Is Little Member with Contradictory Use (v. 9-12).
 - (a) Principle: Same tongue used to Bless God and also to curse God-created Man (vs. 9-10) – a serious, hypocritical misuse of the tongue!
 - (b) Illustrations:
 - (1) Can one spring of water send forth both sweet water and bitter? (vs. 11, 12b)
 - (2) Can one tree bear fruit of another species? (v. 12a)
- II. SPIRITUAL WISDOM RATHER THAN WORLDLY WISDOM (vs. 13-18)

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

- A. Marks of the Spiritually Wise (v. 13).
 - 1. Life of steady goodness (v. 13) – good deeds will pour forth.
 - 2. Life of consistent humility – (v. 13) – don't brag about deeds.
- B. Marks of the Worldly Wise (vs. 14-16).
 - 1. Evidence – Presence of jealousy and selfish ambition which leads to disorder and every other kind of evil (v. 16).
 - 2. Result – Earthly, Unspiritual, inspired by the devil, liar (v. 15).
- C. Marks of Heavenly Wisdom (vs. 17-18).
 - 1. Pure
 - 2. Full of quiet gentleness
 - 3. Peace-loving (“Those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of goodness.” (v. 18)
 - 4. Courteous
 - 5. Open to discussion
 - 6. Willing to yield to others
 - 7. Full of Mercy
 - 8. Full of good deeds
 - 9. Wholehearted
 - 10. Straightforward and sincere

CHAPTER THREE IN VERSE

“Bridle the tongue, and the body is tame.

This little member's a billowing flame,

Sending forth blessing and cursing, with ease.

This sort of thing, my dear brother, should cease.”

Alvy Ford -

THE MARKS OF A SENSUAL MAN (James 4)

I. THE FOLLY OF WORLDLY FRIENDSHIP (vs. 1-10)

Friendship of World	Friendship of God
<p>A. Motivation – Constant inner conflicting desires for pleasure. (v. 1)</p> <p>B. Manifestation – Unfulfilled desires cause killing, quarrelling, fighting. (v. 2)</p> <p>C. Meaning – Unfulfilled desires are due to failure in asking God, or due to selfish requests. (v. 3)</p> <p>D. Message – Friendship with the world makes one a proud enemy of God, whom God resists. (vs. 4-6)</p>	<p>A. Motivation – Humble submission to God and reception of strong God-given grace. (vs. 6-7a)</p> <p>B. Manifestation – Resistance of the Devil (causing him to flee); Drawing near to God (causing God to draw near). (vs. 7b-8a)</p> <p>C. Method – Sinners are to wash hands; Double-minded are to cleanse hearts (change joy into gloom; laughter into crying). (vs. 8-9)</p> <p>D. Message – “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.” (v. 10)</p>

II. THE FOLLY OF CRITICAL JUDGMENTALISM (vs. 11-12)

A. To Judge a brother is to Judge the Law. (v. 11)

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- B. To Judge the Law is to remove oneself from obedience to the Law (v. 11) and to usurp God's authority as the sole Judge. (v. 12)

III. THE FOLLY OF SELF-CONFIDENT BOASTING (vs. 13-17)

IV.

- A. Shallow Claim of Boastful – “Travel, go into business, make money.” (v. 13)
- B. Serious Evaluation of God – “Man doesn't know about tomorrow, for life is like a vanishing mist.” (v. 14)
- C. Sensible Norm of Believer - “If the Lord is willing, we will live and do this or that.” (v. 15)
- D. Sensitive Gauge of Sin – “He that knows the right and fails to do it commits sin.” (vs. 16-17)

CHAPTER 4 IN VERSE

“Whence comes the warfare, the envy, the strife?

This is the fruit of the lust in your life.

God stops the proud, to the humble gives grace.

Stand up to Satan; he'll flee from your face.”

Alvy E. Ford -

THE EFFECTIVE MAN VERSES THE INEFFECTIVE MAN (James 5)

- I. THE MAN OF INEFFECTIVE POWER - (v. 1-6)
 - A. Poverty of the Powerful. (v. 1)
 - 1. Fate of the Rich – “Miseries are coming”.
 - 2. Futility of the Rich – “Weep and wail”.
 - B. Putrefaction of The Powerful. (vs. 2-3)
 - 1. Riches have rotted away. (v. 2a)
 - 2. Clothes have been eaten by moths. (v. 2b)
 - 3. God and silver are covered by rust. (v. 3)
 - a. Condemnatory witness against Rich.
 - b. Consuming destruction of Rich.
 - C. Perverseness of the Powerful. (vs. 4-6)
 - 1. The Cause of the Oppressed. (v. 4)
 - a. Complaints of unpaid laborers. (v. 4a)
 - b. Comfort of Almighty Lord. (v. 4b)
 - 2. The Cruelty of the Oppressor. (vs. 5-6)
 - a. Life of selfish indulgence. (v. 5a)
 - b. Life of serious injustice. (vs. 5b-6)
- II. THE MAN OF EFFECTIVE PATIENCE (vs. 7-11)
 - A. Productivity of Patience.
 - 1. Promise of Christ’s Soon Coming. (vs. 7a, 8)
 - 2. Prospects of productive labor (v. 7b)

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

- B. Purpose of Patience.
 - 1. To enhance Christian fellowship. (v. 9a)
 - 2. To escape Christ's judgment. (v. 9b)
- C. Personification of Patience.
 - 1. General illustration of Prophets. (v. 10)
 - a. Prophets spoke authoritatively.
 - b. Prophets suffered exemplarily.
 - c. Prophets rejoiced eventually.
 - 2. Specific illustration of Job. (v. 11)
 - a. Patience of Job – “You have heard”.
 - b. Provision for Job – “You know how Lord provided.”

V. THE MAN OF EFFECTIVE PROMISE. (v. 12)

- A. Prohibition In Promise-Making. (vs. 12a)
 - 1. Do not use an oath.
 - 2. Do not swear by heaven or earth.
- B. Perfection in Promise-Making. (v. 12b)
 - 1. Performance – Respond with simple ‘Yes’ or ‘No’.
 - 2. Prevention – “You will not come under God's judgment.”

VI. THE MAN OF EFFECTIVE PRAYER. (vs. 13-18)

- A. Procedure of Effective Prayer.
 - 1. Pray when in trouble. (v. 13a)
 - 2. Praise when in triumph. (v. 13b)
 - 3. Call for elders of Church when in sickness. (v. 14)
- B. Performance of Effective Prayer.

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1. Heal the sick man. (v. 15a)
 2. Forgive the sinful man. (v. 15b)
- C. Prerequisite of Effective Prayer.
1. Confess sins to one another. (v. 16a)
 2. Pray for one another. (16b)
- D. Personification of Effective Prayer.
1. Elijah's ordinary person. (v. 17a)
 2. Elijah's extraordinary prayer. (vs. 17b-18)
- E. Purpose of Effective Prayer.
1. Possibility of wandering from Truth. (v. 19a0)
 2. Possibility of persuasion to Truth. (v. 19b)
 3. Potential of salvation in Truth. (v. 20)

CHAPTER 5

“Go to, you rich men; just bellow and howl;
You shall receive of your dealings so foul.
Patience is priceless; it reaps in the end.
Christ is the healer, the pardoning friend.”

Alvy E. Ford -

CHAPTER 16

***“ONE MARK OF A GREAT CHURCH:
FERVENT PRAYER!”***

CHAPTER 16

“ONE MARK OF A GREAT CHURCH: FERVENT PRAYER!”

Notes Donald Demaray: We must remember that we are all the product of Prayer. Apparently no one is saved aside from someone's prayers. There is absolutely no substitute for the work of prayer. If we had even a glimpse of the value of prayer we would rise with new eagerness to the challenge of its work." (Alive To God Through Prayer; pg.129)

Every great revival in history has always been preceded by earnest prayer. It was so of the 1970 revival which is now referred to as the Asbury Revival. The following is by Dwight Gregory, a first-hand report of the Asbury revival:

"By now many of you will have already heard of the revival which began at Asbury College and is now spreading across the continent. It has been my privilege to share in this awakening, and I would like to relate my own impressions of what is happening.

"The movement, I believe, can be traced to what was termed the Great Experiment, suggested by Asbury College President Dennis Kinlaw at the beginning of the year. A number of students covenanted together to discipline themselves in prayer and study of the Bible in a more serious way. When people do this, something is bound to happen. On the morning of February 3 (1970), the college chapel service was given over to testimonies. After a number of the predictable, cliché-ridden testimonies had been given, one or two campus leaders with notoriously non-spiritual reputations stepped to the pulpit to bear witness to real transformation within that week. Right after that, a faculty member stepped up to say that there might be others who wanted to surrender their lives to God. Almost immediately, the altar was filled with over 150 students. By the next day, the revival had spread across the street to the seminary, and nearby newspapers and television stations had begun reporting the story. People were making confessions, being reconciled to fellow Christians, and being filled with the Holy Spirit and giving radiant testimonies. There were many new conversions and a number of testimonies to physical healing. By the weekend, teams had gone out to witness in many other schools and churches and were bringing back reports just

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as dramatic as what was being seen in Wilmore. Classes were dismissed at the college for a full week. That is the story in summary.”

PROPOSITION:

The offering of earnest, fervent prayer by believers in a Church is what makes an ordinary Church a truly great Church. Let's look at the Practice of prayer, Patience in Praying, Problems in Prayer, and the Power of Prayer.

I. PRACTICE OF PRAYER

You can only learn how to pray by praying. It takes a lot of practice; don't expect perfection over night. Just keep on praying and you will learn the art of praying.

Be involved in various prayer opportunities such as:(1)Prayer Chain, (2) Prayer Blocks, (3) Prayer Groups, (4) Prayer partners, (5) Private prayer, (6) Family prayer.

Use variety in praying. For instance:

- (1) On knees in a specific place (great men in history had a special 'prayer closet' to get alone daily to pray).
- (2) Sitting comfortably with eyes open, carrying on normal conversation with God, (Dr. Mary Alice Tenney's example).
- (3) Walking and praying (Example:walk around a block three consecutive times, in the cool evening, praying while you walk. Three times reminds you of the great Triune God. Represents symbolically the bringing of the whole of yourself (body, soul, spirit) to the whole of the Trinity!
- (4) Riding,or traveling in your Car (practice the presence of God by visualizing God sitting in the seat with you, talking and communing with you.).
- (5) Jog in the early morning and pray with relaxation as you jog (has advatages both physically and mentally and spiritualy).
- (6) Write out your prayers in a daily journal or a diary. (Once a month or once a quarter, have a half day of prayer and meditation in the mountains or alone somewhere, reflecting on your diary entries and your written prayers.).
- (7) Pray with the Scriptures, using great portions such as Pslams 103, 111, 145; Revelation 4:5; John 17.
- (8) Use a book of written prayers occasionally (like the treasured classics, "The Private Devotions of Lancelot Andrewes, Peter Marshall's book of prayers, etc., etc. The hymn book is an excellent source of written prayers that eloquently express the deep desires of your soul.).
- (9) Fast and Pray one or two meals a week.
- (10) Keep a prayer notebook, and record answers to prayers.

Of course, spontaneous prayers at any time and in any place, verbally or silently, are always in order.

II. PATIENCE IN PRAYING

Learning to be patient as you wait for tangible results is very important in the life of a person or in the corporate life of a church.

One pastor comments: "Too many people start a disciplined devotional life thinking it's going to be a source of great joy from the beginning. That's not true. It often feels like drudgery, particularly at the start. The joy only comes slowly, in snatches."

"That which is worthwhile only comes slowly. It was Alexander Pope who said, 'Some people will never learn anything because they understand everything too soon.' If we are willing to take our time and be satisfied with truths slowly revealed as God unfolds them, we'll begin to see the fruits of the devotional life." (Leadership Magazine; pgs. 37, 38; Winter 1982)

Learning to pray might be likened unto learning to play the piano. Learning to pray, like learning to play the piano, may be slow at first, but the longer we persist in practice, the more skilled we become and the more enjoyable the practice and results become.

Remember, the test of effective praying is not how exhilarated you feel, but how well the insights gained through prayer are worked into your daily life. "If we have really exposed ourselves to the Word and come into contact with God, it will affect our daily life. And that is what we want." (Lorne Sanney)

III. PROBLEMS IN PRAYER

Time will not permit us to look at all or even most of the problems associated with prayer. There are problems or challenges in prayer. Let's think of a couple common problems.

A. The Problem of Distractions of Mind.

Says Lorne Sanney about this common problem, "As outside things pop into your mind, simply incorporate those items into prayer. If it's some business item you must not forget, jot it down. It will be natural for things to occur to you during your prayer that you should have done, so put them down, pray about them and plan how you can take care of them and when. Don't just push them aside or they will plague you..." (Leadership magazine; pg. 75; Summer 1982)

One aid to help you in this problem of the wandering thoughts is to use a written prayer list. "Making a prayer-list is a means of grace in itself. Some people make a list to cover a month; others work on the week as a unit; nearly all these serious intercessors have a 'priority' list, which is constantly changing, of people in the most urgent need and for whom (during their period of acute necessity) they pray every day...Certainly we cannot use a prayer-list as though it were a telephone directory, and just run our eye down a list of names. Nor is it much better, I think, to speak the names aloud, if it is all done at speed. There is more in it than that. Wait before God in the quietness. Recollect His presence, His power and His love. Wait..." (Daily Readings; pg. 204; Sangster)

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B. Impatience In Waiting Upon God

Learning to wait quietly before God in an age of quickness, speed, and impatience is a challenge indeed, but an absolute necessity if we are ever to develop skill in communication with God and enjoy communion with the Divine One.

Realize several things in dealing with this problem of impatience within yourself. Pray short prayers more often rather than long prayers once in a while. The point is this: Be consistent in talking to God daily, regardless of the length of your talks. The more you talk to God, the more you come to know Him and the more you come to rely upon Him. When that reliance upon God becomes great, your prayers will become more natural and frequent.

Pray short flash prayers throughout your entire day. Practice saying a quick flash prayer for everyone that you talk to. Practice having a short prayer in the home of everyone that you're with for any length of time, especially when you visit in the home of another Christian. When someone asks you to pray for them or a request that they have, stop right there and pray with them about their request if at all possible.

IV. POWER OF PRAYER

A. Means of Knowing God More Intimately

Said one wise soul: "The purpose of your life on earth is to know God." (Leadership magazine; pg. 39; Winter 1982)

I like Isaiah 30:18 – "*And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you*". Notes Murray on this verse: "The vision of him waiting on us will give us new impulse and inspiration to our waiting on him...If he waits for us, then we may be sure we are more than welcome; that he rejoices to find those he has been seeking." (Leadership Magazine; pg. 70; Summer 1982)

B. Means of Living Faithfully in an Ungodly World.

One respondent noted that the first fruit he recognized as a result of his devotional life was 'an improved ability to live increasingly untainted in a tainted world.' Francis de Sales called it the 'spiritual nosegay'. A nosegay was a small bouquet of sweet-smelling flowers that ladies carried in the streets of seventeenth-century Europe so that they could stand the stench of the open sewers along the streets. As spirituality grows, it becomes a means of living faithfully in a world that reeks with the stench of brokenness." (Leadership Magazine; pg. 38; Winter 1982)

C. Means of Bringing About Great Spiritual Changes in our World

Illustration of Abraham (Genesis 18:22-33)

Illustration of Moses (Exodus 32:11-14)

Illustration of Elijah (James 5:16-18)

“Prayer prepares the way for revival, creating the atmosphere of intense desire and yieldedness of will in which the Holy Spirit can work. Prayer loosens the grip of the Evil One on enslaved wills and darkened minds and seared consciences. Prayer whets the appetite of the believer for greater spiritual blessings. Prayer brings about a unity of mind and heart and purpose among Christians, until petty jealousies and selfish desires are forgotten, and the one consuming desire in the Church is that God may be glorified in the salvation of souls. In every great spiritual awakening in the history of the Church, important, believing prayer has paved the way for revival, and has drawn down the power of God to human need.” (Fred Hoffman)

CONCLUSION

“When Dr. Bacchus of Hamilton College was dying, his doctor came into the room and gave him a brief examination. Then the doctor conferred quietly and seriously with friends standing in the doorway. ‘What did the doctor say?’ asked Dr. Bacchus.

‘He said, sir, that you cannot live more than one-half hour.’

‘Then take me out of bed and place me on my knees!’ he pleaded. ‘Let me spend the time in prayer for this sinful world.’ Moments later, Dr. Bacchus passed from bended knee to Paradise.” (How You Can Pray With Power and Get Results; Lundstrom; pg. 53)

Will God find you on your knees in prayer when you die? But a more important question is this: Will God daily find you on your knees while you live?

One of the most sacred experiences of my life was with my mother in prayer – kneeling by her at the side of the bed or kneeling at the living room couch, daily, morning and evening. Do you have a Family Altar in your home? Do you spend some time each day with your entire family, praying together? What would happen this next month if every family in our Church knelt daily with their family in earnest prayer? I challenge every family to establish a family altar – to pray every day with your family! What a difference this will make. When this begins to happen consistently, perhaps we can declare in humility, “God is making our Church into a great Church!”

CHAPTER 17
“LEARNING TO GIVE JOYFULLY!”

CHAPTER 17

“LEARNING TO GIVE JOYFULLY!”

Scripture: *“¹ And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. ² In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. ³ For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, ⁴they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord’s people. ⁵ And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us. ⁶ So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. ⁷ But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving. ⁸ I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. ⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. ¹⁰ And here is my judgment about what is best for you in this matter. Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. ¹¹ Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. ¹² For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have. ¹³ Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. ¹⁴ At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, ¹⁵ as it is written: “The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little.” (II Corinthians 8:1-15)*

Text: *“God loveth a cheerful giver.” (II Corinthians 9:7b)*

INTRODUCTION:

What is your motivation for living? What are the driving forces of your life? Show me what a person loves in life and I will show you the person! Your desires, affections, and motivations

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guide your life and determine your life! The Book of Proverbs says, “*Above all else, guard your affections. For they influence everything else in your life.*” (4:23)

Are you committed to a life of generosity? How strong is your motivation to give? In our Scripture reading, Paul is seeking to motivate his Corinthian friends to be liberal and generous.

Paul outlines four motivations for generosity in II Corinthians 8:1-15:

- (1) Example of the generosity of others in spite of their poverty, (vs. 1-5)
- (2) Example of the Church’s own good past record, (vs. 6-12)
- (3) Example of the sacrificial love and generosity of Jesus Christ, (v. 9) and
- (4) Desire to equalize the burden of Christians within the family of God, (vs. 13-15).

PROPOSITION:

Learning to give generously involves first the understanding and accepting of the motivations for giving, and secondly it involves facing and overcoming the obstacles to give which threaten one’s motivations in giving.

So, let us look at the motivations for giving, as outlined in II Corinthians 8:1-15 and, after looking at these motivations, seek to remove all obstacles to generous giving.

I. LOOKING AT THE MOTIVATIONS

A. EXAMPLE OF THE GENEROSITY OF OTHERS IN SPITE OF THEIR POVERTY. (vs. 1-5)

(1) First, the Macedonian Christians gave of themselves to the Lord. This is the key to all motivation in giving. When one gives himself to the Lord, he comes to know God, and in coming to know God, one comes to appreciate God’s generosity. Knowing of God’s generosity causes one to become a generous person himself. The more one knows God, the more generous one will become!

(2)

(2) Second, the Macedonian Christians gave themselves to other Christians. True giving is not merely giving of one’s financial resources to help others (as important as this is). True giving is giving of oneself to another. No greater gift than this!

In her study of the early Methodists, Dr. Mary Alice Tenney observes “Perfect Love Operates in two directions: vertically, toward God, horizontally toward man. Early Methodists really loved men. They did not sign a check for Community Chest Drives; they went into dirty garrets and nursed sick old women. Even noblemen did that sort of thing, denying themselves luxuries in order to do it. It

got right down among the needy, the evil, even the criminals, and showed them what real friendship and compassion are. People still need friends more than clothing. More than money, they need the News that inner resources are theirs for the asking. The usual social worker knows nothing about this. Twenty dollars a week contribution leaves the hungry essentially as hungry as before, for the heart is still starving. If Love could be allowed to work in the world today among the Great Hungry here and overseas, as it was released by the Methodist Revival, the ground work for world change would be laid.” (Living in Two Worlds; pgs. 112, 113)

If the Macedonian Christians gave so generously in their poverty, should we in America not give generously out of the abundance to help others?

II. EXAMPLE OF OUR OWN GOOD PAST RECORD. (vs. 6-12)

The Corinthians were greatly gifted by God. They were rich in so many ways – in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in love, in eagerness to help others. A great Church! Now Paul tells them to be rich in generosity. They planned well! Their intentions were good! Now, Paul encourages them to translate good intentions and plans into good deeds! *“On with it, then, and finish the job! Be as eager to finish it as you were to plan it.”* (v. 11)

We too, as a Church and as individuals, must have a good ‘carry-through’. It is too easy to have good plans and good intentions, and yet fail to have a good ‘carry-through’. Results are important! Let us not only talk about giving; let us actually give! Let us not only have great enthusiasm during the initial planning stage, but also let us have continuing enthusiasm as we routinely and regularly give!

III. EXAMPLE OF SACRIFICIAL LOVE AND GENEROSITY OF JESUS CHRIST (v. 9)

The supreme example of Jesus’ gift of His life, on the cross is noted in verse 9: *“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.”* Think of His riches in heaven in contrast to His poverty on earth. If Christ has given His all to save us, should we not give Him our all, including our money, to advance His cause and Kingdom?

IV. DESIRE TO EQUALIZE THE BURDEN OF CHRISTIANS WITHIN THE FAMILY OF GOD. (vs. 13-15)

Christians are called to carry one another’s burdens. We are to live as a family, helping one another during times of crisis. No one in the family of God is meant to be overly burdened financially. Everyone is to have his needs met. No one should have too much, and no one should have too little (v. 15).

Says E. Stanley Jones about financial stewardship, “Put in a stop where your needs end. After that, all you make belongs to other people’s needs. Settle the level of need in the full light of the

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needs of others, of your enlightened conscience, and of the judgment of a disciplined group...While you are lifting your economic level to the level of need, give a tithe of what you earn. After you have reached that level, give everything you earn...Work for a co-operative order in which each will think and work for all, and all will think and work for each.” (Abundant Living; pg. 302)

Here is a description of the loving care, which the early Christians had for one another. “³² All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. “³³ With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all ³⁴ that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ³⁵ and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.” Acts 4:32-35)

“A wealthy farmer prayed in his family circle that his unfortunate neighbor might not starve. When they arose from their knees, his little girl said to him, ‘Daddy, you needn’t have bothered God with that, for you can quite easily keep them from starving.’” (Christ and Human Suffering; pgs. 191; E. S. Jones)

Are we motivated to work at equalizing the inequalities, which exist in the Christian Church throughout the world today? When we have so much in America, is it right for our Christian brothers and sisters in other lands to be starving to death?

Paul does not suggest that we should be overly burdened because of trying to relieve others. It is true that we American Christians have many burdens to bear economically. But the inflation rate in other countries is much higher than it is in America. If we think we have it hard, think of how much harder, it is for our fellow Christians to exist in poverty-stricken countries!

Should we not live more simply in order that we might help supply the basic needs of our less fortunate brothers in other countries? Can we give up someone of our luxuries in order to supply some of their necessities? *“If a fellow man or woman has no clothes to wear and nothing to eat, and one of you say, ‘Good luck to you, I hope you’ll keep warm and find enough to eat,’ and yet give them nothing to meet their physical needs, what on earth is the good of that? Yet that is exactly what a bare faith without a corresponding life is like – useless and dead.”* (James 2:15-17, Phillips)

FACING THE OBSTACLES TO GENEROUS GIVING

In spite of the clear Bible teachings on tithing and in spite of the several clear motivations for giving (as outlined in Scripture), there are many obstacles and objections to tithing. Let's look at some of those objections and seek to give a Biblical answer to those objections.

A. IF I HAVE BILLS TO PAY, I SHOULD PAY THEM BEFORE I TITHE.

1. Which is a greater obligation, your tithe to God or your payment on your car? If God treated some non-tithing Christians as banks treat persons with overdue bills, then God would have to foreclose on some professing Christians!
2. If some non-tithing Christians wait to pay off all their bills before tithing, then they probably will never start tithing. Another expensive luxury item often replaces one luxury item, which is paid off. It is unfortunately true that the more one makes the more one buys, and the more one makes the smaller percentage of his income is given to God's work. "IRS figures Americans who earn the most contribute the smallest percentage of their income to charity. Those earning \$4,000 to \$6,000 donated an average of \$425 last year while those earning \$30,000 to \$60,000 contributed \$869." (Church Around the World report, January 1981)
3. If non-tithing Christians honored God by beginning to tithe, then God surely would help them to reduce their bills by living more disciplined lives.

B. WHEN GOD PROSPERS ME, THEN I WILL TITHE.

1. This is both unbiblical and unsound. For, using this argument, a believer who is not presently prospering, is not obligated to tithe. A lack of prosperity financially is no reason not to tithe. The blessings, which God pours out upon our lives, are not always financial and material.
2. To say, "When God prospers me, and then I will tithe", is to bargain selfishly with God. One is saying that only AFTER God gives the money, THEN he will give. This is giving based on SIGHT, not on the basis of FAITH.

The Bible says that we unconditionally are FIRST to "Give" to God and then AFTER we have given, God will give back to us. Said Jesus, "*Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.*"

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3. Many talk about giving large amounts to God when some day they prosper. But only when you prove yourself in the little things, can God entrust you with the big things. If a Christian does not tithe when he has little, how can God trust him to tithe if he has a lot?

The person who says, "When God prospers me, then I will tithe", fails to see that God needs His money NOW. To postpone giving can be disastrous at times. To wait to give only after you have prospered is to wait too long.

A businessman went to a missionary society with \$280.00 toward sending a new recruit overseas, but he was told that he was too late as they had just canceled her passage for lack of the money. In tears he then confessed: 'God told me to give it some days ago, but I delayed.'" (The Grace of Giving; pg. 89)

III. I AM ONLY ONE PERSON, SO WHAT GOOD IS MY TITHE ANY WAY?

1. "I am only one, but I am one! Because I can't do everything, I will not refuse to do something!"
2. If everyone adopted that attitude, then the work of God would suffer. I can't help what others do; I am responsible for what I do. I am only one link in the chain, but it is my job to be a strong link.
3. My few dollars, reflecting my tithes and offerings, cannot do much, but combined with your tithes and offerings, our money together can do significant things for God, such as supporting a missionary, establishing a Christian college or orphanage or hospital, or building a church building.

IV. I CAN'T AFFORD TO TITHE. WHAT I MAKE VERILY COVERS MY BASIC EXPENSES.

1. One may ask, "Can you afford NOT to tithe?" "Can you afford not to express your love concretely to God?" "Can you afford not to have a local Church which is made possible only because you and others like your tithe?" "Can you afford to disobey God's command to tithe, as found in Malachi 3:8-10?"⁸ *"Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How are we robbing you?' "In tithes and offerings."⁹ You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me."¹⁰ Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it."* "Can you afford to rob God?"

2. Are there not other things in your life, which can go before the tithe goes? Are there not luxuries which can be sacrificed before the tithe is sacrificed? Is it not right to live within our means – after the tithe is paid?
3. Is it not true yet (as thousands have testified) that God is able to stretch the 9/10 to do as much or more than the 10/10? Is it not true that the man who honors God with his money is the man who will be honored by God?
4. One who thinks he can't afford to tithe must ask himself if he has really surrendered fully to the Lordship of Christ in his life.

VII. I DON'T BELIEVE A CHRISTIAN, LIVING UNDER GRACE, NEEDS TO TITHE LIKE THOSE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT TIMES.

1. Tithing is commanded in the Old Testament and tithing is commended in the New Testament. Both the Old and New Testament teach tithing as the minimum standard for giving.
2. If Old Testament saints, under the Law, gave 1/5 of their income to the Lord's work, it surely is reasonable to expect New Testament saints, living under Grace, to give at least 1/10 of their total income to the Lord's work.

VIII. DON'T BELIEVE THE TITHE SHOULD ALL BE PAID TO THE LOCAL CHURCH, SINCE THERE ARE OTHER CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS WHICH NEED SOME OF MY TITHE.

1. Notes the great preacher, Stephen Olford, "The responsibility to bring ALL the tithes and offerings to the local Church is plainly illustrated in the Old Testament. One of the great sins of our time is the robbing and defrauding of the local Church by its membership. And until such restitution is made, God will not bless. This is what is meant by 'storehouse tithing' – the bringing of your tithes and offerings to the place where your membership is established, your spiritual life is nourished, and your Church privileges are enjoyed. If you give elsewhere, then it should be over and above the required tithe and offering to your Church. Now this is scripturally binding upon all who desire to see the blessing of God." (The Grace of Giving; pgs. 29, 30)

VII. I TITHE ON THE MONEY THAT IS LEFT, AFTER ALL MY BILLS ARE PAID.

1. This is not tithing to God, this is tipping God. Tithing is based on the total income. Someone asked a minister, "Should I tithe on my gross income or on my net income?" The minister replied, "Do you want God to bless your gross income or to bless your net income?"

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2. The tithe should be paid before any other bills are paid. Give the tithe first, and then use the remainder of your income to honor God by providing for your family, and other needs.

Israel was told to bring the **FIRSTFRUITS** of their labors to God – not the last fruits!

“Honor the Lord by giving Him the first part of all your income and He will fill your barns with wheat and barley and overflow your wine vats with the finest wines.” (Proverbs 3:9, 10)

VIII. I DO NOT NEED TO TITHE IF I GIVE MY TALENTS AND MY SERVICE TO THE CHURCH.

Says one, “God is not asking for our tithe OR our talents – He want our tithe and our talents. Entire consecration reaches all the hidden recesses and gives the total to God, gladly.”

CONCLUSION:

I have heard so many in our church talk about how God has blessed their lives because they began to take tithing seriously. Have you given God your money? It represents so much! Allow God to motivate you to give!

CHAPTER 18
***“DEVELOPING A PERSONAL
PRAYER MINISTRY!”***

CHAPTER 18

“DEVELOPING A PERSONAL PRAYER MINISTRY!”

TEXT: *“The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects.” (James 5:16)*

INTRODUCTION:

In 1857, a layman by the name of Jeremiah Lanphier had a great concern for people in his New York City neighborhood, and he began a prayer meeting at noon in his Church. The first day he met, he waited for one-half hour before six finally showed up. The next week 20 people came to pray for the entire hour, and the third week 40 people prayed for the hour. The group decided to pray daily rather than weekly, and the number of people that responded to the call of prayer, grew so fast that other churches began to announce noon prayer meetings. Because the churches finally could not accommodate the crowds, “the police and fire departments threw open their buildings for prayer services.” Finally, theatre buildings began to open for prayer meetings. On the opening day, one theatre with a seating capacity of 3,000 was filled, and the overflow crowd gathered in the barroom.

“The convicting power of the Holy Spirit was not only present in the regular prayer meetings, but pervaded the total life of the city. ‘Women found Christ in their parlors; and a conductor on a New York horse-car was converted in his car; whole families of Jews were led to see Christ as their Messiah; the most hardened infidels were melted by the Spirit’s Power, and led to the cross.’ It is estimated that at least 50,000 were converted in New York City alone, as a result of this prayer revival. The revival spread to other cities where noon prayer meetings were held daily. “During the twenty-four-month period ‘following the first outbreak of the Revival late in 1857, it is calculated that there were more than 1,000,000 converts.’”

PROPOSITION:

Prayer is the most important activity that any child of God can be engaged in. The Scriptures tell us that the prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects. Prayer is “loving communion (with God) which may help in the promotion of God’s will, whereas without the prayer it might be frustrated.” (Trueblood’s: “A Place to Stand”, pg. 90). Said St. Augustine many years ago, “Without God, we cannot. Without us, God will not.”

Developing a personal prayer ministry is the most important thing that you can do as a Christian. May I suggest how one can develop an effective prayer ministry, which will have great impact upon the Church, community, and indeed the entire world. As Jeremiah Lanphier, you may influence many people.

I. PRACTICE PERSONAL DAILY PRAYER

1. Regularly have Daily Quiet Time.
 - (a) Read Scriptures and mark those that especially speak to you.
 - (b) Make a special study of a theme (such as ‘wisdom’ in the Book of Proverbs and underline the word every time it appears.)
 - (c) Develop a prayer notebook or a prayer list and record dates when God answers prayers.
 - (d) Use the Simple ACTS formula when praying. (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication)
2. Practice Flash Prayers throughout the day.

“Everybody in every ordinary day has hundreds of chinks of idle wasted time which may be filled with ‘flash prayers’ ten seconds or a minute long. Here are illustrations of such moments:

Upon awakening in the morning.
In the bath.
Dressing.
Walking down stairs.
Asking the blessing at the table.
Leaving the house.
Riding or walking to work.
Waiting at the red lights.
Entering the elevator.
Between interviews.
Waiting for an appointment.
Preparing the lunch.

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Falling asleep.

(Laubach)

3. Listening Post. “When you can’t sleep, then just open your mind to Christ and listen to what he has to tell you.” (E. S. Jones)

II. PRACTICE FAMILY PRAYER TIME

A family altar should be in every home, adapted to children. Variety and regularity are the two important ingredients. Use an interesting and colorful Bible Story Book with the children. Begin using songs. Let various family members take turns praying. Keep it simple, interesting, short – but consistent. For adults, use a helpful family devotional guide, such as ‘Daily Bread’.

III. CHOOSE A PRAYER PARTNER AND PRAY REGULARLY WITH THEM.

There is great strength produced when two pray together and share together and rejoice together. Jesus said that when two or three are gathered together in His name that He is in the midst. He also said that if two of you agree as touching any matter, the request shall be granted! Believe together and you will receive together. Choose a prayer partner and begin to build a prayer life together. Meet once a week together and spend some time sharing specific needs, and believe and expect those needs to be supplied.

Some prayer partners share with each other daily – over the phone. Use the phone each morning and pray together on the phone. Let your Church be known as a praying Church. Let there be a ‘web of prayer’ develop among your Church family.

Ask God whom He desires for you to have as a prayer partner, then begin to meet weekly or pray daily over the phone.

IV. PARTICIPATE IN A PRAYER GROUP

There is sufficient Biblical precedent for the small prayer group. Acts 2:1 says, “*When the day of Pentecost had come, they were altogether in one place.*” (Acts 2:1) Pentecost came upon a group, not a single individual. Acts 4:31 speaks again of a group prayer meeting: “*And when they had prayer, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God with boldness.*”

Throughout the history of the Christian Church, there has never been a revival of religion without social prayer.

It is urgent that we see several prayer groups established among our church family, for “in every case of a movement of God’s Spirit, group prayer is involved.” (Demaray; pg. 65) Observes William Sangster, “Something seems to be added to prayers offered in fellowship which is not available in the same measure to the same prayers offered by the same people in separation.” (Ibid; pg. 65)

Give high priority to establishing and maintaining prayer cells. “If prayer is fellowship with the Almighty God of this Universe, how can it be other than the chief business and privilege of every day?” (Sangster)

Notes Demaray, “Just think what a bulwark against temptation group prayer really is! Just think of the planning, aspirations, and dreams that come to light in the group! Think of the burdens shared! The joys revealed! The courage restored!”

V. BE ACTIVE IN THE PRAYER CHAIN

The prayer chain is for the purpose of informing all in the Church as quickly as possible of needs for prayer. Each person in the prayer chain is asked to make his call to the next person on the chain as soon as possible. In a matter of a few minutes, nearly all in our Church family can be aware of prayer needs.

If you are not actively involved in the prayer chain, see your Church prayer director soon.

CONCLUSION:

Each of these five areas of prayer activity are vital to developing an effective personal prayer ministry.

Just as breathing, the air of the atmosphere is essential for physical life, so breathing from the celestial atmosphere of prayer is imperative to maintaining spiritual health. When breathing ceases, life is snuffed out! Spiritual life cannot long last without prayer.

Prayer is our privilege and our responsibility. It is our privilege because God has allowed man to help Him to carry out His purposes for this world. It is our responsibility because there is reason to believe that if we do not pray, God’s will is thereby frustrated.

Says E. Stanley Jones, “Most of the casualties in the spiritual life are found at the place of a weakened prayer life. When the prayer life is toned up the whole of the rest of the life is toned up with it. Prayer is pivotal. I find I am better or worse as I pray more or less. If prayer fades, power fades. When I pray I’m like an electric bulb put into the socket, full of light and power.

When I don’t pray I’m like that same bulb pulled out of the socket – no light, no power. And it is as simple as that. And it works with a mathematical precision. If prayer our weakness is linked to Almightyness, our ignorance linked to Infinite Wisdom, our finite self to the Infinite Self. When every other way is closed, the way of prayer is open.” (Christian Maturity; pg. 302)

CHAPTER 19
***“THE CROSS IN THE FOURTH
GOSPEL!”***

CHAPTER 19

“THE CROSS IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL!”

Text: *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* (John 3:16).”

INTRODUCTION:

The Book of John contains the simple message of salvation and has at its center the Cross of Christ. “He (John) wrote as he saw, and he saw clearly but deeply. His writings accordingly are a mixture of clarity and profundity.” (The Cross in The New Testament; by Morris; pg. 144)

PROPOSITION:

It is the clear teachings of the Cross which we wish to look at today. To understand John’s conception of the Cross, we must look at John’s teachings regarding man’s sin, God’s offer of eternal life, and Jesus’ deliberate sacrifice of Himself. Put in different terminology, we must look at man’s problem, God’s solution to the problem, and God’s means of solving the problem.

I. SERIOUSNESS OF SIN

John defined sin as a very serious offense to God, which carried serious consequences. Those consequences were described in terms of the present existence and in the existence hereafter.

A. CONSEQUENCES OF SIN NOW

John defined sin in terms of being in the darkness instead of the light. *“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.”* (John 3:19, 20) Being in the darkness for so long creates blindness – one’s spiritual eyes cannot stand the light of truth.

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Another consequence of sin is spiritual bondage. Accepting Christ's word gives freedom; rejecting His word results in bondage. Said Jesus to the Jews, "If *my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.* They answered him, *We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?* Jesus answered them, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.*" (John 8:31-34) Sin makes a slave out of a person. Sin is a cruel tyrant.

One who indulges in sin reaps self-condemnation. "*He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*" (John 3:18) The following poem speaks of self-condemnation:

"Still, as of old,
Man by himself is pierced.
For thirty pieces Judas sold
Himself, not Christ."

(The Cross In The New Testament; pg. 149)

Sin, with all the inner hell it causes, creates self-despising. To live with a self that you can't respect is almost unbearable. "The fear of punishment hereafter is being shifted to the fear of the hell of inner conflicts, of neuroses, of breakdowns, of tensions, of a sense of inner guilt. The outer hell is still there, but this immediate inner hell is now preoccupying the minds of this generations. The future world is impinging on us still and will always impinge upon us, but the bite, the sting, the pressure for conversion comes from the hell of having to live with a self you don't like and can't respect, a self which you hate, but with which you must daily and hourly live." (Conversion by E. S. Jones; pg. 50)

Indulging in sin brings upon one the wrath of God – either actively or in the form of the natural outworking of sin. "*He that believeth on the son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*" (John 3:36) Listen to Lloyd-Jones' comment about God's wrath: "We tend to think that the wrath of God must manifest itself in the form of active punishment, but...sometimes it reveals itself by just allowing sin to run riot, and, in an utterly unrestrained way, to show itself in all its foulness, ugliness and horror." (The Flight of Man and the Power of God; pg. 71)

B. CONSEQUENCES OF SIN HEREAFTER

The Gospel of John does not speak in detail of the consequences of sin hereafter, but that fact in no way diminishes the reality of eternal punishment and spiritual death. The most popular verse in John (John 3:16) speaks of the consequences of sin. God gave His Son for all mankind because every man was in danger of perishing. He who believes in the Son shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

Said Jesus to the unbelieving Jews, *“I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins.”* (John 8:24) Jesus speaks of this death with a note of greatest tragedy. To die in one’s sins is not to be annihilated; it is to reap eternally the consequences of unbelief and rejection of Christ. Those consequences are eternal separation from God.

The dying words of men who were unbelievers testify to the horror of Christ’s declaration. Tallyrand Perrigord, said as he was dying, “I am suffering the pangs of the damned.” Voltaire’s dying words: “I am abandoned by God and man! I shall go to hell! O Christ! O Jesus Christ!” Charles IX, King of France said as he was dying, “What blood, what murders, what evil counsels have I followed! I am lost; I see it well!” (Rossell; No. 141)

II. EXPERIENCE OF ETERNAL LIFE

One of the predominant themes of John is eternal life. John makes it clear that this life begins now and continues forever after death. *“I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”* (John 6:51) *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keeps my saying, he shall never see death.”* (John 8:51) *“And I give unto them (my sheep at the present time) eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.”* (John 10:28) *“Jesus said unto them, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”* (John 11:25, 26) Jesus spoke of a life, which was eternal in quantity and godly in quality. It is not mere length of life that Jesus promised, but a quality of life that Jesus promised, which is patterned after the life of God Himself.

Life is the gift of Christ. *“For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.”* (John 6:33) To the woman of Samaria, Christ gave *“living water”*. Said Jesus, *“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”* (John 10:10) In Jesus’ prayer to His Father, He showed that He was the source of life. Said Jesus, *“Father, the hour has come; glorify thy Son that the Son may glorify thee, since thou hast given him power over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom thou hast given life.”* (John 17:2)

This life is eternal in quantity and God-like in quality, and its source is Christ. The question now to ask is this: *“Just how does one come to experience this eternal life?”*

A. FOUND THROUGH SPIRIT’S MINISTRY

It is through Spirit’s ministry that this new life is experienced by man. The Spirit’s ministry includes conviction. The Spirit of God takes the initiative in calling and drawing men to this new life. Said Jesus, *“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.”* (John 6:44) *“No one can come to me unless it is granted him – unless he is enabled to do so – by the Father.”* (John 6:65, Amplified Bible) It is clear from these verses that no one can come to God unless he feels the pull of God. The new life can only be experienced as the Spirit shows him the shallowness of his old life and

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the depth and beauty of the new life. The Cross is the convicting and drawing power of God. *“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”* (John 12:32) God’s Spirit is in the world to convict. *“And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”* (John 16:8)

The Spirit’s ministry also includes the New Birth. Jesus taught that all men must be born again. He put all men into one of two categories – those who have experienced the new birth and those who have not experienced the new birth. Said Jesus to Nicodemus, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”* (John 3:5, RSV)

The Spirit’s ministry is that of universal grace. Grace is the undeserved and unmerited favor of God towards mankind, and is made possible by Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross. The love of Christ demonstrated on the Cross “copes with the situation posed by man’s sin in such a way that neither the divine demand for righteousness nor the sinner’s best interests are overlooked.” (The Cross in the New Testament; pg. 173) This grace of God extended towards sinners. It includes all Jews as personified in Nicodemus. It includes the Samaritans as shown by the conversion of the woman at the well and many other Samaritans, which she testified to. God’s grace includes all people everywhere – to the whole world.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His Son.” The Samaritan believers declared to the Samaritan woman, “We have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.” (John 4:42, RSV)

Thus, the life of God is experienced through the Spirit’s ministry – of conviction, of the New Birth, of imparting universal grace.

B. FOUND THROUGH EXERCISE OF BELIEF

One of the inseparable connecting themes of John is Life and Belief. Eternal life is found by exercising belief in Christ. It is “whosoever believeth in him” that shall not perish. *“And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life.”* (John 6:40) *“He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.”* (John 11:25) *“He that does not believe in the Son shall die in his sins.”* (John 8:24) The Gospel of John was written for this very purpose: *“But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”* (John 20:31) The belief or faith, which John speaks of, is sometimes the content of faith, but oftentimes it is the faith, which “takes a man out of himself and places him in Christ.” (The Cross in the New Testament; pg. 175) It is “believing in” Christ or committing one’s self to Christ that John is referring to. Not mere intellectual assent, but total commitment of one’s self to Christ, is the Biblical meaning of belief. The exercise of belief is essential is coming to find eternal life. It is man’s response to the Spirit’s conviction and drawing.

III. JESUS' DELIBERATE SACRIFICE OF HIMSELF

We have noted that John describes man in terms of having a problem – the problem of sin – and that sin has serious consequences both in this life and in the life hereafter. John uses the word ‘sin’ twenty times in his Gospel, more times than Matthew and Mark combined (The Cross In The New Testament; pg. 146) We have also seen that another basic theme of John, in connection with the Cross, is the theme of Life. Life is the gift of Christ and is eternal in quantity and quality. It is the Spirit of God that convicts the sinner and brings about the experience of the New Birth, but man must exercise faith in the Son as the condition for experiencing the New Birth.

The problem is sin, the solution is the New Birth, but we must next look at God's means of solving the problem. That brings us to a discussion of Jesus' deliberate sacrifice of Himself on the Cross.

It is important to notice the word ‘deliberate’. Jesus was not murdered; rather, He gave up His life freely and willingly as a sacrifice for man's sins. Jesus did not die for any crime of his own; therefore, his death must have been deliberate and for a definite purpose. The fact of Christ's Sinlessness is evidence for His deliberate sacrifice of Himself. Said Jesus, *“I do always those things that please him (God)”* (John 8:29b)

Jesus' foreknowledge of His own death shows that His death was deliberate and purposeful. Jesus often spoke about his hour not yet fulfilled or come. *“Mine hour is not yet come.”* (John 2:4b) *“My time is not yet come.”* (7:6) *“My time is not yet fully come.”* (7:8) Finally Jesus did say, *“The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified...Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say: Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.”* (John 12:27) One thing is certain: the Cross was no surprise to Christ. It was for the purpose of dying sacrificially as the substitute for man that Christ came into the world. Christ died and fulfilled the Old Testament Scripture, which foretold of His death. Christ's death was planned by God, foretold by the prophets, and anticipated by Christ Himself. It was deliberate.

Jesus' rejection of the popular Messianic concept lends further evidence that Christ's death was deliberate. When the Jews saw Jesus' miracles, they declared, *“This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.”* (John 6:14) Their idea of ‘prophet’ was a Messiah who would destroy the Romans and give Israel military, political, and material victory. The Jews sought to make Jesus an earthly king, but Jesus flatly refused any such attempts. Jesus' life was a life of struggle against the evil powers of Satan that sought to thwart God's plans by persuading Jesus to accept a Messianic role that was purely materialistic. Jesus saw this struggle in terms of light verses darkness, materialism verses spiritualism, evil men verses good men, Satan verses God. The Evil One sought Christ's destruction when He could not persuade Christ to adopt a materialistic role. Jesus spoke of Satan entering into Judas, for the purpose of seeking Christ's death. The paradox of Christ's death is this: What Satan thought to be his greatest victory in the death of Christ, turned out to be his greatest defeat. Through Christ's death, Satan's death warrant was signed. Why was this? Simply, because Christ died in order that man might

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not die for his own sins. Christ died that man might live and that Satan, with all of his works, might be destroyed. Christ refused to adopt the popular Messianic role and deliberately and purposefully died in order to solve man's sin problem.

CONCLUSION:

We have briefly traced the basic themes of salvation in the Book of John. The problem of man – Sin; the solution to the problem – Life; the means of that solution – Christ's deliberate death. We shall never be able to probe the depths of the meaning of Christ's death. We only know that Christ's death was planned by God and is powerful in saving man. Christ has died for all, but it is only as man appropriates Christ's work on the Cross, through faith, can man be saved from the penalty of sin which is death. Kneel at the Cross to find the forgiveness of sins and the joy of eternal life.

CHAPTER 20
***“QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK ABOUT
PRAYER!”***

CHAPTER 20

“QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK ABOUT PRAYER!”

TEXT: *“Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.”* (Luke 18:1b)

“A good man’s prayer is powerful and effective.” (James 5:16b, NEB)

INTRODUCTION:

We have often read that Scripture (James 5:16), but do we really believe it? Some simply do not believe it, as evidenced by the almost total absence of prayer in their lives. Others out rightly, simply believe it, and practice it, whether or not they have faced the intellectual problems connected with prayer. Others want to believe this passage but are faced with problems relating to God’s will. Such people reason that since God is all-powerful, His will can only be accomplished regardless of whether or not man prays. Such people see no real need in prayer and reason that at the best, prayer is simply for the purpose of submission to God’s powerful will or thanksgiving for God’s gifts. They find no place for petition or intercession, but only submission, adoration, and thanksgiving. Those who leave petition and intercession out of their prayers believe, if only subconsciously, that their prayers have no causal affect upon God’s will being realized. Such people reason as follows (put in Trueblood’s words), “Since this is God’s world, His will is bound to be done. If He wills war and disease, then war and disease will occur. Because we are poor finite creatures, we cannot change the course of events except perhaps by our own free will, in matters which pertain exclusively to ourselves. How could my little prayer possibly make a difference? Do we really expect that the divine purpose will be altered because of what we happen to think we need? Is it not grossly presumptuous for a mere human being, a mite on a minor planet, to try to instruct the Lord of heaven and earth? Prayer then is either ineffective or superfluous. If what we ask is inconsistent with God’s will it will not be done; if it is consistent with His will, it will occur anyway, whether we pray or not.” (A Place To Stand; by Elton Trueblood; pgs. 87, 88)

PROPOSITION:

The question of ‘Why Pray?’, may be more relevant than it seems at first. Admittedly, when we are seeking to understand the mysteries of the intangible and spiritual, we are usually left with some unanswered questions. However, while admitting this difficulty, let us realize that prayer is very intelligible and above all, workable. Following are some of the most often asked questions concerning prayer.

Why Pray In A Universe That Is Run By ‘Unalterable Laws’?

A. Universe Is Not A Closed System But An Open System.

Jesus’ practice of prayer demonstrated His belief that this is a purposive universe (not a mechanical universe) in which God wills for man to cooperate with God in fulfilling God’s eternal purposes. Prayer is possible then because this is a purposive universe instead of a mechanical universe. Prayer is necessary because man cannot help carry out God’s purposes through his life without knowledge of those purposes and strength to fulfill these purposes, both of which comes through prayer. Prayer then is “loving communion (with God) which may help in the promotion of (God’s) will, whereas without the prayer it might be frustrated.” (A Place to Stand; by Elton Trueblood; pg. 90)

B. “Laws Interact With Other Laws”: (Questions People Ask About Religion; W. E. Sangster; Pg. 76)

There are laws in the spiritual realm yet undiscovered that interact with the laws we presently know about. Some laws (like gravity) that were one time considered to be unalterable are now ‘violated’ because of other laws that come into play. Example: “Iron will neither float nor hang in the air, but we have liners like floating palaces crossing the wide oceans and mighty planes flying over all the continents of the world. Planes don’t break the law of gravity, for there are laws of aerodynamics as well.” (Ibid; pg. 76)

Why Pray, “If God Knows Best” And Will Accomplish What He Desires Anyway?

Because prayer is fellowship and through fellowship with God man becomes like God, thus fulfilling man’s purpose for creation and thus fulfilling God’s desire for companionship with Man. (Illustration: A human father may know a child’s needs without the child ever asking the father for gifts and necessity, but the father nevertheless desires the child to ask, in order to deepen the love relationship between father and son).

Why Are Not Prayers Immediately Answered?

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Because of man's, free will. Man can set his evil will against God, and can even withstand God.

To save us from presumption and to increase our patience and our appreciation, God may not immediately answer our prayers.

“One way of proving our seriousness is our persistence in prayer.” Some people's “swift abandonment of the quest proves that their desire was not deep. They admit that to master a symphony might take months of study, but they expect to ‘pick up’ God in a few minutes.” (Questions People Ask About Religion; by W. E. Sangster; pg. 80)

How Can My Prayers Have Any Real Affect On People?

Read Frank Lauback's book entitled “Prayer the Mightiest Force in the World”, if you really want to find out. Prayer helps God, for prayer “persuades people to listen to God.” (pg. 54) It appears that prayer has much of the same effect that a verbal witness, or a sermon, or a book, or a letter, or a telephone call, or a telegram has – prayer communicates a message to another and persuades another to take a certain course of action, in this case, to turn to God. The evidence seems to show that prayer is like a radio wave, beaming out messages which are received by the unconscious mental receiving sets of hundreds of people who happen to be tuned in to a particular prayer frequency. If this idea is true, then prayer is probably the most effective means of communicating the Gospel that we know of.

Why Work To Get An Answer To A Problem If You Can Pray?

Because prayer is not a substitute for work. You probably have heard the classic statement: “Prayer is work; prayer works; prayer lead to work.” That statement is classic because it is true. E. Stanley Jones advises the man who prays to “promise God what you will do to make this prayer come true. As the conversation is a two-way affair, so the accomplishment is a double affair. God answers the prayer, not for you, but with you. The answering of prayer is a co-operative endeavor. For, God's interest is not to give you things, but to make you through the getting of those things. The end of the whole process of prayer is not the prayer but the person.” (Abundant Living; pg. 230)

(Illustration: A student cannot ask God to give him an ‘A’ on an exam if he never opens a book to study himself; a farmer cannot pray for a good harvest, if he has not worked to plant the seed, cultivate, and irrigate. A Christian cannot expect a spiritual harvest of souls if he sits back and expects God to do all the work of evangelism). Luther said, “He that has prayed well has studied well.” Prayer without study is vain; study without prayer is also vain. Prayer and work must go hand in hand.

How Can Prayer Help Me Personally?

- A. Through prayer I have a sense of God's companionship, thus fulfilling my inner spiritual and social cravings for fellowship.
- B. My days go better and I am easier to live with, when I pray. Prayer puts me in touch with a higher Reality, and at the same time, releases a divine energy into my life, thus enabling me to use my "earthly" circumstances to serve the Purposes of that higher revealed Reality.
- C. Prayer gets rid of my resentments and my guilt of an unforgiving spirit, for I cannot properly pray and at the same time be hateful and unforgiving. The cleansing agent of prayer which brings confidence and good will to my system, gives healing to my mind, body, and spirit. Thus prayer is inseparably connected with healing.

Did Jesus Teach And Practice Prayer? Yes.

- A. By Exhortation.
 - 1. Child-like Trust in praying – Matthew 6:9; 7:7-8, 11.
 - 2. Belief in praying – Mark 11:24.
 - 3. Praying in 'Jesus' Name'– John 14:13; John 14:14; John 15:16; John 16:23, 24.
 - 4. Simplicity in praying – Matthew 6:7-8.
 - 5. Secrecy in praying – Matthew 6:6.
 - 6. Importunity in praying – Luke 11:5-13.
 - 7. Praying in small groups – Matthew 18:19, 20.
- B. By Demonstration
 - 1. Pray with Whom?
 - (a) In Public – John 11:41-42
 - (b) With Disciples – Luke 9:18
 - (c) All alone – Matthew 14:23
 - 2. Pray When? Favorite time in morning (Mark 1:33), but at all times throughout the day.
 - 3. Pray for What?
 - (a) Glorifying Father – John 17:8
 - (b) For His own usefulness – John 17:5
 - (c) For Disciples
 - John 17:11 – Unity
 - John 17:13 – Joy to be fulfilled
 - John 17:15 - Might be kept from evil one
 - John 17:17 - Might be sanctified
 - John 17:24 – Behold Christ's glory.
 - (Practical specific love in praying for Peter – Luke 22:32)
 - (d) To submit His own will to Father's will – Luke 22:42-44.
 - (e) Pray for enemies – Luke 23:34
 - 4. Pray with what Results?

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- (a) Father always heard and granted Him results – John 11:42a.
- (b) Desire for prayer was stimulated in lives of disciples – Luke 11:1

How Should I Pray?

- A. With Great Earnestness and Desire ---The intensity of our desire in praying will reflect itself by the amount of time we spend in prayer. Jesus spent many hours in prayer. (Hebrews 5:7) Extended praying helps us to become more sensitive to God's presence and power; helps us better to discover ourselves; and helps us to become more aware of God's plan for our life and the lives of others. Extended praying helps us to clarify in our own minds just what God wants specifically to do though us to help another. To pray to God at length de-emphasizes our problems and helps us to center our minds upon God and His boundless resources. Says Dean Inge, "It is quite natural and inevitable that if we spend sixteen hours daily of our waking life in thinking about the affairs of the world, and five minutes in thinking about God...this world will seem two hundred times more real to us than God." (Alive To God Through Prayers; Donald Demaray; pg. 84)
- B. With Simplicity – There is also a time for short, direct, 'flash' prayers. Jesus also practiced this type of praying. What are 'flash' prayers? They are short but regular prayers uttered silently throughout the whole day when meeting every circumstances of life. Says Frank Laubach, "Everybody, in every ordinary day, has hundreds of chinks of idle wasted time which may be filled with flash prayers ten seconds or a minute long." (Prayer the Mightiest Force In The World; pg. 73) Mrs. Billy Graham, who was a busy housewife, said that she did not have time to get down on her knees often. "I do most of my praying 'on the hoof'", says Mrs. Graham, "but to know that you can wash dishes, iron, clean, shop, drive, and in whatever you have to do, Jesus Christ is there beside you, urging you to talk over your problems with him – that is a joy and a comfort it is impossible to describe." (Alive To God through Prayer; pg. 89)
- C. With Submission – Jesus prayed to His Father 'Not my will, but thine be done.' His entire life was in submission to God's will. Says the notable Archbishop William Temple, "Though we bring Him all our needs and hopes, we also recognize that what we should choose may not be best at all, and check our desires by the overruling petition, 'Not my will, but Thine be done.'" (The Hope of a New World; pg. 32)

What Should My Prayer Consist Of? The Content Of Prayer Includes The Following, Each Distinct But All Inter-Related.

- A. Adoration – Time for quieting my mind before God (aids: Reading of Psalms, reflecting upon words of Prayer and praise Hymns); time of waiting upon God (Psalm 62:5)

- B. Confession – After one acknowledges the holiness of God, he cannot help but cry out for God’s cleansing (Isaiah 6). Time for confession of not only volitional sins, but also ‘sins’ of ignorance and ‘sins’ of omission.
- C. Thanksgiving – Thank God regularly and specifically for things as Home, Health, books, Children, Church, Circumstance which bring growth, Guidance in decision-making, Comfort in trouble and Strength in routine labor, God’s personal salvation and Eternal Presence. Learning slowly to count one’s blessings and thanking God for each one in turn gets my mind off personal problems, and builds an attitude of optimism and gratitude.
- D. Intercession – A great portion of the prayer time of a mature Christian should be spent in intercession (prayer for other people). When praying for others, don’t center attention on the problems, sicknesses, or diseases, but rather on the persons themselves.
- E. Petition – is time when we honestly present to God personal, spiritual, physical, financial, social needs, and ask God for personal guidance. Self-dedication of one’s desires and judgments, is the answer to finding guidance from God. It is rare that God gives a special message to the deeply dedicated Christian. Says William Temple, “Such (special) messages may come and we should be ready for them; but they are rare. More often we hear no special message, but find when the time comes that we do or say the right thing, because our impulses and judgment are under the influence of God, in whose hands we have placed our lives. We should in that way commit ourselves to God at the beginning of each day, thinking as we do so of the experiences which we expect that day to bring.” (The Hope of a New World; pgs. 32, 33)

Where And When Should I Pray?

- A. Where to Pray – Because worship is an attitude of the heart (John 4:23) and not merely an act connected with a certain religious posture, man may pray to God in any place. However, having a special place to pray daily has certain advantages: (a) Guards one against negligence, (b) Helps one to get into the proper frame of mind through association with specific place.
- B. When To Pray – No universal law can be laid down at this point, but it is reasonable to believe that just as there are specific times to eat, to sleep, or to work, so there should be specific times to pray (the devout Jew prayed at 9 a.m., 12 mid-day, and 3 p.m. Should the devout Christian do any less?). John Wesley spent two specific hours in prayer each day, and his friend wrote of Wesley’s practice of regular prayer, “He thought prayer to be more his business than anything else and I have seen him come out of his closet with a serenity of face next to shining.” (“Power through Prayer”; E. M. Bounds; pg. 38)

CONCLUSION:

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Says E. Stanley Jones, “Most of the causalities in the spiritual life are found at the place of a weakened prayer life. When the prayer life is toned up the whole of the rest of the life is toned up with it. Prayer is pivotal. I find I am better or worse as I pray more or less. If prayer fades, power fades. When I pray I am like an electric bulb put into the socket, full of light and power. When I don’t pray I’m like that same bulb pulled out of the socket – no light, no power, it is as simple as that, and it works with a mathematical precision. In prayer our weakness is linked to Almightyness; our ignorance linked to Infinite Wisdom; and our finite self to the Infinite Self. When every other way is closed, the way of prayer is open.” (Christian Maturity; pg. 302)

CHAPTER 21
“HOW TO FIND FINANCIAL
FREEDOM!”

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“HOW TO FIND FINANCIAL FREEDOM!”

SCRIPTURE: ¹⁵ Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.” ¹⁶ And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. ¹⁷ He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’ ¹⁸ “Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. ¹⁹ And I’ll say to myself, ‘You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.’” ²⁰ “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’ ²¹ “This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.” (Luke 12:15-21)

TEXT: *“A man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.”* (Luke 12:15)

INTRODUCTION:

This parable of the Rich Fool strikes at the heart of materialism. Materialism is the common denominator in both the systems of capitalism and communism – each considers things and possessions of ultimate value.

PROPOSITION:

There is a right and a wrong way to use money. Money is a means of exchange and its use determines its moral value. Money can be a blessing or money can be a curse. Every Christian should purpose to find and enjoy Financial Freedom. To find financial freedom, one must have a proper attitude towards money.

I. MONEY AND MATERIAL THINGS MUST NOT BE DISPISED

- A. The Rich Man was not condemned because he had money, but because he loved the money and worshipped what the money was able to purchase.
- B. It is not money, but rather the love of money, which is the root of all evil.

- C. This Parable teaches the folly of trusting in riches and worshipping what money can buy.
- D. “The fact is that the Christian faith is the most materialistic of religions, the only one that really takes the material seriously – the spiritual working in and through the material.” (E. S. Jones’ Word Became Flesh; pg. 56) – No compartmentalizing of the sacred and the secular.
- E. Giving money to the work of God is changing money from the tangible to the intangible, from the material to the spiritual, from the temporal to the eternal, from things to character.

II. THE LIMITATION OF MONEY AND MATERIAL THINGS MUST BE RECOGNIZED

- A. The Rich Man in Jesus’ Parable was called a fool for he reasoned that everything had its price tag. He failed to realize the limitation of money.
- B. Money cannot buy health (striving after wealth can rob one of health). (Ecclesiastes 5:12)
- C. Money cannot buy character.
- D. Money cannot buy eternal life. (“We brought nothing into the world and we cannot take anything out of the world.” (I Timothy 6:7; Ecclesiastes 5:15))
- E. Money can make a person quit trusting God. (Proverbs 11:28)
- F. Money can cause a person to be deceived. (Mark 4:19)
- G. Money can cause a person to become double-minded. (Matthew 6:24)
- H. Money can cause a person to rob God. (Malachi 3:10)

IV. MONEY MUST NEVER BE EQUATED WITH HAPPINESS, BUT MONEY MUST BE USED AS A MEANS TO THE END OF MAKING OTHERS HAPPY.

- A. When there is an upward peace (with God), there is an inner peace, which in turn helps to bring about outward peace (in human relationships).
- B. Contentment is finding as many reasons for not owning something as reasons for owning something. (Hebrews 13:5; I Timothy 6:8)
- C. “Hard as some people will find it to receive, it is a fact that material things are regarded as the chief good in life only by those who do not have them.” (Sangster’s ‘Secret to Radiant Life; pg. 114).

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Most rich people are miserable, and they are often characterized by broken homes, high blood pressure, ulcers, alcoholism, adultery, drugs, and even suicide. (Ecclesiastes 5:10, 11)

- D. The strange thing about wealth is that the accumulation of it calls for the accumulation of more wealth.
- E. Wesley had a three-fold principle to guide his life in regards to money and material possessions:
 - (1) Gain all you can.
 - (2) Save all you can.
 - (3) Give all you can.

E. STANLEY JONES' 'LADDER FOR MASTERY OVER MONEY'.

1. Hold in mind that money is a good servant, but a terrible master.
2. Reject the philosophy that you may hold vast accumulations as a trustee for the poor.
3. Nothing that you can do for your children will be more harmful than to leave so much to them that they will not have to struggle and work.
4. There are two ways to be wealthy – one is in the abundance of your possessions, and the other is in the fewness of your wants.
5. Put in a stop where your needs end. After that all you make belongs to other people's needs.
6. Keep your needs down to needs, not luxuries disguised as needs.
7. Settle the level of need in the full light of the needs of others, of your enlightened conscience, and of the judgment of a disciplined group.
8. While you are lifting your economic level to the level of need, give a tithe of what you earn. After you have reached that level, give everything you earn.
9. Work for a co-operative order in which each will think and work for all, and all will think and work for each. (Abundant Livings; pgs. 300-302)

CONCLUSION:

Simplicity in living is one of the most important principles in the right use of money and material things. Wastefulness or extravagance have no place in the Christian's practices of stewardship.

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“Use it up,
Wear it out,
Make it do,
Or do without.”

CHAPTER 22

“THE PATH TO TRUE RICHES!”

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SCRIPTURE: *“⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. ⁹ Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. ¹¹ But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. ¹² Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³ In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you ¹⁴ to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ which God will bring about in his own time—God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen. ¹⁷ Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. ¹⁸ Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. ¹⁹ In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.”* (I Timothy 6:7-19)

TEXT: *“Be Rich in Good Works.”* (I Timothy 6:18)

INTRODUCTION:

The predominate attitude of our culture in judging success is materialistic. The more money one has, the more successful he is. The more money one has, the more friends he has. The more friends one has, the more popular he is. These are the thoughts of the worldly-wise man who has never seen the deeper values of life.

The man of the world may possess great material wealth, and yet be one of the poorest men on earth. Why is this? Simply because the worldly-wise man has failed to realize the limitations of money. He has failed to realize that there are some things in life that money can't buy. Money can't buy health or happiness. Happiness is experienced, not sought for or purchased with money. Happiness and contentment are found in the simplest things of life, among the simplest and poorest people. Instead of giving contentment, money oftentimes compounds ones fears and anxieties. The more money one has, the more money one has to lose.

Life does not consist in the abundance of things which a man possesses. The path to true riches is found through the gateway of self-surrender. The happy life is not the grasping and greedy life, but rather the life of service. As one said, "The Christian knows that the secret of happiness lies, not in things, but in people." (Barclay's Timothy; pg. 150) H. W. Beecher says, "In this world it is not what we take up, but what we give up, that makes us rich." God loves the cheerful giver. It is more blessed to give than to receive.

PROPOSITION:

Let us more carefully consider what true riches are. Richness consists in giving to God, but there is a right way out of many ways in which a person can give money to God and the Church. Wesley considered the use of money as the most important criterion of practical Christianity. Let us carefully note: (1) the Ways of Giving, and (2) the Results of the right way of Giving.

I. WAYS OF GIVING

A. BARCLAY NOTES THE MANNER IN WHICH MANY PEOPLE GIVE MONEY. THERE ARE DIFFERENT WAYS. SOME GIVE TO THE CHURCH SIMPLY OUT OF A SENSE OF DUTY.

To make giving an exercise of drudgery, out of a cold and calculating heart, is to miss the very purpose of giving. If giving is done with an obvious reluctance, it would be almost better not to give at all.

B. SOME GIVE SIMPLY TO FIND SELF-SATISFACTION.

To give simply to feel that one has been a good citizen is to give with an inferior motive. Some like to feel that tingle of self-satisfaction when they have given to charity. Says Barclay, "Such giving is in essence selfish. People who give like that give the gift to themselves rather than to the other person." (Corinthians; pg. 259)

C. SOME GIVE TO ENHANCE THEIR OWN PRESTIGE.

It is honorable and respectable to give some money to the Church. Some use the Church in order to become more respectable citizens in the community, or with a secret motive that their own business may in turn be advanced. Jesus said that we should not give to

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be seen of men. The Father who sees what one gives in secret will graciously reward in open.

D. THE RIGHT WAY TO GIVE IS TO GIVE OUT OF A HEART OF LOVE.

We should give tithes and offerings in order to outwardly express our love to God. The Bible says that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Says one keen observer, "It is one of the basic facts of human life that the ungiven self is the unfulfilled self." (None of These Diseases; pg. 130)

Says Barclay, "The finest gifts are given, not when they are demanded, but before they are asked for. The finest gifts are given, not after waiting until need has to ask, but by the man whose eye sees and whose heart feels and whose hand is stretched out even before any request is made." (Corinthians; pg. 260)

The generous life is the enriched life. "Carlyle tells how when he was a boy a beggar came to the door. His parents were out and he was alone in the house. On a boyish impulse he broke into his own savings-bank and gave the beggar all that was in it, and, he tells us, that never before or since did he know such sheer joyous happiness as came to him in that moment." (Barclays Corinthians; pg. 262)

Paul writes, "*He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will reap bountifully. Let each man give as he has decided in his heart. Let him not give as if it hurt him to give or as if it was being forced out of him, for it is the happy giver whom God loves*". (II Corinthians 9:6, 7; Barclay)

II. RESULTS OF CHEERFUL GIVING

The person who gives out of a heart of love is the rich man (as Barclay well points out).

A. THE GENEROUS MAN IS RICH IN LOVE.

The generous man is not cold and calculating but he is warm and genuine. As a student at Central College, I went to a little country Church with a college representative who was seeking to raise money for the college. One farmer alone (in the early 1960's) gave \$500 to the college. He did not make a display of his generosity, but gave his money out of a heart of love. That man was a man whom people loved and respected, not merely because he gave that particular sum of money on that occasion, but because it was his habit in life to give generously, far above his tithe.

B. THE GENEROUS MAN IS RICH IN FRIENDS

An important lesson can be learned from the life of John D. Rockefeller, Sr. As a farm lad, he was industrious. After entering business he drove himself hard and spent long hours on his job. He became very successful and rich. By the age of thirty-three, he had reached his first million dollars. At age forty-three, he controlled the biggest business in the world. At age fifty-three, he was the richest man on earth and the only one who was a billionaire. To make this money however, he sacrificed his health and happiness. His digestion was so bad that he could only eat crackers and milk. To make his fortune, he had driven others out of business, and was greatly hated. He had bodyguards day and night, and he could not sleep at nights.

The time came, however, when Rockefeller saw that his money could not give him happiness and peace of mind. He therefore determined to no longer greedily amass wealth, but rather to use his money to help mankind. Time does not permit to tell of all the benevolent causes that he began and contributed too. The Rockefeller Foundation was established and from this many hundreds of millions of dollars were “showered on universities, hospitals, mission work, and millions of underprivileged people. He was one who helped rid the South of its greatest economic and physical scourge-hookworm. We can thank John D. every time our lives and the lives of our children are saved by an injection of penicillin because his contributions aided in the discovery of this miracle drug.” (None of These Diseases; pgs. 128, 129)

These and many other things are what Rockefeller did with money that he once selfishly amassed. He was at one time an unhealthy and hated man. When he was fifty-three, he was not expected to live. After he gave of his money and of himself to help mankind, his health improved and he lived to be ninety-eight years old. He not only lived to a ripe old age, but he is now remembered as a great philanthropist. He gained both happiness and health by giving of himself and his means in helping mankind.

It is still true, as was shown in Rockefeller’s earlier life, that “hardening of the heart ages people more quickly than hardening of the arteries.” (Franklin Field)

C. THE GENEROUS MAN IS RICH IN HELP

Occasionally a need will arise in which we greatly need a friend to help us; a person who is generous will usually have a friend who will be glad to help him in time of need.

Paul realized that the churches would occasionally need each other’s mutual aid in times of need. He therefore urged them to be generous. Says Paul, *“You are not called on to give so that others may have relief while yourselves are hard pressed. But things will even themselves up. At the present time your abundance must be used to relieve their lack, so that someday their abundance may be used to relieve your lack, so that things may be evened up, just as it stands written, ‘He who gathered his much had not too much, and he who gathered his little had not too little.’”* (II Corinthians 8:13; Barclay)

D. THE GENEROUS MAN IS RICH TOWARD God

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Writes Paul, *“For the ministration of this act of voluntary service not only fills up the lacks of God’s dedicated people, but it also does something special for God through the many thanksgivings it produces.”* (II Corinthians 9:12; Barclay) The one who is rich toward God is the one who seeks not to see how little he is required to give to God, but is the person who seeks to see how much he can give to God. The one who is rich toward God is the one who has put the interests and needs of others before his own desires. It is the person who *“has not directed life to amassing possessions but to eliminating needs.”* (Barclay’s Corinthians 263)

“There was a man called Monobaz who had inherited great wealth, but he was a good, a kindly and a generous man. In the time of famine he gave away all his wealth to help the poor. His brothers came to him and said: ‘Your fathers had inherited from their fathers, and are you going to waste it all?’ He answered: ‘My father laid up treasure of Mammon: I have laid up treasure of souls. My father laid up treasure for this world: I have laid up treasure for the world to come.’” (Barclay’s Timothy; pg. 159)

CONCLUSION:

What is the result of cheerful giving? It is richness in love, richness in friends, richness in help, and richness toward God. Do you want to be a rich man? The secret is this: *“Labor hard, consume little, give much – and all to Christ”.* (A. N. Groves as quoted in True Discipleship) God gives the following promise to the faithful tither: *“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”* (Malachi 3:10)

At the conclusion of his sermon on The Use of Money, Wesley gives the following helpful advice in the expenditure of our money: *“Gain all you can without hurting either yourself or your neighbor, in soul or body, by applying hereto with unintermitted diligence, and with all the understanding which God has given you; - save all you can, by cutting off every expense which serves only to indulge foolish desire; to gratify either the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life; waste nothing, living or dying, on sin or folly, whether for yourself or your children; - and then, give all you can, or, in other words, give all you have to God. Do not stint yourself, like a Jew rather than a Christian, to this or that proportion. Render unto God, not a tenth, not a third, not half, but all that is God’s, be it more or less; by employing all, on yourself, your household, the household of faith, and all mankind, in such a manner that you may give a good account of your stewardship, when ye can be no longer stewards; in such a manner as the oracles of God direct, both by general and particular precepts; in such a manner, that whatever ye do may be ‘a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savor to God’, and that every act may be rewarded in that day, when the Lord cometh with all His Saints.”*

(Wesley’s Sermons, Vol. 1; pgs. 447, 448)

CHAPTER 23
***“CHARACTERISTICS OF SPRIT-
FILLED CHRISTIAN!”***

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“CHARACTERISTICS OF SPRIT-FILLED CHRISTIAN!”

1. An earnest believer takes God’s laws most seriously. He does not trade the mercy of God, shrugging his shoulders and ignoring the counsels and reproofs of God. He recognizes the fact of objective moral standards, and strives earnestly to obey God’s laws. Spirit filled Christians delight to do the Father’s will. “They delight in doing everything God wants them to, and day and night are always meditating on his laws and thinking about ways to follow him more closely.” (Psalms 1:2; Living Bible)

An earnest believer is not repulsed by God’s rules and regulations, for he knows that God’s way are the ways of health and wholeness. With the Psalmist he declares, *“I have thought much about your words, and stored them in my heart so that they would hold me back from sin. Blessed Lord, teach me your rules. I have recited your laws, and rejoiced in them more than in riches. I will meditate upon them and give them my full respect. I will delight in them and not forget them.”* (Psalms 119:11-16; Living Bible)

Thus, a Spirit-filled Christian delights in God’s laws and commandments, and submits his will to the will of the Father. Often on his lips are these words:

“Take my will and make it Thine;
It shall be no longer mine;
Take my heart; it is Thine own;
It shall be Thy royal throne.”

Why does a Spirit-filled Christian take God’s commandments so seriously? It is because he loves God supremely, and desires only to please Christ. Loving God involves not only the sentiment of the heart, but it involves the surrender of the will. Wrote John, *“Loving God means doing what He tells us to do, and really, that isn’t hard at all; for every child of God can obey him, defeating sin and evil pleasure by trusting Christ to help him.”* (I John 5:3-4; Living Bible)

2. One evidence that a person is truly a Spirit-filled person is that he hungers and thirsts for the Word of God – the Holy Scriptures. He is a member of the company of the committed – committed to the truth of God’s Word! Along with the Psalmist, he declares; *“God’s laws are perfect. They protect us, make us wise, and give us joy and light. They are more desirable than gold. They are sweeter than honey dripping from a honeycomb.”* (Psalms 19:7, 8, 10; Living Bible)

3. Prayer is seldom easy, but it is always important. People who are filled with the Spirit are people who want to know God and His will more fully. John Wesley was a man of prayer, and he believed prayer to be more his business than anything else. Often there is a prayer on the lips of a Spirit-filled Christian. He prays “in season and out of season,” at all times, and in all circumstances, for all persons! Paul writes, *“Here are my directions: Pray much for others; plead for God’s mercy upon them; give thanks for all he is going to do for them.”* (I Timothy 2:1; Living Bible)
Paul, a Spirit-filled man, was a prayer warrior. To the Ephesian Church, he wrote: *“I have never stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give your wisdom to see clearly and really understand who Christ is and all that he has done for you.”* (Ephesians 1:16-17; Living Bible)

CONDITIONS TO ANSWERED PRAYER (with promises)

CONTRITION – *“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”* (2 Chronicles 7:14)

WHOLE-HEARTEDNESS – *“And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.”* (Jeremiah 29:13)

FAITH – *“Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.”*

RIGHTEOUSNESS – *“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”* (Right relationship with God and man)

OBEDIENCE – *“And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.”* (I John 3:22)

ASK IN JESUS’ NAME – *“And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.”* (John 14:13, 14) *“Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.”* (John 16:24)

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ASK ACCORDING TO GOD'S WILL – *“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.”* (I John 5:14, 15)

PERSISTENCE – *“Keep on asking and it will be given you; keep on seeking and you will find; keep on knocking (reverently) and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who keeps on asking receives, and he who keeps on seeking finds, and to him who keeps on knocking it will be opened.”* (Matthew 7:7; Amplified Bible)

PRAY AT ALL TIMES - *“Pray without ceasing.”* (Thessalonians 5:17)

Mrs. Billy Graham admits that I do most of my praying ‘on the hoof’”. ‘She says tht sometimes a busy homemaker simply cannot get down upon her knees often. ‘But to know that you can wash dishes, iron, clean, shop, drive, and in whatever you have to do Jesus Christ is there beside you, urging you to talk over your problems with him – that is a joy and a comfort it is impossible to describe.’” (Demaray; pg. 89) (Alive To God through Prayer; pg. 89)

4. The local Church is not without its faults, but the Spirit-filled Christian is one who is not disillusioned by the weaknesses and failures of the corporate body of Christ. The Spirit-filled Christian seeks to perfect the imperfections in his own life, and he seeks to cultivate a spirit of openness and charitableness in the corporate life of the congregation of believers. He upholds and supports the local Church, and he remains loyal and true amidst all the ups and downs of the congregational life.

Psalm 26:8:

*“⁸ LORD, I love the house where you live,
the place where your glory dwells.”*

Psalm 27:4:

*“⁴ One thing I ask from the LORD,
this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the LORD
and to seek him in his temple.*

Psalm 84:10

*“¹⁰ Better is one day in your courts
than a thousand elsewhere;
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
than dwell in the tents of the wicked.”*

Psalm 122:1

*“¹ I rejoiced with those who said to me,
“Let us go to the house of the LORD.”*

5. A Spirit filled person witnesses joyfully to others, seeking to lead many to Christ.
6. A Spirit-filled person is attractive in his personality because he is Christ-lead and others-oriented.
7. A Spirit-filled Christian is attractive, winsome, fragrant, appealing and beautiful! Why? Because his life is a reflection of the beautiful Christ who is the object of his love, affection and worship.

A Spirit-filled person cultivates the ‘fruit’ of the Spirit in his daily life:love, joy, peace, etc.

“²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.” Galatians 5:22-23

CHAPTER 24
“VICTORY OVER DEPRESSION!”

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“VICTORY OVER DEPRESSION!”

SCRIPTURE: ¹ *As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, my God.*

² *My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?*

³ *My tears have been my food
day and night,
while people say to me all day long,
“Where is your God?”*

⁴ *These things I remember
as I pour out my soul:
how I used to go to the house of God
under the protection of the Mighty One^[d]
with shouts of joy and praise
among the festive throng.*

⁵ *Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.*

⁶ *My soul is downcast within me;
therefore I will remember you
from the land of the Jordan,
the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar.*

⁷ *Deep calls to deep
in the roar of your waterfalls;*

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*all your waves and breakers
have swept over me.*

⁸ *By day the LORD directs his love,
at night his song is with me—
a prayer to the God of my life.*

⁹ *I say to God my Rock,
“Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I go about mourning,
oppressed by the enemy?”*

¹⁰ *My bones suffer mortal agony
as my foes taunt me,
saying to me all day long,
“Where is your God?”*

¹¹ *Why, my soul, are you downcast?*

Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God,

for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God. (Psalms 42:1-11)

TEXT: *“Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.” (Psalms 42:11)*

INTRODUCTION:

Have you ever had a heartbreaking time in your life when your tears became your food day and night? “Depression is a major ill that affects more people than we imagine and infects them more than we realize.” (Briscoe)

PROPOSITION:

- I. THE LONGINGS OF A SOUL THAT IS DESPERATE (vs. 1-3)
 - A. Insatiable thirst for God (v. 1)
 - B. Intense homesickness for God (v. 2)
 - C. Incessant tears from sorrow (v. 3a)
 - D. Insensitive taunts from cruel men (v. 3b)
- II. THE MEMORIES OF A SOUL THAT IS LONELY (v. 4)
 - A. Unleashed sorrows of a soul focusing on present troubles (v. 4a)

- B. Nostalgic memories of a soul recollecting past triumphs (v. 4b)
- III. THE REMINDERS OF A SOUL THAT IS THOUGHTFUL (vs. 5-8)
- A. Causes of depression must, be explored (v. 5a)
 - B. Source of Hope, must be reaffirmed (v. 5b)
 - C. Communion in the Past, must be recalled (v. 6)
 - D. Sovereignty of God, must be acknowledged (v. 7)
 - E. Mercy of God, must be anticipated (v. 8)
- V. THE AGONIES OF A SOUL THAT IS OPPRESSED (v. 9-10)
- A. The mystery of restraints in divine intervention (v. 9)
 - B. The agony of ridicule by human interrogation (v. 10)
- V. THE REAFFIRMATION OF A SOUL THAT IS HOPEFUL (v. 11)
- A. Present Reassurance based on reflective questioning (v. 11a)
 - B. Future Confidence based on reliable commitment (v. 11b)

CONCLUSION:

Have tears been your food day and night? Have troubles befallen you and do you feel crushed in your spirit? Does the way seem long and dreary, and do you often feel lonely or forsaken? Does God seem distant from you? Do you sometimes feel like crying out, "O God, why have you forgotten me?" Are you downcast, disturbed, and depressed?

You can find victory over your depression! It will require the positive exercise of your will and the positive disciplining of your thoughts, but you can find victory over your depression! Explore the possible causes of your depression. Affirm the fact that God is the source of your hope and the object of your faith. Recall the past blessings of God in your life, and remember that God, as sovereign, is in total control of all circumstances – even those circumstances which have given birth to your depression. Anticipate that God's mercies will be poured out upon you, anew, and afresh. Realize that God has a purpose to accomplish even in your depression, that God can take the broken pieces of your shattered life and can make something beautiful out of brokenness. Even though God seems at times to be slow in His divine intervention, and even though the cruel taunts of insensitive men inflict deep hurts to your soul, remember that God is your Savior and as such is able and ready to save you out of your 'pits of despair'. Reaffirm your faith in a faithful God! Say to yourself, "I will put my faith in God, for I will yet praise

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him, my Savior and my God.” “The saddest countenance shall yet be made to shine, if there be a taking of God at his word and an expectation of his salvation.” (Spurgeon)

CHAPTER 25

***“WORDS THAT ARE HONORING TO
GOD AND HELPFUL TO OTHERS!”***

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“WORDS THAT ARE HONORING TO GOD AND HELPFUL TO OTHERS!”

1. Psalms 19:14 - (Words that are acceptable to God – Pray this verse every day!)
2. Isaiah 6:1-7 - (Cleansed Lips – Pray for God’s total cleaning of your life)
3. Proverbs 13:3 – (Guard your lips; sometimes best to remain quiet)
4. Psalms 15:1-3 – (Do not slander or cast a slur-bad word-on your neighbor; Speak the Truth at all times)
5. Proverbs 11:9 – (Do not use Your mouth to hurt and destroy other persons)
6. Proverbs 15:28 – (Think before you speak; think carefully what your answer will be before you speak; don’t be impulsive or quick to speak, but think about your answer first)
7. Matthew 12:34-36 – (Your words reveal what is in your heart)

Luke 6:45 – A good and righteous heart will speak kind and godly words, and an evil and godless heart will speak dirty and evil words that hurt others and which greatly offend and hurt Almighty God)
8. Ephesians 5:3-7 – (Note verse 4 regarding words)

(Christians are commanded never to engage or practice vulgar or profane language, and no foolish talk or unclean joking. There are several other evil practices forbidden to Christians, such as sexual immorality, impurity, greed). No cursing; No Profanity. Be Sacred!
9. Colossians 4:6 – (Christians are to practice gracious and appealing (favorable – like Seasoning Salt) conversation, with wisdom that enables the believer to answer every question he is asked with appropriate and loving responses – seeking never to offend or hurt anyone, but to bless everyone).

10. Proverbs 16:24 – (Pleasant words can help bring healing to others).
11. Proverbs 25:11 – (Words that are spoken at the right time and in the right way, bring a sense of beauty and balance to life, with much cheer and appeal).
12. Ecclesiastes 10:12 – (Words from the mouth of a godly man bring good edification and joy to those around him but the words from a godless person finally bring destruction to him).
13. Isaiah 50:4 – (God guides the godly person in the selection of those words that he speaks, and these words from the lips of the godly person lifts up and sustains and encourages the heart of the weary and the discouraged person).
14. Ephesians 5:19 – (Christians are to use the beautiful words of Spiritual, God-centered songs and hymns and psalms to encourage each other).
15. I Peter 2:21-22 – (Christians are to follow the example of Jesus, and seek to live lives that are free of all deceit – both in what they say and in how they live; Christian is to be ‘like Christ’, looking always to Jesus as his/her perfect example and model for daily living in every human Relationship.)
16. Psalms 5:9 – (A Christian must be trustworthy and reliable in the use of his words, in contrast to wicked persons whose hearts are evil and whose words are deceitful (lying)). Psalms 10:7 – Psalms 36:3 – Psalms 55:21
17. Proverbs 12:18 – (A Christian must be very fearful not to speak careless and reckless words, for such words can bring great harm and hurt to others – like the kind of hurt which a sword can bring to a harmless victim, but the words of a wise and godly person can bring comfort and healing. Make sure your words are always healing words).
18. Proverbs 24:1-2 – (Because the heart of evil men plot violence, and their words are not designed to promote peace, but trouble instead, a Christian should not be in their presence. They are an evil influence – destructive in their motives and in their actions).
19. Matthew 12:34-37 - (Jesus made it very clear that one’s words are the expression – overflow-of what is in one’s heart. He said that “men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words, you will be condemned”).
20. James 3:1-2 – (The power of the human tongue, for great good or for great destruction, taught here. The truly mature person is the person whose tongue is carefully controlled by God - verse 2. The secret to tongue-control is God-control, that is, a life surrendered to God. Our tongue is meant to never Curse our fellow men, and always to praise our Creator and Saviour).

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21. Ephesians 4:31 – (As Christians, we are to get rid of all evil things in our lives, such as slander, bitterness, rage, and anger, instead to use our tongue to bless everyone around us).
22. Titus 3:2 – (No slander, but instead consideration for others, and humility, teachableness, and openness to the needs of others).
23. I Peter 2:1 – (Christians are to get rid of all kinds of evil, in human relationships – including deceit, lying, envy, and slander of every kind).
24. I Peter 3:10 – (A Christian will see good days, and he will love his life, IF he “Keeps his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech.”).
25. Psalms 34:13 – Proverbs 13:3 -Proverbs 21:23 -James 1:26: (The tongue of the wise person is to be restrained from and to avoid great evil and to enjoy great blessings and prosperity).

CHAPTER 26

“LOVE ALL – AND JUDGE NONE!”

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“LOVE ALL – AND JUDGE NONE!”

SCRIPTURE:¹ *“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. ² For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. ³ “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? Matthew 7:1-3*

Text: *“Do not judge others...Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you will be healed.” (Matthew 7:1 and James 5:16)*

The more clear I am about the objective truth of God’s Word and will, as well as the nature and distinction between right and wrong, the more non-judgmental I should be in my relationship with those who obviously are breaking God’s commandments and indulge in wrong-doing. A non-judgmental attitude toward the wrong-doer is not an attitude of condoning, and is not an attitude of indifference toward the wrong that is being committed.

The object and goal is to see the wrong-doer Repent of his wrong and make peace with God and to make reconciliation with those he has wronged. But how is this ‘Repentance’ or ‘Change of mind’ to take place?

It will not take place if I condemn him or criticize him or debate with him. The result of my reproach fullness toward the wrong-doer will not incite repentance or awaken a healthy guilt in him. Rather, my reproach fullness will drive him to a defensive attitude, an attitude of self-justification. I have thus not brought him nearer to God and nearer to proper repentance; but rather my attitude toward him has driven him further from God and further from a spirit of repentance. He now justifies and rationalizes his sins and hardens his heart. He listens not to either my voice of accusation or to the convicting voice of the Holy Spirit.

How then will the wrong-doer be brought to repentance, issuing forth in a change of behavior and a reconciliation of all relationships? God incites repentance in the wrong-doer through a humble, open, confessing spirit of the believer. *“If my people, who are called by*

my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land." (II Chronicles 7:14) It is when God's people stop criticizing and reproaching and pontificating in the spirit of self-righteous justification, and instead begin to openly share their own shortcomings, sins, failures and weaknesses, and seek forgiveness from the world which God's people have sinned against by failure to do good – it is then that God will create in the wrong doer a spirit of repentance. Only when the Church humbly shares its wrongs and lovingly accepts all wrong-doers without a spirit of self-righteous holiness, that the world of wrong-doers will be open to confessions, sensitized to guilt, and motivated to repentance. When the Church, (and each individual believer) is God's instrument to incite repentance, by practicing repentance, then God can bring sinners (home to God)! The Church, (and each individual believer) is God's instrument to incite repentance. When the Church is revived through confession, the world will be healed through repentance. The more seriously I take sin and the more vehement I am in opposing injustice, the more sensitive I should be of 'wickedness' in my own life: "...if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land." (II Chronicles 7:14), and the more accepting I should be of the wrong-doer. Only when I hate sin intensely within myself, will I love and accept the wrong-doer unconditionally, and seek, not to condemn him, but to share with him my own wrongdoings. Only as I focus on taking the beam out of my own eye, will the wrong-doer be convinced of the beam in his own eye. Only when I, as a believer, engage in self-incrimination, open sharing, humble confession, will the wrong-doer be motivated to do the same.

When the world sees the church, not as an accuser and judge, but as a fellowship of mutual confession and loving support, then the world will put down its defenses, its rationalizations and its justifications and make true confession and genuine repentance. When the world hears the voice of humble confession in the Church's fellowship of mutual love, then it will be motivated to open its floodgates of self-justification and receive God's healing through repentance.

It is not accusations or judgmentalism, but understanding and unconditional acceptance of others which are the absolute essentials for the awakening of real guilt and the incitation of genuine repentance in the wrong-doer. To criticize a man is to drive a man into self-justification and thus away from repentance and away from God. We hinder, not help, a man by becoming his judge. By becoming his judge, we stand in the place of God who alone is Judge. The transgressor acknowledges wrong-doing in the quietness of personal contemplation or in the presence of a non-critical friend.

'Judge not' – that is the call to every Christian. How to rid myself of this overbearing, destructive practice? "The spirit of judgmentalism evaporates as soon as I become conscious of my own faults and speak freely of them to my friend, as he speaks to me of those which made him reproach himself." (Tournier, *Guilt and Grace*, pg. 85)

"Nothing is more contagious than confession." (Ibid, pg. 85) The cost of being a counselor is to confess my own faults to the counselee. Healing of the troubled person takes place, not

in the atmosphere of criticism or self-righteousness, but in the atmosphere of mutual caring and sharing.

How are conflicts and problems in relationships solved? Not by exchange of logic and debate and arguments which are generally exchanged as if in the presence of two deaf men. But by exchange of heartfelt confession of personal weakness and needs, creating an atmosphere of true caring and loving. Reconciliation and healing are the products of humility and mutual sharing. When my attitude changes from one of judgmentalism to understanding and humble confession, I build a bridge of love and kindness, creating healing in relationships.

What then is my part, as a believer, as one who desires to heal people of emotional and spiritual ills?

- (1) Not to condone or to justify sin or to be indifferent to sin and sin's consequences. I must hate sin in all forms, and discern it quickly in others and more quickly in myself.**
- (2) Not to condemn, to criticize, or to judge the wrongdoer. Restraint from condemning does not mean that I am condoning (approving or overlooking) sin. I am to hate sin but I am never to judge or to criticize the sinner. "The most tragic consequence of our criticism of a man is to block his way to humiliation and grace, precisely to drive him into the mechanisms of self-justification and into his faults instead of freeing him from them. For him, our voice drowns the voice of God. We put him beyond the reach of the divine voice, which can only be heard in the silence. The impassioned response which our criticism triggers off in his soul makes too much noise." (Ibid, pg. 82)**
- (3) Become the loving enabler of the wrongdoer, enabling the wrongdoer (through my loving attitude and unconditional acceptance) to see and to listen to God. For God alone is the Judge, the Convictor, and Convincer of sin.**

"Real repentance is reached only when conviction of sin grows from within and not from without, when it rises from the depths of our own being, from intimate communion with God, from the prompting of the Holy Spirit, and not from the judgment of men." (Ibid, pg. 81)

"If true guilt is God's reproach, what I can do for a patient is to help him to approach God, to listen to Him himself, and not to expect divine judgment from my lips." (Ibid, pg. 73)

"Our voice must be silenced; our judgment of man must be broken off, so that he may hear the voice of God, whose judgment is quite different from our own." (Ibid, pg. 87)

CHAPTER 27
***“DAVID THE PENITENT - GETTING
BACK TO GOD!”***

CHAPTER 27

“DAVID THE PENITENT - GETTING BACK TO GOD!”

INTRODUCTION:

Briefly note the life of David as a youth – respectful, faithful, talented, disciplined, whole-hearted, versatile, brilliant, and a deep lover of God and nature. David, who was tutored by God in nature, was a courageous challenger in the face of serious threats to Israel. David trusted God, defied sin, wrought a mighty victory, and humbly ascribed all praise to God. (Goliath)

Briefly note David the Fugitive – The warmth of personality (David the friend of Jonathan), the discretion of action (David’s fleeing from murderous Saul), and the nobility of spirit (David’s forgiveness of Saul) all unite to make David a truly great man during this fugitive period of his life.

PROPOSITION:

Let us follow the steps downward in David’s sin, and finally the steps upward in David’s restoration to fellowship with God. The steps by which he fell into passionate sin and the steps by which he regained fellowship with God are the same steps in the fall and the recovery of every man.

I. DAVID THE PASSIONATE SINNER

A. CONDITIONS CONDUCIVE FOR PASSION

1. Idle mind – II Samuel. 11:1, 2 (Indulgence –eating and drinking; leisure with no great task; David staying in Jerusalem and enjoying leisure (not up from his couch).
2. The Second Look that led to passionate thinking and mental adultery (How did he know she was exceptionally beautiful? He obviously gazed at the woman)
3. Mental plotting – II Samuel 11:3, which eventually gave birth to:

4. Passionate Act itself – II Samuel 11:4 (adultery)

B. RESULTS OF PASSIONATE ACTION

1. Unaccounted – for problems (11:5) – conception in this case.
2. Cover-up plot which was unsuccessful – 11:6-9.
3. Further desperate plotting as attempt to cover up his shameful sin – 11:10-13.
4. Successful plot of murder – 11:14-17.
5. Stole another man's wife – 11:26-27; 12:10.
6. Harsh judgment from God – 12:15-19.
 - (a) Illegitimate son's death – 12:15-19.
 - (b) Amnon, a son of David, committed incest with Tamar, a daughter of David. Absalom, David's son, slaughtered Amnon as punishment.
 - (c) Absalom, David's son, undermined David, secretly conspired against David for the throne of Israel, took over Jerusalem temporarily, causing David to flee for his life, and finally David's army fought against Absalom's army resulting finally in Absalom's tragic death.
 - (d) Internal rebellion, dissensions, and plots which made life weary for David.

II. DAVID THE PRAYING PENITENT (Psalms 51)

A. CONFESSION OF TRANSGRESSIONS (1-4)

1. David's recall of God's merciful disposition (1)
2. David's realization of personal guilty condition (2-4), (No attempt at blaming others); (4) Honest acknowledgement of wrong – facing it seriously and no attempt to appease the conscience or rationalize; (3) prayer for thorough treatment by God (2).

B. CLEANSING FROM INTERNAL POLLUTION (5-7)

1. David's essential problem - Depravity (v. 5) (Cardinal Jewish belief – Original Sin)
2. God's Internal standard – Purity of Motive (v. 6) – truth and sincerity.

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

3. David's earnest commitment – For God-wrought purging (7)

C. RESTORATION OF JOYOUS RELATIONSHIP (8-12)

1. David's desire for joyous restoration of former relationship – (vs. 8, 11, 12). (David craved to enjoy God's fellowship which was joyous and meaningful – recall of past experiences with God in childhood and during fugitive period incited deep desire in David for restoration).

2. David's two-part prayer for restoration (9, 10).

D. ENABLEMENT FOR EXTERNAL WITNESS (13-10)

1. David's power for witness – Sacrifice of a broken heart in contrast to mere burnt offerings (16-19).

2. David's content in witness – Praise to God's righteousness (14-15).

3. David's result from witness – conversion of sinners (13).

CONCLUSION:

David's sins have been called the sins of Middle Age, but they can be the sins of any age. David fell so low, and yet God forgave him, and David became the greatest king of all Israel. There is hope for him who has fallen into sin – however grievous it is.

CHAPTER 28
***“ELIJAH – A MAN OF GREAT
PASSIONS!”***

CHAPTER 28

“ELIJAH – A MAN OF GREAT PASSIONS!”

Text: *“Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are.”* (James 5:17)

“Elijah was a man with human frailties like our own.” (NEB)

INTRODUCTION:

1. John the Baptist was liken unto Elijah (and of John the Baptist it was said by Jesus that no man was greater than John the Baptist was) – great compliment to Elijah.
2. Some thought Jesus was Elijah for Jesus reminded people of Elijah.
Some of Jesus’ actions must have been similar to Elijah’s actions.
3. Elijah was one of two Old Testament heroes chosen to appear with Christ on the Mount.
4. Elijah was a man of like passions (frailties) to us, therefore we can in many ways, identify with him in our experiences.

PROPOSITION:

Elijah was a great and godly man, a man of great extremes and intensity of passion. He experienced the same passions that men of God through the ages have experienced. God brought Elijah through the ebb and flow of life, and one day Elijah received his eternal reward. God is able to cope with life, with all the experiences life can bring, and can make us the victors at the end.

I. CONFIDENCE

- A. In God’s Protection (before Ahab) – I Kings 17:1
- B. In God’s Provisions (at the dried-up brook) – I Kings 17:2-7

C. In God's Power – (in raising the widow's son to life) – I Kings 17:17-24

II. COURAGE

A. In Challenging the King - I Kings 18:17-19

B. In Challenging the Baal-worshippers – I Kings 18:20-24

C. In Challenging God – I Kings 18:30-38

D. In Executing the False Prophets – I Kings 18:39-40

III. CONFUSION

A. Essence – Discouragement – I Kings 19:1-4

B. Loneliness – I Kings 19:9, 10

C. Cure

1. Physical Rest, Food, and Nourishment – 19:6

2. Personal experience of God's nature – 19:11-13a (Resting assured that God never wavers and one's relationship with God is intended to be a once-for-all established relationship.)

3. Involvement in God's Work – I Kings 19:15-17

4. Realization that he wasn't alone in fight for righteousness – 19:8; Acts 4:23, 24

IV. CONFRONTATION

A. Setting – Murder of Naboth – 21:1-16

B. Pronouncement of Judgment on Ahab – 21:17-24

C. Fulfillment of Prophecy – 22:37, 38; II King 9:29-37

V. CHARIOT RIDE – II KINGS 2-11-12a.

CONCLUSION:

Elijah experienced the whole gamut of human experiences. Man of like passions.

1. Time of great confidence in God.
2. Times of great courage in face of dangers and emergencies.
3. Times of cowering and cringing in face of smaller threats (Jezebel).
4. Times when exhausted and run down and discouraged and lonely and in need of great renewal from God.
5. Times when God in mercy touched him and restored him (like He does us).

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

6. Times when his courage was restored and revived.
7. Like all godly people, he looked forward to the time of meeting his God and receiving his crown.

CHAPTER 29

***“GLIMPSES INTO A FEW BOOKS OF
THE OLD TESTAMENT!”***

CHAPTER 29

“GLIMPSES INTO A FEW BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT!”

EXODUS

HISTORICAL SECTION (1-18)

- A. Israel in Bondage (Chapter 1)
- B. Moses the Deliverer (Chapters 2-7)
 - 1. His Early Life (2:1-10)
 - 2. His Flight (2:11-15)
 - 3. His Call (2:16-3:22)
 - 4. His Preparation (Chapter 4)
 - 5. His Return to Egypt (Chapters 5-7)
- C. The Ten Plagues (Chapters 8-11)
 - 1. Water into Blood
 - 2. Frogs
 - 3. Lice
 - 4. Flies
 - 5. Murrain
 - 6. Boils
 - 7. Hail

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

- 8. Locusts
- 9. Darkness
- 10. Death of Firstborn
- D. Passover (chapters 12-13)
- E. Wilderness Experiences (Chapters 14-18)

THE PILGRIMAGE OF ISRAEL, A TYPE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

The Egyptian bondage. A type of the bondage of sin.

Moses as deliverer. A type of Christ.

The exodus. A type of the abandonment of the sinful life.

The Passover lamb. A type of Christ, the Lamb of God.

Pharaoh's pursuit of Israel. A type of the evil forces pursuing believers.

The song of Moses. A Type of the songs of spiritual victory.

The mixed multitude, Exodus 12:38. A type of the worldly element in the Church.

Marah and Elim, Exodus 15:23-27. A type of the bitter and sweet experiences of the religious life.

The Flesh Pots, Exodus 16:3. A type of the sensual pleasures of the old life.

The manna, Exodus 16:4. A type of Christ, the Bread of Life.

The water from the rock. A type of Christ the living water.

The upholding of Moses' hands. A type of the need of co-operation with leaders.

LEGISLATIVE SECTION (19-40)

- A Moral Law – The Ten Commandments (19-20)
 - 1. God's Worship Commandments (1-11)
 - 2. God's Social Commandments (12-17)
- B. Civil Law (Regulation – Chapters 21-24)

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

1. Servants (21:1-11)
2. Injured (21:12-36)
3. Property Rights (22:1-15)
4. Human rights (22:16-23:9)
5. Sabbath (23:10-12)
6. Annual Feasts (23:13-19)
7. Conquest of Caanan (23:20-32)
- monial Law (Chapters 24-31)

THE TABERNACLE (25-27)

1. Offerings (25:1-9)
2. Ark (25:10-15)
3. Mercy Seat (25:16-23)
4. Table (25:23-30)
5. Lamp Stand (25:31-40)
6. Tabernacle Construction (Chapter 26)
7. Altar (27:1-8)
8. Court (27:9-19)
9. Illumination (27:20-21)

THE PRIESTHOOD

1. Garments (Chapter 28)
 2. Consecration (Chapter 29)
 3. Offerings (29:38-46)
 4. Holy Anointing Oil (30:34-36)
- D. The Law Broken (32:1-33:6) – (Apostasy)

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

1. Golden Calf (32:1-6)
 2. God's Indignation (32:7-10)
 3. Moses' Intercession (32:11-20)
 4. Aaron's Defense (32:21-24)
 5. Israel's lethal punishment (25-32)
- E. Tabernacle Built (33:7-40:38)
1. God's Rewritten Decalogue (Chapter 34)
 2. Tabernacles Construction (Chapters 35-38)
 3. Priests' Garments (Chapter 39)
 4. Tabernacles Dedication (Chapter 40)

KEY TO THE LIFE OF MOSES

1. Family
2. Early life
3. Youth and manhood
4. 40 years in Midian
5. Return to Egypt
6. The Exodus
7. At Mt. Sinai
8. Sinai to Kadesh-Barnea
9. At Kadesh-Barea

WILDERNESS WANDERINGS

1. Kadesh the 2nd time
2. Journey to Jordon
3. Last Days

4. Reappearance at the Transfiguration of Christ.

JUDGES

CHAPTER 1 – ISRAEL’S PENETRATION AND VICTORY IN LAND

- 1-7 Judah’s victory over Canaanites and Perizzites
- 8-10 Judah’s capture of Jerusalem and Hebron
- 11-15 Othniel’s capture of Debir
- 16-20 Judah and Simeon’s various victories
- 21 Jebusites’ dwelling in Jerusalem
- 22-26 Joseph’s (tribe) capture of Bethel
- 27-36 Canaanites dwelling among Israel

CHAPTER 2 – ISRAEL’S IDOLATROUS WORSHIP

- 1-5 Angel’s sad message to Israel
- 6-10 Old generation’s death
- 11-15 Generation’s idolatrous worship
- 16-19 Judges’ reigns in Israel
- 20-23 God’s anger against Israel

CHAPTER 3 – OTHNIEL’S AND EHUD’S JUDGESHIPS

- 1-4 Israel’s proving among heathen tribes
- 5-7 Israel’s intermarriage with heathen tribes
- 8-11 Othniel’s deliverance of Israel from Mesopotamia
- 12-14 Israel’s subjection to Moabites
- 15-26 Ehud’s judgeship and murder of Eglon
- 27-30 Israel’s victory over Moabites
- 31 Shambar’s judgeship and murder of Philistines

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

CHAPTER 4 – DEBORAH’S JUDGESHIP IN ISRAEL

- 1-3 Israel’s oppression by Canaanites (Jabin)
- 4-16 Barak’s victory over Sisera’s host
- 17-24 Sisera’s death by Jael

CHAPTER 5 – DEBORAH AND BARAK’S SONG OF THANKSGIVING

- 1-11 Deborah and Barak’s praise to God
- 12-23 Deborah’s blessing and rebuke to tribes
- 24-31 Deborah and Barak’s blessing on Jael

CHAPTER 6 – GOD’S CALL OF GIDEON

- 1-6 Midianites’ oppression of Israel
- 7-10 Prophet’s message to Israel
- 11-24 Angel’s appearance to Gideon
- 25-27 Gideon’s construction of altar
- 28-32 Joash’s defense for Gideon
- 33-35 Gideon’s call for army
- 36-40 Gideon’s signs of fleece

CHAPTER 7 – GIDEON’S VICTORY OVER MIDIANITES

- 1-8 God’s selection of Gideon’s army
- 9-14 Midianite’s dream of Gideon’s victory
- 15-18 Gideon’s instruction to army
- 19-25 Midianites’ defeat by Gideon

CHAPTER 8 – GIDEON’S DEATH AND ISRAEL’S IDOLATRY

- 1-3 Gideon’s reconciliation with Ephraimites
- 4-9 Succoth and Penuel’s refusal of help to Gideon

- 10-12 Gideon's revenge on Zabah and Zalunna
- 13-17 Gideon's revenge on Succoth and Phenuel
- 18-21 Gideon's murder of Zebah and Zalmunna
- 22-27 Gideon's collection of golden earrings
- 28-32 Gideon's descendants and his death and burial
- 33-35 Israel's idolatry after Gideon's death

CHAPTER 9 – ABIMELECH'S CRUELTY AND ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION

- 1-6 Abimelech's murder of seventy brothers
- 7-21 Jotham's rebuke of Shechemites through parable
- 22-29 Gaal's conspiracy against Abimelech
- 30-33 Zebul's warning to Abimelech
- 34-38 Zebul's treachery to Gaal
- 39-41 Gaal's defeat before Abimelech
- 42-45 Abimelech's overthrow of Shechem
- 46-49 Abimelech's cruelty to Shechemites
- 50-57 Abimelech's unusual death at Thebez

CHAPTER 10 – ISRAEL'S UNIVERSAL IDOLATRY

- 1-2 Tola's Judgeship in Israel
- 3-5 Jair's judgeship in Israel
- 6-9 Israel's oppression by Philistines and Ammonites
- 10-18 Israel's repentance and God's pity for them

CHAPTER 11 – JEPHTHAH'S VALOUR AND HARSH VOW

- 1-11 Jephthah's captainship in Gilead
- 12-28 Jephthah's fruitless embassy to Ammonites
- 29-33 Jephthah's victory over Ammonites

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

34-40 Jephthah's sacrifice of daughter

CHAPTER 12 – ISRAEL'S CIVIL WAR AND VARIOUS JUDGES' REIGNS

1-6 Gileadites' war against Ephraimites

7 Jephthah's death and burial

8-10 Ibzan's judgeship in Israel

11-12 Elon's judgeship in Israel

13-15 Abdon's judgeship in Israel

CHAPTER 13 – ANGEL'S MESSAGE AND SAMSON'S BIRTH

1 Israel's subjection to Philistines

2-5 Angel's message to Manoah's wife

6-7 Wife's revelation of message to Manoah

8-14 Angel's appearance unto Manoah and wife

15-23 Manoah's burnt offering unto the Lord

24-25 Samson's birth and growth

CHAPTER 14 – SAMSON'S RIDDLE AND SLAUGHTER OF THIRTY PHILISTINES

1-4 Samson's desire for Philistine wife

5-7 Samson's slaughter of lion

8-9 Samson's discovery of honey in carcass

10-14 Samson's challenge to reveal riddle

15-17 Samson's revelation of riddle to wife

18-20 Samson's slaughter of thirty Philistines

CHAPTER 15 – SAMSON'S WARFARE AGAINST PHILISTINES

1-2 Samson's loss of wife

3-5 Samson's burning of Philistines' corn

6 Philistines' burning of Samson's wife

7-8 Samson's slaughter of many Philistines

9-13 Judah's delivery of Samson to Philistines

14-17 Samson's slaughter of Philistines with jawbone

CHAPTER 16 – SAMSON'S REVEALED STRENGTH AND DEATH

1-3 Samson's feat of strength at Gaza

4-20 Delilah's enticement of Samson

21-25 Philistines' capture of Samson

26-31 Samson's last victory and death

CHAPTER 17 – MICAH'S IDOLATRY IN ISRAEL

1-2 Micah's restoration of stolen money

3-6 Micah's idolatry in house of gods

7-10 Levite's sojourn with Micah

11-13 Levite's priesthood to Micah

CHAPTER 18 – DANITES' ADDED POSSESSION AND IDOLATRY

1-6 Spies' dodging in Micah's house

7-10 Spies' report to Danite brethren

11-21 Danites' stealing of Micah's priest

22-26 Micah's futile cry to Danites

27-29 Danites' capture of Laish

30-31 Danites' idolatry and Jonathan's priesthood

CHAPTER 19 – GIBEAH'S WICKEDNESS AND LEVITE'S STARTLING ACT

1-2 Levite's unfaithful wife and her escape to father

3-9 Levite's abode with father-in-law

10-21 Levite's sojourn in Gibeah

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

22-28 Gebeah's wickedness to Levite's wife

29-30 Levite's gruesome division of wife

CHAPTER 20 – ISRAEL'S WAR AGAINST BENJAMIN

1-7 Levite's explanation of wickedness to Israel

8-11 Israel's plot against Gibeah

12-17 Israel's unheeded request to Benjamin

18-25 Gibeah's double victory over Israel

26-48 Israel's victory over Gibeah by ambush

CHAPTER 21 – BENJAMITES' OBTAINEMENT OF WIVES

1-7 Israel's bewailment for Benjamites

8-15 Israel's slaughter of Jabash-gilead inhabitants

16-25 Benjamites' capture of daughters of Shiloh

RUTH

CHAPTER 1 – NAOMI’S SADNESS AND RUTH’S FAITHFULNESS

- 1-5 Naomi’s sad sojourn in Moab
- 6-7 Naomi’s return to Bethlehem with daughter-in-law
- 8-13 Naomi’s exhortation to daughters-in-law
- 14-18 Ruth’s faithfulness to mother-in-law
- 19-22 Naomi’s return to Bethlehem with Ruth

CHAPTER 2 – RUTH’S FAVORABLE ENCOUNTER WITH BOAZ

- 1-3 Ruth’s gleaning in Boaz’s field
- 4-7 Boaz’s inquiry of Ruth’s identity
- 8-17 Boaz’s kindness to Ruth
- 18-23 Naomi’s gladness at Ruth’s report

CHAPTER 3 – BOAZ’S ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RUTH’S KINSHIP

- 1-5 Naomi’s instructions to Ruth
- 6-9 Boaz’s discovery of Ruth
- 10-13 Boaz’s blessing on Ruth
- 14-18 Ruth’s return to Naomi

CHAPTER 4 – RUTH’S MARRIAGE AND OBED’S BIRTH

- 1-5 Boaz’s offering to close kinsman
- 1-8 Kinsman’s rejection of Boaz’ offer
- 9-12 Boaz’s marriage to Ruth
- 13-17 Obed’s birth and Naomi’s blessing

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

18-22 Pharez's generation until David

1st SAMUEL OUTLINE

1. SAMUEL'S BIRTH AND DEDICATION

1-3 Elkanah's Annual Shiloh Worship

4-8 Hannah's Childless Despair

9-11 Hannah's Dedicatory Request

12-16 Eli's Change

17-19 Hannah's Confidence

19-20 Samuel's Birth

21-28 Hannah's Child Dedication

2. ELI'S PRIESTHOOD DISINTEGRATION

1-10 Hannah's Exaltation

11-17 Eli's Sons' Office Disintegration

18-21 Hannah's Annual Visit

22-26 Eli's Sons' Immoral Conduct

27-36 Prophetic Authority

3. SAMUEL'S CALL AND COMMISSION

1-6 Samuel's Call

7-14 God's Prophetic Message

15-18 Samuel's Communicated Message

19-21 Samuel's Prophetic Authority

4. PHILISTINES' CAPTURE OF ARK

1-2 Israel's Battle Defeat

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

- 3-5 Israel's Ark Removal
- 6-11 Eli's Sons' Battle Death
- 12-17 Messengers' Despairing Report
- 18 Eli's Son's Battle Death
- 19-22 Phinehas' Wife's Shock and Childbirth
- 5. ARK'S PLAGUE
 - 1-5 Philistines' Dagon Destruction
 - 6-12 Philistines' Hemorrhoid Plague
- 6. ARK'S RETURN
 - 1-9 Philistines' Return of Ark
 - 10-15 Bethshemesh's Joy at Ark's Return
 - 16-18 Philistines' Offering Content
 - 19-21 Bethshemites' Deathly Offense
- 7. PHILISTINES' DIVINELY-ORDAINED DEFEAT
 - 1-3 Samuel's Exhortation to Repentance
 - 4-6 Israel's (Mizpah) Repentance
 - 7-12 Israel's Divine Deliverance From Philistines
 - 13-14 Israel's Peace Settlement
 - 15-17 Samuel's Ramah Judgeship
- 8. ISRAEL'S DEMAND FOR KING
 - 1-5 Samuel's Sons' Unfair Judging
 - 6-9 Samuel's Reluctant King Concession
 - 10-18 Samuel's Prophecy of Kingly Tyranny
 - 19 Israelites' Disbelief

9. SAUL'S CONFRONTATION WITH SAMUEL

1-2 Saul's Physical Description

3-14 Saul's Search For Donkey

15-17 God's Revelation of King

18-27 Samuel's Feast For Saul

10. SAUL'S KINGLY ANOINTING

1-8 Samuel's Prophetical Instructions

9-12 Saul's Prophecying

13-16 Saul's Recount of Journey

17-27 Saul's Kingly Introduction to Israel

11. SAUL'S JABESH-GILEAD DELIVERANCE

1-3 Nahash's Treaty Challenge

4-10 Saul's Battle Challenge

11-13 Saul's Battle Victory (Ammonite)

14-15 Saul's Kingly Declaration

12. SAMUEL'S WISE COUNSEL

1-5 Samuel's Confirmed Integrity

6-15 Samuel's Historical Review

15-25 Samuel's Worship Admonition

13. PHILISTINES' OPPRESSION OF ISRAEL

1-7 Saul's Army

8-12 Saul's Unlawful Offering

13-15 Samuel's rejection of Saul

16-23 Saul's Defenseless Army

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

14. JONATHAN'S COURAGEOUS BATTLE LEADERSHIP

1-3 Jonathan's Unknown Camp Departure

4-10 Jonathan's Agreement With Armour-bearer

11-15 Jonathan's Philistine Penetration

16-23 Philistine's Camp Commotion

24-28 Saul's Battle Oath

29-32 Israel's Battle Spoils

33-35 Saul's Altar of Repentance

36-43 Saul's Casting of Lots

44-46 Israel's Intercession For Jonathan

47-48 Saul's Battle Conquest

49-52 Saul's Family

15. SAUL'S DISOBEDIENCE TO GOD

1-3 Saul's Battle Commission

4-6 Kenites' Evacuation

7-9 Saul's Sparing of Agag

10-26 Saul's Kingly Rejection Through Disobedience

27-31 Saul's Unavailing Remorse

32-35 Samuel's Slaughter of Agag

16. SAMUEL'S CHOICE AND ANOINTING OF DAVID

1-13 David's Inaugural Anointing

14-16 Saul's Possession By Evil Spirit

17-22 David's Musical Ministry

17. DAVID'S COURAGEOUS CHARACTER

- 1-3 Israel's Philistine Challenge
- 4-7 Goliath's Physical Description
- 8-11 Goliath's Defiant Challenge
- 12-19 David's Brotherly Errand
- 20-37 David's Challenge Acceptance
- 38-51 David's Giant Slaughter
- 52-54 Israel's Plunder Of Philistines
- 55-58 David's Identity Before Saul
- 18. SAUL'S INTENSIFIED ENVY
 - 1-5 Jonathan's Covenant With David
 - 6-9 Saul's Incited Jealousy
 - 10-14 Saul's Murderous Raving
 - 15-19 Saul's Secret Plot
 - 20-23 Saul's Servant's Matrimony Persuasion
 - 24-27 David's Marriage To Michal
 - 28-30 David's Multiplied Successes
- 19. DAVID'S FORCED ESCAPE
 - 1-5 Jonathan's Intercession For David
 - 6-10 Saul's Attempted Murder
 - 11-17 David's Aided Escape By Michal
 - 18-24 Saul's Compelled Prophesying
- 20. DAVID'S AND JONATHAN'S COVENANT
 - 1-3 David's Confided Fear
 - 4-8 David's Proposed Test

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

- 9-15 Jonathan's Love Covenant
- 16-23 David's Acceptance Sign
- 24-29 Jonathan's Communicated Absentee Excuse
- 30-34 Saul's Displaced Anger (at Jonathan)
- 35-40 Jonathan's Illustrated Message
- 41-42 David's And Jonathan's Confirmed Covenant
- 21. DAVID'S PHILISTINE EMERGENCE
 - 1-3 David's Disguised Mission
 - 4-6 David's Showbread Meal
 - 7- Doag's Identity
 - 8-9 David's Weapon Request
 - 10-15 David's Pretended Demonstration
- 22. SAUL'S COMMANDED PRIEST EXECUTION
 - 1-2 David's Band Composition
 - 3-5 David's Moabite Stronghold
 - 6-8 Saul's Accusation Against Benjamites
 - 9-15 Ahimelech's Defensive Account
 - 6-19 Doeg's Priestly Massacre
 - 20-23 Abiathan's Escape to David
- 23. DAVID'S OUTLAW ADVENTURES
 - 1-5 David's Victory At Keilah
 - 6-13 David's Escape From Keilah
 - 14-15 David's Desert Refuge
 - 16-18 Jonathan's Assuring Report

- 19-24 Ziphites' Outlaw Search
- 25-29 Saul's Distracted Outlaw Search
- 24. DAVID'S SPARING OF SAUL
 - 1-4 Saul's Defenseless Position
 - 5-7 David's Restraining Mercy
 - 8-15 David's Innocent Plea
 - 16-22 Saul's Repentance Covenant
- 25. ABIGAL'S RECONCILING ACTION
 - 1 Samuel's Death And Burial
 - 2-3 Nabal's And Abigail's Identity
 - 4-8 David's Provisional Request
 - 9-11 Nabal's Stubborn Rejection
 - 12-13 David's Incited Wrath
 - 14-17 Abigail's Communicated Message
 - 18-31 Abigail's Reasoned Intercession
 - 32-35 David's Pacification And Gratitude
 - 36-38 Nabal's Sudden Death
 - 39-42 David's Marriage To Abigail
 - 43-44 Michel's Remarriage To Phalti
- 26. DAVID'S SECOND SPARING OF SAUL
 - 1-5 Saul's Continued Pursuance
 - 6-12 David's Second Merciful Restraint
 - 13-16 David's Mockery Of Anber
 - 17-20 David's Second Innocence Plea

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

- 21-25 Saul's Humiliating Concession
- 27. DAVID'S PEACEFUL RETREAT AMONG PHILISTINES
 - 1-4 David's Escape To Gath
 - 5-7 David's Sojourn At Ziklag
 - 8-12 David's Plunders In Philistine Country
- 28 SAUL'S TERRIFYING REACTION TO SUPERNATURAL KNOWLEDGE
 - 1-2 David's Battle Alliance With Achish
 - 3-11 Saul's Disguised Request
 - 12-13 Witch Of Endor's Performations
 - 15-19 Samuel's Supernatural Predictions
 - 20-25 Saul's Terrified Reaction
- 29. DAVID'S SEPARATION FROM ACHISH
 - 1-3 David's Attributed Righteousness
 - 4-7 Achish's Dismissal Explanation
 - 8-11 David's Philistine Separation
- 30. DAVID'S VICTORY OVER AMALEKITES
 - 1-6 Amalekites' Invasion Of Ziking
 - 6-10 David's Pursuit Of Amalekites
 - 11-15 Amalekite Slave's Revealed Information
 - 16-20 David's Slaughter Of Amalekites
 - 21-22 David's Warriors' Complaint
 - 23-31 David's Booty Standard
- 31 SAUL'S TERRIBLE DEATH
 - 1-3 Saul's Battle Wound

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

- 4-6 Saul's Suicidal Death
- 7 Philistines' Reoccupation
- 8-10 Philistines' Bodily Plunder
- 11-13 Jabesh-Gilead's Grief and Fasting

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 - 1-10 Amalekite's Eye-witness Report
 - 11-12 David's Lamentation
 - 13-16 David's Vengeance On Amalekites
 - 17-27 David's Memorial Elegy
2. JOAB AND ABNER'S BATTLE BEGINNING
 - 1-4 David's Kingly Anointing At Hebron
 - 5-7 David's Expressed Gratitude To Jabesh-Gileobi
 - 8-11 Ish-Bosheth's Kingly Emergance
 - 12-14 Joab's and Abner's Men's Joint Slaughter
 - 15-23 Asahel's Slaughter By Abner
 - 24-26 Joab's And Abner's Battle Truce
3. ABNER'S RECONCILIATION WITH DAVID
 - 1-6 David's Sons At Hebron
 - 6-10 Ish-Bosheth Accusation Against Abner
 - 11-21 Abner's Alliance With David
 - 22-25 Joab's Anger Response
 - 26-29 Joab's Revengeful Murder Of Abner
 - 30-39 David's Mourning Over Abner
4. ISH-BOSHETH'S UNTIMELY DEATH
 - 1-4 Mephibosheth's Identity

- 5-8 Ish-Bosheth's Defenseless Death
- 9-12 David's Righteous Revenge
- 5. DAVID'S KINGLY ESTABLISHMENT AT JERUSALEM
 - 1-5 David's Kingly Confirmation
 - 6-8 David's Jerusalem Seizure
 - 9-12 David's Palace Construction
 - 13-16 David's Sons In Jerusalem
 - 17-25 David's Philistine Victory At Ephraim
- 6. DAVID'S RELATIONSHIP WITH MICHAL
 - 1-7 Uzzah's Divinely-Stricken Death
 - 8-11 Ark's Temporary Residence With Obededom
 - 12-16 Michal's Displeasing of David
 - 17-20 David's Peace Offerings
 - 21-23 David's Justified Defense Before Michael
- 7. DAVID'S PROMISE AND PRAYER
 - 1-17 David's Eternally Established Kingdom
 - 18-29 David's Prayer Of Confidence
- 8. DAVID'S IMPERIALISTIC VICTORY
 - 1-4 Moab's Subjection To David
 - 5-8 Syria's Subjection to David
 - 9-12 Tois' Congratulatory Tribute
 - 13-18 Edom's Subjection To David
- 9. DAVID'S KINDNESS TO MEPHIBOSHETH
 - 1-5 David's Descendants Inquiry

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

- 6-8 Mephebosheth's Privileged Inheritance
- 9-13 Ziba's Service To Mephibosheth
- 10. DAVID'S KINGDOM EXPANSION
 - 1-5 Hanun's Mistreatment Of David's Embassy
 - 6-8 Ammonite's Battle Alignment With Syria
 - 9-14 Joab's And Abishai's Victories
 - 15-19 Syria's Subjection To Israel
- 11. DAVID'S TRIPLE TRANSGRESSION
 - 1-4 David's Adulterous Temptation
 - 5-13 Uriah's Innocent Character
 - 14-15 David's Conniving Message
 - 16-21 Uriah's Battle Death
 - 22-25 David's Passive Approval
 - 26-27 God's Disapproval
- 12. DAVID'S EXPOSED GUILT
 - 1-6 Nathan's Parable
 - 7-14 Nathan's Pronounced Judgment
 - 15-19 Illegitimate Son's Death
 - 20-25 Solomon's Birth
 - 26-31 Rabbah's Subjugation To David
- 13. AMNON'S INCEST
 - 1-5 Jonathan's Shrewd Planning
 - 6-9 Amnon's Pretended Illness
 - 10-14 Tamar's Compelled Seduction

- 15-17 Amnon's Transferred Guilt
- 18-19 Tamar's Bewailment
- 20-22 Absalom's Futile Appeasement Counseling
- 23-27 Absalom's Invitational Summons
- 28-29 Absalom's Slaughter Of Amnon
- 30-33 Jonadab's Altered Report
- 34-39 Absalom's Escape
- 14. ABSOLOM'S RETURN AND ACCEPTANCE
 - 1-7 Woman's Analogous Role
 - 8-11 Woman's Acknowledgement To David
 - 12-17 Woman's Analogous Revelation
 - 18-20 Woman's Acknowledgement To David
 - 21-24 Absalom's Return To Jerusalem
 - 25-27 Absalom's Family
 - 28-33 Absalom's Appearance Before David
- 15. ABSOLOM'S UNDERMINING OF DAVID
 - 1-6 David's Stolen Loyalty By Absalom
 - 7-9 Absalom's False Pretense
 - 10-12 Absalom's Secret Conspiracy
 - 13-16 David's Escape From Jerusalem
 - 17-23 Ittai's Allegiance To David
 - 24-30 David's Confirmed Confidence
 - 31-37 David's Manipulating Plot
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GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

- 1-4 Zoba's Alligiance To David
- 5-8 Shemei's Cursing Of David
- 9-14 David's Resignation To God's Will
- 15-19 Hushai's Pretending Allegiance To Absolome
- 20 Ahethophel's Counsel To Absolom
- 17. HUSHI'S MANUPULATED COUNCIL
 - 1-5 Ahethophel's War Recommendation
 - 6-14 Hushai's Accepted Recommendation
 - 15-20 Johnathan And Ahimaaz Concealment From Absolom
 - 21-23 Hushai's Transmitted Message To David
 - 23 Ahethophel's Suicide
 - 24-26 Amasa's Appointment
 - 27-29 Shabis Gift Of Rations
- 18. ABSOLOM'S DEATH
 - 1-5 David's Offensive Army
 - 6-8 Absolom's Defeated Forces
 - 9-15 Joab's Merciless Slaughter Of Absolom
 - 16-18 Absolom's Self-erected Monument
 - 19-23 Ahimaaz's Desired Messenger Role
- 19. DAVID'S RETURN TO JERUSALEM
 - 1-7 Joab's Harsh Rebuke to David
 - 8-14 Israel's Desire For David's Reenthronement
 - 15-18 Jusah's Escortment Of David
 - 19-20 Shemei's Mercy Plea

- 21-26 David's Forgiveness of Shemei
- 27-30 Mephibosheth's Reconciliation To David
- 31-40 David's Recompense To Barzilla
- 41-43 Israel's Charges Against Judah
- 20. DAVID'S CHECK OF ASSERTED REBELLION
 - 1-3 Sheba's Rebel Challenge
 - 4-10 Joab's Subtle Slaughter Of Amasa
 - 11-26 Abel's (city) Beheading of Sheba
- 21. DAVID'S ESTABLISHED JUSTICE
 - 1-9 Gibeonites' Retribution For Saul's Mistreatment
 - 10-14 God's Prayerful Desposition Toward Israel
 - 15-26 David's Philistine Victory At Gath
- 22. DAVID'S VICTORY SONG
- 23. DAVID'S BATTLE HEROES
 - 1-7 David's Farewell Blessing
 - 8-12 David's Three Outstanding Battle Heroes
 - 13-18 David's Three Heroes At Adullam
 - 19-23 Abeshai's And Benaiah's Heroic Deeds
 - 24-39 David's Composite Of Heroes
- 24. DAVID'S ILL-FATED CENSUS
 - 1-4 David's Census Command
 - 5-9 Joab's Census Report
 - 10-13 David's Retribution Choice
 - 14-16 Israel's Fatal Malady

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

17-25 David's Repentance Sacrifice

1ST KINGS OUTLINE

1. Solomon's Kingly Inaguration
 - 1-4 David's Functional Nurse
 - 5 -10 Adonijah's Rebel Challenge
 - 11-14 Nathan' s Advice to Bathsheba
 - 15-21 Bathsheba's Reasoned Communication To David
 - 22-27 Nathan's confirmation of Bathsheba's report
 - 28-35 David's appointment of Solomon
 - 36-40 David's anointing of Solomon
 - 41-48 Jonathan' s Revealing report to Adonijah
 - 49-51 Adonijah's Fear of Solomon to Solomon
 - 52-53 Adonijah's reconciliation to Solomon
2. SOLOMON'S EXECUATION OF KINGLY ENEMIES
 - 1-9 David's Deathbed Orders To Solomon
 - 10-12 David's Death
 - 13-19 Adonijah's Request For Abishag
 - 20-27 Solomon's Execution Of Abishag
 - 28-35 Solomon's Execution Of Joab
 - 36-38 Shimei's Provisional Protection
 - 39-46 Solomon's Execution Of Shime
- i3. Solomon's Gift Of Wisdom
 - 1-9 Solomon's Request For Wisdom

- 10-14 Solomon's Discriminatory Gift From God
- 15-28 Solomon's Exemplary Test Of Wisdom
- 4. SOLOMON'S ROLE OF STUDENT AND POET
 - 1-6 Solomon's Leading Men
 - 7-20 Solomon's Twelve Over-seers
 - 21-25 Solomon's Daily Food Supply For Kingdom
 - 26-28 Tribes' Divided Responsibility For Food Supply
 - 29-34 Solomon's Superior Wisdom In Ancient World
- 5. SOLOMON'S LABORERS FOR TEMPLE CONSTRUCTION
 - 1-6 Solomon's Employment Of Sidonian Carpenters
 - 7-12 Solomon's Contract With Hiram
 - 13-18 Solomon's Large Scale Construction
- 6. TEMPLE'S COMPLETED CONSTRUCTION (7 YEARS)
 - 1-10 Temple Blueprint
 - 11-13 God's Propositional Promise To Solomon
 - 14 Temple's Interior Decoration
- 7. SOLOMON'S LAVISH HOUSE FURNISHINGS
 - 1-12 Solomon's House Construction
 - 13-46 Hiram's Skilled Bronzework
 - 47-51 Temple's Furnishings
- 8. SOLOMON'S DEDICATORY PRAYER
 - 1-9 Ark's Transfer From Tabernacle To Temple
 - 10-21 Solomon's Consummation Of God's Promise
 - 22-26 Solomon's Confiding In Divine Character

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

- 27-30 Solomon's Plea For Divine Responsiveness
- 31-34 Solomon's Plea For Divine Mercy
- 35-40 Solomon's Plea For Divine Provision
- 41-43 Solomon's Plea For Equality
- 44-51 Solomon's Plea For Divine Restoration
- 52-53 Solomon's Plea For National Distinction
- 54-61 Solomon's Blessing On Israelites
- 62-64 Solomon's Immense Offering
- 65-66 Israel's Feast
- 9. SOLOMON'S PROSPEROUS KINGDOM
 - 1-9 God's Conditional Promise To Solomon
 - 10-14 Solomon's Transfer Of Cities To Hiram
 - 15-24 Solomon's City Reconstructions
 - 25 Solomon's Tri-annual Offering
 - 26-28 Solomon's Navy
- 10. QUEEN OF SHEBA'S ASTONISHMENT
 - 1-3 Solomon's Wisdom Test By Queen
 - 4-10 Queen's Rich Tribute To Solomon
 - 11-13 Solomon's Gift To Queen Sheba
 - 14-17 Solomon's Staggering Annual Income
 - 18-20 Solomon's Royal Splendor
 - 21-29 Solomon's World Renown
- 11. SOLOMON'S IDOLATOUS BACKSLIDING
 - 1-8 Solomon's Disloyalty

- 9-13 God's Prediction Of Kingdom Dissolution
- 14-22 Hadad's Request To Pharaoh
- 23-25 Rezon's Opposition To Israel
- 26-39 Ahizah's Illustrative Prediction To Jeroboam
- 40-43 Solomon's Attempted Murder Of Jeroboam And Solomon's Death
- 12. JEROBOAM'S HERETICAL DUPLICATION OF JUDAH'S RELIGION
 - 1-5 Israelites' Tolerance Request
 - 6-11 Rehoboam's Companions' Foolish Advice
 - 12-16 Israelites' Rejection Of Rehoboam's Kingship
 - 17-20 Israelites' Desertion And Open Rebellion Against Rehoboam
 - 21-24 God's Rebuke To Judah
 - 25-33 Jeroboam's Golden Calves
- 13. JEROBOAM'S CONTINUED IDOLATRY
 - 1-10 Prophet's Miraculous Prediction Of Josiah's Reform
 - 11-25 Prophet's Tragic Death
 - 26-32 Old Prophet's Identification With Prophet Of Judah
 - 33-34 Jeroboam's Persistent Idol Worship
- 14. JEROBOAM'S PREDICTED JUDGESHIP
 - 1-5 Jeroboam's Son's Illness
 - 6-16 Elijah's Devastating Prophecy About Jeroboam
 - 17-20 Jeroboam's Sons' Death
 - 21 Jeroboam's Kingship
 - 22-24 Judah's Fertility Worship
 - 25-28 Shishak's Attack On Jerusalem

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

- 29-31 Jeroboam's Death
- 15. ASA'S RELIGIOUS REFORMS
 - 1-8 Abijan's Reign
 - 9-15 Asa's Righteous Reign
 - 16-20 Asa's Alliance With Ben-hadad (Syria)
 - 21-24 Asa's Death
 - 25-27 Nadab's Brief Wicked Reign
 - 31-34 Haasha's Wicked Reign
- 16. AHAB'S BAAL INTRODUCITON TO ISRAELITES' RELIGION
 - 1-7 Jehu's Devastating Prophecy About Baasha
 - 8-14 Zimri's Annihilation Of Baasha's House
 - 16-20 Zimri's Seven Day Reign And Suicidal Death
 - 21-28 Omri's Wicked Reign
 - 29-33 Ahab's Baal Worship
 - 34 Hiel's Rebuilding Of Jericho
- 17. ELIJAH'S JAREPHATH'S MIRACLES
 - 1-6 Elijah's Provision Of Food For Elijah
 - 7-10 Elijah's Guidance To Jarephath
 - 11-16 Elijah's Provisional Miracle For Widow
 - 17-24 Elijah's Life-giving Miracle To Widow's Son
- 18. ELIJAH'S DISPLAY OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY
 - 1-6 Elijah's And Obadiah's Search For Springs
 - 7-16 Elijah's Reassuring Mission To Obadiah
 - 17-20 Ahab's Meeting Of Elijah

- 21-38 Elijah's Test Of Baal's Validity
- 39-40 Elijah's Slaughter Of Baal's Priests
- 41-46 Elijah's Effective Prayer For Rain
- 19. ELIJAH'S CONFRONTATIONS WITH GOD
 - 1-4 Elijah's Flight From Jezebel
 - 5-9 Elijah's Extended Strength From God's Provisions
 - 10-14 God's Manifested Power In A Quiet Way
 - 15-18 God's (Succession) Command To Elijah
 - 19 Elijah's Commission To Elisha
- 20. ISRAEL'S GOD-ORDAINED VICTORY OVER SYRIANS
 - 1-11 Benhadad's Threat To Ahab
 - 12-21 Israelites' Slaughter Of Syrians
 - 22-30 Israelites' Plain Victory Over Syrians
 - 31-34 Benhadad's Reconciliation With Ahab
 - 35-42 Prophet's Parabolic Illustration Of Ahab's Fate
- 21. GOD'S MERCY TO AHAB
 - 1-6 Ahab's Rejected Vineyard Request Of Naboth
 - 7-10 Jezebel's Deceptive Plot Against Naboth
 - 11-14 Jezebel's Stoning Of Naboth
 - 15-16 Ahab's Seizure Of Naboth's Inheritance
 - 17-24 Elijah's Devastating Prophecy To Ahab
 - 25-26 Ahab's Unprecedented Wickedness
 - 27-29 Ahab's Repentance

II KINGS OUTLINE

1. AHAZIA'S FATAL DEPENDENCE ON HEATHEN GODS
 - 1-4 Elijah's Death Message To Ahaziah
 - 5-10 Elijah's Fiery Consumption Of Ahijah's Men
 - 11-12 Elijah's Second Miracle Of Fiery Retribution
 - 13-16 Elijah's Deathly Pronouncement To Ahijah
 - 17-18 Jehoram's Succession To Israelite Throne
2. ELIJAH'S TRANSFERENCE OF PROPHETIC OFFICE
 - 1-5 Elisha's Exemplified Loyalty To Elijah
 - 6-10 Elisha's Liberal Request From Elijah
 - 11-14 Elijah's Chariot Ascendance To Heaven
 - 15-18 Prophet's Vain Search For Elijah
 - 19-22 Elisha's Miracle Purification Of Water
 - 23-25 Youth's Fatal Judgment For Mockery
3. ISRAEL'S SUPPRESSION OF MOABITE REBELLION
 - 1-3 Jehoram's Idolatrous Reign
 - 4-8 Jehosaphate's War Alliance With Jehoram
 - 9-12 Jehoram's Fear From Water Deprivation
 - 13-20 Elisha's Miracle Provision Of Water
 - 21-23 Moab's False Illusion Of Water
 - 24-27 Israel's Plundering Of Moabite Cities
4. ELISHA'S ABUNDANT MIRACLES

- 1-7 Elisha's Miracle Multiplication Of Oil
- 8-10 Shunammite Woman's Hospitality To Elisha
- 11-17 Shunammite Woman's Miracle Conception In Old Age
- 18-37 Elisha's Life-giving Miracle To Shunammite's Son
- 38- 41 Elisha's Miracle Purification Of Poisonous Herbs
- 42-44 Baalshalishaite's Faith-inspired Multiplication Of Loaves
- 5. NAAMAN'S HEALING OF LEPORASY
 - 1-4 Servant Girl's Recommendation Of Elisha
 - 5-7 Syrian King's Frustrating Request
 - 8-14 Naaman's Reluctant Obedience To Elisha's Command
 - 15-19 Naaman's Allegiance To Elisha's God
 - 20- 24 Gehazi's Lie And Theft
 - 25-27 Gehazi's Descendant's Perpetual Leporacy
- 6. ANGEL'S PROTECTION OF SAMARIA
 - 1-7 Elisha's Miracle Of Floating Axe head
 - 8-23 Elisha's Miracle Submission Of Syrians
 - 24-31 Samaria's Siege By Syrians
 - 32-33 Israelite King's Plotted Murder Of Elisha
- 7. LEPERS' NEWS OF GOD'S DELIVERANCE OF ISRAEL
 - 1-7 Syrians' Divinely-induced Fleeing From Camp
 - 8-20 Israelites' Plunder Of Syrian Camp
- 8. AHAZAEAL'S ASSASSINATION OF BEN-HADAD
 - 1-6 Israelite Woman's Reclamation Of Property
 - 7-15 Elisha's Prophecy Of Hazael's Cruelty

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

- 16-19 Jehoram's Wicked Reign
- 20-22 Joram's Suppression Of Edomites
- 23-24 Joram's Death And Burial
- 9. JEHU'S ANNILATION OF JEZEBEL
 - 1-3 Elisha's Commission To Prophets
 - 4-10 Jehu's Anointing As Israelite King
 - 11-13 People's Kingly Proclamation Of Jehu
 - 14-26 Jehu's Assassination Of Jehoram
 - 27-28 Jehu's Assassination Of Ahaziah
 - 29-33 Jezebel's Tragic Death
 - 34-37 Jezebel's Body Consummation By Dogs
- 10. JEHU'S TOTAL EXTERMINATION OF AHAB'S HOUSE
 - 1-11 Jehu's Commanded Annihilation Of Ahab's Sons
 - 12-14 Jehu's Annihilation Of Ahaziah's Relatives
 - 15-17 Jehu's Extermination Of Ahab's Samaritan Relatives
 - 18-27 Jehu's Extermination Of Priests Of Baal
 - 28-31 Jehu's Careless Observation Of God's Law
 - 32-33 Hazael's Oppression Of Israelites
 - 34-36 Jehu's Death And Burial
- 11. JEHOIDA'S COVENANT CONFIRMATION WITH ISRAEL
 - 1-3 Joash's Protection From Athaliah's Purges
 - 4-12 Jehoida's Kingly Crowning Of Joash
 - 13-16 Jehoiada's Assassination Of Athaliah
 - 17-21 Jehoiada's Cleansing Of Idolatrous Worship

12. JOASH'S TEMPLE REPAIRS
 - 1-8 Jehoash's (Joash) Plan For Temple Repair
 - 9-16 Josah's Temple Budget
 - 17-18 Joash's Protective Bribe To Hazael
 - 19-21 Joash's Assassination By His Servant
13. JEHOASH'S RECLAMATION OF ISRAELITE CITIES FROM SYRIANS
 - 1-9 Jehoahaz's Destructive Encounters With Syrians
 - 10-13 Jehoash's Death And Burial
 - 14-19 Jehoash's Symbolic Acts Of Syrian's Predicted Defeat
 - 20-21 Elisha's Life-giving Remains
 - 22-24 Jehoash's Triple Defeat Of Syrians
14. ISRAELITES' PROSPERITY UNDER JEROBOAM II'S REIGN
 - 1-6 Amaziah's Righteous Vindication Of Injustice
 - 7-12 Jehoash's Defeat Of Proud Amaziah
 - 13-14 Jehoash's Plundering Of Jerusalem
 - 15-16 Jehoash's Death And Burial
 - 17-22 Amaziah's Death And Burial
 - 23-27 Jeroboam's Restoration Of Israelite Territory
 - 28-29 Jeroboam's Death And Burial
15. ISRAEL'S RAPID SUCCESSION OF KINGS
 - 1-4 Azariah's Righteous Reign
 - 5-7 Azariah's Leprosy And Death
 - 8-12 Shallum's Assassination Of Zachariah
 - 13-15 Menahem's Assassination Of Shallum

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

- 16-22 Menahem's Cruel And Oppressive Reign
- 23-24 Pekahiah's Evil Reign
- 25-26 Pekah's Assassination Of Pekahiah
- 27-29 Assyrian's Capture Of Native Israelites
- 30-31 Hosea's Assassination Of Pekah
- 32-38 Jotham's Righteous Reign
- 16. AHAZ'S ASSYRIAN-INFLUENCED RENOVATIONS
 - 1-4 Ahaz's Pagan Reign
 - 5-6 Edomites' aided Return To Elath
 - 7-9 Assyrian King's Assassination Of Rezin
 - 10-16 Ahaz's Duplicated Altar Instructions
 - 17-20 Ahaz's Temple Renovations
- 17. ISRAELITES' ASSYRIAN CAPTIVITY
 - 1-6 Israelites' Exile To Assyria
 - 7-18 Israelites' Exile-deserving Transgression Against God
 - 19-26 Assyrians' Transplantation Of 'Heathen' In Samaria
 - 27-33 Assyrian Dwellers' Polluted Religion
 - 34-41 Israelites' Reviewed History Of Covenant-breaking
- 18. ASSYRIAN SIEGE OF SAMARIA
 - 1-8 Hezekiah's Righteous Renovations
 - 9-12 Israelites' Second Assyrian Captivity
 - 13-25 Sennachirib's Divinely-commanded Retribution
 - 26-35 Assyrian's Challenge To Surrender
 - 36-37 Hezekiah's Revelation Of Assyrian Plot

19. GOD'S DELIVERANCE OF SAMARIA FROM ASSYRIA

1-7 Isaiah's Prophecies Of Israelite Victory

8-13 Sennachirib's Threat Of Future Israelite Defeat

14-19 Hezekiah's Prayer For Deliverance

20-28 Isaiah's Prophecy Of Divine Vengeance On Assyria

29-34 Isaiah's Prophecy Of Divine Protection For Samaria

35-37 God's Rendered Vengeance On Assyria

20. ISAIAH'S FORESHADOWING OF ISRAEL'S FATE

1-3 Hezekiah's Prayer For Healing

4-7 Hezekiah's Healing And Extension Of Life

8-11 Hezekiah's Sign Of Healing

12-15 Babylon King's Investigation Of Hezekiah

16-19 Isaiah's Prophecy Of Babylonian Captivity

20-21 Hezekiah's Destruction Of Aqueducts

21. MANASSEH'S APOSTATE REIGN

1-9 Manasseh's Evil Renovation

10-15 God's Pronouncement Of Judgment On Judah

16-18 Manasseh's 'Bloody' Reign

19-26 Amon's Wicked Reign

22. GOD'S REVELATION THROUGH DISCOVERED LAWBOOK

1-7 Josiah's Command For Temple Repair

8-10 Hilkiyah's Discovery Of Law Book

11-13 Josiah's Penitence From Law Book Reading

14-17 God's Revealed Indignation Toward Israel

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

18-20 God's Merciful Sparing Of Josiah

23. JOSIAH'S GREAT REFORMATION
24. JUDAH'S BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY
25. NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S SEIGE OF JERUSALEM

BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES IN OLD TESTAMENT

**“THE FUTILITY OF LIFE WITHOUT GOD -
MAN’S QUEST FOR MEANING!”**

1. MONOTONY
 - 1-11 Monotonous Uniformity In Nature
 - 12-18 Problem-making Result Of Knowledge
2. TRANSITORINESS
 - 1-11 Transitory Qualities Of Pleasure And Riches
 - 12-17 Universal Fate Of Wise And Foolish – Death
 - 18-26 Inheritability Of Man’s Laboriously - gained Goods
3. ATHEISM
 - 1-18 Sovereignty Of God In Orderly Creation
 - 19-22 Atheistic Attitude Toward Death
4. WICKED OPPRESSION
 - 1-6 Unrestrained Oppression To Lonely
 - 7-8 Meaninglessness Of Labor To Workman
 - 9-12 Defenseless Loneliness Of Bereft
 - 13-16 Transitory Quality Of Fame
5. ELUSIVE RICHES
 - 1-7 Accountability Of A Pronounced Vow
 - 8-9 Sovereign Rulership Of God
 - 10-17 Anxiety-producing Quality Of Riches

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

18-20 Divinely-bestowed Allotment Of Riches

6. DESPAIR

1-12 Aching Despair Of Unsatisfied Soul Longing

7. ADVERSITY

1-8 Inevitability Of Bitter Experiences

9-14 Wisdom Of Submission To God-ordained Adversity

15-29 Universality Of Man's Rebellion

8. JUDGMENT

1-8 Arbitrariness Of Human Rulership

9-15 Ultimate Judgment Of Unrestrained Evil-doer

16-17 Inscrutable Knowledge Of God

9. DESTINY

1-12 Ultimate Fate Of Righteous And Sinner – Death

13-18 Ultimate Reward Of Righteous

10. SHALLOW LEADERSHIP

1-11 Unworthy Leadership By Fools

12-20 Perverse Speech Of Fools

11. ACCOUNTABILITY

1-6 Advisability Of Diligent Labor

7-10 Inevitability Of Ultimate Accountability

12. ULTIMATE MEANING

1-7 Ultimate Deterioration Of Human Form

8-12 Pronouncement Of Life's Futility Without God

13-14 Ultimate Meaning In Obedience To God

AMOS OUTLINE

From 850-800 B.C. Israel experienced defeat. Damascus was at the height of her strength and Israel couldn't cope with this power. However, during this period of time a nation which had been on the stage of history for many centuries, was increasing in power and military conquests. This ancient nation was Assyria, whose shadow in the east was beginning to be seen in the West. By 805 B.C. Assyria conquered Damascus and laid it under heavy tribute. Israel escaped the Assyrian blow and remained free and independent. During the next half century (800-750 B.C.), Assyria was weakened and lost nearly every foothold west of the Euphrates.

Through the combined efforts of Jeroboam II, King of Israel (786-750), and Uzziah (783-742), King of Judah, the area of the combined kingdom was extended to include almost as much territory as was included in Solomon's realm, a century earlier.

A rich and prosperous society resulted when the trade routes which Solomon had controlled were again in Israelite hands. Great palaces were built and fine ivories were the possessions of the wealthy. Materially speaking, the period was one of the richest in the history of Israel.

Riches often corrupt a society, and Israel was no exception. Wealth produces greed, and greed often results in great class distinctions which are based upon the degree of wealth a group enjoys. Many were very wealthy; others were extremely poor. The rich became richer, at the expense of the poor man who was driven to further poverty. Religion tolerated social injustice and the religious shrines became the centers of gross immorality. Society and religion were both sick and needed desperately to be awakened and renovated.

It was to this society – affluent, corrupted, complacent – that Amos was called to proclaim God's Word.

1. GODS JUDGMENT ON SURROUNDING NATIONS

- 1-2 Amos' Contextual Identity
- 3-5 God's Judgment On Damascus
- 6-8 God's Judgment On Philistines
- 9-10 God's Judgment On Tyre

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

- 11-12 God's Judgment On Edom
- 13-15 God's Judgment On Amon
- 2. GOD'S JUDGMENT ON CHOSON PEOPLE
 - 1-3 God's Judgment On Moab
 - 4-5 God's Judgment On Judah
 - 6-16 God's Judgment On Israel
- 3. ISRAEL'S SPECIAL JUDGMENT
 - 1-8 Israel's Election
 - 9-15 Israel's Coming Plunder
- 4. ISRAEL'S CALLOUSED INDIFFERENCE
 - 1-5 Israel's Pretentious Sacrifices
 - 6-11 Israel's Rejected Reproofs
 - 12-15 Creator's Power
- 5. GOD'S LIFE-OFFER
 - 1-9 Israel's Exhortation To Seek God
 - 10-12 Poor Man's Oppression
 - 13-17 Israel's Lamentation
 - 18-27 Israel's 'Day Of The Lord'
- 6. ISRAEL'S FATAL INDULGENCE
 - 1-7 Israel's 'Banqueting'
 - 8-14 Israel's Coming Oppression
- 7. AMOS' INTERCESSION
 - 1-3 God's Threat Of Locusts
 - 4-6 God's Threat Of Drought

7-9 God's Plumb-line

10-13 Prophet's Denunciation (by Amaziah)

14-17 Prophet's Devastating Reply (to Amaziah)

8. ISRAEL'S DISASTER

1-3 Amos' Vision Of Over-ripe Fruit

4-8 Israel's Inhumanity

9-11 Israel's Spiritual Famine

9. ISRAEL'S RESTORATION

1-6 God's Inescapable Omnipresence

7-10 Sinners' Destruction

11-15 Remnants' Fruitful Return

HOSEA – THE HIGH COST OF LOVE

Hosea was a contemporary of Amos and his ministry covered much of the same time in Israel's history as Amos's ministry. Hosea spoke, however, to a Israel at a little bit later time when, as a nation, they were fast declining in power and prosperity. Assyria's increase in power was accompanied by imperialistic endeavors, which was a consequent threat to the small western nations – including Israel and Judah.

Amos' message of judgment and justice was more universal in scope, and included many of Israel's surrounding nations. Hosea, however, focused most of his attention on Israel's social, political, and religious conditions. Several of the prophecies of Amos against Israel's neighbors had partly been fulfilled, and Hosea apparently saw no overwhelming urge to repeat Amos' judgments.

Hosea was move over preoccupied with Israel's advanced state of corruption. Disintegration in Israel was much more obvious in Hosea's day than it was in Amos' day, although Amos was convinced that this disintegration was no less real in his own day.

Hosea was well aware of the social injustice in Israel, and vividly described it just as Amos described it. However, Hosea was more immediately concerned with the cause of such injustices which he attributed to the breaking of God's covenant. Idolatry was the most obvious manifestation of unfaithfulness. International treaties with pagan nations was a denial of faith and a sign of instability. Israel's idolatry and foreign policy were both evidences of spurning God's love. Infidelity to love was the most heinous sin of Israel.

1. CHILDREN'S SYMBOLIC MEANING

1 - Hosea's Contemporaries

2-11 Gomer's Three Children

2. GOMER'S SYMBOLIC CHASTENING

1-5 Gomer's Passion

- 6-13 God's Chastening
- 14-23 Israel's Rejuvenation
- 3. GOMER'S SYMBOLIC RECONCILIATION
 - 1-3 Hosea's Ransom
 - 4-5 Israel's Reawakening
- 4. PRIESTS' SHALLOW LEADERSHIP
 - 1-3 Israel's Vicious Acts
 - 4-6 Priests' Rejection Of Office
 - 7-10 Priests' Lustful Example
 - 11-19 Israel's Stubborn Waywardness
- 5. JUDAH'S WICKED INVOLVEMENT
 - 1-7 God's Determined Sentence
 - 8-15 God's Inescapable Sentence
- 6. ISRAEL'S WICKED PRESUMPTION
 - 1-3 Israel's Impenitent Confidence
 - 4-6 God's Rejected Standard
 - 7-11 Israel's Calloused Covenant-breaking
- 7. ISRAEL'S POLITICAL ANARCHY
 - 1-2 Israel's 'Naked' Shamefulness
 - 3-7 Princes' Corruption Of Justice
 - 8-13 Israel's Devastating Alliances
 - 14-16 Israel's Stubborn Rebellion
- 8. ISRAEL'S REBELLIOUS MANIFESTATIONS
 - 1-6 Israel's Idolatry

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

- 7-10 Israel's Foreign Policy
- 11-14 Israel's Pretentious Sacrifices
- 9. ISRAEL'S PREDICTED EXILE
 - 1-9 Israel's Predicted Poverty
 - 10-17 Israel's Predicted Barrenness
- 10. ISRAEL'S IMPENDING DISASTER
 - 1-10 Israel's Coming Shame
 - 11-12 Israel's Call To Repentance
 - 13-15 Israel's Horrible Calamity
- 11. GOD'S KINDLED COMPASSION
 - 1-7 Israel's Rejection Of Mercy
 - 8-9 God's Recoil
 - 10-12 Israel's Coming Restoration
- 12. GOD'S REJECTED MERCY
 - 1-6 Jacob's Former Faith
 - 7-9 Israel's Ruinous Prosperity
 - 10-12 Israel's Coming Restoration
- 13. GOD'S VICIOUS JUDGMENT
 - 1-3 Israel's Gross Idolatry
 - 4-6 God's Historical Reminder
 - 7-16 Israel's Destruction
- 14. ISRAEL'S ULTIMATE RESTORATION
 - 1 God's Forgiveness
 - 7-9 Israel's Return

MICAH – “THE SUPREME AUTHORITY OF GOD”

1. DOOM
 - 1 Micah’s Contemporaries
 - 2-7 Samaria’s Desolation
 - 8-16 Jerusalem’s Infection
2. EXPLOITERS
 - 1-2 Exploiters’ Manipulative Practice
 - 3-5 Israel’s Predicted Territorial Loss
 - 6-11 Israel’s Social Abuses
 - 12-13 Israel’s Future Restoration
3. LEADERS
 - 1-4 Princes’ Cruel Oppression
 - 5-8 False Prophets’ Material Preoccupation
 - 9-12 Leaders’ Naïve Confidence
4. ULTIMATE VICTORY
 - 1-8 God’s Future Peaceful Rule
 - 9-10 Jerusalem’s Predicted Siege
 - 11-13 God’s Omnipotent Vengeance
5. JERUSALEM
 - 1-8 Jerusalem’s Eventual Victory
 - 9-15 Jerusalem’s Cultic Purification
6. REJECTION

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

1-5 God's Historical Reminder

6-8 God's Rejected Standard

9-12 Israel's Ethical Sins

7. **MERCY**

1-6 Israel's Vicious Injustice

7-10 Israel's Eventual Vindication

11-17 Israel's Awe-inspiring Deliverance

18-20- God's Reconciling Mercy

NAHUM – ‘THE WRATH OF GOD’

SCRIPTURE: “⁷ *The LORD is good,
a strong refuge when trouble comes.
He is close to those who trust in him.*
⁸ *But he will sweep away his enemies
in an overwhelming flood.
He will pursue his foes
into the darkness of night.*
⁹ *Why are you scheming against the LORD?
He will destroy you with one blow;
he won't need to strike twice!*
¹⁰ *His enemies, tangled like thornbushes
and staggering like drunks,
will be burned up like dry stubble in a field.*
¹¹ *Who is this wicked counselor of yours
who plots evil against the LORD?*
¹² *This is what the LORD says:
“Though the Assyrians have many allies,
they will be destroyed and disappear.
O my people, I have punished you before,
but I will not punish you again.*
¹³ *Now I will break the yoke of bondage from your neck
and tear off the chains of Assyrian oppression.” Nahum 1:7-13*

TEXT: “*He is slow in getting angry, but when aroused His power is incredible.*” (Nahum 1:3a; Living Bible)

INTRODUCTION:

It is important to understand the historical context during which time the prophet gave his fearful prophecy against the cruel Assyrian empire.

Assyria was successful in destroying Samaria, the Northern capital of Israel, in 721 B.C. Later, in 688 B.C., Assyria planned to utterly destroy Jerusalem, the capital of Southern Judah. How-

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

ever, Jerusalem was miraculously saved, the Assyrian army was destroyed and Sennacherib was assassinated by his own sons. (Isaiah 37:33-38) Although Jerusalem escaped destruction, Hezekiah's attempt at freeing Judah from Assyrian domination was unsuccessful, and Hezekiah's son and successor, Manasseh, gave up rebellion and made peace with Assyria.

Throughout the first half of the 7th century B.C., Assyria's power increased greatly. Sennacherib's successor, Ashurbanipal (669-627 B.C.), ruled the known world with an iron hand and inflicted acts of unthinkable cruelty on his enemies. Ralph Earle in *Meet the Minor Prophets* makes note that Ashurbanipal "tore off the limbs of kings, compelled three captured rulers to pull his chariot through the streets, forced a prince to wear around his neck the bloody head of his king, and feasted with the head of a Chaldean monarch hanging above him." (p. 65) The recently discovered Assyrian law book reveals the prescribed penalties for the enemies of Assyria: gouging out eyes, hacking off hands, slitting noses, cutting off ears, pouring boiled tar on the heads.

Under Manasseh's rule (687-643), Judah greatly declined in spirituality. Note a description of Manasseh's wickedness (II Kings 21:9-15; 24:13; Jeremiah 15:1-4). Judah again made homage to Assyrian deities, and the practice of fertility religion with the ritual of sacred prostitution was again tolerated in Judah, even within the Temple.

During the last half of the 7th century B.C., Assyria began gradually to decline in power. This was mainly due to an over-extension of her power and a consequent inability to suppress outbreaks of scattered opposition throughout her vast Empire. Finally in October, 626 B.C., the Babylonian prince Nabopolassar (626-605) defeated the Assyrians outside Babylon and a month later he took over the throne there. Assyria was on her way out as the world power. Sometime later Assyria's long-standing enemy – Egypt – out of fear of the new threatening power – Babylon – came to Assyria's aid. This help to Assyria was of no avail, for finally in 612 B.C., Assyria's end came when Ninevah, the Assyrian capital, fell to Babylon.

PROPOSITION:

The purpose of the book of Nahum is to describe God's vengeance for proud and cruel Assyria, and to predict the complete overthrow of Ninevah. From Nahum, one learns of an often overlooked aspect of God's love – love that finds its expression in the vindication of vengeance on a rebellious and proud nation.

I. GOD'S WRATH – CHAPTER 1

God's Omnipotent Vengeance (vs. 1-11)

Judah's Vindication (vs. 12-15)

II. NINEVAH'S ANGUISH – CHAPTER 2

A. Nineveh's Desolation (vs. 1-7)

B. Nineveh's Looting (vs. 8-13)

III. NIVEVAH'S UNLAMENTED DOOM – CHAPTER 3

Nineveh's Shame (vs. 1-7)

Nineveh's Vulnerability (vs. 8-19)

CONCLUSION

God's character is unchangeable – merciful, yet jealous.

God has sovereign control over the actions of men and nations.

God's love is not a sentimental love, but a just love.

CHAPTER 30
THE CONQUERING CHRIST – ANA-
LYTICAL OUTLINE OF THE BOOK
OF REVELATION!”

CHAPTER 30

THE CONQUERING CHRIST – ANALYTICAL OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION!

PART ONE: THE VISION OF GOD

I. INTRODUCTION (1:1-3)

A. The Revelation of Jesus Christ (vs. 1:1-2)

1. Reason for revelation (1) – “What must soon take place.”
2. Medium for revelation (1) – “made it known by sending his angel.”
3. Recipient of revelation (1) – to his servant John.”
4. Communication of revelation (2) – “who bore witness to the Word of God.”

B. The Benefits of Revelation (vs. 1:3)

1. Special promise
 - a. Blessing to readers
 - b. Blessing to listeners
 - c. Blessing to doers
2. Impending realization – “the time is near.”

II. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE VISION OF GOD

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

- A. The Triune God – Source of Grace and Peace (vs. 1:4-8)
 - 1. Eternity of God (“who is, who was, who is to come”)
 - 2. Perfection of Holy Spirit (“Seven spirits who are before his throne”)
 - 3. Magnitude of Jesus Christ
 - a. Faithful witness
 - b. Firstborn of the dead
 - c. Ruler of kings on earth
 - d. Lover and redeemer of believers
 - e. Restorer of mankind to kingdom glory
 - f. Eternal dominion
 - g. Coming ruler and judge
 - h. Alpha and Omega

- B. The Setting Of The Vision (vs. 1:9-11)
 - 1. Identification with tribulation
 - 2. Reception of divine vision

- C. The Terrifying ‘Son of Man’ (vs. 1:12-16)
 - 1. Setting for the Son’s appearance – seven golden lamp stands (vs. 12, 13a)
 - 2. Terror of the Son’s features (vss. 13b-16)

- D. The Awesome Response Of Instinctive Worship (vs. 1:17-20)
 - 1. Appropriate response of man - “fell at his feet as though dead.” (v. 17)
 - 2. Comforting love of Son – “Fear not...etc.” (vs. 17b-18)
 - 3. Decisive command to John - “now write what you see.”

PART TWO:

THE MESSAGE TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES. (vs. 2:1-3; 22)

- I. MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS (vs. 2:1-7)
 - A. Character of Christ
 - 1. Power of Christ – “hold seven stars in his right hand”
 - 2. Oversight of Christ – “walk among the seven golden lampstands”
 - B. Commendation of Christ
 - 1. Fruitful works
 - 2. Patient endurance
 - 3. Orthodox doctrine
 - 4. Refutation of heresy
 - 5. Perseverance in faith
 - 6. Hate the works of the Nicolaitans
 - C. Condemnation of Christ
 - 1. “You have abandoned the love you had at first” (v. 4)
 - D. Call To Repentance
 - 1. Remember your past godly life
 - 2. Repent of your present sin of lovelessness
 - 3. Perform the good works of your past
 - E. Warning To Be Heeded
 - 1. Refusal to repent results in removal of lampstand

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

2. Call to receptivity: "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." (v. 7)
3. Challenge And Promise of Christ: "To him who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God." (v. 7)

II. MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH AT SMYRNA (2:8-11)

A. Character Of Christ

1. Eternity of Christ – "first and the last"
2. Resurrection of Christ – "who died and came to life"

B. Commendation of Christ

1. Endurance during tribulation
2. Spiritual wealth in spite of material poverty

C. Comfort of Christ

1. Fact of impending persecution – "the devil is about to throw some of you into prison"
2. Alleviation of fear – "Do not fear what you are about to suffer."

D. Challenge and Promise Of Christ

1. "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life." (v. 10)
2. "He who conquers shall not be hurt by the second death." (v. 11b)

E. Call To Receptivity: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." (11a)

III. MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH AT PERGAMUM (2:12-17)

A. Character of Christ: "Who has the sharp two-edged sword" (Judgment of Christ).

B. Commendation of Christ

1. Faithfulness to the person of Christ – "you hold fast my name."
2. Faithfulness to the Word of Christ – "you did not deny my faith."

- C. Condemnation of Christ
 - 1. Reason for judgment
 - a. Toleration of licentious heresy (v. 20)
 - b. Refusal to repent of immorality (v. 21)
 - 2. Realization of judgment – to those who refuse to repent of their spiritual adultery, Christ will bring great tribulation upon them
 - 3. Result of judgment – “and all the churches shall know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve.” (v. 23)
 - D. Call to Repentance
 - E. Warning To Be Heeded: Failure to repent will result in Christ coming to war against them with the sword of His mouth
 - F. Call To Receptivity: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”
 - G. Promise of Christ To Conquering Ones
 - 1. Hidden manna
 - 2. White stone
- IV. MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH AT THYATIRA (2:18-29)
- A. Character of Christ
 - 1. Eyes like a flame of fire (symbol of wrath)
 - 2. Feet like burnished bronze (symbol of judgment)
 - B. Commendation of Christ
 - 1. Works
 - 2. Love
 - 3. Faith

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

4. Service
 5. Patient endurance
 - C. Condemnation of Christ
 1. Reason for judgment
 - a. Toleration of licentious heresy (v. 20)
 - b. Refusal to repent of immorality (v. 21)
 2. Realization of judgment – to those who refuse to repent of their spiritual adultery, Christ will bring great tribulation upon them
 3. Result of judgment – “and all the churches shall know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve.” (v. 23)
 - D. Comfort of Christ – To the faithful who have not succumbed to heresy, Christ lays no burden upon them except the responsibility to “hold fast what you have until I come”. (v. 29)
 - E. Promise of Christ to Conquering Believers
 1. Ruling authority: “he shall rule with a rod of iron”
 2. Glory of Christ: “I will give him the morning star.”
 - F. Call To Receptivity: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (v. 29)
- V. MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH AT SARDIS (3:1-6)
- A. Character of Christ
 1. Power: Sevenfold Spirit of God is subject to Him
 2. Power: Seven stars (angels of churches) are subject to Him
 - B. Condemnation Of Christ
 1. Self-deceived – “name of being alive, and you are dead”. (v. 1)
 2. Imperfection of works – “I have not found your works perfect in the sight of my God”. (v. 2)

- C. Call To Repentance
 - 1. Remember the past privileges
 - 2. Persevere in past call
 - 3. Repent over present sins
 - D. Warning To Be Heeded: Impending, surprise judgment is to fall upon the unrepentant (v. 3)
 - E. Comfort Of Christ: The faithful (who have not soiled their garments) “Shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.” (v. 4)
 - F. Promise Of Christ To Conquering Believers
 - 1. He shall be clad in white garments
 - 2. His name shall not be blotted out of the Book of Life
 - 3. His name shall be confessed before my Father and before his angels
 - G. Call To Receptivity: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (v. 6)
- VI. MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH AT PHILADELPHIA (3:7-15)
- A. Character of Christ
 - 1. Holy and true (righteousness of Christ)
 - 2. He has the key of David (access to Father’s presence)
 - 3. Opens and shuts (sovereignty of Christ)
 - B. Commendation of Christ
 - 1. Faithfulness in spite of feebleness (v. 8)
 - 2. Bestowed honor from the faithless (v. 9)
 - 3. Preservation in the hour of trial (v. 10)
 - C. Warning To Be Heeded
 - 1. Impending coming of Christ

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

2. Importance of perseverance
 3. Possibility of security
- D. Promise Of Christ To Conquering Believer
1. Promise of strength: “I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God”. (v. 12)
 2. Promise of identification
 - a. Identification with God’s power (“Write on him the name of my God”).
 - b. Identification with God’s program (“write on him the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem”).
 - c. Identification with God’s glory (“write on him my own new name”).
- E. Call To Receptivity: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”. (v. 13)
- VII. MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH AT LAODICEA (3:14-22)
- A. Character of Christ
1. Jesus is the ‘Amen’ of God (complete revelation of God).
 2. Jesus is the faithful and true witness (true revelation of God).
 3. Jesus is the beginning of God’s creation (origin of God’s creation).
- B. Condemnation Of Christ
1. The peril of compromise
 - a. Sickening characteristic – luke-warmness
 - b. Drastic treatment – “I will spew you out of my moth”
 2. The peril of deceptive pride
 - a. False evaluation of spiritual condition
 - (1) “I am rich.”

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

(2) "I have prospered."

(3) "I need nothing."

b. True evaluation of spiritual condition

(1) "You are wretched."

(2) "You are pitiable, poor, blind, naked."

C. Call to Repentance

1. Adequate provisions offered (v. 18)

a. Gold refined by fire to make you rich

b. White garments to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen.

c. Salve to anoint your eyes that you may see

2. Redemptive motive for chastisement (v. 19)

3. Meaningful fellowship promised (v. 20)

D. Promise of Christ To Conquering Believer: "I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne." (v. 2)

E. Call To Receptivity: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." (v. 2:20)

PART THREE: THE VISION OF THE THRONE AND THE LAMB (4:1-5:14)

I. THE VISION OF THE THRONE (4:1-11)

A. Revelation of the Throne (v. 1-2)

1. Invitation of the Divine – “I will show you what must take place after this.”
2. Initiation in the Divine – “I was in the Spirit, and lo, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne.”

B. Radiance from the Throne (v. 3)

1. Appearance of king – “like jasper and carnelian.”
2. Appearance around throne – “rainbow that looked like an emerald.”

C. Company Around The Throne

1. Twenty – four thrones
2. Twenty – four elders seated on thrones
 - a. Clad in white garments
 - b. Golden crowns upon their heads

D. Terror Surrounding The Throne (vs. 5-6)

1. Lightening flashes
2. Peals of thunder
3. Seven burning torches of fire (“which are the seven spirits of God”)
4. Sea of glass like crystal seems to appear before the throne

E. Worship Around The Throne (6b-11)

1. Four living creatures

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

- a. Identification of creatures (full of eyes in front and behind, and each of them with six wings.)
 - (1) First creature – “like a lion”
 - (2) Second creature – “like an ox”
 - (3) Third creature – “with the face of a man”
 - (4) Fourth creature – “like a flying eagle”
 - b. Activity of creatures: night and day they ceaselessly give glory and honor and thanks to Christ, saying “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!” (v. 8)
2. Twenty-four elders
- a. Activity of worship
 - (1) Fall down before Christ
 - (2) Worship him who lives forever and ever
 - (3) Cast their crowns before him
 - (4) Sing a song of exultant worship to Christ
 - b. Exclamation in worship:
 - (1) General praise expressed: “worthy art thou, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power.”
 - (2) Specific power declared
 - (a) Statement of creation: “for thou didst create all things.”
 - (b) Sovereignty of creation: “and by thy will they existed and were created.”

II. THE VISION OF THE LAMB AND THE SCROLL (5:1-14)

A. Person Of Worthiness Explored With Weeping (vs. 1-4)

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

1. Challenge of question with loud voice: “who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?”
 2. Response to question with great weeping: “I wept much that no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.”
- B. Person of Worthiness Identified With Confidence (vs. 5-7)
1. Identification of worthy person
 - a. Lion of the tribe of Judah
 - b. The root of David
 2. Activity of worthy person: “he can open the scroll and it’s seven seals.”
 3. Description of worthy person: “I saw a Lamb standing as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.” (v. 6)
 4. Confidence of worthy person: “he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne.” (v. 8)
- C. Person Of Worthiness Worshipped With Awe (vs. 8-14)
1. The response of instinctive worship (v. 8): “the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb.
 2. The response of insightful knowledge (vs. 9, 10)
 - a. Statement of worthiness: “worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals.”
 - b. Reason for worthiness – Redemptive work of Christ
 - (1) The sacrifice of the Redeemer: “thou wast slain and by Thy blood didst ransom men for God.” (v. 9)
 - (2) The heritage of the Redeemed: “thou hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on earth.” (v. 10)
 3. The response of innumerable celestials. (vs. 11-13)

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

- a. The response of “many angels”: “worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” (v. 12)
- b. The response of “every creature in heaven and on earth”: “To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!” (v. 13)
- c. The response of the four living creatures: they said ‘Amen!’
- d. The response of the elders: they “fell down and worshipped.”

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

PART FOUR: THE VISION OF THE SEVEN SEALS (6:1-8:1)

I. THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE

A. The White Horse (vs. 6:1-2) Conquering Power

1. Characteristic – “rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him.”
2. Activity – “he went out conquering and to conquer.”

B. The Red Horse (vs. 6:3-4) - War and Bloodshed

1. Characteristic – “he (rider) was given a great sword.”
2. Activity – “rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that men should slay one another.”

C. The Black Horse (vs. 6:5-6) - Famine

1. Characteristic – “rider had a balance in his hand.”
2. Activity – a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, ‘A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; but do not harm oil and wine!’

D. The Pale Horse – Pestilence and Death

II. CRY FOR VINDICATION OF SUFFERING SAINTS (Fifth Seal; vs. 6:9-11)

A. Cry For Quick Vindication (vs. 6:9-10)

B. Call For Continuing Perseverance (v. 6:11)

III. COMING OF THE GREAT ‘DAY OF WRATH’ (Sixth Seal) (vs. 6:12-17)

- A. Cataclysmic Affects On The Physical Universe (vs. 12-14)

 - B. Crisis Response Of The Human Inhabitants (vs. 15-17)
- IV. INTERLUDE: THE SEALED ONES AND THE SLAIN ONES (7:1-17)
- A. The Sealing Of The 144,000 (7:1-8)
 - 1. The messengers of the mission (vs. 1-2)
 - a. “Four angels” – Standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth.”
 - b. “Another angel” – “ascend from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God.”
 - 2. The mission of the messengers (vs. 3-8)
 - a. Protection of the sealed ones (v. 3)
 - b. Identification of the sealed ones (vs. 4-8)
 - B. The Great White – Robed Multitude (7:9-17)
 - 1. The Immensity of the multitude (v. 9)
 - 2. The exclamation of the multitude (v. 10)
 - 3. The worship of the angels (vs. 11-12)
 - 4. The identification of the multitude (vs. 13-14)
 - 5. The security of the multitude (vs. 15-17)
- V. THE OPENING OF THE SEVENTH SEAL (8:1)

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

PART FIVE: THE VISION OF THE SEVEN TRUMPETS (8:2-11:19)

I. PREPARATION FOR THE TRUMPETS (8:2-6)

A. Description of the Angel (vs. 2-4)

1. Position: “Angel came and stood at the altar.”
2. Properties
 - a. Golden censer
 - b. Incense to mingle with the prayers of all the saints

B. Activity Of The Angel (v. 5)

1. Angelic action: “angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth.”
2. Earthly reaction: “there were peals of thunder, loud noises, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.”

C. Preparation Of Seven Angels (v. 6)

II. SOUNDING OF THE FIRST SIX TRUMPETS (8:7-9:21)

A. Sounding Of The First Trumpet (8:7) (Hail, Fire, Blood)

B. Sounding Of The Second Trumpet (8:8-9) (Burning Mountain)

C. Sounding Of The Third Trumpet (8:10-11) (Star Wormwood)

D. Sounding Of The Fourth Trumpet (8:12) (Sun, Moon, Stars Smitten)

E. Warning Of The Eagle (8:13)

F. Sounding Of The Fifth Trumpet (First Woe) (9:1-12) (Plague Of Locusts)

1. Properties of the bottomless pit – smoke, etc.
2. Powers from the bottomless pit – locusts with power like the power of scorpions

3. Inflictions from the bottomless pit – “their torture was like the torture of a scorpion when it stings a man.” (v. 5)
 4. Terrorizing picture of the demonic creatures (vs. 7-9)
 5. Paralyzing powers of the demonic creatures (vs. 10-11)
- G. Sounding Of the Sixth Trumpet (Second Woe (9:13-21))
1. Description of the mighty troops (9:13-17)
 2. Destruction by the mysterious troops (9:18-19)
 3. Defiance of earth’s remaining inhabitants (9:20-21)
- III. INTERLUDE LITTLE BOOK AND TWO WITNESSES (10:1-11:14)
- A. The Little Book (10:1-11)
1. Confidence In Posture Of The Angel (vs. 1-3)
 - a. Angel wrapped in a cloud
 - b. Rainbow over angel’s head
 - c. Angel’s face was like the sun
 - d. Little scroll opened in angel’s hands
 - e. “Set his right foot on the sea, and left foot on the land.”
 - f. “Called out with a loud voice, like a lion roaring.”
 2. Comfort in proclamation on the angel (vs. 4-7)
 - a. “Angel...swore that there should be no more delay.”
 - b. “The mystery of God...should be fulfilled.”
 3. Consumption of scroll by John
 - a. Strange command to John – “take it (scroll) – and eat; it will be bitter to your stomach, but sweet as honey in your mouth.” (v. 9)
 - b. Strong obedience by John – “And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it; it was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter.” (v. 10).”

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

- B. The Two Witnesses (11:1-14)
1. Command to measure the temple (vs. 1-12)
 2. Invincible power of the witnesses (vs. 3-6)
 - a. Power to prophesy. (v. 3)
 - b. Power for persecutors (vs. 4-5)
 - c. Power over earthly forces (v. 6)
 3. Satanic power over the witnesses. (vs. 7-10)
 - a. Victory of the beast – “beast that ascends from the bottomless pit will make war upon them and conquer them and kill them.” (v. 7)
 - b. Merriment of mankind – “and those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry and exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a torment to those who dwell on the earth.”
 4. Divine vindication of the witnesses. (vs. 11-14)
 - a. Exercise of divine power – “a breath of life from God and entered them, and they stood up on their feet”. (v. 11)
 - b. Exaltation to divine honor – “and in the sight of their foes they went up to heaven in a cloud.” (v. 12)
 - c. Execution of divine wrath - “and at that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.” (v. 13)

PART SIX:

CONFLICT BETWEEN GODLY FORCES AND EVIL FORCES

(12:1-14:20)

I. THE WOMAN AND THE DRAGON (12:1-17)

A. Viciousness Of The Conflict (vs. 1-6)

1. Appearance of the Contenders (vs. 1-3)

2. Power of the Contenders (vs. 4-5)

a. Dragon: "His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven."

b. Child of the woman: "one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron."

3. Protection of the child (v. 6)

B. Victory in the Conflict (vs. 7-12)

1. Defeat of the dragon and his angels (v. 7)

2. Disposal of the dragon from heaven (vs. 8, 9)

3. Declaration of the consummation of the kingdom (vs. 10-11)

4. Destructive purpose of the defeated foe (v. 12)

C. Vengeance Out Of The Conflict (vs. 13-17)

1. Destructive pursuit of revengeful dragon (v. 13)

2. Protective refuge of the divinely-enabled woman (v. 13)

3. Futuristic attempt of serpent to destroy woman (vs. 15-16)

4. Revengeful attack on woman's offspring (v. 17)

II. THE TWO BEASTS (13:1-18)

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

- A. Beast Out Of the Sea (vs. 1-10)
 - 1. Appearance of the beast (vs. 1-1-2)
 - 2. Persuasive power of the beast (vs. 3-4)
 - 3. Blasphemous speech of the beast (vs. 5-6)
 - 4. God-allowed victory of the beast (vs. 7-10)
- B. Beast Out Of The Earth (vs. 11-18)
 - 1. Appearance of the beast (v. 11)
 - 2. Supportive role of the beast (v. 12)
 - 3. Deceptive activity of the beast (vs. 113-14)
 - 4. Destructive power of the beast (v. 15)
 - 5. Identifying mark of the beast (vs. 16-18)
- III. THE LAMB AND THE 144,000 (vs. 14:1-5)
 - A. Identifying mark of the 144,000 (v. 1)
 - B. Qualifying Song of the Lamb
 - C. Distinguishing Characteristics of the Redeemed (vs. 4-5)
- III. VISIONS OF FINAL JUDGMENT (14:1-5)
 - A. Explanations of Impending Judgments (vs. 6-11)
 - 1. First angel's message: Give God glory and worship Him as the Creator.
 - 2. Second angel's message: "Fallen, fallen Is Babylon the great."
 - 3. Third angel's message: "If any one worships the beast and its image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also shall drink the wine of God's wrath." (vs. 9, 10a)
 - B. Exhortation to Persevering Faith (v. 12)
 - C. Encouragement To Faithful Perseverers (v. 13)
 - D. Execution of Judgment on Earth (vs. 14-20)

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

1. Harvest of the earth(vs. 14-20) “Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe.” (v. 15)
2. Vintage of the earth (vs. 17-20) “Put in your sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe”. (v. 18)

PART SEVEN:

THE SEVEN BOWLS (15:1-16:21)

- I. PREPARATION FOR THE SEVEN BOWL-PLAGUES (15:1-8)
 - A. Preparation for the Consummation of God's Wrath (v. 1)
 - B. Praise from the Conquerors in God's Warfare (vs. 2-4)
 - C. Plagues from the Corridors of God's Temple (vs. 5-8)

- II. POURING OUT OF THE SEVEN BOWL-PLAGUES (16:1-21)
 - A. The First Bowl (vs. 1-2) – Boils
 - B. The Second Bowl (v. 3) – Bloody Sea
 - C. The Third Bowl (vs. 4-7) – Bloody Rivers
 - 1. Angel's declaration of God's just judgments (vs. 4-6)
 - 2. Altar's response to God's just judgments (v. 7)
 - D. The Fourth Bowl (vs. 8-9) – Great Heat
 - 1. Intensity of judgment's infliction (v. 8)
 - 2. Impenitence of rebellious sinners (v. 9)
 - E. The Fifth Bowl (vs. 10-11) – Darkness
 - 1. Devastating impact of judgment (v. 10)
 - 2. Defiant rejection of repentance (v. 11)
 - F. The Sixth Bowl (vs. 12-16)

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

1. Preparatory nature of judgment – Euphrates dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the east. (v. 12)
 2. Preparatory scheme of foul spirits of demonic trinity (vs. 13-16)
 - a. Battle preparation - demonic spirits go abroad to the kings of the whole world to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty (v. 14)
 - b. Battle location – place which is called in Hebrew Armageddon (v. 16)
- G. The Seventh Bowl (vs. 17-21) – Hail
1. The message of consummation in judgment (v. 17) “A great voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, ‘It is done!’”
 2. The medium for consummation in judgment (v. 18): “And there were flashes of lightning, loud noises, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as had never been since men were on the earth, so great was the earthquake.”
 3. The magnitude of the consummation in judgment (vs. 19-21)
 - a. The great city was split into three parts
 - b. The cities of the nations fell
 - c. God made great Babylon drain the cup of the fury of his wrath.

PART EIGHT:

THE FALL OF BABYLON (17:1-19:5)

- I. THE WOMAN AND THE BEAST (17:1-18)
- A. Abomination of the woman (vs. 1-6) “with the wine of whose fornication the dwellers on earth have become drunk.” (v. 2)
 - B. Victory of the Lamb (vs. 7-14) - “they (the beast and the kings) will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.” (v. 14)
 - C. Betrayal of the Beast (vs. 15-18) – “They (the ten kings) and the beast will hate the harlot; they will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire.” (v. 16)
- II. THE FALL OF BABYLON THE GREAT (18:1-24)
- A. Desolation of Babylon (vs. 1-8) “a haunt of every foul spirit... she shall be burned with fire” (vs. 2, 8)
 - B. Dismay over Fallen Babylon (vs. 9-20)
 - 1. Lamentation of kings (vs. 9-10) – “they will stand far off, in fear of her torment, and say, ‘Alas! Alas! Thou great city, thou mighty city, Babylon! In one hour has thy judgment come.’ (v. 10)
 - 2. Lamentation of merchants (v. 11ff) – “the merchants of these wares, who gained wealth from her, will stand far off, in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud, ‘Alas! Alas, for the great city that was clothed in fine linen, in purple and in scarlet, bedecked with gold, with jewels and with pearls! In one hour all this wealth has been laid waste’.”
 - 3. Lamentation of seamen (vs. 18-20) – “And they threw dust on their heads, as they wept and mourned, crying out, ‘Alas, alas, for the great city where all who had ships at sea grew rich by her wealth! In one hour she has been laid waste.’” (v. 19)

4. Rejoicing of saints (v. 20) – “Rejoice over her, O heaven, O saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her!” (v. 20)

C. Description of Fallen Babylon (vs. 21-23a)

1. Description of the fallen Babylon (vs. 21-23a)
 - a. “Thrown down with violence.”
 - b. “Sound of harpers...shall be heard in thee no more.”
 - c. “Craftsman...shall be found in thee no more.”
 - d. “Light of a lamp shall shine in thee no more.”
 - e. “Voice of bridegroom and bride shall be heard in thee no more.”
2. Reason for destruction of Babylon (vs. 23b-23a)
 - a. “All nations were deceived by thy sorcery”
 - b. “And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on earth.”

D. Delight of Vindicated Saints (19:1-5)

1. Delight of great multitude in Heaven (vs. 1-3)
2. Delight of 24 elders and 4 creatures (v. 4)
3. Delight of voice from the throne (v. 5)

PART NINE:

VISIONS OF THE CONSUMMATION OF THE KINGDOM (19:6-20:15)

I. THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB (19:6-10)

- A. Perfection of the reign of Christ (vs. 6-7a) – “Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, crying, ‘Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.’” (v. 6)
- B. Purity of the Bride of Christ (vs. 7b-8) “it was granted her (the Bride) to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure” – ‘for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.’ (v. 8)
- C. Priority in the Glory of Christ - Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, ‘You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus, worship God.’” (v. 10)

II. THE MAGNIFICENCE OF THE WARRIOR – MESSIAH (vs. 11-16)

- A. Character and activity of the warrior - Messiah (vs. 11-16)
 - 1. Righteous in just judgment – “in righteousness he judges and makes war”. (v. 11)
 - 2. Universal in kingly reign – “on his head are many diadems” (v. 12)
 - 3. Mysterious in hidden nature – “he has a name inscribed which no one knows but himself”. (v. 12)
 - 4. Redemptive in holy mission – “He is clad in a robe dipped in blood”. (v. 13)
 - 5. Authoritative in revelatory ministry - “the name by which he is called is the Word of God.” (v. 13)
 - 6. Mighty in victorious crusade - “armies of heaven... followed him on white horses.” (v. 14)

7. Unequivocal in final vengeance. (v. 15) “Smite the nations...rule them with a rod of iron...tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.”
8. Unchallenged in final reign (v. 16) “On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, King of kings and Lord of lords.”

III. THE DESTRUCTION OF ANTI-CHRIST AND THE FALSE PROPHET. (19:17-21)

- A. Anticipation by angel of battle victory. (vs. 17-18)
- B. Assembly of armies in battle confrontation. (v. 19)
- C. Destruction of beast and false prophet in lake of fire. (v. 20)
- D. Death of remaining wicked by Sword of Christ. (v. 21)

IV. THE BINDING OF SATAN AND THE MILLENNIAL REIGN OF Christ

- A. The binding of Satan by the angel (vs. 1-2)
 1. The seizure of Satan by the angel. (vs. 1-2)
 2. The sealing of Satan in bottomless pit. (v. 3)
- B. The millennial reign of Christ and His saints. (vs. 4-6)
 1. Resurrection of the suffering saints. (v. 4)
 2. Reign of the faithful saints. (vs. 5-6)

V. THE DESTRUCTION OF SATAN. (20:7-10)

- A. The final battle (Gog and Magog). (vs. 7-9)
- B. The final victory. (v. 10). “and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”

VI. THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT. (20:11-15)

- A. Terror before the righteous judge. (v. 11)
- B. Evaluation by the righteous judge. (vs. 12-13)
- C. Vengeance of the righteous judge. (vs. 14-15)

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

PART TEN:

THE NEW HEAVEN AND THE NEW EARTH (21:1-22:21)

- I. COMFORT OF THE INHABITANTS (21:1-4)
 - A. The companionship of the Holy “Behold, the dwelling of God is with men.”
 - B. The transformation of the Holy “the former things have passed away.”
- II. CHARACTER OF THE INHABITANTS (21:5-8)
 - A. The conquering of the Holy – “He who conquers shall have this heritage.’
 - B. The Cleansing of the Holy City – The inhabitants of the Holy City are those who have lived cleansed and separated lives, in contrast to the cowardly, faithless, polluted, etc. (v. 8)
- III. SPLENDOR OF THE HOLY CITY (21:9-14)
 - A. Revelation of the City – “the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.” (v. 10)
 - B. Radiance of the City – “having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.” (v. 11)
 - C. Residents of the City – “on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed...and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.” (vs. 12, 14)
- IV. CONSTRUCTION OF THE HOLY CITY - (21:15-21)
 - A. Measurements of the City (vs. 15-17)
 - B. Walls of the city (v. 18)
 - C. Foundations of the City
 - D. Gates of the City (v. 21)
 - E. Street of the City (v. 21)

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

IV. CHARACTER OF THE HOLY CITY (21:22-27)

A. The effervescent ‘furnishings’ of the City

1. The Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb is the temple
2. The Glory of God is the light
3. The Lamb is the lamp

B. The everlasting glory of the city – “they shall bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.” (v. 26)

C. The exquisite purity in the City – “But nothing unclean shall enter it, nor anyone who practices abominations or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” (v. 27)

IV. THE RIVER OF LIFE AND THE TREE OF LIFE (22:1-5)

A. The healing life in the City (vs. 1-2)

B. The honorable loyalty in the City (v. 2)

C. The hallowed Lord in the City (v. 4)

CHAPTER 31
***“LET US HOLD FAST – THE BOOK
OF HEBREWS!”***

CHAPTER 31

“LET US HOLD FAST – THE BOOK OF HEBREWS!”

Notes William Barclay, “When we sum it all up, we can say that Hebrews is a letter written by a great teacher, written by a man whom we would call a professor, to a little group or college of Christians in Rome. He was their teacher; at the moment he was separated from them; he was afraid that they were drifting away from the faith; and so he wrote this letter to them.”

Notes Robert Shank: “Those who contend that the writer to the Hebrews views his readers as men who have halted short of saving faith in Christ, rather than as true believers, do so out of regard for the necessities of their theology. The evidence of the epistle is against them.

“Others agree that the Epistle to the Hebrews obviously is addressed to true believers, but contend that the writer’s purpose is not to sound a warning against apostasy, but to share with his readers the secret of spiritual progress. His call to them, as they contend, is not “Don’t turn back!” – But “Let us go on!” Again, such opinion is dictated by the necessities of their theology, rather than by the contents of the epistle.”

“The phrase “let us go on” he writes, “unto perfection.” The writer may have reference to his intention to proceed to the advanced development of “the doctrine of Christ” to which he proposes to lead them in the course of his letter. Or, it may be a call to his readers to advance from spiritual infancy in which he found them (5:11-13) toward the maturity (v. 14) which is possible for all who will grasp it. Actually, both things are within the writer’s purpose. Certainly it is his intention to proceed toward the fuller development of his Christology, which is the grand theme of the didactic portions of his letter. But the presentation of his Christology is not an end in itself; it is offered for the profit of his readers. The didactic portions of his letter are but the base from which he launches his frequent exhortations, the principal burden of which is not “let us go on”, but “let us hold fast.”

“Certainly he is concerned that his readers “go on unto perfection.” But his first concern is that they “hold fast the confession of hope without wavering.” If they do, they will go on toward perfection. The Christian life, a living relationship proceeding upon a living faith in a living Saviour, is never static. *“Jesus said unto them, Take heed that ye hear: for with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.”* (Mark 4:24, 25) Robertson’s comment is worth pondering: “The man who does not acquire soon loses what he thinks that he has. This is one of the paradox-

es of Jesus that repay thought and practice.” Growth in grace, or spiritual decline, may be hardly perceptible in many instances; nevertheless, it remains true that a Christian either grows or degenerates. The Christian life is never static. The congregation to whom the Epistle to the Hebrews was written had not merely failed to grow in their Christian lives; they had degenerated to the point of becoming spiritual infants again. (5:11, 12) “They had become with the years less quick in understanding, and not more quick according to a natural and healthy development...The Hebrews had through their own neglect become young children...As yet however this dullness had not extended to action, though such an issue was not far off. (c.v.1. 12:com. 2 Peter:ii, 20)

Their peril of finally apostatizing increased in proportion as they declined spiritually. The writer’s concern for them is reflected in his frequent and urgent exhortations.

“In contrast with the exhortation let us go on unto perfection,” which occurs but once, the exhortation “let us hold fast our confession” which occurs twice (4:14; 10:23) and the epistle abounds with cognate exhortations:

“...if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end” (3:6); “if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end” (3:6); “if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end” (3:14); “Lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God (3:12); “lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin (3:13); “lest at any time we should slip away” (2:1); “if we neglect so great salvation” (2:3); “harden not your hearts” (3:8, 15); “lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief” (4:11); “show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end” (6:11); “let us keep on drawing near with a true heart in full assurance of faith” (10:22); “cast not away therefore your confidence” (10:35); “for ye have need of patience, that...ye might receive the promise” (10:36); “the just shall live by faith: but if he draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him” (10:38); “lest ye be wearied and faint” (12:3); “despise not the chastening of the Lord nor faint when thou art rebuked of him” (12:5); “be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live” (12:9); “lest that which is lame be turned out of the way” (12:13); “lest any man fail of the grace of God” (12:15); “lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who sold his birthright” (12:16); “if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven” (12:25); “be not carried away with divers and strange doctrines” (13:9); “let us keep going forth unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach” (13:13).

Any emphasis in the Epistle to the Hebrews on going on toward spiritual maturity is secondary. The burden of the writer’s “word of exhortation” is that his readers “hold fast the confession of their hope” in Jesus Christ as the only Saviour and “the Source of eternal salvation unto all who obey Him.” (Robert Shank; “Life in the Son; pgs. 231-234)

The great James Denney in his book ‘The Death of Christ’ also believed the main trust of the book of Hebrews was conservation of the Faith. “The Epistle to the Hebrews does not make as clear to us as the Pauline epistles how it is that Christ’s death becomes effective for men. The author was not an evangelist so much as a pastor, and it is not the initiation of the Christianity, but its conservation, with which he deals throughout.”

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

After one makes a careful study of the book of Hebrews, one is impressed with a pattern in the book. Three basic components emerge: (1) Promises and Provisions, (2) Conditions and Exhortations, (3) Warnings and Perils.

A contextual study of Hebrews involves appreciating the promises and provisions of God, as they are couched in the broader conditions and the warnings as expounded in the total passages under consideration. A proof-texting method of Bible Study is always dangerous and is a direct violation of the principles of hermeneutics.

If conservation of the faith is the main concern of the author of Hebrews, then the didactic portions of the Book are the 'launching pads' for the frequent exhortations to maintain the faith. Again, (to quote Robert Shank): "The didactic portions of his letter are but the base from which he launches his frequent exhortations, the principal burden of which is not 'let us go on,' but 'let us hold fast.'" (Life In the Son; pg. 232)

The Christology of Hebrews is rich and beautiful and is worthy of a study within itself. But the didactic portions are only secondary. The hortatory sections, in which the author's main thrust is "Let us hold fast," are primary.

Why was Hebrews writer? Because the author "was afraid that they (the believers), were drifting away from the faith." (William Barclay). The key emphasis in the Book is, "Let us hold fast!" Why this emphasis?

- (1) Because there was a real possibility that these believers could go back to the Jewish religion, which would mean a repudiation of the way of grace through Jesus and the New Covenant.
- (2) Because of the possibility of falling away from grace (becoming faithless) under the severe attacks of persecutors (10:32-34; 13:3).
- (3) Because of the possibility (and reality!) of failing to grow spiritually, and instead, degenerating to the point of becoming spiritual infants again (5:11, 12). "Their peril of finally apostatizing increased in proportion as they declined spiritually. The writer's concern for them is reflected in his frequent and urgent exhortations." (Life in the Son; Robert Shank; pg. 233)
- (4) Because of the possibility of believers becoming discouraged and embittered when God wielded the chastening rod. (Hebrews 12)

HEBREWS

DIDACTIC (1-14)

Jesus is superior to all things and to all persons! Jesus is Creator and sustainer of the physical universe (1, 2), the heir of God (1:11), the incarnate manifestation of God's glory (1:3), the atoning sacrifice for sin (1:3), the resurrected and exalted Son (1:3), Jesus is superior to the angels in every way (1:5-14) (warranted by Scriptural support (1:5-13). As demonstrated by his everlasting reign (1:8), by His creative power (1:10), by His everlasting person (1:11), by His immutability (1:12), by His victorious kingly reign (1:13). Angels are servants of the redeemed (1:14).

HORTATORY (2:1-4)

Based on the superior revelation of God through Christ, believers are exhorted to pay closer attention to the message and to guard against drifting away from the truth. There is no escape (from judgment) for those who "neglect such a great salvation." (2:3)

DIDACTIC (2:5-3:6)

Christ has universal dominion; Christ, (not the angels) will control the future world (2:5). There is Scriptural precedent for Christ's universal rule (2:6-8). This universal dominion of Christ is based on His redemptive suffering. (2:9-10) and based on His incarnate identification with mankind (2:11-18) through which Christ broke the power of Satan and gave spiritual victory to mankind.

Based on Christ's person ('Son of God') and based on Christ's work of redemption (Sacrificial death), God has made Christ the Head over His own house – the faithful (3:1-6).

HORTATORY (3:6-4:16)

Since Christ is superior to the prophets (1:1-2). To the angels (1:4-24); 2:5). And to Moses (3:1-6), and since His creative power (1:2, 3a, 10, 11) and redemptive work (1:3b; 2:9, 10) are mighty manifestation, we believers (3:7) are warned against hardening our hearts against God's love and mercy as the unbelieving Israelites did in the desert when God tested them. (3:7-10) Believers under trial are warned not to allow their hearts to become hardened, evil, and unbelieving, (3:12, 13, 15) following the example of the Israelites who forfeited the promise of God and reaped the wrath of God (3:11) because of unbelief. God's promises for salvation can only be fulfilled in the lives of those who are faithful to God to the end of life (3:14). Believers are to look at the example of the Israelite apostasy (3:16-19), as a warning against the perils of unbelief.

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

God's desire is universal salvation of mankind but only those who experience salvation through persevering faith (4:1, 2b, 3, 5, 6) finally enter the final and eternal 'rest' of God (in heaven). "There is a full complete rest still waiting for the people of God," (Living Bible, 4:9) but persistent disobedience makes it impossible finally to enter that rest (4:7-11 and especially 4:11).

The secret motives of our hearts (the true spiritual conditions of our lives) are fully known to God (4:12, 13), but God has mercy upon us during our tests, if we continue to trust our Great High Priest who intercedes before the Father on our behalf. (4:14-16).

DIDACTIC (5:1-10)

Christ, after the example of Aaron and the Aaronic priesthood, was called and chosen by God to be High Priest in behalf of sinning mankind. Through the humble obedience, which Christ learned through suffering, He became the Giver of eternal life to all persons who obey Him.

HORTATORY (5:11-6:20)

Obedience (described through the aforementioned picture of Christ who suffered redemptively, (5:1-10) must be practiced in order to keep one from relapsing into spiritual infantilism, and become mature in his ability to understand the deep truths of God's Word, and in order for a believer to be mature in his ethical discernment (5:11-14).

Relapse into spiritual immaturity, as evidenced by failure to understand the deeper truths of God (6:1-3), can lead to a state of apostasy (6:4-6) and spiritual sterility (6:7-8); therefore (6:4-6) Therefore, (negatively speaking) because of the reality of this spiritual peril, and (positively-speaking) because of the trustworthiness of God's saving promise and oath (as exemplified in God's faithful promise to Abraham and Abraham's response of faith to that promise; (6:13-20), believers are urged to persevere in a life of faith and practical love (6:9-12) and not to become "sluggish, but initiators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." (6:12; RSV)

DIDACTIC (7:1-10:18)

The lesser (Abraham, representing Levi and the total Aaronic priesthood,) paid tithes to the greater (to Melchizedek, representing Jesus Christ). This shows the mighty saving purposes and redemptive blessings of the priesthood of Christ which has come to replace the weak Aaronic priesthood. (7:6)

The superior and eternal priesthood of Christ has replaced the inferior and transient Aaronic priesthood (as shown by the fact that, humanly-speaking, Christ was descended from the tribe of Judah, not the priest-tribe of Levi) (7:12-28)

The New Covenant of Grace, based on Christ's superior Heavenly priesthood (8:1-6), (as foretold in Jeremiah 31:31-34) has replaced the Old Covenant of Law. The New Covenant results in the forgiveness of

sins and in a change of the human heart that issues forth in willing obedience to God's commands (8:7-13).

The transforming blood of the New Covenant is the blood of Christ, which blood was shed once and-for-all as the eternally efficacious atonement for sins, in contrast to the oft-repeated blood sacrifices of animals in the Old Testament ritualistic sacrificial system (which was only a shadow of the heavenly tabernacle). (Hebrews 9:10:18)

HORTATORY (10:19-12:29)

Believers are exhorted to appropriate the wonderful provisions of Christ's atonement (Hebrews 10:19-23), and to persevere in love (10:24), in responsible Christian fellowship (10:25) and in faithful suffering for the Lord (10:32-34), in view of the terrible possibility of falling away from the Savior through deliberate sinning, thus incurring the terrible judgment of God (10:26-31). Perseverance in the faith (i.e., continuing to trust the Lord for everything throughout one's entire lifetime) is the condition for the fulfillment of God's promise of final salvation to believers (Hebrews 10:35-38), and is patterned for the present-day believers after the exemplary faith of Godly ancestors, some of whom exercised faith and thus enjoyed victory through deliverance from death (Hebrews 11:1-35), and some of whom exercised faith and enjoyed victory in spite of death (Hebrews 11:35b-40).

Believers are exhorted to rid themselves of all known sin and to 'run with patience the race' that God has set before them, keeping encouraged as they look at the example of Jesus who suffered patiently at the hands of evil men (Hebrews 12:1-4).

Believers are exhorted to accept the corrective discipline of the Lord as remedial and redemptive and contributive to spiritual maturity, and not to become discouraged or rebellious when experiencing such discipline (12:1-11). Believers are exhorted to guard against various sins (quarrelling, bitterness, immorality, spiritual indifference) (12:14-17), and, in view of the holiness and justice of God (12:18-24), to maintain an unshakeable faith and obedience (12:25-29).

DIDACTIC (13:1-6)

Some practical aspects of Christian discipleship are briefly noted: The importance of maintaining brotherly love, the importance of hospitality to strangers, the importance of showing compassion to believers who are suffering for their faith, the importance of maintaining marital fidelity, the importance of being content rather than being greedy, the importance of affirming God's abiding presence which eliminates fear.

HORTATORY (13:7-17)

Submission to the true spiritual leaders (v. 7, 17), adherence to the true spiritual way (in contrast to the false way of legalism, vs. 9-12), identification with Jesus' sufferings (vs. 13-14), and offering of praise and good works are all called for as appropriate human responses to the beautiful provisions and blessings of God's new covenant (described in the earlier portions of the Book).

CONCLUSION:(13:18-25)

Personal appeal for the prayers of the Hebrew believers, and affirmation of God's power to the believers in the New and everlasting covenant, sealed with Christ's blood. Final appeal to heed the word of exhor-

tation which has been the main purpose of the author in writing the Book of Hebrews. Closing benediction.

CHAPTER 32
***“THE WAY OF FAITH VERSES THE
WAY OF FEAR!”***

CHAPTER 32

“THE WAY OF FAITH VERSES THE WAY OF FEAR!”

SCRIPTURE: ¹ I will praise the LORD at all times.
I will constantly speak his praises.
² I will boast only in the LORD;
let all who are helpless take heart.
³ Come, let us tell of the LORD's greatness;
let us exalt his name together.

⁴ I prayed to the LORD, and he answered me.
He freed me from all my fears.
⁵ Those who look to him for help will be radiant with joy;
no shadow of shame will darken their faces.
⁶ In my desperation I prayed, and the LORD listened;
he saved me from all my troubles.
⁷ For the angel of the LORD is a guard;
he surrounds and defends all who fear him.

⁸ Taste and see that the LORD is good.
Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him!
⁹ Fear the LORD, you his godly people,
for those who fear him will have all they need.
¹⁰ Even strong young lions sometimes go hungry,
but those who trust in the LORD will lack no good thing.

¹¹ Come, my children, and listen to me,
and I will teach you to fear the LORD.
¹² Does anyone want to live a life
that is long and prosperous?

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

- ¹³ Then keep your tongue from speaking evil
and your lips from telling lies!
- ¹⁴ Turn away from evil and do good.
Search for peace, and work to maintain it.
- ¹⁵ The eyes of the LORD watch over those who do right;
his ears are open to their cries for help.
- ¹⁶ But the LORD turns his face against those who do evil;
he will erase their memory from the earth.
- ¹⁷ The LORD hears his people when they call to him for help.
He rescues them from all their troubles.
- ¹⁸ The LORD is close to the brokenhearted;
he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.
- ¹⁹ The righteous person faces many troubles,
but the LORD comes to the rescue each time.
- ²⁰ For the LORD protects the bones of the righteous;
not one of them is broken!
- ²¹ Calamity will surely overtake the wicked,
and those who hate the righteous will be punished.
- ²² But the LORD will redeem those who serve him.
No one who takes refuge in him will be condemned.” Psalms 34

TEXT: *“I sought the Lord and he heard me and delivered me from all my fears.”* (Psalms 34:4)

INTRODUCTION:

1. Fear, like love, is a basic emotion of man which can be either helpful or harmful, depending upon what the object of fear is.
2. Illustrations of helpful fears:
 - (a) Fear as guardian of morality,
 - (b) Fear of dark has led to discoveries of candle, oil lamp, electricity.
 - (c) Fear of pain and disease has led to discovery of anesthetics and healing drugs.
3. Illustration of harmful fears:
 - (a) Fear of future,
 - (b) Fear of failure,
 - (c) Fear of death.

I. FAITH RELEASES – FEAR TIES UP

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

1. God
 - a. Faith in a God of infinite love, wisdom, and power releases one from despair, resulting in one seeing Reality as ordained for good purposes. (Makes one positive and happy).
 - b. One who sees God as a Judge to be avoided and feared is the one who has a most dismal and terrifying outlook on life. (Makes one negative and miserable, as illustrated by Luther's life before his conversion.)
2. Nature
 - a. All of man's discoveries in Nature have depended upon man's faith in the predictability and consistency of Nature's Laws.
 - b. Terrifying fear of nature kept man for centuries from discovering Nature's secrets and using them for his advantage.
3. People
 - a. Faith in people builds strong and enduring relationships (Foundation of peace is faith in people).
 - b. Fear of people causes suspicion, hate, betrayal. (Foundation of war is fear of people).
4. Self
 - a. Faith in oneself releases one to realize his fullest potential, resulting in a poised, positive, and contributive person.
 - b. The insecure, inferior, defeated person is one who has lost faith in himself and has come to fear himself, resulting in stunting one's growth.

II. FAITH IS NATURAL – FEAR IS UNNATURAL

“We are inwardly constructed, in nerve and tissue and brain cell and soul, for faith and not for fear. God made us that way. Therefore, the need of faith is not something imposed on us dogmatically, but it is written in us intrinsically. We cannot live without it. To live by worry is to live against Reality.” (E.S. Jones' Abundant Living; pg. 85)

III. FAITH IS CONTRIBUTIVE IN PROBLEM SOLVING – FEAR IS DESTRUCTIVE IN PROBLEM SOLVING

1. Proper Distinctions

“Problems constitute a sign of life. I would go so far as to say that the more problems you have, the more alive you are.” (Pearle) Encountering problems with fear instead of faith is a sign of weakness.
2. Application

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

- a. To look at a problem with fear results in running from the problem.
 - b. To look at a problem with faith is to attack the problem and find and carryout a workable solution.
3. Quotes
- a. “Our belief at the beginning of a doubtful undertaking is the one thing that assures the successful outcome of any venture.” (William James)
 - b. Jesus said, “All things are possible.” Therefore the Christian must eliminate the word “impossible” from his vocabulary.
 - c. “Anxiety is like a magnet. It draws unhappy results to itself. But so also is faith. Indeed faith is a much more powerful magnet, one which draws to itself the most incredible blessings.” (Overcoming Anxiety and Fear; Peale; pg. 11)

IV. FAITH IS ATTRACTIVE – FEAR IS REPULSIVE

1 Related To People

- a. Faith solidifies relationships and makes one other-centered, and thus an admirable and interesting person.
- b. Fear and suspicion of others destroys relationships and makes one self-centered, and thus a repulsive and miserable person (Fear of being involved with others is a leading cause of self-centeredness).

2. Related To God

- a. Lacking faith in a God who is all-powerful, all-wise, and all-loving, such a person has no alternative but despair, and despairing people are not attractive people.
- b. Faith in a Sovereign, personal God and involvement in His cosmological purposes, makes one’s life radiant, winsome, and thus attractive.

V. FAITH TAKES CULTIVATION – FEAR IS PRODUCT OF COMPLACENCY

1. Proper Distinctions

- a. It is not hard to succumb to one’s circumstances and yield to one’s fears.
- b. It takes real intelligence and effort to live by faith and courage.

2. How to Use Faith To Cancel Fears

- a. Face Fear and determine to Overcome It.

(Illustration: Herefords is one breed of cattle that instinctively head into the windward end of a storm, facing the storm’s blasts shoulder-to-shoulder, and

they, in contrast to other cattle, remain alive and well through the storm). (Illustration: Said Theodore Roosevelt: "I have often been afraid, but I wouldn't give in to it. I made myself act as though I was not afraid, and gradually my fear disappeared.").

b. Find Out Why You Have These Fears.

(List fears individually, pray about each one, seek the counsel of a wise friend).

c. Affirm Constantly Your Faith IN Jesus' Power to Overcome Your Fears.

- (1) Remember the Victory over Fear which was won at Calvary.
- (2) Relax, let go of your fears, and let God constantly fill you with His Power and Poise.

d. Practice Faith Every Day in Order to Defeat Your Fears

- (1) Make Faith Affirmations during difficult circumstances such as – Philippians 4:13 and Ephesians 3:20.
- (2) Faith Meditations – Read the Bible underlining in red pencil every statement relative to courage and confidence and memorize these verses.
- (3) Faith Prayers – Stretch your faith a little every day by asking God for a few things that seem impossible.
- (4) Faith Associations – Be around people whose faith is strong, and your faith will become stronger (strong argument for faithful Church attendance).
- (5) Faith Actions and Projects – 'Faith in Action' is 'God in Action'. To see God work miracles through your life will make your faith grow by 'leaps and bounds.'

CONQUERING MAN'S GREATEST FEARS

I. FEAR AND FAITH CONCERNING FAILURE

- A. Seriousness of Fear of Failure – “More people than might be supposed are deeply troubled by the fear of failure. It is a dangerous fear to have working against you, for it can cause the personality to freeze and therefore induce the very failure you fear.” (Overcoming Anxiety and Fear; Peal 25)
- B. Effective Use of Failure
 - 1. Failure in some form comes to everyone.
 - 2. Eventual success many times comes because one uses his failures as spurs to greater effort rather than an snares of despair.
 - 3.
- C. Overcoming Fear of Failure
 - 1. Consistent involvement will not only reduce the fear but bring the hopes of success closer and closer to reality. (“Honestly admit your fear and then act as though you were unafraid – and with the help of God go on and do your job with total neglect of fear.” (Peale; Ibid; 28)
 - 2.
 - 3. Failure or success must not be the main consideration in confronting a task, but rather faithfulness to God’s call.
 - (a) Illustration: Many missionaries have labored hard and long with little numerical or ‘worldly’ success, but faithfulness to God’s call was honored.
 - (b) By the world’s standards, Jesus was a failure – rejected by His own people, crucified on a shameful cross – and yet Jesus was faithful to His call (John 9:4) and was the most successful person who has ever lived.
 - 4. “Suppose you should fail. Is that so terrible? Not to have tried is a worse failure.” (Abundant Living; pg. 82)

II. FEAR AND FAITH CONCERNING THE UNKNOWN FUTURE

- A. Possible Advantages of an ‘Unknown’ Future
 - 1. Keeps us from being complacent regarding effort and terrified regarding problems.
 - 2. Enables us to exercise faith in God while legitimately planning for the future. (Allows us to choose between worry or trust in making decisions regarding the future).

B. Proper Attitude In Facing an 'Unknown' Future

1. Christian must exercise faith in:
 - a. God's Love – 'God wants what is best for us'.
 - b. God's Wisdom – 'God knows what is best for us'.
 - c. God's Power – 'God is able to give what is best for us.'
(Note: Remember, God never causes His children needless tears, and that God is Sovereign – Romans 8:28)
 - d. Christian must allow the Spirit to work in his life, to:
 - e. Embolden the fearful (II Timothy 1:7)
 - f. Empower the weak (Philippians 4:13)
 - g. Infill the loveless (Romans 5:5) – the more one becomes preoccupied with others, the less one is fearful of future.
 - d. Instill with wisdom. (God will give the needed wisdom to meet the crisis of the future.)
2. Christian must act with confidence, living life to the fullest today, and planning reasonably for tomorrow. Don't borrow from tomorrow. Divide and conquer by taking one day at a time (Matthew 6:34).
3. Close each day thanking God for that day and open each new day with a prayer for guidance (Praise and confidence drives away fears).

III. FEAR AND FAITH CONCERNING DEATH

- A. Motivations For Conquering Fear of Death
 1. The Resurrection of Christ demonstrates the truthfulness of Christ's promise: "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me...shall never die.
 2. To fear death then is a type of atheism – showing a lack of faith in the God who has proven that He has vanquished death.
- B.
- C. Method For Conquering Fear of Death – Building up faith in God from day to day prepares one to meet emergencies with faith and calm.

CHAPTER 33
“THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE”

CHAPTER 33

“THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE”

TEXT: *“Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! It is amazing to think about. Your workmanship is marvelous – and how well I know it. You were there while I was being formed in utter seclusion! You saw me before I was born and scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe. Every day was recorded in your Book! How precious it is, Lord, to realize that you are thinking about me constantly! I can’t even count how many times a day your thoughts turn towards me. And when I waken in the morning, you are still thinking of me!” Psalms 13:14-18*

INTRODUCTION:

Does human life have any value? Is man more than dust, more than 160 pounds of muscle and fat and bone and fluid? Is man more than a small speck living on an insignificant planet in the vast universe, lost in space?

Slander against humanity is committed often by atheistic philosophers, such as the one who stated that man is “a boisterous bit of the organic scum on one small planet.” The one who has lost faith in a loving Creator is the one who has also lost faith in the dignity of man and the ‘Sanctity of Life’! To such a person, human life has little value. It has been pointed out many times by perceptive minds that technology demotes persons. Arnold Toynbee once noted that technology puts persons “into serial numbers punched on a card, designed to travel through the entrails of a computer.” Desmond Morris tells us that humans are nothing but animals, and B. F. Skinner, a behaviorist, believed that humans were nothing more than machines, programmed to make automatic responses to external stimuli. Is it any wonder that many people today feel that they are worthless nonentities?

When one thinks about the ‘Sanctity of Life’ – especially on the ‘Sanctity of Life Sunday’ – he thinks of the abortion issue in our American Society. And rightfully so, when one realizes that about one and one-half million babies are aborted each year in America! This is an atrocity that almost defies understanding and comprehension! A silent holocaust! Doubtless, the abortion problem is the number one moral problem in America today, even though we must admit that there are many other most serious moral problems which cannot be ignored.

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

Some people are very sensitive to the abortion issue (the 'Right-to-Life' issue) and rightly so, but some of these same people need to be sensitive to other important moral issues as well, all having to do with the concept of 'Sanctity of Life'. Many issues relate to the sacred view toward life, a proper respect for the human body. What are a few of those important issues, beyond the obvious issue of abortion? Issues such as (1) the alcohol issue which is critical, (2) the drug issue which is most serious, (3) the tobacco issue which has been especially clarified by science since the surgeon general's report in 1964, and magnified in recent years, (4) the race issue which has come to the forefront anew during the last decade, (5) the sex equality (gender) issue which continues to evoke considerable public debate, (6) the so-called 'New Morality' which is really the old immorality in modern garb, and (7) the pornography issue which is a threat to common decency in our society.

It is important, especially for Christians, in considering the general theme of 'Sanctity of Human Life' (and the stewardship of the physical body), not to become lop-sided moralists who strongly contend for justice in one area of morality, but who are oblivious or indifferent to many other equally intolerable injustices and moral evils which are destroying the very foundation of public decency.

To avoid becoming mere moralists, and to assure ourselves that we are Biblically –oriented, it is important that we embrace a total view of life and recognize that the foundation for all true respect for human life is found in our personal acceptance of the God of the Bible who is best known through a personal relationship with His Son, Jesus Christ. Knowing Christ will assure one that he discovers the beauty of human life – for Christ said that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

PROPOSITION:

It is in the Bible that we learn of God's high regard for human beings! The sanctity of life – and thus the basis of all genuine human freedom – is founded in the Biblical concept of Man! There are several principles in the Bible that reveal God's respect for human life.

I. CREATION OF MANKIND

Genesis 1:26, 27 says, "*Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*"

Notes Malcolm Muggeride, "In Christian terms every single human being, whoever he or she may be, sick or well, clever or foolish, beautiful or ugly, every single human being is loved of his Creator, who has, as the Gospels tell us, counted the hairs of his head. This Creator cannot see even a sparrow fall to the ground without concern. Now it is from that concept that our rights derive... These basic human rights depend ultimately on the Christian concept of man and of his relationship to his Creator." (The End of Christendom; pg. 19.)

The Bible says, "*God giveth to all life, and breath, and all things. For in God we live, and move and have our being.*" (Acts 17:28)

God is the Creator of all persons. God loves all persons alike. As the Author of life, God alone has the right to terminate the life of one of His creatures. Life is equally sacred to God, whether it be in the jungles of Africa or whether it be in the concrete jungles of New York City, whether it be life within the body of an 80 year old man or whether it be life that is surging in the body of an unborn baby.

Each person is special because each person was specially formed by God for a special purpose! Declares David, *“You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body, and knit them together in my mother’s womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! It is amazing to think about. Your workmanship is marvelous – and how well I know it. You were there while I was being formed in utter seclusion! You saw me before I was born and scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe. Every day was recorded in your Book! How precious it is, Lord, to realize that you are thinking about me constantly! I can’t even count how many times a day your thoughts turn toward me. And when I waken in the morning, you are still thinking of me!”* (Psalms 139:13-18, Living Bible)

“God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshiped with men’s hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation. For in him we live, and move and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have =said. For we are also his offspring.” (Acts 17:24-26, 28)

Does a doctor or a consenting parent have any moral right to kill any of God’s unborn offspring?

When we read v. 2b (*he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things,*” it reminds us of the Old Testament passage where Job said: *“The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” It is the Lord who gives us breath.*

This passage further teaches us that all nations of people are of one blood, that is, all life is equally important to God, be it life with black, red, yellow, or white skin. Life is equally sacred to God, be it in starving Africa, or be it in metropolitan New York, or be it the life that is surging within the body of an 80 year old or life that is surging in the body of an unborn baby.

The Bible considers blood to be the very essence of life, and the Bible forbids the shedding of human blood.

V. INCARNATION PRINCIPLE

Perhaps the most important verse of the New Testament is John 1:14, *“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; and we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.”*

Notes E. Stanley Jones: *“This verse – ‘the Word Became Flesh’ – is the Great Divide. In all other religions it is Word became word – a philosophy, a moralism, a system, a technique, but for all time and all men everywhere, ‘the Word became flesh’ – the Idea became Fact.”* (Word Became Flesh; pg. 5)

Notes William Barclay: *“Augustine afterwards said that in his pre-Christian days he had read and studied the great pagan philosophers and their writings, but he had never read that ‘the Word Became Flesh’. The one thing that no Greek would ever have dreamed of was that God could take a body. To the Greek, the body was an evil, a prison-house in which the soul was shackled, a tomb in which the spirit was confined. The great Roman stoic Emperor, Marcus Aurelius,, said ‘Despise the flesh; blood and bones are net-work, a twisted skein of nerves and veins and arteries;’ ‘the composition of the whole body is under corruption.’”* (John Commentary)

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

Notes Jones: “And yet, in the face of all that – the highest thought of the day – the Gospel quietly says: ‘And the Word became flesh.’” (Ibid; pg. 8)

The greatest fact of human history is the fact that God became a man, embodying Himself in human flesh. The human form was deity stamped upon it, and should never be degraded.

Why does Christianity teach that human life is sacred and that man’s claim to certain ‘inalienable rights’ is justifiable? Because of man’s unique creation, as we have noted! Also because of God’s special regard for human life as shown in the fact that God embodied himself in a human form! “*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth: and we beheld his glory, glory as if the only Son from the Father.*” (John 1:14) God reflected his glory in His Son – not only in heaven but on earth – in a bodily, physical, earthly form! God did not look upon the human race as untouchable. Far from it, for ‘He dwelt among us’, laughing loving, longing, languishing with us humans! God has forever sanctified human life and invested dignity in the human race when He became a man in the form of His Son, Jesus Christ! Jesus is ‘God with us’ – Immanuel – imparting value to an otherwise valueless human existence. The great fact of human history is the fact that this planet is a visited planet – visited not merely by angels in spirit form, but visited by the Creator Himself in bodily form! God became a man, embodying himself in human flesh! This fact alone forever establishes the truth of the “sanctity of human life”. The human form, the result of God’s special creation according to Genesis, is the very same form that God chose to live in for 33 years! Therefore, if the human form is a specially created form, and if it is the very form that God chose to embody Himself in while living on earth, what institution, or law, or nation, or individual has a right to destroy that human form? Life is sacred because of the fact of the Incarnation!

Does Christianity really teach that the human body is sacred and that human beings therefore have dignity? Yes! Christianity, in its early days, confronted a heresy called Gnosticism, which asserted that human flesh was evil and profane, and therefore to be despised. This heresy contended that, because the human body was evil and God is altogether good, God therefore could not have anything to do with human flesh. They concluded, on the basis of this erroneous logic, that Jesus did not really have a human body, but that he only appeared to have one. They believed that Jesus was not a real human being, but only some phantom or ghost-like being.

The book of 1st John was written to refute the heresy of Gnosticism, and to prove that Jesus was not only God, but that He indeed was truly man, with a real physical body. “Christ was alive when the world began, and I myself have seen him with my own eyes and listened to him speak; I have touched him with my own hands. He is God’s message of life.” (1st John 1:1)

While the ancient world philosophically and practically disregarded the human body at best as of little consequence, and at worst, as an evil network to be despised, Christianity clearly taught that the body is the ‘Temple of the Holy Spirit’.

However, while the New Testament highly regards the human body, the New Testament seldom views the body as a separate entity. The New Testament usually speaks of human life in its totality, including the spiritual and psychological elements of life, as well as the physical element.

On one hand, the New Testament refutes the cynical modern-day contention of some chemists, and philosophical humanists who contend that man is merely a chemically and psychologically determined animal. On the other hand, the New Testament nowhere exhorts man to worship the body or to consider it as the most important feature of human life. Christ calls us to a holistic view of life, teaching us to value all of

life – body, soul, and spirit – with all of the God-sanctioned expressions of these divinely created capacities.

VI. COMPASSIONATE LIFE OF JESUS

To the extent that a person truly seeks to be Godlike – i.e., more particularly, Christlike, to that same extent will he learn to cherish fellow human beings. Christ's responses and attitudes toward people, as He lived and moved among individuals and among the crowds in Palestine, is the model for the followers of Christ to imitate. Christ truly loved people, and so must we, if we are to be truly human.

John Stott gives us a brief, but vivid, picture of Christ's compassionate attitudes towards human beings. Notes Stott, "It is true that he drew attention to the evil and ugly things which issue from the human heart. (Mark 7:21-23) He also spoke, however, of the 'value' of human beings in God's sight. They are 'much more valuable' than birds of beasts, he said. What was the ground of this value judgment? It must have been the doctrine of creation, which Jesus took over from the Old Testament, namely that human beings are the crown of God's creative activity, and that he made man male and female in his own image. It is the divine image we bear which gives us our distinctive value. He despised nobody and disowned nobody. On the contrary, he went out of his way to honor those whom the world dishonored, and to accept those whom the world rejected. He spoke courteously to women in public; He invited little children to come to him. He spoke words of hope to Samaritans and Gentiles. He allowed leprosy sufferers to approach him, and a prostitute to anoint and kiss his feet. He made friends with the outcasts of society, and ministered to the poor and hungry. In all this diversified ministry his compassionate respect for human beings shone forth. He acknowledged their value and loved them, and by loving them he further increased their value."

Jesus life of compassion is seen, not only in His practical acts of love for the multitudes (such as His feeding of the thousands who were hungry as a result of their listening to Jesus' teachings for several hours, (Matthew 14:15-21), but also in Jesus' personable love as He singled out persons for special attention to individualized needs. In the midst of a crowd, Jesus singled out Zacchaeus in order to bring personal salvation to him and to his household (Luke 19:1-10). In the midst of a crowd, Jesus singled out one solitary woman whose body had been amazingly healed as a result of her having touched the hem of Jesus' garment (Matthew 9:20-22). In the midst of a crowd of people who were focused on Jesus, an overlooked and despised blind man became the object of Jesus' attention and healing power. Jesus was very concerned with the masses of humanity, and He had great compassion in His heart for these large crowds of people, for Jesus saw them as 'sheep without a shepherd.' Jesus taught the multitudes and He distributed bread to the multitudes, and large groups of people often followed Him. But Jesus never was awestruck by the crowds, and He was never too busy to give His attention to individuals or to small groups of needy folks. Jesus always upheld the dignity of the individual person!

Notes William Sangster, "The ordinary man, when he thinks at all, is half-paralyzed at the thought that he does not matter. The world is run, he believes by 'high-ups'. For all the lip service paid to him by politicians, he feels that he is just 'one of the masses'. He suspects that he is planned for, planned on, and planned over, but not treated as a person. He feels, at times, less than a pawn in a game played over his head by the people in authority and he awaits the next crisis, or the next depression, or the next war, powerless himself to put it off. The evangelist treats him as a person; assures him that he is dear to God – dear enough to shed the precious blood. He is, so the preacher affirms, so intimately known to God that the hairs of his head are all numbered, and God has set such store on winning his love that He gives His own Son for the gift of a sinner's heart. If he will trust God for it, new life will flow into him – the life of God. It is wonderful for a 'mass-man' to become an individual; a person 'Meeting' with God does it. Cardinal Newman knew, in the hour of his conversion, 'two and two only absolutely and luminously self-

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evident beings myself and my Creator'. Luther knew it. He said 'It is the personal pronouns that matter'. In an age of personal futility, the evangelist has a sovereign opportunity so to offer the life of God to people that futility will vanish in conscious effectiveness, and each new-born soul know himself a person in the sight of his Maker.'" (Daily Readings; pg. 184)

Jesus loved not only the souls of persons, and thus emphasized their need for repentance of sin resulting in forgiveness and eternal life, but Jesus was also very concerned for persons whose bodies were racked with pain wasting away because of a variety of diseases. It is true that Jesus' primary ministry was to seek and to save the lost ones, but it was also Jesus' mission on earth to heal the sick and to feed the hungry. Jesus saw persons from a 'holistic' viewpoint, with physical, mental, emotional, and social needs, which needed to be met, as well as spiritual needs, which needed to be supplied. As the Great Physician, Jesus gave much time and effort in restoring sick and crippled bodies, as well as in saving lost souls. If Jesus cared so much for physical suffering, should not every earnest believer today be concerned, in the name of Christian Compassion, in ministering physical cures to hurting bodies, as well as declaring the Good News of Salvation to lost souls? If the physical body was so important to Jesus, as seen by the large amount of time which He gave to this involvement in His public ministry, should not every believer today give much attention to the physical bodies of the multitudes of sufferers throughout our disease-ridden world (especially among the masses in many poor countries)? It is not "Either-Or", but "Both-And" – i.e., "both salvation of the lost soul and healing of the sick and diseased body."

VII. JESUS' ATONING DEATH

The fact that Jesus died for mankind should forever elevate human dignity. Man wallowing in sin has lost his dignity. Man redeemed from sin has regained his dignity! The vilest of sinners is important to God, for every sinner has the potential of sainthood! Because Christ died for all, all have infinite value!

William Temple said, "My worth is what I am worth to God; and that is a marvelous great deal, for Christ died for me."

Regardless of his physical, mental, moral, or spiritual condition, every man has value and dignity! Why? No man can be called valueless for whom Christ died! Because Christ died for all, none is beyond hope! None are unlovable! None are unredeemable! Because the most valuable person in the universe died for sinners, no sinner is without hope! All can be saved! Man's dignity is not based upon his moral performance, or upon his utilitarian value. Man's dignity and worth is based upon the fact that he is a creature who has been redeemed by the blood of the Saviour.

Christ redeems one powerfully in order to use him productively! "Whatever Christ touched He dignified, and no matter how despised a person or creature may be, Christ has a use for him. No matter how ordinary, ill-educated, disfigured, ill-born, one-talented or obscure, a man or woman may be, Christ has a use for them, and He gives them dignity by that use." (Sangster's Daily Readings; pg. 85)

The same night in which Jesus was betrayed, He took bread, "*and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me.*" (I Corinthians 11:24)

This is another principle in the New Testament, which emphasizes the sacredness of the Human Body. The fact that Jesus' death (which was the death of the body) was the instrument of eternal Redemption for mankind, forever teaches that the human body cannot be carelessly dealt with.

VIII. PRINCIPLE OF THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE HUMAN BODY

One result of the teaching of Gnosticism was a careless disregard for the use of the body, and an excessive indulgence of the body in acts of gross immorality. The Gnostics reasoned that the soul of man was good but the body was evil, and therefore one could indulge the body in lustful acts and leave the soul untouched and unharmed and unpolluted in the process.

Paul refuted this heresy and contended that the body is the vehicle of expression of the soul and that the action of the body vitally affects the soul. *"Sexual sin is never right; our bodies were not made for that, but for the Lord, and the Lord wants to fill our bodies with himself.. Don't you realize that your bodies are actually parts and members of Christ? So should I take part of Christ and join him to a prostitute? Never! And don't you know that if a man joins himself to a prostitute she becomes a part of him and he becomes a part of her? For God tells us in the Scripture that in his sight the two become one person. But if you give yourself to the Lord, you and Christ are joined together as one person ... That is why I say to run from sex sin. No other sin affects the body as this one does. When you sin this sin it is against your own body. Haven't you yet learned that your body is the home of the Holy Spirit God gave you with a great price. So use every part of your body to give glory back to God, because he owns it."* (I Corinthians 6:13b, 15-20)

From a quick look at I Corinthians 6:13-20, we may learn some basic and important truths:

- (1) Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit (note verses 13, 19).
- (2) Our bodies are not to be abused. Examples of abusive use of the body are overeating and sexual immorality (notes verses 13,15-18) Obvious other abuses of the body include destroying the body with the use of drugs and alcohol and tobacco. Failure properly to exercise the body and failure to give the body proper rest and sleep are other examples of body abuse. Killing one's own body -suicide - is out of the question! It is never right, and is never a Christian option. Killing other bodies - murder and abortion - obviously are always wrong.

Let's expand on this second point a little. The Bible warns believers against the dangers of both sensualism and hedonism.

Sensualism is worship of sex. Remember, God created human beings, male and female, and God intends for His wonderful gift of sex to be enjoyed by the totally committed Christian couple within the sole context of marriage. It is not sex itself that is sinful; it is the abuse of sex that is sinful. Sex, properly used, is for procreation - to bring children into the world - and for marital pleasure and for communication of marital love. Sex outside of marriage or before marriage or selfishly within marriage is to abuse one of God's choicest and most beautiful gifts.

Wrote Paul, *"That is why I say to run from sex sin.No other sin affects the body as this one does. When you sin this sin it is against your own body."* (I Corinthians 6:18, Living Bible) Wrote the apostle Paul to young Timothy, *"Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart."* (2 Timothy 2:22)

Now let us look at Hedonism. Hedonism is the worship of pleasure. Never forget that sin is always an abuse of one of God's gifts, an evil perversion of something that is good. Pleasure is a gift from God. The Bible says that God has given us all things richly to enjoy. There are eternal pleasures for those who serve the Lord. It is the Father's good

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pleasure to give His children the joys and riches of His Kingdom. It is the joy of the Lord which is our strength. For the believer, there is a joy which is unspeakable, and full of glory. Yes, pleasure is a gift from God. But when people become pleasure-obsessed rather than God-obsessed, then pleasure is turned into a false god to be worshiped rather than as a gift from the true God to be enjoyed. Pleasure and joy are by-products which come to the one whose main concern in life is to please God. The Bible speaks of those who are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. " When people make pleasure their main goal in life, they have turned pleasure into a god to be worshiped. Thus, they become hedonists. The Bible speaks of those "whose god is their stomach."

Satisfaction of physical pleasures -like eating food - becomes more important to them than worshipping the true and living God. Again, remember Paul's words to the Corinthian Christians:"Take the matter of eating. God has given us an appetite for food and stomachs to digest it. But that doesn't mean we should eat more than we need Don't think of eating as important, because some day God will do away with both stomachs and food." (I Corinthians 6:13; Living Bible)

- (3) Our bodies are to be used in such a way that God receives honor and glory. "For God has bought you with a great price. So use every part of your body to give glory back to God, because he owns it." (I Corinthians 6:20, Living Bible) Keeping our bodies strong and our minds alert brings glory to God. We are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God. "And so, dear brothers, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living sacrifice, holy - the kind he can accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask?" (Romans 12:1; Living Bible)
- (4) Our bodies are temporary, subject to decay and to death. God will eventually do away with our bodies. Therefore, it stands to reason, that no one is ever to worship the human body. Respect and care for the body -yes!

Worship of the body - never! Our focus of attention in life, therefore, should not be on our dying bodies, but on our never-dying souls. Wrote Paul to young Timothy, "Bodily exercise is all right, but spiritual exercise is much more important and is a tonic for all you do. So exercise yourself spiritually and practice being a better Christian, because that will help you not only now in this life, but in the next life too. (I Timothy 4:8, Living Bible) Our primary focus must be on the spiritual dimensions of life , and only secondarily on the physical and material dimensions of life. With all of our modern-day emphasis on sports and physical exercise (body building) and dieting (losing weight), let us never neglect our spiritual exercising (meditation on the Word and Prayer and Worship and Compassionate Involvement).

- (5) "God is going to raise our bodies from the dead by His power just as He raised up the Lord Jesus Christ. (I Corinthians 6:14, Living Bible) Physical death does not end it all. God will give Christians a new body - a resurrected body - which is deathless, incorruptible, identifiable, perfectly healthy, and patterned after Christ's resurrected body!

IX. PRINCIPLE OF THE SUPREME LAW OF LOVE

"Pay all your debts except the debt of love for others - never finish paying that! For if you love them, you will be obeying all of God's laws, fulfilling all his requirements. If you love your neighbor as much as you love yourself you will not want to harm or cheat him or kill him or steal from him. And you won't sin

with his wife or want what is his, or do anything else the Ten Commandments say is wrong. All ten are wrapped up in this one, to love your neighbor as you love yourself. Love does no wrong to anyone. That's why it fully satisfies all of God's requirements. It is the only law you need." (Romans 13:8-10) This Scripture shows that love is not a mere sentiment but right actions towards other human beings. Is taking the life of an unborn baby consistent with a life of love?

VII. PRINCIPLE OF LOVE AS COMPASSIONATE ACTION TOWARDS THE HELPLESS AND NEEDY

"But if someone who is supposed to be a Christian has money enough to live well, and sees a brother in need, and won't help him - how can God's love be within him? Little children (Christians), let us stop just saying we love people; let us really love them, and show it by our actions. Then we will know for sure by our actions, that we are on God's side, and our consciences will be clear, even when we stand before the Lord." (I John 3:17-19) One who takes the life of an unborn child will have to question if his actions are consistent with love, and such a doctor or consenting parent who is connected with abortion will have to contend with a guilty conscience eventually.

Wrote James: *"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man says he hath faith and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body: what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."* (James 2:14-17)

Compassionate action toward fellow men is the standard for righteousness. Again, these Scriptures show that the human body is important and worthy of being rescued from death - be it starvation which is explicitly stated, or be it an unborn child which is implied from the principle.

VIII. PRINCIPLE OF THE GOLDEN RULE

"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that man should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." (Matthew 7:12)

Writes Barclay: "This saying is the topmost peak of social ethics, and the Everest of all ethical teaching. It is possible to quote rabbinic parallels for almost everything that Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount; but there is no real parallel to this saying. This is something which had never been said before. It is new teaching, and a new view of life and of life's obligations .. it is not difficult to find many parallels to this saying in its negative form ... The negative form of the rule involves nothing more than NOT doing certain things; it means refraining from certain actions. It is never very difficult NOT to do things .. It is one thing to say, 'I must not injure people; I must not do to them what I would object to their doing to me.' That, the law can compel us to do. It is quite another thing to say, 'I must go out of my way to help other people and to be kind to them, as I would wish them to help and to be kind to me.'" (Barclay's Matthew pg. 278-280) Even stated negatively, the Golden Rule of the Jews would forbid the taking of another life, yea, even that of an unborn baby. How much more then does the positively stated Golden Rule of Jesus forbid the taking of human life - born or unborn? Would the doctor who aborts an unborn child without that unborn child's consent, have wanted his own life aborted before his own birth? The Golden Rule of Jesus has much to say about the proper and respectful treatment of other people, including unborn babies!

IX. PRINCIPLE OF ACCOUNTABILITY FOR DEEDS DONE IN THE HUMAN BODY

"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those

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that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Romans 6:12-13) The body is either the instrument of sin or the instrument of righteousness. The body is the vehicle of expression of morally accountable actions. God is sovereign over life and death. Whatever a man sows, he must reap. Judgment for sin is found in sin's harvest - namely, a life plagued with guilt and separated from fellowship with the Creator.

One does not really break the Laws of God; the Laws break the offender. He who ignores the objective, absolute Laws of God regarding the sanctity of life, and becomes a law unto himself, not only hurts the innocent, but reaps God's judgment.

Those who arbitrarily or selfishly decide to end the life of an unborn child are operating their lives upon a subjective, relative ethic rather than the objective, absolute Biblical ethic. In the time of the Judges (of the Old Testament) it is said that "Everyone did that which was right in his own eyes." Those people reaped the judgment of God then, and surely people today who operate with this relative ethic will also reap the judgment of God. For God, the Author of Life, is alone to decide in the issues of life and death. God alone has the right to terminate human life. Because life is sacred to God, life must be sacred to man. The whole message of the New Testament is the message of Salvation of man - including the healing of the body and the cleansing and restoration of the soul. Anyone who does not value all life and does not seek to save it, is challenging the very values of Almighty God and is in danger of severe punishment. Man is accountable directly to God for the way he handles human life.

X. PRINCIPLE OF THE BODILY RESURRECTION OF JESUS AND THE SUBSEQUENT RESURRECTION OF THE BODY OF TRUE BELIEVERS.

"The resurrection of Jesus was bodily, and it is not to be confused with the widely-held doctrine of immortality of soul. It is fashionable today in some scholarly circles to disassociate the resurrection from anything involving the body of Jesus. This is a misuse of terms, for the concept of resurrection implies body. In fact, it is redundant to say, 'Bodily Resurrection'. That is like saying 'Widow woman'. When one says 'resurrection', he has already implied 'Body'. The concept of an immortal soul, separate from the body, is a pagan idea, traceable back to pagan religions, centuries before Jesus. This is one fallacy refuted in John's Gospel." (Dr. Frank Stagg; Prof Of New Testament Interpretation at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary at Louisville, Kentucky).

The fact of the Resurrection conclusively establishes God's positive attitude toward the human body. God is forever identified with humanity through the resurrection body. If God thinks so much of the human body that He raised Jesus' dead body to life, then what man has a right to think so little of the unborn human body to kill it?

The unborn babe is a body, mind, and soul with infinite possibilities, and to kill it is to kill God's potential, and indeed, to play the role of God!

I Corinthians 6:14 says: "*And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.*" If the human body is so important that God will resurrect the body of every believer in the future, then what right has anyone to destroy the body of a person - especially the body of an unborn immortal babe?

CONCLUSION:

Man derives his value from God. God has shown in His mighty acts that He highly regards man. It is now time for us all to be reminded that all of life, as God has created it, is precious and is to be cherished. A

young American black man, rebelling against the inferiority feelings inculcated in him by some white persons, wrote these words on a banner which he displayed in his room: "I'm Me and I'm good, 'cause God don't make junk!"

In his amazing article entitled 'The Weight of Glory', C. S. Lewis notes, "There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations - these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is civilizations - these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals, whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit - immortal horrors or everlasting splendors. This does not mean that we are to be perpetually solemn. We must play. But our merriment must be of that kind (and it is, in fact, the merriest kind) which exists between people who have, from the outset, taken each other seriously - no flippancy, no superiority, no presumption. And our charity must be a real and costly love, with deep feeling for the sins in spite of which we love the sinner - no mere tolerance, or indulgence which parodies love as flippancy parodies merriment. Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbor is the holiest object presented to your senses. If he is your Christian neighbor he is holy in almost the same way, for in him Christ - the glorifier and the glorified, Glory Himself - is truly hidden."

"To the masses of the western world the news that all men are more than things was proclaimed by the Christian gospel and was celebrated in its central mysteries. It proclaimed the news to all men that they were not brute things, to all men without exception, the weak, the outcast, the downtrodden, the enslaved, and the utterly dejected. The influence of that gospel has been inexhaustible. It anchored the rights of men in the structure of the universe. It set these rights apart where they were beyond human interference. Thus the pretensions of despots become heretical. And since that revelation, though many despots have had the blessings of the clergy, no tyranny has possessed a clear title before the tribunal of human conscience, no slave has had to feel that the hope of freedom was forever forciosed. For in the recognition that there is in each man a final essence - that is to say, an immortal soul- which only God can judge, a limit was set upon the dominion of men over men. The prerogatives of supremacy were radically undermined, the inviolability of the human person was declared." (By Walter Lippmann in 'The Good Society'; quoted by George Roche in 'One by One'; pg. 208)

CHAPTER 34

***“OUR GOD IS ABLE – TO RESTORE
THE FALLEN!”***

CHAPTER 34

“OUR GOD IS ABLE – TO RESTORE THE FALLEN!”

SCRIPTURE: “¹ My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ² He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. (I John 2:1-2)

INTRODUCTION:

Is it necessary for a believer to yield to temptation? The simple and important answer to that question is ‘NO’. Jesus ‘suffered being tempted’, and yet He never once sinned! Hebrews2:18 states: “*For since He (Jesus) himself has now been through suffering and temptation, He knows what it is like when we suffer and are tempted, and he is wonderfully able to help us.*” (Living Bible)

God promises to help us during temptation. “*And no temptation is irresistible. You can trust God to keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can’t stand up against it, for he has promised this and will do what he says. He will show you how to escape temptation’s power so that you can bear up patiently against it.*” (I Corinthians 10:13, Living Bible)

As believers, we need never to yield to temptation. We can say ‘NO’ to Satan’s allurements. Because God controls even the temptations that beset us, every believer can handle temptation. God is strong, able, and willing to help every believer during his times of moral struggle and spiritual warfare. Jesus has already won the battle on Mount Calvary, and the power that raised Christ from the dead is the same power that is available to give Christians victory over temptation. We do not work for a victory; we work from a victory. The victory belongs to Jesus, and each believer has a right and a responsibility personally to appropriate that historic victory as his own personal victory.

Great is God’s protection of his trusting children. “*The Lord is faithful; he will make you strong and guard you from satanic attacks of every kind.*” (II Thessalonians 3:3, Living Bible) “*He is able to keep you from slipping and falling away, and to bring you, sinless and perfect, into his glorious presence with mighty shouts of everlasting joy. Amen.*” (Jude 24, Living Bible)

"The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to its foes;

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That soul, though all hell shall endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no, never, no, never forsake."

(How Firm A Foundation)

"And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us:
The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him;

His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure,
One little word shall fell him."

(A Mighty Fortress Is Our God)

Yes, Jesus has come to save us from our sins (Matthew 2:21) – not in our sins. John wrote, *"My children, in writing these to you my purpose is that you should not commit sin."* (I John 2:1, NEB) "So victory over temptation should be the norm. Nothing below this is healthy. Even so, we do sometimes fail. We get careless, we stealthily lessen our trust in God, and we let a spirit of disobedience bewitch us. Suddenly, we have yielded to temptation and are filled with sorrow." (A Faith To Grow By Donald Bastian; pgs. 42, 43)

PROPOSITION:

As long as a believer is in this fallen world, there are many perils to avoid and many temptations to resist. But if a believer fails and falls spiritually, God does not abandon that fallen believer. There is hope for recovery. The fallen may rise again!

I. POSSIBILITY OF SPIRITUAL FAILURE

Does Jesus care when I've tried and failed
To resist some temptation strong;
When for my deep grief there is no relief,
Though my tears flow all the night long?

Oh yes, He cares, I know He cares,
His heart is touched with my grief;
When the days are weary, the long nights dreary,
I know my Savior cares.

Does Jesus Care?

(By FRANK ELLSWORTH GRAEFF)

Have you ever failed morally, spiritually, or socially, and after your failure wondered if God still cared for you? Have you ever felt so guilty that you had a hard time thinking that you could never love yourself again? Have you ever had a hard time looking at yourself in the mirror after you did, said, or thought something that was ignoble? Have you ever had an experience when you felt, like Simon Peter, that you had denied your Lord? "The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: *'Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.'* And he went outside and wept bitterly." (Luke 22:61, 62)

He who climbs the highest, may fall the hardest. Jesus warned us to watch and to pray, lest we fall into temptation. He said that the spirit of man is willing but that the flesh is weak. Everyone is vulnerable at one time or another. Wrote Paul to the overly confident Corinthian believers: *“So let the man who feels sure of his standing today be careful that he does not fall tomorrow.”* (I Corinthians 10:12; Phillips)

What happens when one does fall on his face spiritually? Does God care for people who miserably fail?

It is interesting that the Bible records the failures of its heroes. “Noah got drunk, Moses got angry, and Gideon got scared. Peter could be inconsistent, Paul was inconsiderate, Thomas doubted, Martha pouted. But God dealt with them and used every one of them for His glory and for our blessing.” (What Happens When Life Doesn’t?, Briscoe; pg. 136)

There are many perils along life’s way - perils against which every believer must constantly guard! Jesus talked about the peril of an unforgiving spirit. Said Jesus, *“For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”* (Matthew 6:14-15)

There are also the perils of false teachers who seek to deceive believers. Said Jesus: *“Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Christ’, and will deceive many.”* (Matthew 24:4-5)

There is the peril of temptation, which assails the believer during times of weakness. Said Jesus *“Watch and pray that ye enter not into the temptations; the spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak.”*

There is the peril of murmuring and ingratitude. Wrote Paul, *“And don’t murmur against God and his dealings with you, as some of them (the ancient Israelites) did, for that is why God sent his angel to destroy them. All these things happened to them as examples – as object lessons to us – to warn us against doing the same things; they were written down so that we could read about them and learn from them in these last days as the world nears its end. So be careful. If you are thinking, ‘Oh, I would never behave like that’ – let this be a warning to you. For you too may fall into sin.”* (I Corinthians 10:10-12)

There is the peril of money. Wrote Paul *“For the love of money is the first step toward all kinds of sin. Some people have even turned away from God because of their love of money for it, and as a result have pierced themselves with many sorrows.”* (I Timothy 6:10; Living Bible)

There is the peril of bitterness against which believers must always guard. *“Look after each other so that not one of you will fail to find God’s best blessings. Watch out that no bitterness takes root among you, for as it springs up it causes deep trouble, hurting many in their spiritual lives.”* (Hebrews 12:15)

There is the peril of spiritual neglect and drifting. Wrote the author of Hebrews, *“So listen very carefully to the truths we have heard, or we may drift away from them. For since the messages from angels have already proved true and people have always been punished for disobeying them, what makes us think that we can escape if we are indifferent to this great salvation announced by the Lord Jesus himself, and passed on to us by those who heard him speak?”* (Hebrews 2:1-3; Living Bible)

There is the peril of false teachers and false teaching. Wrote Paul to Timothy, *“The Holy Spirit tells us clearly that in the last times some in the Church will turn away from Christ and become eager followers of teachers with devil-inspired ideas.”* (I Timothy 4:1; Living Bible)

There is the peril of rejecting the dictates of a God-sensitized conscience. Paul wrote to Timothy, *“Cling tightly to your faith in Christ and always keep your conscience clear, doing what you know is right. For*

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some people have disobeyed their consciences and have deliberately done what they knew was wrong. It isn't surprising that soon they lost their faith in Christ after defying God like that." (I Timothy 1:19; Living Bible)

These are just some of the perils against which every sincere believer must guard. It is possible for a Christian to enjoy consistent spiritual victory. However, it is also true to say that many believers 'slip and fall' spiritually.

II. PROVISION FOR SPIRITUAL FAILURE

Our God is able to heal the broken-hearted. Our God is able to restore the fallen, to reclaim the lost, to revive the fainting, to strengthen the weak one, to forgive the guilty, to reconcile the alienated, and to give dignity for shame to the prodigal!

It is said that where a broken bone is healed, the bone at that point is stronger than at the points where the bones have never been broken! Where one is weakest as a fallen believer, he can become, by God's grace, the strongest. God loves the backslidden believer. The Good Shepherd loves His lost sheep.

"THE NINETY-AND-NINE"

- There were ninety and nine that safely lay
 In the shelter of the flock,
 But one was out on the hills away,
 Far off in the cold and dark;
 Away on the mountains wild and bare,
 Away from the tender Shepherd's care.
- "Lord, Thou hast here Thy ninety and nine;
 Are they not enough for Thee?"
But the Shepherd made answer:"This of Mine
 Has wandered away from Me;
And although the road be rough and steep,
 I go to the desert to find My sheep."
- But none of the ransomed ever knew
 How deep were the waters crossed;
Nor how dark was the night which the Lord passed through
 Ere He found His sheep that was lost.
 Out in the bleak desert He heard its cry—
 All bleeding and helpless, and ready to die.
- "Lord, whence are those blood-drops all the way
 That mark out the mountain's track?"
"They were shed for one who had gone astray
 Ere the Shepherd could bring him back."
"Lord, whence are Thy hands so rent and torn?"
 "They're pierced tonight by many a thorn."
- And all through the mountains, thunder-riven,
 And up from the rocky steep,
 There arose a cry to the gate of heaven,

"Rejoice! I have found My sheep!"
And the angels echoed around the throne,
"Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own!"
(Words by Elizabeth Clephane)

God wants to restore the backslidden person. To backslidden Judah, God said, "*Return faithless people; I will cure you of backsliding.*" (Jeremiah 3:22)

Broken-hearted, repentant David prayed, "*Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.*" (Psalms 51:11-12)

To backslidden Israel, God said, "*I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them. I will be like the dew to Israel; he said (Israel) will bloom like a lily.*" Hosea 14:4-5) Not only does God promise healing to the backslider, but God promises to restore dignity and fruitfulness to the backslider!

Declared Micah regarding God's merciful nature: "*You cannot stay angry with you people, for you love to be merciful. Once again, you will have compassion on us. You will tread our sins beneath your feet; you will throw them into the depths of the ocean! You will bless us as you promised Jacob long ago. You will set your love upon us, as you promised our father Abraham!*"(Micah 7:18-20; Living Bible)

God cares for the fallen person. God has made provision for forgiveness, and that provision is through His Son. ¹ *My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous.* ² *He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world.*" (I John 2:1-2, Living Bible)

It Is Possible For A Christian To Sin, But If A Christian Falls Into An Act of Sin, God, Because of Christ's Atonement, Will Forgive and Restore To Fellowship. (I John 2:1, 2)

If a Christian should find himself with guilt as a result of an act of sin, "We Christians) have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:and he is the propitiation for our sins:and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

A. Jesus Is Advocate

Jesus pleads our case before God the Father. "An advocate is a helper, a supporter of someone's cause, an advocate in someone's defense." (Barclay) Jesus is the one who intercedes on man's behalf before God the Father. Jesus alone is worthy to be an advocate before the Father, because Jesus alone is absolutely righteous.

B. Jesus Christ the Propitiation

To show the relationship between Advocate and Propitiation, Stott quotes Smith as saying, "Our Advocate does not plead that we are innocent, or adduce extenuating circumstances. He acknowledges our guilt and presents His vicarious work as the ground of our acquittal." (pg. 82)

"The great basic truth behind this word is that it is through Jesus Christ that man's fellowship with God is first restored, and then maintained." (Barclay; pg. 47)

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To put it more clearly, the idea behind the word is this: God is wrathful toward man's sin and God's wrath toward the sinner must be averted or appeased if man is to be forgiven. God's judgment does rest upon man, but God's wrath is appeased since God has let the penalty for sin (which man deserved to receive) to be inflicted upon Himself.

A simple human analogy would be that of a parent who is wrathful because of his child's disobedience. The child deserves punishment, but the parent takes the punishment for the child and thus releases the child from the punishment, and at the same time appeases the wrath of himself – the parent.

As Stott so clearly states: "It is appeasement of the wrath of God by the love of God through the gift of God. The initiative is not taken by man, nor even by Christ, but by God Himself in sheer unmerited love. His wrath is not averted by any external gift, but by His own self-giving to die the death of sinners. This is the means He has Himself contrived by which to turn His own wrath away." (pg. 88)

Jesus' propitiation (or Jesus' death on the cross for man's sins, which has become the means of appeasing God's wrath against the sinner) is for the whole world. The offer of salvation is universal (John 3:16; John 12:32; I Timothy 2:4).

Advocacy is only for believers – that is, for those who have accepted the objective work of Jesus' propitiation.

III. RECOVERY FROM SPIRITUAL FAILURE

The God who, through His Son, has made wonderful provision for the recovery of the fallen person, has certain expectations in regards to man's response to God's grace initiative. There are certain steps in the recovery process.

1. Recognize the reality and the seriousness of sin.
2. Don't rationalize or deny your sins.
3. Accept personal moral responsibility for your failures and your sins.
Remember, every temptation is resistible. No one needs yield to temptation. It is because one has become careless or overconfident that he has fallen into sin.
4. Recognize that forgiveness is always costly. It took Jesus' death to make possible your forgiveness!
5. Confess all your sins to God, and repent deeply of your sins. Humility and contrition is the door back to God. Peter, after his betrayal of Jesus, wept bitterly and repented wholeheartedly. Do not try to conceal your sins. If you yield to temptation, follow David's example! He wrote, "*Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord' – and you forgave the guilt of my sin.*" (Psalms 32:5)
6. Accept God's forgiveness gratefully and humbly. Never take God's forgiveness for granted! One man was asked how he could sin so brazenly. He replied something like this: "O, I am not worried, for it is God's business to forgive!" Such blasphemy! Remember that God is not obligated to forgive anyone! Forgiveness is a gift of God's mer-

cy. We cannot earn it, deserve it, or purchase it! We can only receive it with brokenness and humility. We all deserve to die! If God gave us what we deserved, we would all be in hell!

Notes Barclay, "It is a terrible thing to seek to trade on the mercy of God. It is a terrible thing to make the mercy of God an excuse for sinning. Think of it in human terms. How despicable it would be for a son or a daughter to consider himself or herself free to sin, because he or she knew that a father or a mother would forgive. That would be taking advantage of love to break love's heart." (Barclay's Romans; pg. 86)

Sin is not a virtue! "*Well then, shall we keep on sinning so that God can keep on showing us more and more kindness and forgiveness? Of course not! Should we keep on sinning when we don't have to?*" (Romans 6:1, 2a; Living Bible)

7. After you have confessed your sins to God, be willing, if necessary, to confess your sins to others. Notes Bishop Donald Bastian: "If in your lapse you have wronged others, make amends. If you have wronged God alone – by a failure in your imagination, for example – confess to Him. If you have wronged another person, correct it with him. If you have wronged the Church, confess to the Church. This is a costly thing to do. But it is right, and doing so will help prevent future failures." (A Faith to Grow By; pg. 43)

Restitution - i.e., confessing your sin to someone else whom you have wronged – is a 'bitter pill' to swallow, but restitution will give you at least four positive benefits:

- (a) It will give you humility, which, in God's eyes, is very valuable. ("God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble");
 - (b) It will give you a "clear conscience" which is important if you are to maintain your joy and confidence in Christian living;
 - (c) It will leave a positive witness with the one whom you have wronged. God can use your humble confession to another as a means to incite repentance in the life of that other person to whom you are confessing. Confession is often contagious. Unbelievers (as well as believers) are impressed with persons who are courageous enough to confess their wrongs, especially in a world where most like to blame others rather than accept personal moral responsibility for actions. You do not lower yourself, but you raise yourself in the estimation, which others have of you when you confess your sins to them:
 - (d) It will act as a deterrent against further sinning in the future. Anything that is so painful (and humbling) as restitution is, will act as a barrier against yielding to temptation in the future.
8. Forgive yourself and learn valuable lessons from your moral failures. Notes William Sangster: "Having accepted the forgiveness of God, don't brood over the past. There are many people in the family of God who do not doubt God's forgiveness, but they never seem able to forgive themselves. The memory of their sin lacerates them. It is hardly ever out of their minds. So, far from being able, as some are, to forgive themselves lightly, they seem unable to forgive themselves at all. Just like some unhealed wound in the body, this unhealed wound in the spirit drains their strength, hinders their progress, pours pus into the blood-stream, and keeps them in a state of spiritual invalidism.

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“God has forgiven you; forgive yourself. Who are you to have superior moral values to the Almighty God? Here are two things, which will help you to forgive yourself.

- (1) Can't you see that your unwillingness to forgive yourself is a form of spiritual pride? What you are really saying, at the deep level of your mental and emotional life is this: 'How could I ever have done that?' (Note the stress on the 'I') 'Me! A spiritual giant like me!' Now, look! That self-hate is doing you no good...It is like poison injected into your veins. Accept the forgiveness. You cannot undo the past. God has forgiven it, and, if God has forgiven you, who can justly accuse you? That is the first thing: forgive yourself.
- (2) Here is a second. In some mysterious way – beyond your human fathoming – God can use sin...the God who is mighty in creation is also mighty in transformation.” (Daily Reading; pg. 71)

God will not allow anything in our past lives to be wasted. He can take even the Bad of one's past and use it in the development of Good! One man, before he was a believer, involved himself in deceptive practices and ended up in prison for several months. After becoming a Christian and after he was released from prison, he began a Christ-centered prison ministry which gained national recognition and acceptance! So, whatever your past sins are, confess them to God, and allow God to use even your past sins to bring about some good! Doing this helps you to learn to forgive yourself.

Simon Peter, after his dreadful fall into sin, wept bitter tears of regret and remorse. However, God's mercy made possible the forgiveness of Peter and, as a result, Peter was restored to dignity and usefulness. However, after Peter's terrible fall, caused largely because of pride and overconfidence, Peter forever thereafter maintained a spirit of deep humility and trust in Christ alone.

Allow your failures to help you to develop greater character in Christ-likeness. If you have been lustful in the past, be notable for your moral purity now! If pride has been your downfall, let yourself be clothed with the 'garments of humility'. If stinginess has been a problem for you, then make generosity a way of life now!

Where you were in the past week, you can now be strong. The eagle with a broken wing can be healed and can again soar high in the sky! The future for people who have failed can still be bright because of God's mercy and God's love and forgiveness.

9. After you have accepted the forgiveness of God, and after you have forgiven yourself, “then put yourself again under God's control and submit to His testings.” (Bastian)

Remember, that what is from Satan's viewpoint a temptation is from God's viewpoint a test. God intends to use problems and troubles in life to produce steadfastness in believers. Christlike character is achieved in the life of a believer through the testing experiences of life. When we look at temptation from God's viewpoint, then temptation becomes, not a stumbling block to defeat us, but a steppingstone to perfect us! Notes Barclay: “Now here is a great and uplifting truth. What we call temptation is not meant to make us sin; it is meant to enable us to conquer sin. It is not meant to make us bad, it is

meant to make us good. It is not meant to weaken us, it is meant to make us emerge stronger, finer, and purer from the ordeal. Temptation is not the penalty of being a man, temptation is the glory of being a man. It is the test which comes to a man whom God wishes to use.” (Barclay’s Matthew; pg. 56)

Remember, all throughout life, we will encounter temptation. It was even so with Jesus. After Jesus successfully resisted the devil and overcame temptation, what does the Scripture say about Satan? “*And when he (Satan) had exhausted every kind of temptation, the devil withdrew until his next opportunity.*” (Luke 4:13; Phillips)

After you have overcome temptation, just remember that temptation will eventually return. Satan only leaves for a while.

But also remember the benefits from successfully meeting temptation:

“Yield not to temptation,
For yielding, is sin
Each victory will help you,
Some other to win.”

Expect continuing or periodic temptations, for Satan does not easily give up. But remember that, what are temptations from Satan’s viewpoint, are tests from God’s viewpoint. God will allow continuing trials (temptations) to come to our lives in order to perfect our character. Peter, in his letters, had much to say about the purposes of trials. “These trials are only to test your faith, to see whether or not it is strong and pure. It is being tested as fire tests gold and purifies it – and your faith is far more precious to God than mere gold; so if your faith remains strong after being tried in the test tube of fiery trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day of his return. Dear friends, don’t be bewildered or surprised when you go through the fiery trials ahead, for this is no strange, unusual thing that is going to happen to you. Instead, be really glad – because these trials will make you partners with Christ in his suffering, and afterwards you will have the wonderful joy of sharing his glory in that coming day when it will be displayed.” (I Peter 1, 7, 12, 13)

10. Accept without complaint the God-allowed consequences from your past wrong moral decisions (sins), but expect God to continue to use you even while you are suffering from the consequences.

It is true that, as an on-going consequence of his sins, David faced serious troubles in his household for years, following his restoration to God. Even though God forgave David his terrible sins, there were some consequences that David lived with for many years. Internal rebellion, dissensions, and plots made life weary at times for David. However, in spite of the ongoing consequences, which David had to bear because of his past sins, David enjoyed restored fellowship with God.

When David confessed his sins to God, he cried out, “*Restore to me the joy of your salvation.*” (Psalms 51:12a) Joy that is lost because of willful sinning can be restored because of sincere confession and total surrender.

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David further prayed, *“Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.”* (Psalms 51:13) The joy which God gives to the repentant believer, is combined with dignity, which comes as a result of God’s willingness to use a restored believer in effective evangelistic ministry! *“Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.”* (Psalms 51:13) A person who personally experiences forgiveness and inner cleansing is equipped to help others whose experiential needs are the same as his own.

So, while David had to bear some of the scars of his past sins, David’s future was not totally jeopardized by his past sins. Yes, David had to live with some regrets because of the wrongs of his past. But David’s fellowship with God was mended and his joy was restored. God continued to use David effectively, and no greater compliment could be given to any man than this: *“He (David) was a man after God’s own heart!”* This shows us that, however bad our past has been, if we confess our sins and if we surrender totally to God, we too (like David) can ‘turn our scars into Stars’!

Let me share a dramatic example of this truth. I once received a letter from a convicted man – a man who was a backslidden believer but one who had been restored to fellowship with God. I met him while having Wednesday morning Bible studies at the County Jail. Here is an excerpt from his letter:

“I was given a 32 year sentence in Fort Collins. It came as no surprise. My attitude was one of a fighter, knocked down but not knocked out...I’ve had the ultimate privilege of leading a young man to Jesus in this jail and the Lord used me in preventing a suicide, so I’m not idle at all. I don’t believe for a second that God put me in here, but I do believe He will use me where I am at...I turned myself in on all of this. I could not run from God any longer. Being right with God meant more to me that being physically free. I believe with all my heart I will be free again on the outside to lead a productive life, one that will count for Jesus, so while I’m disappointed in some things, I am not discouraged.” (Personal letter, June, 1987)

CONCLUSION:

What if you yield to temptation? Here is what to do:

1. Recognize the reality and the seriousness of sin.
2. Don’t rationalize or deny your sins.
3. Accept personal moral responsibility for your failures and your sins.
4. Recognize that forgiveness is always costly.
5. Confess your sins to God, and repent deeply of your sins.
6. Accept God’s forgiveness gratefully and humbly.

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7. After you have confessed your sins to God, be willing, if necessary, to confess your sins to others.
8. Forgive yourself and learn valuable lessons from your moral failures.
9. Put yourself again under God's control and submit to his testing.
10. Accept without complaint the God-allowed consequences from your past wrong moral decisions (sins), but expect God to continue to use you even while you are suffering from the consequences.

Never Forget: "OUR GOD IS ABLE TO RESTORE THE FALLEN PERSON."

CHAPTER 35
“RIGHT AND WRONG TYPES
OF DOUBT!”

CHAPTER 35

“RIGHT AND WRONG TYPES OF DOUBT!”

TEXT: *“The righteous shall live by his faith.”* (Habakkuk 2:4)

INTRODUCTION:

There are times when it is right to doubt and other times when it is wrong to doubt. There are some doubts, if exercised, are always destructive. There are other doubts, if exercised, and production of belief.

There is some doubting which dishonors the truthful character of God. There is other doubting which comes in the very process of discovering the exciting truths about the character of God.

PROPOSITION:

What determines whether doubt is destructive or constructive? Doubting God’s character and revealed nature is really a manifestation of dishonest moral rebellion. However, there is an honest intellectual doubting which is the shadow-side of belief. One cannot honestly believe unless he has honestly worked through his intellectual doubts. Thus, there are two types of doubting - one positive and one negative, one good and one evil, one constructive and one destructive, one activated by basic submission and one motivated by basic rebellion.

I. DESTRUCTIVE DOUBTING

To doubt the revelation of God’s Nature as given through the Cross and the Resurrection, is to bypass the road to eternal life (John 3:36).

Saving truths (the truths concerning God’s love, wisdom, power, justice, and mercy) are vividly revealed in the Death and Resurrection of Christ, and are the very foundation of life.

- A. Let us look at the truths revealed by the Cross-and the Resurrection – truths that dare not be doubted!
 - 1. First, what did the Cross Accomplish?
 - (a) Appeased God’s Wrath – because Jesus took God’s wrath against sin upon Himself by becoming the perfect sacrifice for sin.

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- (b) Satisfied God's Justice – for God could not allow sin to go unpunished, and at the same time remain a just God. God is both just and the justifier of the ungodly, because of what Christ did on the Cross.
 - (c) Demonstrated God's Love – The Cross on Mt. Calvary is the earthly revelation of the Cross-that has eternally been on the heart of God, and is thus the supreme demonstration of inherent Divine Love.
2. Second, what did the Resurrection Accomplish?
- (a) Vindicated God's Righteousness – God had to raise His Son to life to show that the sinless Son of God could not be overcome by the sinful sons of the devil. Evil must be cut down, if not on the 1st or 2nd day, then always on the 3rd day!
 - (b) Proved God's Promises – God is never slack in fulfilling His promises, as some men count slackness (II Peter 3:a). The Resurrection is the badge of Christ's authority to establish His long-predicted Messianic Kingdom in the hearts and lives of people.
 - (c) Demonstrated God's Power – The power that raised Christ from the dead is the greatest of all powers (I Corinthians 15:55-57), and is the same power that is available for every believer to enable him to live victoriously and abundantly.
- B. Let us look at the personal application of the truths, which were revealed by the Cross and the Resurrection - truths that dare not be doubted!
- 1. God's Character of Love – if God loved me so much that He died for me, surely God continues to love me so much that He will not allow anything to happen to me but what will accomplish good in my life.
 - 2. God's character of Wisdom – If God is wise enough providentially to make the wrath of men to praise Him, and wise enough to produce order out of disorder, surely, He is wise enough to manage my life.
 - 3. God's Character of Power – If God is powerful enough to vanquish death by raising Christ from the dead, thus using the greatest tragedy of history – Crucifixion – to accomplish the greatest triumph of history – Redemption - then God is powerful enough to use all circumstances (good, bad, indifferent) to serve redemptive purposes in my life.
 - 4. God's Character of Justice – If God vindicated His righteousness by raising His sinless Son from the grave on the third day, expressing His vengeance on sin, then God is able in due time to

reward unrecognized good and to punish unchecked evil. Therefore, I have no need to fret myself because of evil doers (Psalms 37:1). Evil has already been defeated!

5. God's Character of Mercy – If God so loved me in that, while I was still a sinner, Christ died for me (Romans 5:8), will not that kind of God have mercy upon me when I confess my sins and shortcomings to Him? I can be assured that the blood of Jesus cleanses me from all unrighteousness (I John 1:7), and daily delivers me from the guilt and power of sin.
- C. In light of the vital necessity never to doubt the great truths concerning God's Nature, which were revealed by the Cross and the Resurrection, let us look at specific steps, which we can take to maintain faith and combat destructive doubts.
1. Keep Surrendered to God Daily - After the once-and-for-all surrender to God, allow the Spirit daily to impart the gift of faith to the heart.
 2. Let Christ Handle Doubts as They Arise.
 3. Recall Past Mercies of God – Build faith, based on the faithfulness of God's past actions. Israel often recalled the Red Sea Deliverance. Use a daily journal to recall past miracles.
 4. Reaffirm Your Present Confidence In Christ's Sufficiency For You – Affirm that God is your Father, that you are forgiven, that Jesus does love you.
 5. Wait on God and Don't Try to Reason Out Every Problem – Note the text (Habakkuk 2:4) which is a statement of man's faith in the faithfulness of God, when facing a problem (of evil) that presently offers no solution. (Expand on Problem of Evil, which produces doubts, and Faith as its answer, as related in the Book of Habakkuki).

II. CONSTRUCTIVE DOUBTING

Once you have staked your entire life on God and His will and His revealed nature (as discussed), then, using this commitment as your stable center, go as far afield in doubt as you wish in seeking a satisfying intellectual and soul answer to your questions. Develop a reasoned faith. Struggle to understand. Ask any question. Fear not to probe. Develop a tough mind. Never be fearful to ask any question. Only as you question, will the answers be forthcoming. God encourages this process: "Come, let us reason together, saith the Lord." (Isaiah 1:18)

Keep your mind alive and inquisitive. Honest doubts are compatible with an honest commitment to Christ, and in fact, the degree of commitment to Christ will be reflected in the degree of serious thinking one does in finding a satisfying answer to the difficult questions of life. One will not find all the answers to life's questions, but not to find the answers is no sin. However, never to ask the questions is a sin against one's God-given intelligence, and is evidence of spiritual as well as intellectual, sloth!

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The Christian is to out-think the sinner as well as to out-live him, and in fact, one cannot fully live until he learns to accept the challenge of hard thinking.

You may doubt any of your beliefs but One. Never doubt the trustworthiness and goodness of God's character as revealed in the death and resurrection of Jesus. God never has failed and never will fail! Never doubt this! Whatever comes and however much the circumstances of life defy the processes of reasoning, never doubt that God is love! Hold to that premise and all doubts will lead eventually to assurance!

Ask God for a tender heart and a tough mind – a heart tender in response to God's love and a mind tough to grapple with life's mysteries. We are not meant to understand all of God's ways or all of life's perplexities, but we would understand many more of them if we but had the courage to think and to ponder! The tender heart of faith and receptivity must accept those mysteries that will never be unraveled by the reasoning process.

But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.” (I Peter 3:15).

An intellectual understanding of Christianity is vital, for Jesus commanded us to love God with all our minds as well as with all our hearts. As one said, “My heart cannot rejoice in what my mind rejects.”

An unexamined faith is not a faith worth having – and is indeed dangerous. One must know that his beliefs are based on objective truth, for it is the object of belief that determines the value of belief. To accept anything in an unthinking way is possibly to accept error. In addition, to accept truth based on dogmatic authority, without thinking it through yourself, is to accept a secondhand faith. A secondhand faith is dying faith!

The Bible exhorts us to work out our own salvation with ‘fear and trembling’ (Philippians 2:12b), and we could add – ‘work out your salvation with the aid of honest doubts which will lead to honest beliefs.’ Remember, Christianity is not unreasonable, although it goes beyond reason. Honest intellectual doubting leads one to the adequacy of the evidence that results in the assurance of the heart!

CHAPTER 36

“THE KINGDOM BANQUET!”

CHAPTER 36

“THE KINGDOM BANQUET!”

SCRIPTURE: “¹⁵ When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, “Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.” ¹⁶ Jesus replied: “A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. ¹⁷ At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’ ¹⁸ “But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.’ ¹⁹ “Another said, ‘I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.’ ²⁰ “Still another said, ‘I just got married, so I can’t come.’ ²¹ “The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.’ ²² “‘Sir,’ the servant said, ‘what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.’ ²³ “Then the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. ²⁴ I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.’” Luke 14:15-24)

TEXT: “And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven.”

INTRODUCTION:

What a discourtesy to be invited to a meal, first accept it, and then later reject the invitation on some flimsy excuse. God invites you to His Banquet. Will you accept it or will you, like the persons in the parable, make flimsy excuses? What does the Banquet symbolize, to whom is the invitation extended, and how do, and the different excuses apply to today? These and other questions will be answered, as we look at the Parable of the Great Supper.

PROPOSITION:

In mercy, God has extended His invitation to every person to be a member of His Kingdom. Before a person can become a member of God’s Kingdom, he must accept God’s invitation, putting priorities of the Kingdom before personal, selfish interests.

I. IDENTIFICATION OF KINGDOM

It is clear that the great Banquet stands for the Kingdom of God. The Jews believed that God would someday come, and break through history, and establish His Kingdom. When that time came, there would be great rejoicing for all Jews. They characterized these coming golden days in terms of the Messianic Banquet. All of God's people, the Jews, would enjoy a great feast in the presence of the Messiah. Of course, the Jews pictured this banquet only for Jews. They could not imagine any other person taking part in the Messiah's banquet.

In contrast to the Jews' exclusive picture of the Kingdom, Jesus expressed an all-inclusive picture of the Kingdom, a picture that would include not only orthodox Jews, but also sinners and Gentiles. This was unthinkable to orthodox Jews. When Jesus taught His disciples to pray *'Thy Kingdom Come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven'*, He was also giving a definition of the Kingdom. The Kingdom is a society of men who desire to do God's will more than they desire anything else. They desire to do God's will on earth, in the same way as it is done in heaven. Paul later interpreted Jesus' concept of the Kingdom. *"For the kingdom of God does not mean food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."* (Romans 14:17) Contrary to Jewish belief that all Jews would automatically enjoy the Messianic Feast, Jesus taught that only those people – whether Jew or Gentile – who were righteous, peaceful, and joyous would be allowed as members of the Kingdom.

II. INVITATION TO KINGDOM

A. TO JEW

The King of the Banquet "invited many people to it." His first invitation was extended to the Jews. "In Palestine, when a man made a feast, the day of it was announced long beforehand, and the invitations were sent out and accepted; but the hour of it was not announced; and when the day came and all things were ready, servants were sent out to summon the already invited guests. "To accept the invitation beforehand and then to refuse it when the day came was a grace and serious insult." (Barclay's Luke; pg. 199)

The Jewish people were most privileged. It was they who were God's chosen people, the special instrument through which He brought His Son into the world. It was the Jews who, throughout history, were the bearers of special revelation and they alone believed in the one and only true God. God had so patiently dealt with the Jewish people and had prepared them for the coming of the Messiah. Special Messengers – the prophets – had often spoken of the coming Messiah whose ways would be the way of life and light. Indeed, the special history of the Israelites is evidence that God invited them to the banquet.

The tragedy of history is this: The Jews rejected the invitation of God to the Banquet. *"He came into his own creation, and his own people would not accept him."* (John 1:11; Phillips) They failed to take the way of righteousness, peace, and joy - the spiritual way. Rather, they wanted the way of meat and drink, that is, the physical way. Looking for a materialistically oriented, military Messiah, they overlooked the spiritually oriented, loving Messiah. They refused the invitation, and would not come to the Banquet of God.

B. TO SINNER AND GENTILE

Refusing to have the banquet hall empty, the King sends forth messengers to summon "the poor, the maimed, the blind and the lame." This list of assorted mankind represents broken sinning humanity.

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

Many orthodox Jews were too proud to accept Jesus and to acknowledge their own religious hypocrisy. Therefore, Jesus turned to the downgraded and despised publicans and sinners of all sorts.

After calling the assorted and degraded pieces of humanity to the banquet table, there is still room. *“So the master said to his servants, “Go out to the roads and to the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled.”* This compulsion is not the compulsion of coercion but rather the compulsion of love. This speaks of the call of the Gentiles, which, to the orthodox Jews, were only fuel for hell. Thus, we see the universal appeal of the Gospel call. God invites all – Jew and Gentile – but only those who accept the call will be admitted. None are admitted automatically, but each must come by the way of righteousness, peace, and joy into the Kingdom. Said Jesus, in a similar parable, *“Verily I say unto you (orthodox Jews), that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.”* (Matthew 21:31b, 32) Part of accepting the invitation to the Banquet – Kingdom of God – is repentance of sin and taking the way of righteousness. Gentiles who repent and turn to righteousness are accepted into the Banquet or Kingdom of God.

It is as if Jesus is saying in this parable to the orthodox Jews, “Ah, what happiness it will be (you say) to get an invitation to God’s banquet and accept it! But this is precisely the chance you have been offered, and see what you have done with your invitation! And if God now proposes to find places at table for sinners and Gentiles, you have only yourselves to blame. It is not God who has excluded you; you have excluded yourselves.” (Interpreting the Parables; Hunter; 57)

Pride barred the door to many Jews. Humility is always an essential ingredient in accepting the invitation to the Banquet. Jesus illustrated this when He told the parable about Places at Table which is in the same general context as The Great Supper. *“Now He told a parable to those who were invited, when he marked how they chose the places of honour, saying to them, ‘When you are invited by anyone to a marriage feast, do not sit down in a place of honour, lest a more eminent man than you be invited by him; and he who invited you both will come and say to you, “Give place to this man”, and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, “Friend, go up higher”; then you will be honoured in the presence of all who sit at table with you. For every one who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted”* (Luke 14:7-11) Being a member of the Kingdom means a life of humility, “in honour preferring others before yourself.”

II. PRIORITIES OF KINGDOM

Jesus made it very clear that the priorities of the Kingdom must be before any personal interests. Each of the excuses in the parable are the same types of excuses today.

A. The First Man Put Business Interests Before Kingdom Interests.

Said one, *“I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.”* (Luke 14:18) Many there are still who put their work before their Church, who are more interested in making a living than they are in making a life. The ring of the cash register is sweeter to some than the quietness of the sanctuary. The glitter of gold fascinates some more than the glory of God. Bargaining at the stock market is more important to some than bargaining for the souls of

men. Missing a day's work is more disturbing to some than missing a worship service. Getting ahead of the Joneses is more important to some than staying in step with God. Investing in earth's real estate is more momentous to some than investing in heaven's incorruptible mansions. Earning a college degree is more important to some than earning a degree in faithfulness and service.

Energy and hard work are commendable, but if misdirected can result in rejection from the Kingdom. Wealth is not to be despised, if it does not result in poverty of the soul. Position in business and work is honorable, if it does not crowd God from the throne room of one's heart. "Less money and more of the treasure in heaven might be a better investment, if a choice between the two has to be made. (Kennedy's Parables; 200) *"And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof" but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.*" (I John 2:17)

B. The Second Man Put The Interests Of Novelty Before the Interests Of The Kingdom.

"Another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am on my way to try them out. Please have me excused." Sound familiar? It does to me. 'I have bought a new car, and I want to try it out. We are taking a trip Sunday.' 'I have bought a new boat, and can't wait to try it out on that lake.' 'I have built a new cabin and plan to stay there over the weekends during summer. I'll worship God in nature.' 'I have bought a new camper and new fishing equipment. They say the fish are biting good. Might see you next Sunday. Depends how the fish bite this weekend.' 'I have bought some brand new skies. The snow is just right for skiing. Got to take advantage of the snow. Besides, everyone is going to the slopes. Have me excused please.' 'I have bought some new tennis rackets and this beautiful sunny Sunday is just right.' 'A new TV program is coming on Wednesday night. Sorry I will miss Bible class. Have me excused.' 'Spring is in the air. Time to get the garden planted. Please have me excused this time.'

Sad it is that the toys of sensual pleasure are more real to us than the delights of spiritual discoveries. The novelty of picking up a moon rock seems to thrill us more than picking up the Bible. Low attendance at a party is more disturbing to us than low attendance at worship. Missing a favorite TV program disturbs us more than missing a good Bible class. The garden not growing disturbs us more than the Church not growing. Learning a new recipe excites us more than learning a new verse of Scripture. Fishing for trout is more exciting than fishing for the souls of men. The excuses of the one who said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am on my way to the try them out", is the same excuse of many today. The interests of novelty are more important than the interests of the Kingdom. Such people are fools. They accept the second-best or worse when they could have the very best. Such miss out on the delights of the Kingdom Banquet.

Those who refuse the invitation miss out on the mental delights. The Christian life delights the mind. While the sinner is feeding his mind on the husks about him, the Christian is exploring new frontiers of knowledge and wisdom.

Those who refuse the invitation miss out on emotional delights. The world gives pleasures for a season, followed by a cruel and pathetic hangover. The Kingdom's joys, and happiness are served to the one who feeds at the Banquet Table. There is an aesthetic heightening in conversion. The Christian's emotional aesthetic capacities are increased, not shriveled up.

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

“Heaven above is softer blue,
Earth around is sweeter green;
Something lives in every hue,
Christless eyes have never seen;
Birds with gladder songs o’erflow,
Flowers with deeper beauties shine,
Since I know, as now I know,
I am His, and He is mine.”

Those who refuse the invitation miss out on spiritual delights. They miss out on the joys of faith, hope, and love. There is a joy that is unknown to the cold, rational, logical realist, which only is known by the man who sees faith’s promises realized. There is a great contrast between the over-dawning hope of one and the ever-increasing despair of another. Love’s fulfillment and power makes hate’s dissipation and destruction look pathetic. The man of the Kingdom enjoys the spiritual delights of faith, hope, and love, while the self-rejected man is “dead in trespasses and sins.” Poor indeed is the man who puts the interests of novelty before the interests of the Kingdom.

C. THE THIRD MAN PUT GOOD INTERESTS BEFORE THE SUPERIOR INTERESTS OF THE KINGDOM.

“Another said, ‘I have married a wife, and, therefore, I cannot come.’” Loyalty to wife and family is commended, but if wife, husband, or child becomes the object of one’s deepest love – to the exclusion of God – then a man is unworthy of God’s Kingdom.

God and man communed together before the home and family was even originated. Adam walked alone with God before Eve was created. A man must know his God intimately before he can enjoy his family completely. God - first; Family - second. The love of the Master must come before the love of the maid. Indeed, the love of the maid is enhanced by the love of the Master. “They live best together who live with God; they serve each other best who also serve their fellow men; the atmosphere of a home is most lovely when those who dwell within it never forget that they are also members of the great family and household of God.” (Barclay’s Luke; pg. 201)

A man is not worthy of the Kingdom if his interests do not go beyond the interests of his own home and family. Is my home open to the brethren? “*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*” (Psalms 133:1))

Is my home open to strangers: “*Never let your brotherly love fail, nor refuse to extend your hospitality to strangers – sometimes men have entertained angels unawares.*” (Hebrews 13:1, 2; Phillips)

Many there are who supposedly, out of love, have persuaded a relative – husband, wife, son, or daughter – not to go to the mission field. Seeking to save a person from danger, the loved one has only been kept from doing God’s will. Unless a person is willing to give up a loved one for God’s service, he is not worthy to sit at the Banquet Table. “Two men stood on the dock in New York City. They were watching an ocean liner as it left for far-away shores. One of the men said to the other: ‘That ocean liner is carrying a gift from me to the mission fields. It has on it thousands of dollars worth of supplies for a mission hospital.’ The other man replied: ‘That ocean liner also carries a gift from me to the mission fields. It has on it my only daughter. She is going as a missionary. I have given her to the Lord’s service.’ Tears came to the eyes of the first man.

He said, 'My friend, you have given far more to the Lord than I have. I have given money. You have given your only daughter!'" (This Is The Will Of God; by Barker; pgs. 57, 58)

Caring for loved ones is good and expected of a Christian, but if one puts the good interests of life before the superior interests of the Kingdom, he is not worthy to sit at the Banquet Table of God.

CONCLUSION:

"The teacher of a Sunday-School class of small boys once planned a surprise birthday party for one of the members. The boy's mother promised to make sure he was at home, and so on the appointed day the class arrived with their presents and refreshments. But the boy could not be found. His mother called him in vain. Finally, they went ahead with the party and had a fine time although the guest of honor was missing. Late in the afternoon, after the guests had departed, the little boy came home and the mother finally had the truth from him. He had heard her call, all right, but he thought she had work for him to do so he hid in the barn." (The Parables; by Kennedy; pgs. 203, 204)

Sad it is that a person could think that, when God invites him to the Banquet, God is calling him to an unpleasant task or that God desires to rob him of life. With this false conception, he goes off and hides – hides in material pursuits, hides in leisure and novelty, hides in something so good as the family. Accept the invitation to the Banquet. There are delights unspeakable ready for you!

CHAPTER 37

“HOW TO WORSHIP!”

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“HOW TO WORSHIP!”

SCRIPTURE: ¹ Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD;
let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.
² Let us come before him with thanksgiving
and extol him with music and song.

³ For the LORD is the great God,
the great King above all gods.
⁴ In his hand are the depths of the earth,
and the mountain peaks belong to him.
⁵ The sea is his, for he made it,
and his hands formed the dry land.

⁶ Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker;
⁷ for he is our God
and we are the people of his pasture,
the flock under his care. (Psalms 95:1-7)

TEXT: *“O come, let us worship and bow down’ let us kneel before the Lord our maker.”* (Psalms 95:6)

INTRODUCTION:

“Worship is the response of the creature to the Eternal.” (Worship by Underhill; pg. 3) Every man worships something or someone. All men give their allegiance to an entity, which they conceive to be greater than themselves.

The object of worship is what determines the quality of worship. All men worship something or someone. All men give their allegiance to an entity, which they conceive to be greater than themselves.

The Scriptures teach that knowledge of the true eternal God was universal in the beginning. Polytheism (worship of many gods) is a corruption of monotheism (worship of one God). Idolatry is the result of

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man's obstinate rebellions and rejection of God's truth. Paul wrote, "*Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.*" (Romans 1:21-23)

In mercy, God penetrated the world of darkness, sin, and ignorance, to reveal Himself to man. God revealed Himself to Abraham, gave His commandments to Moses in the Exodus, and perfectly embodied Himself in the Person of His Son Jesus Christ. "*The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent.*" (Acts 17:30, RSV)

PROPOSITION:

Man is the only creature, which is a worshipping creature. He is altogether unique. Man alone can worship his Creator and intimately fellowship with Him.

Let us investigate this distinctive characteristic of man. to better appreciate worship, let us note the attitude and activity of worship, and then note some of the aids – both personal and external – which man uses to help him in his worshipping activity.

I. ATTITUDE AND ACTIVITY OF WORSHIP

A. HISTORY OF WORSHIP

Worship is an attitude of life. Because God is Sovereign of the entire Universe, worship permeates every area of life. When man realizes that, "*God made the world and all things therein.*" (Acts 17:24), and is thus Lord of heaven and earth, how can man help but exercise all his powers in worship of this God? "*For in him (God) we live and move, and have our beings.*" (Acts 17:28) God is Ruler of all nature, and desires to be the Ruler of man's heart. It is man's moral privilege to surrender his heart as a sanctuary for God's presence.

Worship is also a formal activity of life. Because God is Creator of all men, He wills that men should corporately acknowledge their creature hood through worship of their Creator. In the Old Testament God commanded, the Israelites to set aside (sanctify) a house for his purpose. This house was considered holy, and designed, as a special place in which God's presence would dwell.

B. SANCTUARY of WORSHIP.

We learn throughout Scripture that God's house is not to be used for man's profane activities. It is in the House of God that one finds God's glory. Let us note, first, the improper uses of God's House, and then note the proper and only use of His House.

1. Improper Uses

- a. It is not a place to advertise piety. Piety can be, advertised in prayer. Says Barclay, "True prayer is always offered to; God and to God alone. A certain American cynically described a preacher's prayer as 'the most eloquent prayer ever offered to a Boston audience.'" (Barclay's Luke, pg. 232) Piety can be, advertised, in testimonies. The testimony which glorifies God is not the one which gives the impression that the testifier

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never failed, but the one which glorifies the God of grace who has been long suffering and merciful. Our songs can even draw too much attention to self. In Sunday morning worship service it is hymns that are sung rather than Gospel songs. The hymn directs one's attention to God; the Gospel song directs more attention to self.

- b. It is not a place to exhibit talent, however excellent the talent. When a preacher, poet, musician, or artist draws attention to himself rather than to God, then his talent is used selfishly, God is not honored, and the people are not worshipping.
- c. It is not a place to advance business interests. Just as Jesus drove the greedy exploiters out of the Jerusalem Temple, so likewise the condemnation will come upon every man who uses God's House to advance His selfish interests.
- d. It is not a place to exhibit fashionable clothes. God has no partiality and He expects man to show no partiality within the Church. James wrote; *"If there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit under my footstool, are ye not then partial and become judges of evil thoughts.* (James 2:3,

2. Proper Use

Jesus said the Church is a House of Prayer. Spiritual growth is a natural benefit, which is derived from corporate worship, but the main purpose of God's house is prayer and praise.

If at the main purpose of God's House is prayer, the Church should be pervaded with a sense of quietness, reverence, awe, and prayer. Such an atmosphere would exclude excessive or unnecessary noise. Noise distracts from worship. In a large college Church, a tape recording was made of the noise, which was made during the transition time between Sunday School and Church. The Church people were surprised and ashamed when they heard the noise from the tape that was replayed for them.

The atmosphere of worship excludes all playful activity, or unnecessary conversation of the week's activities. The congregation is assembled for one purpose – to worship God.

II. AIDS TO WORSHIP

1. Habit of Regular Church Attendance

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The most important thing of life, become a person's habits. The way one habitually uses his time and where he habitually spends his time, reveals much about a person's loyalties.

It is the purpose of every service to point man's attention God-ward in an attitude of adoration, but especially is this true of the Sunday morning worship service. Sunday night service is especially dedicated for the Church's out-reach. Wednesday night service provides opportunity for receiving ginner renewal, strength, and enlightenment through study. The dedicated Christian will make a supreme effort to attend God's House as often as possible.

2. Meditation prior to service to prepare one's heart for worship. This can be accomplished by (a) silently reading a good hymn, which fixes one's mind on God's greatness, (b) silently reciting a Scripture verse, which tells of God's love and power, (c) silently praying that God will apply the truth to one's daily life.
3. Choosing place to sit which is conducive for worship. If one sits in the back seat he may have to exert special discipline to sing, pray, and listen well. As a child in my Church, an old sainted man kindly motioned to me, to come up to the second seat in the Church to sit beside him. It seemed that I could always worship better, when I sat in the front of the Church beside this godly man. One's companions do have influence on him.
4. Wholeheartedly participate in every worship activity.
 - (a) Sing hymns not only for musical harmony but for the meaning that can be derived from the words.
 - (b) Give tithes and offerings as an act of worship, not as an 'necessary obligation' aside from worship. Each time tithes and offerings are taken, this is an opportunity for one to give himself anew to God. This is the reason why one's tithe should not be given in one lump sum, but rather in small weekly or bi-weekly portions.
 - (c) When the pastor prays, pray with him, instead of listening to the way he phrases his words. Feel free to audibly say 'Amen', when the pastor says 'Amen' or at any time when you feel led of God.
 - (d) Listen devotionally and open-mindedly to the preacher. A overly critical and close-minded person will not learn. Even if the preacher is not the best of speakers, listen anyway for the purpose of discovering new truths. Even if one doesn't agree with all that is said, listen openly, for this is a sign of maturity. Don't develop casual attitudes because of frequently hearing preaching.
5. Apply truths to daily life. Jotting down notes during the service helps keep one's mind on the sermon. Meditate upon the new truths, soon after the service. Ask God to help you to put into practice what you have learned. Obey James' exhortation, "*Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only.*" (James 1:22)

We have looked at the personal aids to worship let us now look at the traditional, external aids to worship.

B. EXTERNAL AIDS

1. Ritual

- a. Definition – “A religious ritual is an agreed pattern of framework within which corporate religious action can take place.” (Underhill, pg. 32)
- b. Purpose - to enable a group of people to do something together with a minimum amount of confusion. There must be organization in any worthwhile social endeavor, and public worship is not excepted. It is helpful to have a regular form since a pattern will enable everyone who is present, to know what activity comes next. If there was no form, the attention of the congregation would be diverted from worship to a wondering of what will come next. There is a reason for an order of service. It is to make it easier for all to keep their mind on worship. If all know what activity is coming next, then the attention of all can be kept centered upon worshipping God. This does not mean that there should not be an occasional change in the order of service for the sake of wholesome variety. Neither does it mean that there should not be a spontaneous element in the worship service. An occasional ‘Amen’ or a spontaneous testimony in the service is very conducive to worship. Any other emotional expression is proper if it aids others in worship. However, emotion, which draws the attention of others to you and may from God, is selfish and harmful. In the expression of emotion, one should especially be considerate of outsiders and newcomers. It is God that must have all of the attention, not the preacher or any other person in the service.
- c. Danger – Dependence upon the ritual as a means to gain God’s favor, is the danger associated with ritual. Ritual must not be made an end within itself, but rather a means to an end. Ritual must aid us in worshipping God. God is the object of man’s worship – not ritual. To become preoccupied alone with formality, is to become divorced from true religion. True religion is concerned only with glorifying God through active obedience. Through the prophets, God told the Israelites that their religious acts were rejected because they were not performed from the heart. God said through Isaiah, “*This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips does honour me, but have removed their heart far from me.*” (Isaiah 29:13) Paul spoke of people who have a form of religion but who deny power of true religion.

2 Symbol

- a. Definition – “Since the true Object of man’s worship always lies beyond his comprehension, we are obliged to bridge the gap by means of symbolic images; chosen objects which signify, mediate or suggest, but never explain, the Reality that we adore.” (Underhill, pg. 38)

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- b. Purpose – We use visible symbols “to arouse, maintain, and express our worship”. The appearance of a cross in our Church, reminds us of the suffering and sacrifice of our Savior, whose death and resurrection brought man’s salvation. A steeple on a Church guides our eyes upward, reminding us that it is the God of Heaven whom we worship and from whom we receive help. The pulpit, which is placed in the middle of the platform, reminds us of the centrality of God’s Word as the final standard of authority in matters of life and conduct. Because the sacrament table is on the same floor level as the congregation, this shows that all the people – not just the clergy – have a right to partake of the cup, which represents Christ’s blood, shed for the sins of all men.

Symbols have no virtue within themselves but are only useful as they remind us of a spiritual Reality beyond ourselves which we cannot fully comprehend. As humans, we are confined to time and space, and must oftentimes depend upon external objects as means by which we express our deepest feelings. Thus, for example, we express love – an indefinable quality – by the giving of a gift. Love cannot be equated with the small gift, but the gift is merely a token or symbol of a deep indefinable quality that can only be expressed by an outward act.

Thus, such acts as the sign of the Cross, the kiss of peace, and the prostration may all be outward symbols of deeper meanings. Says Evelyn Underhill, “The symbol, or significant image, is to, as its unfriendly critics suppose, a substitute for spiritual truth. It is rather the point where physical and metaphysical meet – a halfway house, where the world of things and the world of spirit unite, and produce a new thing possessed of sensible and supra-sensible reality. And man, who partakes himself of this character, finds in it the natural means of access to God.” (pg. 40)

- c. Danger – The misuse of a symbol in worship leads to idolatry – that is, worshipping the symbol, rather than the God of which the symbol is intended to remind one. To worship the symbol, is to divorce oneself from true religion.

3. Sacrament

- a. Definition – “A sacrament is a significant deed, a particular use of temporal things, which gives to them the value of eternal things and thus incorporates and conveys spiritual reality.” (Underhill, pg. 42)
- b. Kinds – Water is used to cleanse, oil is used to anoint, and the imposition of hands is used to consecrate. The most significant sacrament is the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. Participation in this religious act is a command of our Lord. Paul recalled the institution of this rite when he wrote, “*After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come.*” (I Corinthians 11:25, 26)

This act carries with it, deep spiritual significance. It not only reminds us of the body and blood of Christ which was given for our sins, but it provides opportunity for renewing our faith in God and more deeply submitting our lives to the ministry of God's Spirit. It is a means of grace as well as a reminder of Calvary.

The sacrament is a representative deed, which conveys spiritual meaning. Our Church does not believe, as the Roman Catholics do, that the elements are transformed into the actual body and blood of Christ. We do not believe, as the Lutherans, that the body and blood of Christ are present with the elements when they are taken.

2. Sacrifice

The all-encompassing and culminating act of worship is sacrifice. When man realizes his finiteness and moral defilement and God's infinite power and holiness, man feels compelled to humbly surrender himself to the Creator, just as Isaiah of old did. (Isaiah 6)

Underhill well summarizes the act of sacrifice in these words, "As man begins to wake up to the Reality over against him, there comes to him as the sequel to his sense of awe and dependence the feeling that he wants to offer something – indeed, must offer something – to the unseen Power... The sacrifice may have as its immediately inciting cause awe, fear, anxiety, the impulse to propitiate, or the sense of need or guilt; for all these paths, the spirit of men is persuaded to seek communion with God. But whether this declared cause be the desire to adore, to atone, or to obtain benefits – behind all and coloring all is the remote cause; the deep conviction that sacrifice is the sum of worship, the way in which man must approach God, his first lesson in creaturely love." (pgs. 47, 48)

CONCLUSION:

We have tried to define what worship really is – acknowledgement of the sovereign God whose character is holy, righteous, and loving. Worship is an attitude of life, which should influence man's every action and decision. Worship is a conscious engagement in praise, prayer, and meditation within the corporate body of believers. Through one's own personal discipline, he learns progressively and increasingly how to worship. The Church is a God-instituted organization for the purpose of enabling man to corporately and individually to come into contact with the Divine Reality. The Christ has resorted to certain aids to enable one to better realize the Divine Reality. Ritual, Symbol, and Sacrament are aids to enable man to better worship, and lead him to the culminating act of all worship, which is Sacrifice or self-surrender to God. All worship should lead one to a sense of self-abandonment and overwhelming adoration of God.

The songwriter caught the true spirit of sacrifice when he wrote:

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my life, my soul, my all."

CHAPTER 38

“FATHER, FORGIVE THEM!”

CHAPTER 38

“FATHER, FORGIVE THEM!”

SCRIPTURE: “³² Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. ³³ When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. ³⁴ Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”^[a] And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. ³⁵ The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is God’s Messiah, the Chosen One.” ³⁶ The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar ³⁷ and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.” ³⁸ There was a written notice above him, which read: *THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.*” (Luke 23:32-38)

TEXT: “Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”^[a] And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.” (Luke 23:34)

INTRODUCTION:

I. I NEED FORGIVENESS!

Why do I need forgiveness? For lots of reasons, but I will tell you a few.

A. BECAUSE I AM A SINNER BY NATURE AND BY PERSONAL CHOICE

“Behold, I was brought forth in (a state of) iniquity; my other was sinful who conceived me (and I, too, am sinful).” (Psalms 51:5; Amplified).

“It has been the experience of countless men that they have turned deliberately against the best they have known. The experience of St. Paul as recorded in the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is the classic example.” (The Essence of Spiritual Religion; pg. 63; Trueblood)

“I don’t understand myself at all, for I really want to do what is right, but I can’t. I do what I don’t want to – what I hate. I know perfectly well that what I am doing is wrong, and my bad conscience proves that I agree with these laws I am breaking. But I can’t help myself, because I’m no longer doing it. It is sin inside me that is stronger than I am that makes me do these evil things. I know I am rotten through and through so far as my old sinful nature is concerned. No matter which way I turn, I can’t make myself do right. I want to but I can’t. when I want to do

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good, I don't; and when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway. Now if I am doing what I don't want to, it is plain where the trouble is' sin still has me in its evil grasp. It seems to be a fact of life that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong." (Romans 7:15-21; Living Bible)

I cannot take my sins lightly. My sins are the same kinds of sins that crucified the Son of God! Jealousy, pride, self-centeredness, unbelief, and rejection of Truth!

Why do I need forgiveness? Because I am a great sinner, committing the same sins that crucified the beautiful Son of God!

Why do I need forgiveness?

B. BECAUSE THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN ARE VERY SERIOUS, BOTH IN TIME AND ETERNITY.

"The wages of sin is death." Death of my spirit, and death of my soul eventually. Sin is waste – total waste. Waste of my body, mind, and spirit. Sin brings untold misery. It destroys all that is good, creative, and productive. Sin is so serious because it destroys our relationship with God – the greatest of all wastes.

"The condition most nearly the opposite of salvation is one of waste. Waste is the real tragedy in any avenue of life, and any thoughtful person is moved when he sees great powers, which are either undeveloped or badly used. It is when he sees great powers, which are either undeveloped or badly used. It is more than a truism that the saddest words are 'it might have been.'" (Trueblood)

I need forgiveness badly, for without forgiveness there is no salvation. Without salvation, there is total waste - in time and in eternity. My life is wasted and my soul is lost!

"In the 1930's, specialists in psychosomatic medicine began to learn that a host of physical diseases were caused by envy, jealousy, self-centeredness, resentment, fear and hatred – the identical emotions that the Bible lists as attributes of our wolfish nature. Hence, we see that most of the mental and physical ills of man are caused by the activities of an inner evil force." (None of These Diseases; pg. 145)

C. BECAUSE FORGIVENESS LEADS TO HEALTH AND HAPPINESS AND PRODUCTIVITY.

Psychiatrist "Dr. Lena Sadler had asked her husband, Dr. William S. Sadler, to see one of her patients, a 'refined, highly educated' woman. The patient still did not respond, even after their combined psychiatric counseling. Dr. William Sadler advised his wife that she need not expect any worthwhile improvement 'until her patient's mental life was set in order and numerous psychic slivers were removed.' To the question of how long did he think that would take, he replied, 'Probably a year or more.' Now let Dr. William Sadler tell in his own words that happened:

'Imagine my surprise when this patient walked into my office a few days later and informed me that her 'troubles were over' that the things she had assured me a few days previously she 'could never do', had all been done, that everything I had asked her to do as part of her 'cure' had been set in operation - she had completely overhauled her social, family, and personal life, had made

numerous ‘confessions’, and had accomplished a score of almost impossible mental and ‘moral’ stunts. In reply to my astonished question, ‘How in the world did you ever do all this and effect this great change in your mental attitude toward yourself and the world in less than one week?’ she smilingly replied, ‘Dr. Lena taught me to pray.’”

Comments Dr. McMillan about this: “Without further long, drawn-out and expensive sessions in a psychiatrist’s office, the woman had confessed her sins to God and to others. Then she experienced immediately the healing and refreshment of the promise of Jesus ‘Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.’” (None of These Diseases; pgs. 143, 144)

Why do I need forgiveness? For without forgiveness, there can be no inner healing, health, and happiness.

II. JESUS WANTS TO GIVE ME FORGIVENESS

A. JESUS IS ABLE TO GIVE ME FORGIVENESS (Objective Reality) – (Why?)

1. Description of Jesus’ actual suffering on the Cross.

Jesus wants to give me forgiveness. But a desire to forgive and an ability to forgive are two different things. Forgiveness is only possible because Jesus died on the cross! Thus, forgiveness is very costly! It cost the death of the Son of God!

Crucifixion was considered the most horrible form of death in the ancient world. The criminal was to carry his own cross beam to the place of crucifixion by the longest route possible, in order for all to view the criminal and take warning. Imagine what Christ went through. Think of the terrible scourging with a whip with sharp bones and hardened leather finding its way into the tender bleeding flesh of the back. Think of the mockery of the soldiers. Think of Christ who was physically exhausted and staggering under the weight of the cross. Jesus was offered drugged wine after his painful crucifixion, but Jesus refused the offer, “for He was determined to accept death at its bitterest and at its grimmest, and to avoid no particle of pain.” (Barclay’s Matthew; pg. 404) Jesus endured the shame and reproach of the cross, as His very clothes were distributed to the soldiers in his hour of death.

Says one scholar about the horrible shame of crucifixion: “Among the Romans the degradation was also a part of the infliction - and the punishment if applied to freemen was only used in the case of the vilest criminals. The one to be crucified was stripped naked of all his clothes – and then followed the most awful moment of all. He was laid down upon the implement of torture. The arms were stretched along the cross beam, and at the center of the open palms the point of a huge iron nail was placed, which by the blow of the mallet, was driven home into the wood. Then through either foot separately, or possibly through both together, as they were placed one over the other, another huge nail tore its way through the quivering flesh. Then the accursed tree was slowly heaved up and the end fixed firmly in a hole in the ground. The feet were but a little raised about the earth. The victims were in full reach of every hand that might choose to strike.” (The Saviour’s Seven Statements; Robert G. Lee; pgs. 25, 26)

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2. Description of Jesus' accomplished 'Work' through the Cross.

Forgiveness is only possible because Jesus died on the cross. Why all the physical suffering? Because Jesus was bearing in his body all the sins of the world. Jesus' death was a substitutionary death.

God can only forgive sin because Jesus took the penalty of sin, which is death. God could not remain a just and a holy God and at the same time wink at sin or dismiss sin and excuse sin. Sin must be punished by death – either the death of the truly guilty one or the death of the innocent for the guilty!

“The cross shows how hard it was for God to forgive. *“God was in Christ personally reconciling the world to himself”* (2 Corinthians 5:19; Phillips). This was no scape goating! This isn't an ugly story of God punishing Jesus for our sins. Morally and justly, the guilt of one's sins cannot be *transferred* to a third party. It must be settled between the two involved. Either the sinner bears his own guilt – that's cold justice. Or the one sinned against, the first party, may absorb what the second party did – that's forgiveness! And that's what God did in Christ at Calvary. He tasted death for every man (Hebrews 2:9). That is why God's forgiveness is the most costly thing in the universe.” (The Freedom of Forgiveness; pgs. 23, 24)

Jesus constantly lived a life of forgiveness. The supreme act and example of His forgiveness is found on the Cross. *“He never sinned, never told a lie, never answered back when insulted; when he suffered he did not threaten to get even; he left his case in the hands of God who always judges fairly.”* (I Peter 2:22-23; Living Bible)

The cross accomplished certain great things. It satisfied God's justice as we have seen. It demonstrated God's love, as shown by Jesus' words: 'Father, forgive them.' The cross also revealed Jesus' unshakeable faith in God's power over evil.

In His darkest hour, Jesus claimed God as His unique Father – even though He could not understand the full meaning of His cruel and agonizing death. He trusted during the darkest hour! When he could not understand, he nevertheless trusted. He believed in God as His unique Father – a Father who would not allow any needless sorrow or pain. Some deny God during times of suffering, but Jesus continued to call God His 'Father' during his greatest suffering. Faith in the goodness of God even though one's circumstances of evil defy reason and explanation!

“The faith of Jesus in God's love, God's plans and purposes, and in God's faithfulness was unshaken by all through which He had passed and by what He was now enduring. The hard hands that beat His face could not make Him doubt that God's hand was in all. The blindfold that was over His eyes did not make Him doubt that God saw. The scourge that cut His back could not make Him doubt God's dealings in the human affairs, that His stripes would be the means of heal-

ing. The crown that tore His brow did not make Him doubt that He would be crowned King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The cross did not make Him doubt there was a place on the right hand of God to which He would be exalted. The scepter – a weed placed in His hand – did not make Him doubt that He would hold a scepter over the islands of the world – in universal reign – some day.” (The Saviour’s Seven Statements; Robert G. Lee; pg. 34)

Jesus believed that God could even redeem wrong. Think of it – out of this crucifixion (the worst sin of all mankind) came the SALVATION OF THE WORLD! The simple, yet profound lesson, to learn from this is this: “Never Despair, for God is sovereign Ruler and He will bring triumph out of tragedy.”

B. I AM ABLE TO RECEIVE FORGIVENESS (Subjective Possibility) – (How?)

The cross of Christ and Christ’s death is the foundation of my forgiveness. What Christ universally made possible for mankind, I may experience personally, namely, forgiveness!

To understand the personal possibility of forgiveness, we must understand two things: (1) What Jesus could Not do by His Prayer “Father, Forgive Them”, and (2) What each person must DO through prayer to make forgiveness a personal reality.

1. What Jesus could NOT do by His prayer.
2. “Jesus prayed, *‘Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do.’*” In praying this prayer, Jesus could not, and was not, excusing ignorance. Ignorance does not imply innocence. “Ignorance is blameworthy. Jesus never justifies ignorance. Ignorant people do not deserve to be forgiven their sins. If so, ignorance would be a desirable thing. All spiritual ignorance is more or less blame-worthy...God is holy – and He will not lower His standard of righteousness to the level of our ignorance. Is it not true that all of our sins have in them an element of ignorance?...Unbelief is the result of ignorance. Jesus did not mention the ignorance of those He prayed for as a plea for pardon, but as a description of their state.” (Saviour’s Seven Statements; Robert Lee; pg. 36)

When Jesus prayed, *‘Father, forgive them’*; He could not offer a blanket pardon for the sins of His murderers. Each person must receive forgiveness personally.

Neither is Jesus’ prayer a prayer for God to trust forgiveness upon men who did not want forgiveness. Jesus wants to save all persons. God’s perfect will is that all should be saved, but God permits man to choose his own destiny. God cannot forgive those who have no desire to be forgiven.

3. What Man must do through prayer?

If the persons surrounding the cross were unable automatically, receive forgiveness, even though Jesus prayed for their forgiveness, what is necessary for forgiveness to become a personal reality? No one can receive forgiveness unless he

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meets the conditions for forgiveness: (1) A deep desire to be forgiven, which assumes a knowledge that one needs to be forgiven. (2) A genuine repentance of sin – a moral U –Turn. (3) A turning to Christ in simple faith. The thief on the cross met all three of these conditions and as a result was saved in the last moments of his life.

II. I MUST GRANT FORGIVENESS TO OTHERS

A. The Forgiveness, Which I Receive From God, Is Conditioned Upon My Ability And Willingness To Forgive Those Who Have Wronged Me.

We have said that in order for one to experience personal forgiveness from God, you must desire to be forgiven and repent of sin and turn to Christ in simple faith. Also, in order to receive and maintain God's forgiveness, you must extend absolute, unconditional forgiveness towards those who have wronged you. Jesus taught this: "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." (Matthew 6:14, 15, NIV) See also Matthew 18:21-35.

In the Lord's Prayer, we are taught to pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Failure to forgive those who have wronged us results in a forfeiting of our

B. The Forgiveness, Which I Extend To Others, Is Costly, But Not Nearly As Costly As The Forgiveness, Which God Extends To Me.

Forgiveness is costly! It cost the death of the Son of God! Even as Jesus was dying, He had words of forgiveness on His lips for His enemies! The Greek language shows that this prayer of Jesus for forgiveness was prayed over and over again – repeated many times that day. "As the centurion crushed Him to the ground he hears the same prayer. As the blunt spikes, tore through each quivering palm – the same prayer. When they reared up the cross, made heavier to lift by the weight of His body – the same prayer. When the rabble cursed and ranted – the same prayer. When the soldiers parted His garments and gambled for the seamless robe – the same prayer. When the curious crowds wagged their heads – the same prayer." (Robert Lee; pgs. 30, 31)

God's forgiveness of me is far more costly than my forgiveness of someone else! I can never forgive more than what I have already been forgiven! No one could ever do me more wrong than the wrong I have already done to the Son of God! If God has forgiven me of all, should I not be willing to forgive all?

The scriptures say, "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." (Ephesians 4:31, 32)

Forgiveness is both a rare and absolutely essential Christian quality. To forgive is to act 'divinely', for man's natural tendency is to seek vengeance during times of wrong.

As Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was dying, he prayed, "*Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.*" (Acts 7:60)

After Richard Wurmbbrand, the great Rumanian Christian minister, had been released from Communist prison and torture after 14 years, he went to the graveside of the Communist man who was responsible for his imprisonment and laid beautiful flowers on his grave, showing his love for the man who was responsible for his long years of agony and suffering!

Sam Sherrard – concerning his son who was killed on motor cycle while riding with Sam, was killed by a drunk driver who hit the cycle. Sam received God's grace which enabled him to forgive the drunk driver and in love. Sam sought the man's salvation!

CONCLUSION:

Yes, I need forgiveness because (1) I am a sinner by nature and by choice, (2) the Consequences of sin are most serious, and (3) the miracle of healing through forgiveness is most wonderful.

Jesus wants to give me forgiveness and is able to grant me forgiveness because He died on the cross, taking the penalty of my sin upon Himself.

I can receive God's forgiveness if I accept what Christ has done for me on the cross, if I repent of my sin and turn fully to Christ as Saviour.

I can only receive God's forgiveness, however, if I am willing to forgive those who have wronged me. God will give me grace to forgive others, and He will give me assurance that I am forgiven of all my sins. Jesus died to forgive me! To receive forgiveness and to give forgiveness are the two greatest miracles! Both are possible through Christ! Will you receive Christ's forgiveness today? Will you grant forgiveness to the ones who have wronged you?

O God, the cross of Christ saves us from so much! That cross saves us from the humiliation of sinful exposure and from the hell of righteous punishment. The Cross, O God, is your great redeeming act for all time! I thank you for dying on the cross, thus allowing you Almighty God to maintain justice in your character, and, at the same time, allowing you to exercise kindness in your treatment towards sinners like me. Looking at the cross, we are looking at the very heart of God! Thy Cross is thy magnet to draw us to thee. The 'precious blood of Christ' is your most precious gift to us, heavenly Father. We thank you that we don't have to storm heaven's gates to get your attention. You loved us when we were loveless! You sought us when we were indifferent! Let Calvary Love break our hearts anew! Let your conviction lead to our conversion. Let your breaking of our hearts result in healing our hearts. Your perfect sacrifice means that we can be perfectly forgiven! Let each one today receive your wonderful forgiveness, In Jesus' merciful name!

"Stewardship is not leaving a tip on God's tablecloth; it is the confession of an unpayable debt at God's Calvary". (Paul Rees)

CHAPTER 39

“HOW PERSONAL IS YOUR GOD?”

CHAPTER 39

“HOW PERSONAL IS YOUR GOD?”

PART I – WHY BELIEVE IN GOD’S EXISTENCE?

INTRODUCTION

A. MODERN DENIALS OF GOD’S EXISTENCE (Examples)

1. Communisms – religion is ‘opium of the people’ and the ‘State’ alone is ‘God.’
2. Freudianism – God is merely a personified wish, and all religious experience is a delusion.
3. Positivism - All religious and moral declarations are mere nonsense, and ‘Reality’ is only that which can be experienced through man’s five senses.
4. Atheistic fatalism – (As stated by philosophers): Mencken’s impious creed: “The universe, a gigantic wheel in rapid revolution; man, a sick fly taking a dizzy ride on the rim thereof; religion, the fly’s delusion that the wheel was constructed to give him a ride.”

B. COMPARISON BETWEEN RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

“Religious faith begins exactly where the argument leaves off; all that philosophy could ever do would be to provide an intellectual introduction to religion... what are for philosophy the ultimate questions are for religion the primary assurances.” William Temple.

C. PURPOSE OF PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

1. To give a rational defense of the faith to an unbelieving world (I Peter 3:15)
2. To remove intellectual barriers and honest doubts.

I. THE EXISTENCE OF AN INTELLIGENT ORDER POINTS TO AN INTELLIGENT CREATOR.

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- A. NATURE HAS AN AMAZING ORDER
 - 1. Planets keep their appointed courses.
 - 2. Tides observe appointed times.
 - 3. Seasons come in their appointed order.
- B. Logically, there must be an orderly mind behind an orderly universe.
- C. The Mind Behind the Universe must be greater than any human mind because it achieves results that the human mind can never achieve. Thus---God!
 - 1. To say that orderliness ‘just happened by chance through millions of years,’ is to declare a materialistic miracle.
 - 2. Universal chaos cannot give birth to universal order!
 - 3. Behind intelligence there must be an intelligent Mind expressing itself through that intelligence.
 - 4. The stream cannot run higher than its Source.

II. THE ONE-TO-ONE CORRELATION BETWEEN INTERNAL LOGIC AND EXTERNAL LAWS POINTS TO A COMMON SOURCE OF ORIGIN – GOD.

- A. There is a one-to-one correspondence between man’s mind and the predictable laws of Nature.
 - 1. Phenomenal kinship between mind and nature points to one who is the Designer of both.
 - 2. Science is based upon two compatible facts: one, consistency in nature, and two, the ability of man’s mind to logically comprehend it.
- B. Laws and Logic have a one-to-one correspondence, and thus this fact points to God who is the Common Source of both.

III. THE CONSTANT DECREASE I THE QUANTITY OF ENERGY IN NATURE POINTS TO AN ORIGINAL SOURCE OF ALL –ENERGY –GOD.

- A. Energy Must Have A Beginning –

To the universe is running down like a clock, the clock must have been wound up at a date, which we could name if we knew it. The world, if it is to have an end in time; must have had a beginning in time.” Dr. Inge.

- B. Energy Must Have A Source -
 - 1. The ‘clock’ (universe) which was wound in the beginning, had to have a Winder (God).

2. When one asks why there is an energy loss in the Universe (Entropy), one is asking an ultimate question of purpose – which leads one to the God of Purpose behind the Universe.

PART II –

WHY BELIEVE IN A PERSONAL GOD?

INTRODUCTION:

- A. To logically establish the existence of a Supreme Being is not necessarily to establish the existence of an Object worthy of one's worship, allegiance, and love.
- B. To equate God with abstract ideas of Beauty, Love, Power, or even the absolute is to reduce God to an impersonal essence.
 - 1. To do this would make God a subjective reality and would rob God of all objective reality.
 - 2. God would then cease to exist independent of man's notions or awareness.
- C. A true concept of God is inseparably connected with His personality (which is revealed through God's acts in human history, culminated in the Incarnation.)

I. EVIDENCE OF MORAL EXPERIENCE

- A. Objective Moral Order
 - 1. There is a universal sense of Moral obligation, which many times goes against personal desire or convenience, showing that the source of this moral 'oughtness' is independent of Man.
 - 2. This universal sense of moral obligation points to an objective moral order, independently real and binding upon all men.
 - 3. A clear distinction must be made between:
 - a. Ethical relativism – states that nothing is objectively or really right or wrong, but simply determined according to circumstances or personal notions and opinions.
 - b. Ethical Realism – states that ethical propositions are genuine propositions, capable of being true or false.

4. Ethical Realist can give the following Evidence for Believing in An Objective Moral Order (with Objective Moral Standards):
- a. Conscience – Which can judge an act or an attitude to be right or wrong, only if there independently exists a standard by which to judge the act or attitude.
 - b. Ethical Terminology – There is no such thing as truth or falsehood unless there is an objective standard to determine truth.
 - c. Quarreling, Excuses, Defenses - One cannot prove another person to be wrong, for his judgment is as valid as anyone's, if there is no objective moral standard. There is no reason for one to make an excuse if he hasn't felt that he has failed to 'live up' to a certain, real standard for conduct. One cannot defend any statement that he feels to be true if he cannot point to an ultimate criterion for truth.
 - d. Unselfish Moral Decision – When one makes a moral decision in the presence of two conflicting impulses, he is aware of an overriding Guiding Principle (Moral Law), which (if one obeys it) causes him to side with the impulse which results in unselfish moral action.
 - e. Judgment Making. – The fact that one often makes moral judgments (such as, blame or praise others and judge one's own acts and motives), is evidence of an unconscious assumption that there is an objective moral standard. Unless there is an objective moral order, one cannot pass judgment on another (person, or national morality, or system of government), but only express an opinion which is no 'better' than Hitler's opinion!
 - f. General Moral Agreement Among Different Cultures – The moral teaching among various cultures is strikingly similar, pointing to a universal moral law for all mankind.

B. Personal Moral Law give

1. Source of Moral Law – is a Superhuman Mind.
 - a. It must be a mind, for law has no meaning except for minds.
 - b. It must be Superhuman, for the Moral Law cannot be ours.
2. Feelings associated with Moral Law
 - a. There is a Personal Superhuman Mind behind the Moral Law, for Law has no meaning outside of 'mind,' and 'mind' must be personal to explain the feelings produced by either keeping or breaking the Law.

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- b. Illustrations of Moral Feelings:
 - (1) Same and guilt result from offense against a Person.
 - (2) To search for understanding is only explainable if there is a meeting of mind with Mind.

 - c. The person who invests all the powers of his being in obeying the moral Law, is acting as if the universe was not only governed by this Law, but that there is a Personal Moral Governor behind this Law who cares whether men obey it.
3. Nature of Personality – It is inconceivable to imagine an impersonal being who is able to create personal creatures. If this were so, the creature would have higher qualities than the Creator Himself.

II. EVIDENCE OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

“This fact that a great many people, representing a great many civilizations and a great many centuries, and including large numbers of those generally accounted the best and wisest of mankind, have reported direct religious experience is one of the most significant facts about our world.” Elton Trueblood –

In light of these countless reports of direct religious experience, one of two conclusions must be reached. Such testimonies must either be true or God is an illusion. If God is an illusion, then all great men, as well as Christ Himself, were victims of self-delusion. The evidence which favors the conclusion that such testimonies are true, is as follows:

- A. The Number of Reporters are Many.
- B. The Character of the Reporters Is Varied But Trustworthy. Among the vast number of reporters have been some of the most trustworthy and noble characters in history.
- C. The Agreement of the Reporters Is Not Complete But Substantial.

“Complete agreement is not required for validation. If it were, science would be destroyed. What is required is a substantial core of agreement, with increasing agreement in proportion to developed sensitivity.” (Trueblood) The saints of all ages have had remarkable agreement in their reports of a divine Presence and Power in their lives.
- D. The Consequent Change in Lives is Most Convincing in the Validating Process.

When lives which claim direct experience of God are similarly changed, this fact points to a common Power which produces those changes.

CONCLUSION:

The true God is a Personal God! The universal moral “oughtness” in man is meaningless without an objective Moral Law. The source of this Moral Law is a Personal, Superhuman Mind.

Besides the Moral Argument for the existence of a Personal God, there is the convincing argument from Personal Experience. The testimonies are so many, the occasions so varied, the claims so uniform, and the lives of the claimers so pure, that it is extremely foolish and arrogant to disregard religious experience as valid evidence for God’s personal existence.

Note: (Ideas and concepts mainly taken from C.S. Lewis and Elton Trueblood)

CHAPTER 40

“UNDERSTANDING THE GREAT BOOK OF 1ST TIMOTHY!”

“THE BOOK OF 1ST TIMOTHY”

- I. THE FORMAL GREETING (1:1-2)
 - A. The Author - Paul
 - B. The Authority - “By command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus
 - C. The Recipient - “To Timothy, my true child in the faith”
 - D. The Consolation - “Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord”

- II. THE WAY OF LAW VERSUS THE WAY OF GRACE (1:3 – 2:15)
 - A. The Foundation of Grace Love (1:3-7)
 - I. The “Different Doctrine’ – Speculative Theories (vs. 3-4)
 - a. The Directive To Timothy – “remain at Ephesus that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine.” (v. 3)
 - b. The Corrective by Timothy
 - 1. The Problem – ‘Different Doctrine’
 - 2. The Procedure – No longer occupy yourselves “with myths and endless genealogies which promote speculations.” (v. 4)
 - 3. The Possibility – Correction of the problem would result in false teachers no longer engaging in speculations but in “divine training that is in faith.” (v. 4b)

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- c. The Dynamic Drive – Love (v. 5)
 - a. Issues From a Pure Heart
 - b. Issues From a From a Good Conscience
 - c. Issues From a Since Faith
2. The Diverted Deceivers – Ignorant teachers (vs. 6- 7)
 - a. Denied the True – “Swerving from these:(Pure heart, good on science, sincere faith)
 - b. Discussed the False – “Have wandered away into vain discussion”.
 - c. Driven By Desires – “desiring to be teachers of the law.”
 - d. Deceived in Ignorance – “Without understanding what they are saying”.
 - e. Dogmatic in Claims – “Without understanding what they are saying.”
- B. The Function of Law – Correction (1:8-110)
 1. Beauty (kalo’s) of the Law (v. 8)
 2. Benefits of the Law
 - a. For the Just – Correction (implied (vs. 8b, 9b).
 - b. For The Unjust – Conviction (Amplified) (vs. 9b – 10)
 - i. Specific Application – The Law is laid down for
Lawless, Disobedient, Ungodly, Sinners, Unholy, Profane, Murders of fathers, Murderers of mothers, Manslayers, Immoral persons, Sodomites, Kidnappers, Liars, and Perjurers.
 - ii. General Application – The Law is laid down for anyone who is living “contrary to Sound Doctrine” (v. 10).
 3. Balance of The Law – “In Accordance with the Glorious Gospel with which I have been entrusted” (v. 11)
- C. The Fruitfulness of Grace – Transformation (1:12-17)
 1. Praise for Grace - Thanksgiving
“I thank him who has given me strength for this.” (v. 12a)
 2. Productivity through Grace – Appointment To Service
“He judged me faithful by appointing me to his service.” (v. 12b)

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3. Power of Grace – Personal transformation
 - a. Passionate Life – “I formerly blasphemed and persecuted and insulted him.” (12a)
 - b. Pathetic Ignorance – “I formerly blasphemed and persecuted and insulted him.” (13a)
 - c. Precious Gift – “I received mercy...the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.” (Vs. 13b, 14)
 - d. Purpose of Grace – Universal Redemption
“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” (v. 15)
 - e. Performance of Grace – Display of God’s Patience
 - (1.) The Degree of Grace – The foremost of sinners can be saved (v. 15b)
 - (2.) The Dynamic of Grace – “I received mercy” (v. 16b)
 - (3.) The Demonstration of Grace – “Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience for an example to those who were to believe.” (v. 16a)
 - (4.) The Destiny of Grace – “To those who were to be believing on Him for eternal life.” (Wuest) (v. 16b)
 - f. Person behind Grace – “King of Ages”
“To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever.” (v. 17)

D. The Fight of Faith – Good Warfare (vs. 18-20)

The Commission of Faith – “This charge I commit to you,, Timothy, my son.” (v. 18a)

1. The Inspiration To Faith – Inspired by prophetic utterances. (v. 18a)
2. The Warfare of Faith – “Wage the good warfare” (v. 18 b)
3. The Perseverance in Faith – “Holding faith and a good conscience.” (v. 19a)
4. The Rejection of Faith –
 - a. Cause of Rejection – “Rejecting conscience”
 - b. Reality of Rejection - “certain persons have made shipwreck of their faith.”
 - c. Examples of Rejection – “among them Hymenaeus and Alexander.”
 - d. Corrective During Rejection – “I have delivered (them) to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.”

- E. The Frontier of Grace – Universal (vs. 2:1-7)
 - 1. Universal Prayer By Believers (vs. 1-2)
 - a. Content of Prayer – supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings
 - b. Recipients of Prayer
 - 1. For all men
 - 2. For all kings
 - 3. For all who are in high positions
 - c. Power of Prayer – through prayer, life can be quiet and peaceable
 - d. Character of Pray-ers – “godly and respectful to everyway” (v. 2)
 - 2. Universal Provisio0n From God (vs. 3-6)
 - a. God’s saving purpose (Vs. 3, 4)
 - i. God desires all men to be saved
 - ii. God desires all men to come to the truth
 - b. God’s saving Son (vs. 5, 6)
 - i. Christ’s mediatorial work is for all
 - ii. Christ’s ransom is for all
 - 3. Universal Passion In Paul (v. 7)
 - a. Paul’s Appointment – “For this I was appointed”
 - b. Paul’s Offices – preacher, apostle, teacher
 - c. Paul’s Opportunity – to declare the universal salvation of God (described in vs. 3-6)
 - d. Paul’s Objective – to evangelize the Gentiles
- F. The Response To Grace – Holiness (vs. 2:8-15)
 - 1. The Proper Response of Men (v. 8) – Prayer
 - a. The Practice of Prayer - Men should pray”
 - b. The Place of Prayer – “in every place”

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- c. The Properties of Prayer – “lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling”
- 2. The Proper Response of women (vs. 9-15) – Ordered Deportment
 - a. Proper Attire (modest and sensible apparel)
Not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly attire” (v. 9)
 - b. Proper Actions
“good deeds, as befits women who profess religion” (v. 10)
 - c. Proper Attitudes
 - i. Teachable Attitude – “learn in silence with all submissiveness” (No pride, but receptivity)
 - ii. Submissive Attitude –
 - (a) The symbol of submissiveness – silence instead of teaching
 - (b) The context for submissiveness – “I permit no woman...to have authority over men.” (v. 12)
 - (c) The reason for submissiveness (vs. 13, 14)
 - Adam’s prior creation
 - Eve’s initial transgression
 - iii. Domestic Attitude – “saved through bearing children”
 - iv. Godly attitude – “if she continues in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.” (v. 15)

III. TRUE LEADERSHIP VERSUS FALSE LEADERSHIP (3:1-13)

- A. Pure behavior In Godly Leaders (3:1-13)
 - 1. The Character and Qualifications of Bishop’s Office of (Overseer, 3:1-7)
 - a. Character Qualifications For Bishops (vs. 1-3)
 - i. Aspiration for the office (v. 1)
 - ii. Live above approach
 - iii. Married only once (‘a one woman man’)
 - iv. Temperate
 - v. Sensible

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- vi. Dignified
 - vii. Hospitable
 - viii. An apt teacher
 - ix. No drunkard
 - x. Not violent but gentle
 - xi. Not quarrelsome
 - xii. No lover of money
- b. Domestic Qualifications for Bishops (Vs. 4-5)
- i. The Domestic Responsibility – p[roper household management is evidenced by submissive, respectful children (v. 4)
 - ii. The Domestic Correlation – competent management of personal household prepares one for management of God’s Church (v. 5)
- c. Spiritual Qualification for Bishops (v. 6)
- i. Importance of Spiritual Maturity – “He must not be a recent convert.”
 - ii. Peril of Spiritual Immaturity – “puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil”
- d. Social Qualifications for Bishop (v. 7)
- i. Importance of Good Reputation – “He must be well thought of by outsiders”
 - ii. Peril of Poor Reputation – “He may fall into reproach and the snare of the devil”
2. The Character and Qualifications of Deacons (3:8-13)
- a. Character Qualifications of Deacons (vs. 8-9)
- i. Serious
 - ii. Not double-tongued
 - iii. Not addicted to much wine
 - iv. Not greedy for gain
 - v. Clear conscience

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- b. Spiritual Qualifications of Deacons (v. 10)
 - i. The requirement of testing – “Let them be tested first”
 - ii. The result of testing – “if they prove themselves blameless”
 - c. Domestic Qualifications of Deacons (vs. 11-12)
 - i. Character of Deacon’s Wife
 - (a) Serious
 - (b) No slanderers
 - (c) Temperate
 - (d) Faithful in all things
 - ii. Purity in marriage relationship – Let deacons be married only once” (‘a one woman man’)
 - iii. Proper management of household
 - d. Confidence of Conscientious Deacons (v. 13)
 - i. They gain a good standing for themselves
 - ii. They gain great confidence in the faith
- B. Proper Behavior in Household of God (3:14-16)
- 1. Preference of Personal Presence (v. 14)
 - 2. Purpose of Written Instructions – proper behavior in the household of God (v. 15)
 - 3. Properties of Household of God (15b)
 - a. Church of the living God
 - b. Pillar and bulwark of the Truth
 - 4. Propositional Professions In Household of God (Mystery of our religion; v. 16)
 - a. He was manifested in the flesh (reference to bodily incarnation)
 - b. Vindicated in the spirit (possible reference to God’s vindication of Jesus through bodily Resurrection)

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- c. Seen by angels (possible reference to Christ's pre-incarnate state of glory when he was ministered to by angels)
- d. Preached among the Nations (possible reference to the universal application of the Gospel message)
- e. Believed on in the Word
- f. Taken up in glory (probably a reference to Christ's bodily ascension)

C. Perverse Behavior of Godless Leaders (4:1-5)

1. Context of Perverse Behavior (v. 1a)

"Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith."

2. Cause of Perverse Behavior (v. 1b)

"...by giving heed to deceitful spits and doctrines of demons."

3. Character of Perverse Behavior (vs. 2, 3)

a. Perverse Behavior

- i. Lying lips
- ii. Seared conscience
- iii. Forbid marriage
- iv. Enjoin abstinence from foods

b. Corrective Cure (v. 4)

- i. Affirmation of God's good creator hood
- ii. Acceptance of God's Consecrated Gifts

IV. PROGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR IN DEDICATED PASTOR (4:6-16)

A. Perfected Behavior Through Personal Discipline (vs. 6-10)

1. Nourishment Through Sound Doctrine (v. 6) –

"nourished on the words of the faith and of the good doctrine."

2. Repudiation of False Doctrine (v. 7) –

"Have nothing to do with godless and silly myths"

3. Training in Godly Living (v. 8)

a. Limited value of bodily training

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- b. Unlimited value of spiritual training
 - i. Holds promise for the present life
 - ii. Holds promise for the life to come
- 4. Motivation for Diligent Effort (vs. 9-10)
 - a. The object of our hope – “The living God”
 - b. The character of our God – “The Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.” (v. 10)
- B. Progressive Behavior in Public Performance (4:11-16)
 - 1. Priority of Teaching – “Command and teach these things.” (v. 11)
 - 2. Poise in Teaching – “Let no one despise your youth” (v. 12a)
 - 3. Personification in Teaching – “Set the believers an example” (v. 12)
 - a. Example in speech
 - b. Example in conduct
 - c. Example in love
 - d. Example in faith
 - e. Example in purity
 - 4. Performance in Teaching (v. 13)
 - a. Attend to the public reading of Scripture
 - b. Attend to preaching
 - c. Attend to teaching
 - 5. Power in Teaching (v. 14)
 - a. Divinely – given gift
 - b. Prophetically – confirmed gift
 - 6. Progress in Teaching (v. 15)
 - a. Practice of Duties (personally)
 - b. Observation of Progress (socially)
 - 7. Perseverance in Teaching (v. 16a)
 - a. Take heed to yourself

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- b. Take heed to your teaching
 - c. Hold to your teaching
 - 8. Product in Teaching (v. 16b)
 - a. Persistence in teaching results in saving yourself
 - b. Persistence in teaching results in saving your hearers
- V. RESPONSIBILITIES AND RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE 'HOUSEHOLD OF God' (5:1-6:21)
- A. Responsibilities Between Age Groups (5:1-2)
 - 1. Relationships to older men – “exhort him as you would a father”
 - 2. Relationships to younger men – “treat younger men like brothers”
 - 3. Relationship to older women – treat older women like mothers”
 - 4. Relationship to younger women – treat younger women like sisters, in all purity
 - B. Responsibilities To dependent Widows (5:3-8)
 - 1. The Family’s Responsibilities To Widows (v. 4) and Dependents (v. 8)
 - a. Priority in Family Responsibility – “If a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn their religious duty to their own family.” (v. 4a)
 - b. Purpose in Family responsibility
 - (1) Some return to their parents.” (v. 4b)
 - (2) “This is acceptable in the sight of God.” (v. 4b)
 - c. Provision for dependent family members (v. 8)
 - (1) Importance of Provision – Believers are expected to provide for dependent relatives, especially family members
 - (2) Indictment for Neglect – Believers who neglect to provide show that they have disowned the faith and that they are worse than an unbeliever
 - 2. The Church’s Responsibilities To Widows (vs. 5-7)
 - a. Requirement of Church – “Honor (give provisions for) widows who are real widows” (v. 3)
 - b. Requisites of Widows

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- (1) Widows must not have family members who can care for them (v. 4)
 - (2) Widows must manifest godly character (vs. 5-6)
 - i. These widows must set their hopes on God (v. 5b)
 - ii. These widows must continue to supplications and prayers night and day (v. 5b)
 - iii. These widows must not be self-indulgent (v. 6)
 - c. Reputation of Church – “Command this, so that they may be without reproach.” (v. 7)
- A. Responsibilities Regarding Enrollment of Widows (5:9-16)
1. Requirements for Enrollment of Widows (vs. 9-10)
 - a. Age Requirement – No widow under sixty years old is to be enrolled.
 - b. Marriage Requirement – No widow ‘who has been married more than once’ is to be enrolled.
 - c. Character Requirements (v. 10)
 - (1) Good Reputation – “she must be well attested for her good deeds.’
 - (2) Domestic accomplishment – “one who has brought up children.”
 - (3) Compassionate Action
 - i. “Shown hospitality”
 - ii. “Washed the feet of the saints”
 - iii. Relieved the afflicted”
 - iv. Devoted herself to doing good in every way”
 2. Refusal of Enrollment of Younger Widows (vs. 11-16)
 - a. Reasons for Refusal
 - (1) Likelihood of Remarriage – “when they grow wanton against Christ they desire to marry” (v. 11)
 - (2) Liability of Condemnation – “They incur condemnation for having violated their first pledge.” (v. 12)

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- (3) Laziness in lifestyle – “they are likely to be lazy and spend their time gossiping around from house to house, getting into others people’s business.” (v. 13, Living)
- b. Recommendations for Younger Widows
 - (1) Reasonableness of Recommendation
 - i. Marry
 - ii. Bear Children
 - iii. Rule their households
 - (2) Reasons for Recommendation
 - i. In the present, the enemy must be given no occasion to revile us.
 - ii. In the past, some widows were led astray by Satan.
3. Recapping of Responsibilities to Widows (v. 16)
 - a. Family’s Responsibilities – “If any believing woman has relatives who are widows, let her assist them.”
 - b. Church’s Responsibilities – The Church is to “assist those who are real widows.”
- B. Responsibilities for Care of Elders (5:17-19)
 1. Care for Conscientious Ruling Elders (vs. 17-19)
 - a. Honor for Diligence in Labors (v. 17)
 - (1) Especially in preaching
 - (2) Especially in teaching
 - b. Honor Through Payment of Wages (v. 18)
 - (1) Scriptural Precedent: ‘You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain’
 - c. Honor through Defense of Reputation – “Never admit any charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses” (v. 19)
 2. Correction of Rebellious Ruling Elders (vs. 20-21)
 - a. Rebuke of sinning Elder Required (v. 20)
 - (1) Condition for Rebuke – when elder ‘persists in sin’

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- (2) Context for Rebuke – ‘rebuke in the presence of all’
- (3) Corrective from Rebuke – ‘so that the rest may stand in fear’
- b. ‘Respect of persons’ (partiality) Forbidden (v. 21)
 - (1) Atmosphere of Charge
 - i. In the presence of God
 - ii. In the presence of Christ Jesus
 - iii. In the presence of the elect angels
 - (2) Attitude of Charge – ‘Keep these rules without favor, doing nothing from partiality’ (v. 21b)
- 3. Concern for Proper Ordination (v. 22)
 - a. Reticence ‘in the laying on of hands’
 - b. Retention of personal purity
- E. Responsibility for Personal Health Care (5:23)
 - 1. Responsibility for Personal Health Care
 - 2. Remedial limitations in use – “for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments”
- F. Responsibility Of Ministers For Personal Sins (vs. 24-25)
 - 1. Conspicuous Deeds
 - a. Sinful deeds sometimes known to all! (Correction is possible)
 - b. Righteous deeds sometimes known to all (Praise is possible)
 - 2. Inconspicuous Deeds
 - a. Sinful deeds sometimes hidden from others (judgment will reveal)
 - b. Righteous deeds sometimes unacknowledged ‘until long afterward’ (Living Bible)
- G. Responsibility of Slaves to Masters (6:1-2)
 - 1. Mandate for slaves’ Respectful Behavior – “Let all who are under the yoke of slavery regard their masters as worthy of all honor” (v. 1a)
 - 2. Motivation for Slaves’ Respectful Behavior
 - a. General respect for all masters (the name of God must be honored) “the name of God and the teaching may not be defamed.” (v. 1b)

- b. Specific respect for Christian masters – (the work of masters must be benefitted) “they must serve all the better since those who benefit by their service are believers and beloved” (v. 2b)
- H. Responsibility to Expose Materialistic Perils (6:3-10)
- 1. Conviction of Godless Teachers (6:3-5)
 - a. Deviation from Sound Doctrine (v. 3) – “If any one teaches otherwise and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching which accords with godliness”
 - b. Destitute of True Knowledge
 - (1) Carnal attitude of godless teachers
 - i. Indication of conceit – “he is puffed up”
 - ii. Indictment of conceit – “He knows nothing”
 - (2) Carnal activities of godless teachers
 - i. Controversial activities – “he has a morbid craving for controversy and for disputes about words.” (v. 4a)
 - ii. Chaotic results (vs. 4b, 5)
 - 1. Produces envy
 - 2. Produces dissension
 - 3. Produces slander
 - 4. Produces base suspicions
 - (a) These men are depraved in mind
 - (b). These men are bereft of the truth
 - (c). These men imagine that ‘godliness is a means of gain.’
 - 2. Contentment in Godly Living (6:6-8)
 - a. Proper Perspective regarding Money (vs. 6-7)
 - (1) Wealth cannot bring contentment (only godliness can)
 - (2) Wealth is earned while on earth (“we brought nothing into the world.”)
 - (3) Wealth cannot be taken with one when he dies (“We cannot take anything out of the world”)

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- b. Proper Use of Money – “if we have good and clothing, with these we shall be content” (v. 8)
- 3. Condemnation of Covetous Materialists (6:9-10)
 - a. Problem of Materialistic Desires – “those who desire to be rich.”
 - b. Probability of Materialistic Temptation – “fall into temptation, into a snare”
 - c. Peril of Materialistic Destruction – “fall into...many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.” (v. 9)
 - d. Principle of Materialistic Evil – “For the love of money is the root of all evils.” (v. 10a)
 - e. Possibility of Materialistic apostasy – “It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs.” (v. 10b)
- I. Responsibility To Maintain Sound Faith (6:11-16)
 - 1. Focus on the Sound Faith (v. 11)
 - a. Shun the godless way of life (v. 11a)
 - b. Aim at the godly way of life (v. 11a)
 - (1) Aim at righteousness
 - (2) Aim at faith
 - (3) Aim at godliness
 - (4) Aim at love
 - (5) Aim at steadfastness
 - (6) Aim at gentleness
 - 2. Fight for the Sound Faith (v. 12)
 - a. Present perseverance in the faith
 - (1) “Fight the good fight of the faith”
 - (2) “Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called”
 - b. Past proclamation of the Faith – “You made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” (v. 12)

3. Fulfillment of the Sound Faith (vs. 13-16)
 - a. Context In Giving The Charge
 - (1) In the presence of God (“who gives life to all things”)
 - (2) In the presence of Christ Jesus (who made the good confession before Pontius Pilate)

 - b. Constancy In Keeping the Charge
 - (1) Present responsibility – “Keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach”
 - (2) Future – “until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

 - c. Climax in Fulfilling the Charge (vs. 15-16)
 - (1) Manifestation at Proper Time (v. 15a)
 - (2) Manifestation by Proper Person (vs. 15b-16)
 - i. Identification of the Person – “The blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords.
 - ii. Attributes of the Person
 - (a) Immorality
 - (b) Holiness – “dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has ever seen or can see.”
 - (c) Honor
 - (d) Power (eternal dominion)

- J. Responsibilities in Stewardship of Wealthy (6:17-19)
 1. Improper attitudes of the wealthy (v. 17)
 - a. Haughtiness
 - b. Misplaced Hope
 - (1) The wealthy are not to set their hopes on uncertain riches.
 - (2) The wealthy are to set their hopes on God who is the source of true riches (“who richly furnishes us with everything to enjoy”)

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2. Praiseworthy Activities of the Wealthy (vs. 18-19)
 - a. Giving up earthly wealth
 - (1) Be rich in good deeds
 - (2) Be liberal and generous
 - b. Storing up heavenly treasures
 - (1) Lay up a good foundation for the future
 - (2) “Take hold of the life which is life indeed.”

K. Responsibility of Timothy to Guard the Truth (6:20-21)

1. Guard the True – “Guard what has been entrusted to you.”
2. Avoid the False –
 - a. Identifying the False – “godless chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge.”
 - b. Missing the Mark – “for by professing it some have missed the mark as regards the faith.”

VI. BENEDICTION: “Grace be with you.”

EXAMINING THE PERILS OF LIFE (IN THE BOOK OF I TIMOTHY)
FALSE DOCTRINE DESCRIBED

- 1:4 ...myths and endless genealogies (which promote speculations)
- 1:6 ...vain discussions; Teachers of the law
- 1:19b-20 ...rejecting conscience (learned to blaspheme)
- 4:1-3 ...giving heed to deceitful spirits; doctrines of demons through pretensions of liars consciences are seared; forbid marriage; abstinence from foods
- 4:7-8 ...godless and silly myths (bodily training all-important)
- 5:8 ...no provision for one's own relatives (laziness)
- 6:3-5 ...morbid craving for controversy; disputes about words (depraved in mind) (bereft of the truth); godliness is a means of gain
- 6:20-21 ...Godless chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge

PERILS (DESCRIBED) – POSSIBILITIES OR REALITIES

- 1:6 ...certain persons have wandered away from a pure heart, a good conscience, a sincere faith (into legalism)
- 1:19b-20 ...certain persons have made shipwreck of their faith by rejecting conscience
- 3:6-7 ...possible to be puffed up with conceit and to fall into the condemnation of the devil (possible to fall into reproach and the snare of the devil)
- 4:1-3 ...some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceitful spirits and to doctrines of demons
- 5:8 ...by failing to provide for dependents, a person disowns the faith and is considered worse than an infidel.
- 5:11-15 ... younger widows, under a vow, can break their vow by marrying, and as a result incur condemnation (some of these who have violated their pledge have become busy bodies etc' and 'have already strayed after Satan')
- 5:20 It is possible for those who are in the Church not only to sin, but to 'persist in sin'
- 6:9-10, 17 Possible to become a lover of money (desire to be rich) and as a result to fall into temptation (a snare that brings hurt, ruin, and destruction) senseless, hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction (through this craving some have wandered away from the faith and have pierced their hearts with many pangs).

Possible for rich believers to set their hopes on their uncertain riches (v. 17) instead of on God.
- 6:20-21 It is possible to miss the mark (as regards the faith) by becoming involved in 'the godless chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge'.

LOOKING AT 'SALVATION' AS TAUGHT IN I TIMOTHY

(Subjective Appropriation and Maintenance)

(Objective Accomplishment)

Salvation conditional Upon Man's Proper
Response of Faith and Obedience

Salvation Complete through Christ's
Atonement

<p>I received mercy (1:13)</p> <p>Grace overflowed for me (1:14)</p> <p>Faith and love that are in Christ Jesus (1:14)</p> <p>Mercy received by those who believe in Jesus for eternal life (1:15-16)</p> <p>One is to wage a good warfare, inspired by prophetic utterances, as one holds to faith and a good conscience (1:18-19a)</p> <p>Believers are urged to lead a godly life in every way (2:1-2)</p> <p>Woman will be saved through bearing children, if she continues in faith, love, holiness, with modes-</p>	<p>Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners (1:15)</p> <p>Jesus Christ displayed his perfect patience (1:16)</p> <p>(God is the King of the ages to whom all glory belongs v. 17)</p> <p>The Savior desires all men to come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved (2:3-4) (universal salvation possible)</p> <p>Jesus is the mediator between God and man (one mediator provided) (2:5)</p> <p>Jesus gave himself as a ransom for all (universal atonement provided)</p>
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<p>ty (2:15)</p> <p>Mystery of the faith must be held with a clear conscience (3:9)</p> <p>Humility and good reputation in the office of Bishop are necessary lest one falls into the condemnation of the devil</p> <p>Thanksgiving, believing, and knowing the Truth are essential (4:3)</p> <p>“Nourished on the words of the faith and of the good doctrine” (v. 6)</p> <p>Training in godliness holds promise; not only for the present life, but also for the life, but also for the life which is to come (4:8)</p> <p>The universal objective salvation of Christ becomes a subjective reality to those persons who believe on Christ (4:10)</p> <p>An example of godly living (in speech, conduct, love, faith, purity) is expected (4:12)</p> <p>Both teacher and students of truth will be saved if the teacher holds to the truth (4:16)</p> <p>Widows are to set their hopes on God and continue in supplications and prayers night and day (5:5,</p>	<p>Jesus is the Savior of all men objectively, and the Savior of those men particularly who believe on Him (4:10)</p>
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<p>6)</p> <p>Maintenance of Salvation (the faith) involves continuing care for one's dependent family members (5:8)</p> <p>Maintenance of Salvation (the Faith) is dependent upon continuing resistance to the temptation to love money (6:9)</p> <p>...and continuing pursuit of righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness (6:11)</p> <p>Constantly taking hold of eternal life is essential in order ultimately to receive eternal life ("Be constantly engaging in the contest of the Faith" (Wuest; 5:12)</p> <p>The rich believers are required to set their hopes on God alone (6:17) and to be liberal and generous in good deeds, in order that they "may take hold of the life which is life indeed" (laying up for themselves a good foundation for the future") (6:18-19)</p> <p>A believer (like Timothy) must 'avoid the godless chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge' in order that he not miss the mark 'as regards the faith' (6:20-21)</p>	
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WHAT IS THE MAIN HERESY 'BEHIND' THE BOOK OF I TIMOTHY?

It is likely that the heresy that Paul had to deal with in the Ephesians Church where Timothy pastured was the combined heresy of Gnosticism and Jewish legalism. Gnosticism briefly summarized is as follows:

- (1) All matter is essentially evil and spirit alone is good.
- (2) Therefore, God, who is pure spirit, could not have created the physical universe, but instead God sent out a series of emanations, "each one more distant from himself until at last there came an emanation or aeon so distant that it could deal with matter and create the world" (William Barclay). This latter emanation was so far removed from God that it was considered to be totally opposite of God and indeed even hostile to God. In fact, the emanation which created the world of matter was turned into a god – a god which was hostile to the true and pure God. In I Timothy, Paul had to contend that there was only one God (1:17; 2:5)
- (3) Only the intellectually elite were able to ascend the ladder of emanations to get to the God of pure spirit. These intellectually elite became so interested in this ladder of emanations that they spent long hours speculatively inventing fables and genealogies for these emanations. Only the small elite group were intellectually equipped to understand the genealogies and to climb the ladder of emanations to find salvation from God. Thus, salvation was only for a few, not for all. Paul contended in I Timothy that salvation was for all, for God wished to save all (2:4) and Jesus' ransom was for all (2:6).
- (4) The intellectually elite believed that special knowledge was necessary in order to gain this access to the God of pure spirit, through ascension up the ladder of emanations. Where was this special knowledge to be found? The Old Testament law was a apparently one source for this special knowledge, for the intellectually elite in the Church had 'wandered away into vain discussion, desiring to be teachers of the law' (1:6, 7).
- (5) These false teachers (proud intellectuals who in reality knew nothing, I Timothy 6:4) believed that, because the body was material, it was inherently evil. Only the spirit was pure. As a result of this view of the material body, two opposite consequences resulted. Some of the false teachers concluded that the body, with its vile bodily instincts for food and sex, must be subdued and suppressed. Thus, asceticism resulted, as evidenced in I Timothy 4:4, 5. It is likely that this Gnostic asceticism was supported and reinforced through reference to the Old Testament dietary laws. The opposite extreme was immorality. Some of the false teachers reasoned that, if the body was evil and the spirit alone was pure, one could indulge his flesh and at the same time leave his spirit untouched and unharmed and unpolluted in the process. In writing to Timothy, Paul is apparently aware of the two extreme consequences of Gnosticism – asceticism and immorality. On one hand Paul deals with asceticism (contending that the material world is good "and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with Thanksgiving." 4:5) it is likely that this Gnostic as-

ceticism evidenced itself, not only in rigid dietary laws, but also in its stringent requirements for physical, bodily exercise. One way to keep the body in its place – disciplined and unindulgent - was to undergo ‘bodily training’ (4:8). It is possible that Gnostic asceticism further manifested itself in a low view of marriage, for marriage would involve the strong sexual drives. Could Paul’s positive view of the home and marriage (3:2, 4, 12; 4:3; 5:1, 2, 4, 8, 10, 14, 16) be his way of refuting the heresy of Gnostic asceticism which taught that marriage (involving sex) was profane and dirty? It is certain that the heresy with which Paul had to deal had a low view of marriage (4:3), to the extent that the heretical teachers for bad marriage.

As previously stated, if one extreme of these heretics was asceticism, the other extreme was immorality. It is likely that Paul’s unusual emphasis in the book of I Timothy on ethical character is an expression of his reaction against the Gnostic heresy which led to immorality. Paul gives the utmost attention to:ethical, moral, and spiritual concerns. This concern is shown in many ways. In I Timothy 1:8-11 Paul gives a long list of persons who are immoral. Knowledge of the law is not the method of attaining access to the God of pure spirit as one ascends the ladder of emanations (as possibly the Gnostic legalists are contending, 1:7), but instead knowledge of the law gives consciousness of sin to the lawless (the law is laid down for ‘the lawless and disobedient’ 1:9). The Sound doctrine, of the glorious Gospel (1:11) in contrast tot the ‘different doctrine’ (I Timothy 1:3) of the Gnostics, teaches that the flesh’s indulgence brings condemnation. The body is the expression of the spirit of a person; an one cannot indulge his flesh without polluting his spirit. Ethical character (i.e., love issuing from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith, 1:5) is seen in contrast to a sinful character (i.e., a life characterized by indulgence of the flesh, 1:9, 10). Paul’s ethical concerns, in contrast to the Gnostic heresy which, in one of its manifestations, had no regard for morality, is further seen in several other portions of I Timothy.

In I Timothy 1:12-17 Paul emphasized the moral transformation in his life in contrast to his former life of immorality (“I formerly blasphemed and persecuted and insulted him”. 1:13). This moral transformation is the result of his acceptance of the true doctrine of God’s grace (1:14) and his repudiation of the inadequate way of law (1:8-11).

It is important (in view of the immorality of the Gnostic heretics) that Timothy maintain his strength of moral character (“holding faith and a good conscience”. 2:19), and that he not reject conscience (rejecting conscience is to engage in those immoral actions which bring shame and guilt to ones consciousness). Among the heretics (some of whom have made ‘shipwreck of their faith’. 1:19) are Hymenaeus and Alexander (1:20). It is not known for sure, but it is reasonable to think that Hymenaeus and Alexander were among those who succumbed to Gnostic heresy in the Church and threw morality overboard in their lives. Rejecting conscience could mean adopting a false doctrine (in contrast to sound doctrine) which led, as in the case of the Gnostics, to an immoral lifestyle. It is possible that the sin of Alexander and Hymenaeus was similar to the sin of the immoral man at Corinth, for in both cases Paul commands that theses apostates be “delivered to Satan” (I Timothy 1:20 and I Corinthians 5:5) for correction!

Paul continues to show concern for ethical character throughout the remainder of the letter: “That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way” (2:2); “lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling” (2:8); women are to be godly in

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their behavior (2:9, 10); and they are to continue “in faith and love and holiness, with modesty” (2:15).

Character qualifications for the overseers of the Church are carefully laid down by Paul: Bishops in 3:1-7, Deacons and Deaconesses in 3:8-13, Elders in 5:17-22.

Paul was concerned that the believers in the Church did not engage in sin. This was another way of expressing his focus on the importance of ethical character in contrast to the brazen and sinful lifestyles of the Gnostic heretics who were threatening the sanctity of the church. Paul urges Timothy to “have nothing to do with godless and silly myths” (4:8), and to “set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity” (4:12). Younger women are to be treated like sisters, “in all purity.” (5:2) A self-indulgent lifestyle which is oblivious to the physical needs of family dependents is strongly rebuked (5:8). “As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.” (5:20) Paul issues forth a warning not to “participate in another man’s sins” but instead to “keep yourself pure” (5:22). Could it be that the Gnostic heretics and Jewish legalists appeared to be authentic in their religiosity, and therefore Paul had to caution Timothy against haste in ‘laying on of hands’ (ordination of ministers, 5:22)? The sins of some men were conspicuous (5:24), (Perhaps this refers to the self-indulgent Gnostics who had infiltrated the Church with a lifestyle that was brazenly sinful). “The sins of others appear later” (5:24) (perhaps this is refers to the ascetic branch of the Gnostics whose teachings, along with the teachings of Jewish legalists, appeared to be very proper and sound).

Paul’s ethical concerns are further shown in the attention he gives to the proper behavior of the widows in the Church. The widow who is self-indulgent is “dead even while she lives” (5:6). Paul wants the widows to live “without reproach” (5:7). “Good deeds” (5:10) in the lives of widows are to be “enrolled” (5:9) is of utmost importance. Such widows are to devote themselves “to doing good in every way” (5:10). Wrong behavior (i.e., “violating their first pledge” 5:12) results in “incurring condemnation” (5:12). Straying after Satan (5:15) is the result of violating a sacred pledge, with the consequent behavior described in 5:13 (“they learn to be idlers, gadding about from house to house, and not only idlers busy gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not.”)

There is a teaching (the teaching of the Jewish legalists and Gnostic heretics who were preoccupied with genealogies and myths) which is religious in nature but totally unsound in doctrine. The false teaching of the heretics is strongly condemned, for it “does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching which accords with godliness” (6:3). The teaching of the heretics is unsound for several reasons, but for one, it is unsound because its advocates lead immoral and godless lives! Godliness in character is not an end within itself, but the heretics have turned godliness into “a means of gain” (6:5).

Over and over Paul emphasizes in his letter to Timothy the importance of ethical conduct and godly living. “But as for you, man of God, shun all this (unsound teaching of the self-indulgent and immoral Gnostics and the teaching of the Jewish legalists?)”; aim at righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness...I* charge you to keep the

commandment unstained and free from reproach (reaction against immoral teachings of Gnostics?) until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ” (6:11, 14).

Why was Paul so concerned about teaching the believers in the Church “how one ought to behave in the household of God” (3:15)? It is probable that one of Paul’s chief concerns in writing the letter was to confront the heretical teachers whose teachings and conduct were upsetting the mind and seeking to corrupt the behavior of the believers in the Church. The Church to which Paul addresses his concerns is “the Church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth” (3:15). The heretics who had infiltrated the Church were at best diluting the truth of the Gospel, and at worse were out to replace it altogether with their teachings. The heretics in the Church are pictured in I Timothy 1:3-7. They sought to be novel, preoccupying themselves with myths rather than the established doctrines of Christ. They were preoccupied with intellectual speculation rather than practical ethical behavior. They were more concerned with speculative theories than with practical love. They were puffed up with conceit (6:4) thinking they were great teachers of the law (1:7), but in reality, they understood neither, what they were saying or, the things about which they made assertions (1:7). These Gnostics (‘know-it-all’) who prided themselves in their expert and technical knowledge (regarding endless genealogies, etc.), and who had “a morbid craving for controversy and for disputes about words” (6:4), are indicted by Paul as knowing nothing (6:4).

Paul is concerned that proper order be maintained in the Church and that pure behavior be manifested before all (including outsiders, 3:7). If the teaching of the Gnostics and Jewish legalists would have been adopted by believers in the church (as was the case probably with Hymenaeus and Alexander, there would have been anything but good behavior in the household of God (3:15)! To adopt the lifestyle of the Jewish legalists is to practice a rigid asceticism – adherence to dietary laws, rigid bodily training, repudiation of marriage and the family. To adopt the lifestyle of the self-indulgent Gnostics is to adopt a lifestyle of gross sinning. Adopting either lifestyle results in behavior inappropriate for those who are called to holiness, to Christlikeness, to truthfulness. Behavior in the “household of God” (3:16) is ordered, prayerful, respectful, moral behavior-behavior that is consistent with the self-revealed character of God who wishes to save all from sin and who wishes to lead all to the truth (2:4). Right behavior is humble, godly, pure behavior (in contrast to the accepted behavior of the proud, godless, and profane Gnostics). Right knowledge is knowledge based on God’s self-revelation (Christ’s redemptive purpose (1:15), God’s immortal power and glory (1:17), God’s desire to save all (2:3, 4), Christ’s sole mediatorial role (2:5), Christ’s universal ransom and unlimited atonement (2:6). The speculative knowledge of the Gnostics (‘know-it-all’) was vain and futile and powerless to save!

Right doctrine leads to right living and to proper relationships. Holy men and women (married and unmarried laymen), and holy leaders (overseers like Bishops, deacons, and elders) are to be humble in their service and pure in their relationships. Each is to fulfill his roles and duties responsibly. When they do, proper behavior in the “household of God” (3:15) is guaranteed.

- (6) This widespread heresy of Gnosticism – the heresy that apparently had crept into several of the New Testament churches – was a dangerous and deadly heresy! This heresy contended that the human body was evil and that God who was pure Spirit, was altogether good. Therefore, God could have nothing to do with human flesh. The Gnostics con-

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cluded, on the basis of this erroneous logic, that Jesus did not really have a human body, but that he only appeared to have a physical being. Thus, this heresy denied both the physical incarnation and the bodily resurrection of Jesus! Perhaps it is the Gnostics' denial of the real humanity and the bodily resurrection of Jesus that caused Paul to quote a human or a creed of the Church (3:16):

“He was manifest in the flesh (affirmation of the real humanity of Jesus)

Vindicated in the Spirit (perhaps this speaks of God's vindication of the deity of Christ through the bodily resurrection), seen by angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.” (perhaps this is an affirmation of Jesus' bodily ascension).

As mentioned earlier in this paper, the Gnostics engaged in wild speculations regarding the manner in which the world was created. Building upon their false premise that matter was evil and spirit was good and that the God of pure spirit created the material world through a series of emanations, the Gnostics further speculated that Jesus was “merely the greatest of the emanations, the one closest to God. It classed him as the highest link in the endless chain between God and man.” (William Barclay) Further, Jesus was only one of a whole series of mediators between God and man. a human being in his 'evil' bodily state could not approach the God of pure spirit directly, but only through a long series of emanations, Jesus being the highest in the series of emanations. To the Gnostics, Jesus was the highest mediator among many mediators between God and man.

Thus, the Gnostics not only divested Jesus of His real humanity, but they also divested Jesus of his unique divinity!

With the possibility of this corrupt Christological view of the Gnostics invading the Church, is it any wonder that Paul spends time in I Timothy dealing with the person and work of Christ?

“The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” (1:15) a full acceptance of the total person of Christ Jesus is necessary for salvation! A truncated view of the person of Jesus cannot result in salvation from sin! The use of 'Christ' (the anointed one of God who came into the world) speaks of the Savior's full humanity. Combining the two terms (Christ Jesus) testifies (to the believers in the Church and to the heretics whose views of Jesus were false) that Jesus was fully human and fully divine! The fully human/divine One came for a redemptive purpose – “to save sinners” (1:15). This same divine/human One is patient with sinners, and will give eternal life to any sinner (even to one as bad as Paul) who believes in Him (1:16).

“This is good, and it is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (2:3, 4) The God of pure spirit is by nature a God who is Savior (a unique title for God). God is in love with mankind, and is not hostile to humanity (even though humanity has many frailties, weaknesses, and fleshly passions). This God does not favor the intellectually elite who (according to the Gnostics) were alone able to find the pure God by ascending the many steps in the long ladder of emanations. Even though God is “The King of Ages, immortal, invisible” and glorious (transcendent and holy) (1:17), He can be known by all, for all men are the object of God's saving purpose (2:3,4), and all persons have been ransomed by Christ (2:5).

God's knowledge may become the experiential knowledge of all persons, not just the property of an intellectually elite group (the Gnostics – 'know-it-all' group. 2:4).

Jesus is not the highest mediator in a series of mediators between man and God (as the Gnostics asserted). Rather, Jesus is the only mediator between man and God (2:5)

In an objective sense, Jesus is the Savior of all men (the Savior of common men as well as the Savior of the intellectually elite). Subjectively speaking, Jesus is the Saviour only of those persons who personally believe in Him (4:10). Perhaps this statement (4:10) regarding the method of salvation – (i.e., God is known through humble faith rather than through proud intellectualism) – is another way of refuting the faulty soteriology of the Gnostic heretics.

Why was Timothy's teaching regarding the truth of God's character and the truth of God's method of salvation, so important? For only as Timothy 'holds on' (maintains) this orthodox teaching can he and his hearers be saved (4:16)! So, in summary, to adopt the false teachings of the Gnostic heretics (who believed in salvation through intellectualism), or to adopt the teachings of the Jewish legalists (who believed in salvation through law keeping) was to adopt a set of beliefs which, if pursued, would lead to spiritual death! Only as one believes in the Jesus Christ, as Paul and Timothy taught Him, could anyone have eternal life (1:16).

CHAPTER 41

“WHAT DOTH THE LORD REQUIRE OF THEE?”

CHAPTER 41

“WHAT DOTH THE LORD REQUIRE OF THEE?”

The way God intends for every person (His special creatures) to live.

“He (God) has showed you, Oh man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8)

I. DO JUSTLY (honesty, truthfulness, integrity, dependability of one’s word)

Important Scriptures (read each one very carefully and prayerfully) – together as a family.

Psalm 109:1-2:

*¹ O God, whom I praise,
don’t stand silent and aloof
² while the wicked slander me
and tell lies about me.*

Psalm 119:28-32:

*²⁸ I weep with sorrow;
encourage me by your word.
²⁹ Keep me from lying to myself;
give me the privilege of knowing your instructions.
³⁰ I have chosen to be faithful;
I have determined to live by your regulations.
³¹ I cling to your laws.
LORD, don’t let me be put to shame!
³² I will pursue your commands,
for you expand my understanding.*

Psalm 119:163:

*¹⁶³ I hate and abhor all falsehood,
but I love your instructions.*

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Psalm 120:2:

² *Rescue me, O LORD, from liars
and from all deceitful people.*

Proverbs 6:16-19:

¹⁶ *There are six things the LORD hates—
no, seven things he detests:
¹⁷ haughty eyes,
a lying tongue,
hands that kill the innocent,
¹⁸ a heart that plots evil,
feet that race to do wrong,
¹⁹ a false witness who pours out lies,
a person who sows discord in a family.*

Proverbs 10:18:

¹⁸ *Hiding hatred makes you a liar;
slandering others makes you a fool.*

Proverbs 12:19:

¹⁹ *Truthful words stand the test of time,
but lies are soon exposed.*

Proverbs 12:22:

²² *The LORD detests lying lips,
but he delights in those who tell the truth.*

Proverbs 13:5:

⁵ *The godly hate lies;
the wicked cause shame and disgrace.*

Exodus 20:16:

¹⁶ *“You must not testify falsely against your neighbor.*

Ephesians 4:25:

²⁵ *So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of
the same body.*

John 8:44:

⁴⁴ *For you are the children of your father the devil, and you love to do the evil
things he does. He was a murderer from the beginning. He has always hated the
truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his cha-
racter; for he is a liar and the father of lies.*

Revelation 21:8:

⁸ *“But cowards, unbelievers, the corrupt, murderers, the immoral, those who practice witchcraft, idol worshipers, and all liars—their fate is in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”*

II. LOVE MERCY (compassion, caring, forgiveness, treating people tenderly and lovingly) Important Scriptures (read one very carefully and prayerfully) together as a family. (Zechariah 7:9) (I Peter 3:8-12) (Jesus was full of compassion as he cared for the oppressed and the suffering and the sick and the persons who were treated in unjust manner) (We are called to follow His example, as taught in Matthew 25:31-46)

III. WALK HUMBLY WITH YOUR GOD (recognize that Jesus is Lord and surrender to His authority in your life, in every aspect of your life – body, soul, spirit, mind, emotions, decisions, goals for life, possessions, friends, family, etc.) Take your Self off the throne of your life, and allow Christ alone to sit on the throne of your life as your Lord and Master). Important Scriptures (read each very carefully and prayerfully) – together as a family.

1 Peter 5:5-6:

⁵ *In the same way, you younger men must accept the authority of the elders. And all of you, serve each other in humility, for “God opposes the proud but favors the humble.”* ⁶ *So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor.*

James 4:10:

¹⁰ *Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor.*

Acts 12:21-23:

²¹ *and an appointment with Herod was granted. When the day arrived, Herod put on his royal robes, sat on his throne, and made a speech to them.* ²² *The people gave him a great ovation, shouting, “It’s the voice of a god, not of a man!”* ²³ *Instantly, an angel of the Lord struck Herod with a sickness, because he accepted the people’s worship instead of giving the glory to God. So he was consumed with worms and died.*

Proverbs 29:23:

²³ *Pride ends in humiliation, while humility brings honor.*

Psalms 59:12:

¹² *Because of the sinful things they say,
because of the evil that is on their lips,
let them be captured by their pride,
their curses, and their lies.*

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Proverbs 16:18:

¹⁸ *Pride goes before destruction, and haughtiness before a fall.*

Daniel 4:28-37:

²⁸ *"But all these things did happen to King Nebuchadnezzar. ²⁹ Twelve months later he was taking a walk on the flat roof of the royal palace in Babylon. ³⁰ As he looked out across the city, he said, 'Look at this great city of Babylon! By my own mighty power, I have built this beautiful city as my royal residence to display my majestic splendor.' ³¹ "While these words were still in his mouth, a voice called down from heaven, 'O King Nebuchadnezzar, this message is for you! You are no longer ruler of this kingdom. ³² You will be driven from human society. You will live in the fields with the wild animals, and you will eat grass like a cow. Seven periods of time will pass while you live this way, until you learn that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world and gives them to anyone he chooses.' ³³ "That same hour the judgment was fulfilled, and Nebuchadnezzar was driven from human society. He ate grass like a cow, and he was drenched with the dew of heaven. He lived this way until his hair was as long as eagles' feathers and his nails were like birds' claws. ³⁴ "After this time had passed, I, Nebuchadnezzar, looked up to heaven. My sanity returned, and I praised and worshiped the Most High and honored the one who lives forever. His rule is everlasting, and his kingdom is eternal. ³⁵ All the people of the earth are nothing compared to him. He does as he pleases among the angels of heaven and among the people of the earth. No one can stop him or say to him, 'What do you mean by doing these things?' ³⁶ "When my sanity returned to me, so did my honor and glory and kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored as head of my kingdom, with even greater honor than before. ³⁷ "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and glorify and honor the King of heaven. All his acts are just and true, and he is able to humble the proud."*

Daniel 5:18-21:

¹⁸ *Your Majesty, the Most High God gave sovereignty, majesty, glory, and honor to your predecessor, Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ He made him so great that people of all races and nations and languages trembled before him in fear. He killed those he wanted to kill and spared those he wanted to spare. He honored those he wanted to honor and disgraced those he wanted to disgrace. ²⁰ But when his heart and mind were puffed up with arrogance, he was brought down from his royal throne and stripped of his glory. ²¹ He was driven from human society. He was given the mind of a wild animal, and he lived among the wild donkeys. He ate grass like a cow, and he was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he learned that the Most High God rules over the kingdoms of the world and appoints anyone he desires to rule over them.*

John 2:16:

¹⁶ *Then, going over to the people who sold doves, he told them, "Get these things out of here. Stop turning my Father's house into a marketplace!"*

CHAPTER 42

***“TWO DIFFERENT WAYS OF
LIVING!”***

CHAPTER 42

“TWO DIFFERENT WAYS OF LIVING!”

“Serve the Lord! And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve....But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”
(Joshua 24:15)

“And he who does not take his cross and follow after me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.”
(Matthew 10:38-39)

³¹ *“But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left.*
(Matthew 25:31-33)

“The Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.”
(Psalms 1:6)

¹³ *“You can enter God’s Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. ¹⁴ But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it.*
(Matthew 13-14)

¹⁹ *“Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live! ²⁰ You can make this choice by loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and committing yourself firmly to him. This is the key to your life. And if you love and obey the LORD, you will live long in the land the LORD swore to give your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”*
(Deuteronomy 30:19-20)

GLIMPSES INTO REALITY - (As I Understand It)

Jesus said, *“Except ye repent, ye shall all perish!”* Repentance and belief are the two decisive steps into the kingdom of God! ‘Repentance’ means turning away from one’s sins (in other words, a ‘moral u–turn’). Belief means turning in trust and faith to the Saviour (who alone can forgive sins). Those who continue to believe in Jesus as Savior have eternal life; those who don’t believe in Jesus do not have eternal life. (John 3:36)

Ultimately in life, every person has one of two options – REPENT OR PERISH! Walk in the light or walk in the darkness! Serve God or serve self! A fruitful life or a barren life! A fleshly life or a Spirit-controlled life! A happy (guilt-free) life or a miserable (guilt-dominated) life! A life of freedom or a life of selfishness! A self-forgetful life or a self–preoccupied life! A life of productivity or a life of dissipation! A life of confidence or a life of despair!

A life of creativity or a life of destruction! A life of Christ-worship or a life of worldly-worship! A life of prayer or a life of carelessness! A life of spiritual wisdom or a life of worldly wisdom ! A life of heavenly sonship or a life of prodigal loneliness! A life of heavenly vision or a life of worldly preoccupation! A life of loving acceptance or a life of hateful rejection!!

A life of divine fellowship or a life of demonic oppression! A life of growing abundance or a life of increasing poverty! A life of attractive humility or a life of repulsive humiliation! A life that “reaches out in love,” or a life that withdraws into petty selfish concerns! A life of winsome communication, or a life of ugly silence and indifference! A life of clear goal setting, or a life of purposeless wandering. A life of warm embrace, or a life of cold isolation!

A life centered on worship of the one true God, or a life centered on the worship of the world’s many false gods! A life that is carefully heaven bound, or a life that is carelessly hell-bound! A life whose ears are carefully attuned to the Spirit’s voice or a life whose ears are only attuned to the frivolous noises of the world! A life that cherishes a pure heart and a clean conscience, or a life whose heart is corrupt and whose conscience is seared!

A life that is committed to being a “peacemaker”, or a life that takes a sinister delight in being a “troublemaker”! A life that seeks to be amiable and approachable, or a life that tends to be overly-sensitive and easily offended! A life that is patient and longsuffering with others, or a life that is impatient and irritable towards others! A life that is grasping and greedy and unsympathetic towards others or a life that is generous and uncalculating towards others. A life that is joy filled and thankful, or a life that is forlorn and ungrateful!

A life that is characterized with assurance of eternal life, or a life that is terror-stricken in the face of inevitable death! A life that is satisfied with few earthly possessions, or a life that is in a quest for an abundance of the earth’s possessions! A life that is characterized by a “quiet and contemplative” spirit, or a life that is characterized by fast movements and a never-ceasing boisterous voice! A life that is characterized by Spirit-controlled discipline of human passions, or a life that is characterized by uncontrolled fleshly passions and unbridled ambitions!

A life that seeks only a place of God-honoring service, or a life that proudly and selfishly seeks status and position and wealth! A life that is living for “two worlds” (time and eternity), or a life that is living only for this preset passing and dying world!

A life that seeks quickly to forgive one's offenders or a life that harbors resentments and that seeks revenge for one's offenders! A life that, because of loyalty to Christ, is a "double winner" (on earth and in heaven), or a life, because of rejection of Christ, is a "double loser" (on earth and in hell)! A life that has made peace with one's past through repentance and faith, or a life that is plagued with the guilt of one's sins from the past!

A life that is forward moving and optimistic of the future, or a life that is backward looking and full of regrets and remorse! A life that sees possibilities in every problem or a life that sees insurmountable problems in every possibility! A life that "casts its every care upon the Lord", or a life that endeavors to carry the world's unbearable troubles on its own shoulders! A life that is carefree and happy, or a life that is worry worn and anxiety-ridden!

A life that is humble and teachable or a life that is proud and close minded! A life that is confident and strong with God-assurance, or a life that is weak with multiple doubts and fears! A life that is fragrant and winsome with the "fruits of the Spirit", or a life that is wretched and repulsive with the "fruit of wickedness and corruption"! A life that focuses on the 'good' and minimizes the 'bad' in other persons, or the life that focuses on the 'bad' and minimizes the 'good' in other persons!

A life that believes that God's abounding grace spells ultimate victory in the world's outcome, or a life that believes that mankind's unconquerable evil spells destruction in the world's outcome! A life that delights itself in the knowledge and wisdom of the Holy Scriptures, or a life that is ignorant and oblivious to God's Holy Word and Ways! A life of hopeful optimism because of God's faithful promises, or a life of hopelessness and despair because of earth's shattered dreams and shallow promises.

A life whose heart is 'light' because of Christ's yoke or a life whose heart is 'heavy' because of Satan's yoke of slavery!

"Faith and fear are in perpetual opposition. All that which drives men to evil courses, and all that which divides man from man is based upon fear. All selfishness expressing itself in harm to other men grows out of the heart's fear. All self-sacrifice expressing itself in helpfulness to other men grows out of the heart's strong, firm courage and faith. In the world these two forces stand opposed. Every man is ranged on one side or the other. Every man's life is either a part of the force which scatters, or a part of the force which gathers. Every man's effort in every day of his life is a contribution toward the victory of evil at some point, or else it is a contribution toward the victory of good.

The suggestion that is made to the young man facing life is, on the one hand, a suggestion that he should take short cuts devoid of principle toward the goal he desires to reach. The other suggestion is that he shall find the one highway of stern duty and true principle and tramp it at all costs. The battle begins in his heart between the allurements and enticements of the short and easy method – as it appears to be – of evil; and the long stern, and arduous method – as it appears to be – of good." Taken from "The Westminster Pulpit; Volume 2; pgs. 13, 14; by G. Campbell Morgan

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- ¹ Blessed is the one
who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,
² but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,
and who meditates on his law day and night.
³ That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither—
whatever they do prospers.
- ⁴ Not so the wicked!
They are like chaff
that the wind blows away.
⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
- ⁶ For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

Psalms 1, NIV

NOTES

