

MISCELLANEOUS WORDS OF WISDOM

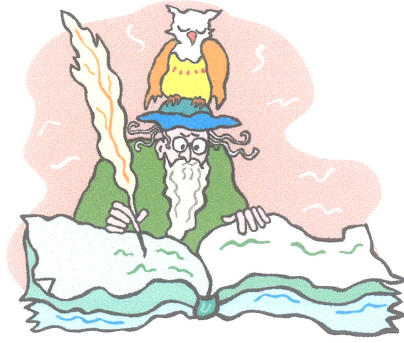
By

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*“Answering Some of Life’s Important Questions!”
(Primarily from the Holy Bible)*



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MISCELLANEOUS WORDS OF WISDOM

(PRIMARILY FROM THE HOLY BIBLE)

“THE BIBLE COMMANDS BELIEVERS TO ‘STUDY TO SHOW THEMSELVES APPROVED BY GOD’.”

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15).

A respected man of God (Paul Wesley Chilcote, PhD) notes; “If you do not read and study the Bible, you will not grow in spiritual wisdom. If you do not watch and pray, you will not be spiritually strong. If you do not worship God, you have little hope of being happy in life.”

The most important knowledge is Biblical Knowledge. Without this knowledge, there is no reliable superstructure (foundation) for life, that is, none of the other knowledge has true or lasting significance. I Corinthians 13 (the love chapter) states that all knowledge will pass away except the love of God in our lives.

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” (Romans 5:5)

It is God’s love within us that enables us to do God’s will and to fulfill God’s commandment to truly love our fellow humans. The soul of man is alone eternal, so when you love a soul, you are loving that which is alone eternal!

“God’s Great Love for Persons He Has Created!” *“For the Lord your God has arrived to live among you. He is a mighty Savior. He will give you victory. He will rejoice over you in great gladness; he will love you and not accuse you. Is that a joyous choir I hear? No; it is the Lord Himself exalting over you in happy song.” (Zephaniah 3:16-18, Living Bible)*

“Choose To Serve God or Choose To Serve Materialism (Money)!” *“Said Jesus: “You cannot serve two masters: God and money. For you will hate one and love the other, or else the other way around.” (Matthew 6:24, Living Bible)*

“God’s great Blessing on Those Who Revere and Serve God!” *For the Lord says, “Because he loves me, I will rescue him; I will make him great because he trusts in my name. When he calls on me I will answer; I will be with him in trouble, and rescue him and honor him. I will satisfy him with a full life and give him my salvation.” (Psalms 91:14-16, Living Bible)*

“Death to One’s Self-Centeredness, and Becoming Alive to the New Self in Christ Jesus.”

“I have been crucified with Christ, and I myself no longer live, but Christ lives in me. And the real life I now have within this body is result of my trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20, Living Bible)

“Gods Universal Love Wonderfully Includes Me.” *“For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son so that anyone who believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16, Living Bible)*

Abhor (hate) that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.” (Romans 12:9)

“The Seven Things That God Especially Hates.” *“For there are six things the Lord hates - no, seven: (1) Haughtiness; (2) Lying; (3) Murdering; (4) Plotting evil; (5) Eagerness to do wrong; (6) A false witness; (7) Sowing discord among brothers.” (Proverbs 6:16-19, Living Bible)*

“Total Dependence upon Our God.” *“Unless the Lord builds the house, they that labor, labor in vain.” Jesus said, “Without me, you can do nothing!” “Not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit,” saith the Lord. “God’s arm is not short that He cannot save and heal.”*

“CALL TO A LIFE OF DEEP AND TRUE HUMILITY IN THE PRESENCE OF ALMIGHTY God!”

The consequences of arrogance and selfish pride are terrible, as seen in the lives of countless persons throughout history.

Two examples:

KING HEROD: *“...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. The people gave him a great ovation, shouting, “It’s the voice of a god, not of a man!” 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.” Acts (12:21-23)*

“KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR OF THE ANCIENT WORLD!” *“Upon hearing this, Daniel (also known as Belshazzar) was overcome for a time, frightened by the meaning of the dream. Then the king said to him, ‘Belshazzar, don’t be alarmed by the dream and what it means.’ “Belshazzar replied, ‘I wish the events foreshadowed in this dream would happen to your enemies, my lord, and not to you! The tree you saw was growing very tall and strong, reaching high into the heavens for all the world to see. It had fresh green leaves and was loaded with fruit for all to eat. Wild animals lived in its shade, and birds nested in its branches. That tree, Your Majesty, is you. For you*

have grown strong and great; your greatness reaches up to heaven, and your rule to the ends of the earth.” Then you saw a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, “Cut down the tree and destroy it. But leave the stump and the roots in the ground, bound with a band of iron and bronze and surrounded by tender grass. Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven. Let him live with the animals of the field for seven periods of time.” “This is what the dream means, Your Majesty, and what the Most High has declared will happen to my lord the king. You will be driven from human society, and you will live in the fields with the wild animals. You will eat grass like a cow, and you will be drenched with the dew of heaven. 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. But the stump and roots of the tree were left in the ground. This means that you will receive your kingdom back again when you have learned that heaven rules. “King Nebuchadnezzar, please accept my advice. Stop sinning and do what is right. Break from your wicked past and be merciful to the poor. Perhaps then you will continue to prosper.” But all these things did happen to King Nebuchadnezzar. Twelve months later he was taking a walk on the flat roof of the royal palace in Babylon. 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.’ 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. 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.’ 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. 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. 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?’ 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. “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 4:19-37

“THE BALANCED GROWTH OF JESUS IS OUR PATTERN FOR OUR OWN GROWTH!”

“Jesus grew in wisdom, and in stature, and in favor with God and Man.” (Luke 2:52)

(1) Physical Growth; (2) Intellectual Growth; (3) Social Growth; (4) Spiritual Growth, find proper growth in all areas of your life. Church, School, Family, Friends, Job, and Entertainment should all contribute to one's 'Balanced Growth'. Have NO involvement with anyone or with anything that tends to destroy your growth in Christ, in these four above-listed areas. 2 Corinthians 6:14 is a direct command from our loving God: *“Don't be unequally 'yoked' with unbelievers.”* (In marriage, business, friendship, entertainment, and education)

“CHILDREN'S OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS, PATTERNED AFTER THE OBEDIENCE OF JESUS TO HIS OWN PARENTS!”

At age 12, Jesus was 'lost' in the Holy Temple from his parents, (although, of course, Jesus was intentionally at the Temple for a holy purpose). When He was found by his parents, the Bible says that Jesus returned home with his parents and during his 'growing up years, he "was obedient to them." (Luke 2:51). If the Son of God (who was fully human, as well as divine, in nature) was obedient to His own parents, as a child and as a teen, how much more should youth today be obedient to their parents (especially Christian children and youth)? *“Children (and youth), obey your parents in the Lord.”* (Ephesians 6) Of course, no Christian youth is commanded by God to obey words or commands of evil from the lips of a godless parent. No child (or youth) should ever enter into an agreement with a godless parent, to lie or cheat or deceive or commit acts of lustful passion. During a circumstance when an ungodly father (or mother) is seeking to influence a child or youth to commit some kind of evil, the child or youth must 'stand up for righteousness and moral purity' (regardless of the 'persecution' and 'resistance' the child or youth will receive from the ungodly parent). Strict obedience is required by God from the child and youth, if the sincere parent (a Christian) is trying hard to 'raise the younger one in the ways of Christ'. Rebellion by a child or a youth has serious consequences, as described rather vividly in certain portions of Holy Scripture. It is no sin for a youth to carry on a serious dialogue with their parents. It is no sin for a youth to carry on a serious dialogue with his/her parents (regarding all kinds of question), but respect and kindness and an obedient spirit must 'dominate' the life of the 'growing your'. All youth must follow Jesus' example - obedience to parents' while He (the Son of God) was growing up! *“Children, obey your parents, this is the right thing to do because God has placed them in authority over you.”* (Ephesians 6:1, Living Bible)

BE TEACHABLE AND SUBMISSIVE TO AUTHORITY!

“Don't be like a senseless horse or mule that has to have a bit in its mouth to keep it in line!” (Psalms 32:9; Living Bible)

God Will Wonderfully Guide You Throughout Your Life! *“You (God) are my hiding place from every storm of life; you even keep me from getting into trouble! You surround me with songs of victory. I will instruct you (says the Lord) and guide you along the best pathway for your life; I will advise you and watch your progress.”* (Psalms 32:7-8; Living Bible)



Submit to God's Correction of Your Life, For God Greatly Loves You. *"God's correction is always right and for our best good, that we may share his holiness. Being punished isn't enjoyable while it is happening - it hurts! But afterwards we can see the result, a quiet growth in grace and character."* (Hebrews 12:10b-11; Living Bible)

TRUST IN GOD ALONE FOR A SUCCESSFUL LIFE!

God is not primarily concerned in your 'Ability', but in you're 'Availability'! Not so much concern regarding your great talents, but great concern in your willing spirit of love and obedience! Are you 'available' for God to use you (with your few or with your many talents)? Do you deeply desire for God to use you (i.e., to use all that you are, now and potentially), to help 'build the kingdom of God'? "Little is much, if God is in it!" With a spirit of humility and also with a spirit of God-given confidence, never underestimate what God can do through you, to bless more and more persons in your ever-expanding world of needy persons! The power of God is limitless, and God is ready to use you in your ever-expanding world of needy persons! The power of God is limitless, and God is ready to use willing hearts and minds to bless His people, far and wide! Be a special God-used person!

Remember, God has a 'place' (mission) for everyone! God's strength is manifest in our human weakness, so no one who feels 'helpless' and 'unworthy' has any excuse to 'stay on the sidelines'!

Everyone has a 'call' from the Lord God Almighty - the Creator of Life! The Creator has gifted every person, without exception. Some have considerable 'limitations' (in terms of gifting and intellect and abilities), but our loving God includes all in His 'Master Plan' for human life! 'Little is much when God is in it.' Some of the best-used servants of God (in terms of spiritual fruitfulness) have been those persons who felt they had so little to contribute to God's kingdom. With a wholehearted dedication to God and to God's specific 'call' in their lives, these 'modest souls' (some of whom had only 'one talent') 'moved mountains for God'! Their willingness (with very little gifting) combined with God's mighty power, resulted in the salvation of many souls and in the edification of many believers! Never underestimate what God can do with a person who is totally 'sold out' to do God's will! Gideon (in the Old Testament) felt totally inadequate to fulfill God's call in his life (to fight against the mighty pagan forces), but Gideon obeyed God's high call (in spite of his terrible fear and feelings of inferiority). A supernatural victory for Israel was the result! Lay your all on the 'altar of consecration', and see what God will do through your life of love and obedience! Your life will have a tremendous 'impact' in the lives of your peers (and possibly many more persons). Make your one life count for Christ. Remember, you have only one life, and it will soon be gone, and only what is done for Christ will last for eternity!

"Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these other things (of legitimate earthly concerns) will be added unto you." So says the 'Master of Life' - Jesus! Those who do not think more highly of themselves than they ought to think - it is these 'servants of God' who have a realistic view of a life, and it is these servants who are prepared to be 'used of God' to touch and to heal the lost and dying souls all around them! Jesus said, *"Ye can do nothing by yourself"*, and certainly it is correct to acknowledge (in humility) that without Christ's indwelling presence, a person finally amounts to nothing 'in the end of life'! Unless the branch is attached to the Vine, there is no life and no fruitfulness in life! Finally, it is 'Christ or Nothing!' Because 'self-centeredness' (pride) is the hub (heart) of all sin, the 'goal' of every person should be to 'get rid of the heart of sin' (selfish pride which leads to sinful and proud actions). How

can such a difficult 'job' (mission) be accomplished? Only through the power of Christ, in cooperation with the willing surrender of man! Only as a sinner confesses all his sins in true repentance and godly sorrow, can he experience the transforming grace (power) of God's forgiveness and reconciliation! This initial act (of confession) involves 'a broken and a contrite spirit' (humility). "There is a way that seems right unto a man (i.e., the 'natural' way of pride and self-sufficiency seems 'right'), but the end thereof are the ways of death (destruction)." The way of the Cross of Christ is the only way to heaven - and that means that a sinner must 'die' to his own pride and self-will and stubbornness!

Growth in the Christian life, (i.e., growth in the way of 'holiness') is always growth in true humility. Remember, "God resists the proud, but He gives grace unto the humble!" "Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, and He will exalt you in due time." You must trust (rely upon) God alone for divine-type wisdom and discernment and understanding and guidance. In all thy ways acknowledge Him (i.e., true humility), and lean not unto thy own understanding and knowledge. And He (God) shall direct thy paths (i.e., He will enable you to make wise decisions that will benefit you), and, as a humble person, you will bless others, and you will glorify God!

"What a fellowship, what a joy divine, leaning on the everlasting arms; what blessedness, what a peace is mine, leaning on the everlasting arms."

WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE 'BIGGEST WORD' IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE?

Perhaps the 'Biggest Word' in the English Language is the word IF! This is a 'conditional word', a word that definitely reveals the fact that human beings have a 'Free Will'. God often says (in the Bible) that IF a person does or says 'certain things', regarding eternal truths, God in response to the human response, will do certain things for humans. God does not 'force' His holy will upon any person, but, instead, God gives an offer of eternal life or earthly abundant life, and then God 'waits' for a positive or a negative response from the human to whom God made the offer. To accept the gracious offer of life means that the human receives 'abundant gifts'; to foolishly reject God's offer of life means that the human remains in his 'sinful condition', which has the potential of leading him to eternal death and punishment!

Humans are the only 'creatures' who are 'made in God's image', with the frightening, and yet the wonderful, capacity to make 'moral choices' which result in either life-giving or in death-delivering consequences. It is life or death, misery or joy, dreadful degeneration or delightful growth, either selfish preoccupation or self-giving love! "*IF we confess our sins, He (God) is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness!*" (I John 1:9) One of the greatest promises in God's Word - but everyone's life 'hangs in the balance' in this promise! IF, IF, IF, IF we confess our sins - then there is forgiveness! Yes, I think that IF is probably the 'Biggest Word' in the English Language!

When we read and study the Bible, we must always read it in a 'balanced and informed manner'. That is to say, we must always keep three words in mind - PROMISES, CONDITIONS, and WARNINGS! Yes, look for 'Promises to be claimed', 'Conditions to be met', and 'Warnings to be heeded'! As was mentioned in the above writing, the IF verses in the Bible speak of the 'conditions to be met'. I John 1:9 state "*There is a condition to be met - IF we confess our sins*". The promise of that verse is wonderful - namely, Forgiveness of our sins. But, the promise can only be 'fulfilled' in our lives, IF the condition is met, namely 'Confess Our Sins'!

“What Does God Require Of Every Person?” *“He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.”* (Micah 6:8, King James Version) If a person is to please God, then there are three characteristics that mark a man as ‘godly’: (1) to do justly (justice and fairness), (2) To love mercy (compassion), and (3) To walk humbly before thy God.

Daily Affirmation: “This is the day that the Lord hath made; I will rejoice and be glad in it.”

Daily Prayer: “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer.” Quickly pray this prayer before meeting anyone!

“REWARDS FOR A LIFETIME OF ‘FAITHFULNESS’ TO THE ‘BLESSED LORD’.”

Says God, *“Be thou faithful unto (until) death, and I will give thee a Crown of*

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, what God has prepared for those who love the Lord.” Heaven is indescribably beautiful – a place where there is no sin or sickness or suffering or death, a place of joy without competition or strife’s or envies a place of glorious worship of the ‘King of kings’ forever. A place where each heavenly citizen has a fulfilling and significant responsibility, which results in blessing everyone around them.

Shortly before Jesus returned to heaven, He gave this promise: *“Let not your heart be troubled. You are trusting God, now trust in me. There are many homes up there where my Father lives and I am going to prepare them for your coming. When everything is ready, then I will come and get you, so that you can always be with me where I am. If this weren’t so, I would tell you plainly.”* (John 14:1-3, Living Bible) We mere humans (believers who are in the process daily of physical dying) have a glorious hope of outliving this earthly life. Indeed, as just stated by Jesus, believers look forward to receiving a ‘brand new body’ (patterned, no doubt, after the resurrected body of Jesus)! For an amazing description of that future ‘new body’, read what Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:10.

“WHAT ARE SOME OF GOD’S CHARACTER TRAITS THAT BELIEVERS ARE TO CULTIVATE IN THEIR OWN LIVES?”

As God’s Spirit takes possession of our lives, we as believers are given the power to imitate the traits of God in our everyday lives! I present my willingness (to be changed within my spirit), and God presents (imparts) His mighty transforming power (initially and continuously). To the extent that I ‘daily die to my own selfishness and self-will’, to that same extent is God able and willing to impart His strength, to enable me to increasingly become ‘Christlike’. Such as process is a lifetime process (as I learn more carefully to obey the Lord and His holy will for me), and as I learn (through prayer and meditation on the Word) how to effectively ‘appropriate’ (by faith and trust) the exhaustless resources of God’s love and wisdom and power!

Some of the most important ‘divine traits’ that I must daily seek to appropriate into my own life are as follows: (1) Righteousness, (2) Integrity (honesty), (3) Justice (fairness), (4) Holiness (separation from outward and inward sin), (5) Peace, (6) Divine-like Love.



Respect for One's Mother Is All-Important – Someone wisely noted: “How a young man (teen) treats his mother is probably the same way that he will someday treat his own wife!”

**“Sow a thought, reap an action;
Sow an action, reap a habit;
Sow a habit, reap a character;
Sow a character, reap a destiny!”**

Guard your thoughts. Bring them into ‘subjection’ to Jesus Christ! You cannot help the actual thought that comes into your mind, but you must surrender every ‘bad thought’ (a temptation from the evil one) to the Holy Spirit, to allow the Spirit to ‘check’ the thought and to purge your mind of any ‘evil thought’ (given to you by the evil one, or by some evil person). Ask daily (and even hourly) to have your mind ‘purged’ of any evil thought, and to have your heart (affections) cleansed by the ‘blood of Jesus’! A clean mind, a pure heart, a clear conscience – the greatest gifts known unto humans (gifts from God to the surrendered person)! “As a man thinks, so is he!” Be sure to cultivate Christ-honoring, loving thoughts! Guard Your Affections, For They Guide Your Life! *“If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who liberally bestows wisdom to the single-minded and sincere person of faith.”* (James 1) Lean not unto your own understanding, but put trust in God’s guidance and total wisdom. He will never lead you astray.

“WHY IS IT MY ‘DUTY’ TO FORGIVE THOSE PERSONS WHO HAVE DEEPLY ‘OFFENDED’ ME?”

No one could offend (hurt) you more than what you have already (by your many sins) offended Jesus Christ, and, always remember that Jesus has, through His terrible, sacrificial death for you, already given you ‘total forgiveness’ for all your wrongs against Him! Your sins helped crucify the sinless Son of God (Jesus), but He has granted you total forgiveness. Therefore, if Jesus has already forgiven you all the ‘Big’ sins, shouldn’t you be willing (with God’s help) to forgive those who have sinned against you? It is your duty to forgive your offenders. It is God’s responsibility to punish evildoers (as God chooses, and when He chooses to do so – in His own timing). (Note Romans 12, 13) Returning ‘good’ for ‘evil’ shows that you are on the ‘high road’ of true greatness and victory,(and you certainly have the ‘smile of God’s approval’ resting upon you when you, like Jesus, love your enemies instead of cursing them. We all make mistakes in our ‘normal relationships’ (friends and family and associates, etc.) *“Dear brothers, don’t be too eager to tell others their faults, for we all make many mistakes.”* (James 3:1, Living Bible) Learn to be ‘charitable’ with fellow (fallible) human beings. Give them the ‘benefit of the doubt’. Don’t be quick to be critical in your words regarding them. Avoid slander and gossip at all times. Be a (peacemaker’, not a ‘trouble maker’. Look for the ‘best’ in others, not the ‘worse’, for every person has ‘good’ in them if you look for it. When you are called upon to be ‘confrontational’ (in someone’s face because of obvious wrongs that need to be made ‘right’) still be loving and kind and thoughtful and genuinely concerned about the welfare of the ‘fallen one’. *“Weep with those who weep.”* (Romans 12) *“Lift up the ‘fallen’ and care for the dying and suffering ones! Be the ‘hands’ and the ‘feet’ and the ‘voice’ of Jesus Himself!”* (Matthew 25) *“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me!”* (Jesus)

Do not be ‘overly-sensitive’ to other people’s words. And, when your feelings are ‘hurt’, plan to forgive quickly, so that there is no chance of bitterness to form within your

heart. Let God take care of vindicating justice for you, and don't take the law (of man or of God) into your 'own hands'. Replace vindictive thoughts with pleasant and wholesome thoughts (positive thoughts from the Holy Book). Read the list of positive thoughts as recorded in Philipians 4. Remember, bitterness in your soul will work great harm - to you and to those around you. Avoid it like the plague! You take the 'high road' of love and forgiveness, and speak that forgiveness out loud towards the person (even though he is not in your presence). And, speak 'blessing' upon that 'enemy' (asking God to bring him into the nearer presence of Christ, through his own surrender to Christ). Don't trust your feelings (of revenge), but exercise your will by 'releasing him' into the hands of God who is both merciful (towards the offender), and also definitely just (and, therefore, will ultimately bring the just punishment to him - for spiritual restoration or for spiritual destruction). God only knows how to 'blend mercy and justice' in His treatment of the offender. You must not secretly desire for God to destroy the offender. You must honestly pray for the restoration of the offender, for this is God's perfect will for the offender. Ask God to restore the serious offender (in mercy), and, in the name of holy justice, to remove the offender, not only from you (the offender), but also to remove the offender from all other persons who may (likely) be hurt in the near or distant future. The Bible often declares that God will 'destroy the wicked' - if such persons refuse to repent and to turn decisively to Christ for forgiveness. But God is not willing that any should perish, but that every human being come to repentance! But for those who stubbornly refuse to repent, there is an eventual 'destruction' - on this planet and in eternity! God is doing everything He can ('just short of forcing His will on the stubborn rebel') to bring the backslider back into the 'fold of grace', and to rescue the straying one from eventual 'doom and destruction' following physical death. But God honors the 'free will' agency of humans. He influences powerfully and seeks to persuade the 'lost ones' to find a place at the 'foot of the Cross of Christ', but God will never violate that part of the person that makes him altogether 'unique' in God's vast creation - namely, the 'power of free choice'!

So, when you are 'hurt' (offended deeply by an insensitive person or by an outright 'cruel' enemy), how should you react? Of course (since you have genuine feelings as a human) you will probably 'weep; or become actually 'shocked' or 'angry'. God understands your feelings. He doesn't condemn you for legitimate (understandable) feelings. But, you, nevertheless, are very vulnerable at this point (in the breakdown of the relationship). By God's enabling Spirit, and by the strength of your own will, you must speak words of forgiveness to the offender (even though you probably won't be with him). Then immediately tell God that you forgive him - which you commit him into the hands of a God who is both merciful and just. Rely upon God to deal directly with this offender. Ask God to bless him (by bringing the offender to his 'senses' to see his need for God and his need for a new life of tenderness instead of toughness). Realize that if a person 'spurns God's mercy, he earns God's judgment'. *"Vengeance is mine, I will repay", says the Lord.*" (Romans 12) Commit your offender (enemy) into the 'hands of God' who is totally fair. *"Whatever a man sows that he shall also reap."* If your offender has sown evil (hurt in your life and in the lives of others), you can be sure (eventually) that he will reap punishment (in some form, at some time) either directly from a just God, or from other persons whom God chooses to bring proper and fair judgment, to the offender. The Bible says that *"pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."* Any person who refuses to humble himself before God Almighty, to confess his sins, and to repent of those sins - such an arrogant, self-sufficient, rebellious person has closed the door to God's forgiveness and reconciliation. God is ready and willing to forgive any sinner, but only on the conditions set down by God Himself - namely, total trust and submission to Jesus, the Son of the Living God. *There is no other name, other than the name of Jesus, by which sinners can come to 'know' the true God.* (Acts 4:12)

So, when you are 'hurt' (offended) by an 'unbeliever', you must say that the Holy Spirit will convict the offender of his/her sins, and you must pray that the offender will be given a spirit of repentance and humility and saving faith. These gifts (for salvation) are offered by God to the 'lost person', but these gifts must be freely accepted by the offending one (sinner). If he accepts these God-given gifts (for salvation), the sinner will soon find 'personal salvation' (entrance into the Family of God). You – the 'hurt' and 'offended one' – should rejoice that a lost soul has found 'new life' in Christ Jesus! Also, in due time, as the new believer grows in faith, it is almost inevitable that this one-time offender (who has deeply 'hurt' you) will find his way to your home where he will humbly seek your forgiveness for his 'wretched behavior'! Then, you will have a wonderful time experiencing reconciliation, and new and deeper (not perfect) friendship.

“HOW SIGNIFICANT IS THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN?”

There are 'tons' of articles and books written which describe the practice and the importance of prayer in the life of a Christian! It is common knowledge that to the extent that prayer is a vital part of a Christian's life, to that same extent is that person a healthy and a growing Christian. Power and effectiveness (fruitfulness) in one's life are dependent upon one's communion with God Almighty! Regular praying brings consistent 'victory' to one's Christian life. Praying without ceasing means (among other things) keeping one's mind and heart always open to the 'voice' of God (amidst one's busy life). 'Flash praying' means taking time briefly to verbalize your requests to God, all throughout your day (especially during those momentary times when you are not directly involved in your legitimate responsibilities and 'demands of work'). It is easy to 'breathe a prayer' of love to the 'Lover of your soul', even while you are 'carrying on your daily duties'. And every time you meet and talk to another person, it is important that you (mentally) offer a 'quick prayer' of love to the 'Lover of your soul', even while you are 'carrying on your daily duties'. And every time you meet and talk to another person, it is important that you (mentally) offer a 'quick prayer' for the other person (be he/she a 'close friend' or an 'opponent'). Quickly ask God for His wisdom (discernment), and for His love, as you get ready to meet another person (for a casual or for a formal occasion). Quickly pray something like this: "O Father, let the words that come from my lips be pleasing to you, and edifying and encouraging to my fellow man that I am now talking to. Let me be cheerful and 'good humored', yet sincere and honest and transparent "For Jesus' Sake". Thank you, dearest Father. I am your humble and dependent 'servant'!" Concentrate on the other person with whom you are having a conversation. Get your mind off yourself, and show sincere and serious interest in the 'other person'. Speak only a 'little about yourself', while you listen to the needs and interests (and hurts) of the other person. Using 'proper discernment', you may want to close the conversation with a 'short prayer' (verbally) for the 'other person' – asking God's richest blessings to rest upon him. Your goal is to 'build up' the other person, and to point him (if possible) to the living and loving Savior!

Prayer is powerful! James (the half brother of Jesus) wrote: *"The earnest prayer of a righteous man has great power and wonderful results."* (James 5:16, Living Bible) There are certain mottos that are meaningful: "Prayer changes things!" "More is wrought through Prayer than these world dreams of!" "Life is fragile, handle with prayer!"

“WHAT DOES THE BIBLE HAVE TO SAY REGARDING THE WIDESPREAD PRACTICE OF SEXUAL IMMORALITY?”

Perhaps there is no greater practice of mental ‘rationalization’ than that ‘rationalization’ which is expressed in the words: “If I love her, why shouldn’t I express my love to her by ‘laying with her’ (‘having sex with her’), even though I am not yet married to her (and may never get married to her)?” Let one perceptive author answer that oft-asked question, in our contemporary society: “I can hardly imagine any two things more diametrically opposed. For love seeks the good of the object beloved, even at the expense of self, but lust – the true name for the other sentiment- seeks transient personal gratification at the expense of the object it desires.

The former is ‘strong as death,’ in the words of the Cantic of Canticles. The latter is fickle and changeable as the caprices of madness. It is ravenous, exorbitant, and utterly egoistic. At best, it is merely carnal; at worst it is positively devilish. Over-indulged, it lays waste all the nobler instincts of manhood, all the specific beauty and charm of womanhood. It should be sharply distinguished from love.” (‘The Old Law and the New Morality’; by Rev. P.J. Gannon, S.J.; pgs. 83, 84)

This same author continues; “Mere passion is a flame that burns out in a short time. Outside the married state all deliberate seeking of sexual pleasure, by thought, word, or deed, alone or in company, consummated or unconsummated, is mortal sin.” (Ibid; pgs. 88-92)

God created the human race with two genders – male and female – for the purpose of companionship and with the ability to propagate (produce children ‘after their kind’, to keep the human race alive and growing). That is the primary purpose of sex, but God allows a married couple to enjoy deep communion through this beautiful act (of giving their bodies to each other very temporarily, but regularly). This act of marriage also allows the consenting persons to demonstrate, not only their oneness with each other, but also to experience (symbolically) their oneness with the Holy Trinity (who is the origin of all communal love).

But God (in His Holy Word) explicitly forbids anyone to enter into the sexual experience, before he/she is married, and also outside of the marriage relationship. *“Thou shalt not commit adultery” is one of God’s clearly stated commands, contained in the “Ten Commandments.”* (Exodus 20) Repeatedly, in the Old Testament and in the New Testament God demands that “everyone respect the bodies (and souls) of their fellow human beings”. The body is the ‘temple of the Holy Spirit’, and, as such, the body (of everyone) is to be honored and respected and cherished – and never abused. Wrote the apostle Paul: *“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. 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, and that he lives within you! Your own body does not belong to you. 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 6:13, 18-20)

Because of what Christ ‘accomplished’ on the Cross (dying to make it possible for God to forgive every sin, committed by every sinner), God is able (justly) to forgive every adulterer who truly and sincerely repents of their sins. Of course, every other sinner (other than adulterers) can be forgiven if they confess their sins and believe ‘on the Lord Jesus Christ’. God loves all sinners, but (don’t be mistaken in your ‘understanding’) God

intensely hates all sin. God has such 'pure eyes' that He cannot even look upon sin! God hates all uncleanness (perversion of all goodness), and He will ultimately destroy all sin, as well as all sinners, if there is no repentance and if there is no turning away from a sinful lifestyle!

The consequences that this world has had to experience (and endure) ever since the historical 'fall of mankind' (in the Garden of Eden) have been many and varied, but one of the 'blatant consequences' from that 'original sin' of rebellion has been widespread 'sexual immorality' (including 'sexual perversion' as seen in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, recorded in the first book of the Bible). What was created by God to be most beautiful (sexual communion between a man and his wife) soon became perverted (adultery, fornication, homosexuality, etc.). Jesus (when He was in Palestine) called His own generation an '*adulterous generation*'. If that was true in Jesus' time, how much more is it true in the 21st century! Widespread immorality! Mocking those persons who hold sex to be most sacred!

The Bible contains scores of verses which describe both the beauty of sex, and also the perversion of sex. Earnest persons (Christian and non-Christians alike) must look to the Bible as the primary and the reliable source for 'sexual understanding' (i.e., to understand the proper place and purpose of sex, and also the wrong 'use' of sex which brings severe and tragic consequences). Let us note only a few of the Scriptural passages which speak about sex (the blessings in the proper 'use' of sex, and also the consequences when God's standards of moral purity are violated).

"Honor your marriage and its vows, and be pure; for God will surely punish all those who are immoral or commit adultery." (Hebrews 13:4, Living Bible)

It is important to understand Jesus' deeper understanding of the meaning of 'adultery'. "The Laws of Moses said, *"You shall not commit adultery."* But I say: *Anyone who even looks at a woman with lust in his eye has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*" (Matthew 5:27, Living Bible) What is in one's heart is as important as what is in one's actions! Mental adultery is as bad as physical adultery! Of course, because God made humans 'male and female', God (from the beginning) expects man and woman (unmarried) to be 'naturally attracted' to each other – not lustfully craving for one another (as objects for selfish exploitation), but wholesomely and lovingly coming together in innocent 'attraction' for one another. Man and woman are made for each other, and usually (not always since there are many 'parental arrangements' of marriages in some countries) – I say, usually, a marriage is the result of two singles (man and woman) coming together in social communication, in deepening love, and in spiritual commitment – all of which leads them to a 'marriage altar'. God means for there to be a 'God-honoring communication' between two godly persons, and during the courtship (with, of course, strong sexual feelings for one another) there is no violation of God's high call to absolute sexual purity (in thought and in action) between the dedicated (Christ-centered) couple! Great sexual attraction (God-given), but never any sexual passion (which dishonors the two persons involved in the courtship relationship, and which, of course, also dishonors the God who created 'sex' in the beginning).

Throughout the entire Bible (Old Testament and New Testament) there are countless warnings given, to 'run away' from all kinds of sexual perversion (adultery, fornication, prostitution, etc.). In the Book of Proverbs, there are vivid pictures given of the snares of adultery, and especially the 'trap' which is laid by the 'clever prostitute'. It is stated that the man who commits adultery is a 'fool', and such a violation of God's laws could even cost the adulterer his very life. The Proverbs note (in the earlier chapters) that if a man wants to find the 'gate to hell', let him find the 'door to the house of the harlot (prostitute)! Mentally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, and even financially there are immediate or long-range consequences when one defies the laws of God!

“For a prostitute will bring a man to poverty, and an adulteress may cost him his very life. Can a man hold fire against his chest and not be burned? Can he walk on hot coals and not blister his feet? So it is with the man who commits adultery with another’s wife. He shall not go unpunished for this sin.” (Proverbs 6:26-29, Living Bible)

What was the punishment that God required for a man and a woman who committed adultery, as stated in the Old Testament? The seriousness of this sin (adultery between two persons, both of whom were married), is revealed by the fact that the penalty was most harsh! *“If a man commits adultery with another man’s wife, both the man and woman shall be put to death.”* (Leviticus 20:10, Living Bible). Shocking? Yes, most shocking! But God so hated unfaithfulness by married persons that God (for His own ‘good reasons’) chose to enact the most severe penalty. God hates divorce, and God hates secrecy and deception carried out by a person. God hates divorce (See Malachi 2) but God also hates sexual perversion (a perversion of the beautiful God-created act of sexual love).

Of course, with the coming of Jesus to earth, the grace and the love and the mercy of God has been manifest, and there is no longer the ‘death penalty’ (in Christianity) for adultery (or other forms of sexual perversion, like homosexuality). However, God still looks upon the breaking of any of the Ten Commandments (including adultery) as very serious. The consequence of the sin of adultery is, of course, not physical death. But the consequence for adultery is, nevertheless, very great and very hurtful, always, the ‘death’ of a ‘clear conscience’ and many times the ‘death’ of an entire family is the destruction of trust in the lives of spouse and children). The ‘death’ of the perpetrator’s dignity, and the disillusionment that often follows the act (or acts) of adultery (‘the new partner is not as wonderful as I had expected’). The ‘death’ of the finances,(because the perpetrator has extra costs that come as a result of his legal obligations. It is no wonder that God hates adultery (and other perversions), for this unruly and wild and caution-free act of momentary passion brings unretrievable ruin to himself and to everyone around him! God, of course, is able to forgive any sin, but even if the perpetrator eventually repents of his horrible sin (sins) of moral impurity, there usually are unexpected ‘squares’ (consequences) that remain in the lives of spouses and children (and other relatives and friends) – all of whom never asked to become the unfortunate ‘victims’ of the ‘wayside trash’ from the divorce (of their husband/wife and the father/mother). The only hope that there is for those unfortunate wives and children who are thrown in the ‘cauldron of divorce’ is what the Bible says about the contrast between man’s horrible sins and God’s amazing grace. Simply (powerfully) stated: **“WHERE SIN ABOUND GRACE SUPER ABOUND!”**

What if the Old Testament Law (Leviticus 20) against Adultery, and many other sexual perversions, were enacted during this present age throughout our world, which it is at times, and still in the Muslim world? What if every American man/woman, who has committed adultery with another person’s marriage partner, (Leviticus 20:10), were ‘stoned to death’? There probably would be many ‘bloody corpses’ scattered throughout our beautiful land of America! And many of those ‘bloody corpses’ would be ‘Hollywood stars’ (millionaires) who make light of the ‘strict and foolish, stupid and naïve sexual standards of Church-going Christians’. Not only are there ‘multiple affairs’ and ‘multiple marriages’, there are also sexually perverted relationships, such as homosexual, which change from time to time. Completely ‘flaunting’ the Laws of God, as ‘out of date and old fashioned’. They don’t hesitate to mock and to ridicule, and to laugh at godly persons, who happen to believe in the ‘Sanctity of Marriage’.

God still hates immorality (adultery, etc.), and God still hates divorce. The last book of the Old Testament declares this truth. During a time when God’s people (Israelites) were greatly distressed (economically and spiritually, etc.), God revealed the ‘Why’ of their

condition. *“Why has God abandoned us? You cry. I’ll tell you why; it is because the Lord has seen your treachery in divorcing your wives who have been faithful to you through the years, the companion you promised to care for and keep. You were united to your wife by the Lord. In God’s wise plan, when you married, the two of you became one person in his sight. And what does he want? Godly children from your union. Therefore guard your passions, keep faith with the wife of your youth. For the Lord, the God of Israel says he hates divorce and cruel men. Therefore control your passions - let there be no divorcing of your wives.”* (Malachi 2:16-18, Living Bible)

“THREE PETITIONS IN YOUR DAILY PRAYERS TO THE ALMIGHTY GOD AND A ‘BLESSING’ AT MEAL TIME!”

For many years I heard a ‘sainted man’ (humble and loving man) verbalize the following prayer: “O Lord, keep us humble, prayerful, and obedient! In Jesus’ name.” That simple prayer that I repeatedly heard him pray (during the many years that I was his pastor) impressed me so much, that I have ‘adopted’ those words as part of my own ‘prayer life’. Those three qualities describe a person who is seriously seeking to love and please and serve our dear Lord – ‘humility’, ‘prayerfulness’, ‘obedience’. I suggest that you pray the same prayer – often, and for the reminder of your earthly life. To the extent that you (as a believer) have these three qualities (virtues) in your life, to that same extent will you develop true godliness in your life!

My Mother and My Grandmother often (in their ‘blessing’ at a mealtime) prayed: “We thank you for this food and we pray that you will ‘feed us with the Bread of Life!’” Of course, Jesus (in the Book of John) called Himself ‘The Bread of Life’. So when we eat physical food we need (at the same time, and at all times actually) to receive God’s offer of spiritual food! Receive (from our loving Heavenly Father) spiritual, as well as physical, food! The bread of earth (as important as it is for nourishment and maintenance of our physical body) – this earthly bread, and the body it sustains, will perish, but the Bread of God (the life of Jesus) which is available for our souls – this Bread (Jesus) will never perish. There is a verse in the New Testament which states (bluntly) that both the physical bread and the physical body will be destroyed (perish), but that the life of God in the human soul (received through faith in Jesus Christ) will never perish. When this physical body shall return to ‘dust’, the soul of the believer will ‘wing its way to worlds unknown, to behold Christ on His throne’, and the redeemed soul (separated from the earthly body) shall be ‘clothed upon with a spiritual body’, never to die but to be glorified forever (to dwell eternally with the Lord).

So, what shall we say about the ‘mystery of life’? We humans know so little about God’s total reality, but the Bible reveals enough about God, Man, Sin, Jesus Christ, Salvation, Death, and the Hereafter – that is, the Bible reveals enough to humans to allow humans (sinners) to make a decision to live for Christ and to die with assurance of eternal life – all because of God’s grace initiatives. So, what does all this (theological discussion) have to do with praying a dinner ‘blessing’ – “Feed us with the bread of life”? Significant because using this phrase during a regular blessing at meals (like my own mother did) reminds us that we frail (dying) humans regularly need, not only physical food, but also spiritual food. Without that spiritual nurture, we will gradually die, and we will ultimately be ‘lost eternally’ (indescribable loss)!

“MEANINGFUL PRAYERS THAT CAN DAILY HELP TO TRANSFORM YOUR ENTIRE LIFE!”

I received my first Bible from my godly ‘great aunt’ – (an older single lady who had been crippled all of her life, as a result of her contracting polio when she was an infant). A most precious ‘woman of God’ (so sincere and guileless), and one person with whom I often knelt in prayer in her home. She and my grandmother lived together (my grandmother took care of her ‘dependent’ sister), and I spent many hours in their home. She and my grandmother were so ‘fun-loving’ and ‘conversational’ and ‘creative’ and ‘truly alive in their lives of deep piety’. They lived the life of true Christianity – fallible, of course, but so authentic and honest and faithful to their Lord (for decades), as they joyfully attended the Church services in the tiny Free Methodist Church, in Fountain, Colorado. Yes, my ‘Aunt Mary Benedict’ greatly affected me, when I was a child and youth, and her influence in my life still lives on! The verse that she marked in the Bible (KJV) that she gave to me was Psalms 62:5, *“My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation cometh from Him.”*

Hundreds of times, throughout my long life, as I have sought to live a life of dependence upon my God, I have recited this powerful verse! I recommend that you include this verse (and the important truths of this verse) in your ‘daily recitation of Biblical truths’!

My mother (not a ‘stranger’ to various kinds of suffering and disappointments throughout her 94 years of earthly life), I say, my mother loved the Lord deeply, cherished loving relationships, was unusually faithful in attendance at her small Church for decades, had a host of friends because she was so out-going and kind and friendly and gracious and honest. Countless times, throughout her ‘pilgrimage of faith’, she verbalized the following (very popular) verse: *“This is the day that the Lord hath made; I will rejoice and be glad in it.”* My mother’s genuine faith and her joyous spirit (and so many other virtues that I could enumerate) deeply influenced me to become a Christian (when I was only 11 years old). Till the ‘end’ (before she had a stroke, when she was 90 years old), Helen Christian (my dearest mother) was still singing with me, laughing with me, manifesting a very kind nature and a joyous spirit. At age 90 (when I took her on wheelchair rides), my mother (with a cheerful countenance and a ‘light-hearted’ spirit) recited her well-known Bible verses to me (about 60 verses with perfect memory!) She loved to recite Psalms 1, Psalms 23, Psalms 24, and so many other ‘life-transforming’ verses that were her own ‘companions’ throughout her ‘earthly pilgrimage’. Verses that guided her, verses that comforted her, verses by which she ‘lifted her heart in praise’ to her beautiful Savior! She was the kindest person (believer) I ever knew, and she was used by God to ‘bring me to the Savior’! But of all the verses my mother loved and recited, the verse that she probably recited more than any other (almost daily) was: *“This is the day that the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”* May God enable us to rejoice in God’s goodness that He gives to us regularly (really continually) – and may we be thankful to God for His abundant blessings, regardless of the circumstances (good or bad) that we find ourselves in!

“IS THERE A ‘SPIRITUAL’ LAW OF ‘SOWING’ AND ‘REAPING’ THAT CONTROLS ALL HUMAN LIVES?”

“Don’t be misled; remember that you can’t ignore God and get away with it. A man will always reap just the kind of crop he sows! If he sows to please his own wrong desires, he will be planting seeds of evil and he will surely reap a harvest of spiritual decay and death; but if he plants the good things of the Spirit, he will reap the everlasting life which the Holy Spirit gives him.” (Galatians 6:7-8, Living Bible)

“Why Does God Consider ‘Lying’ (Deceit) Such a Serious Sin? (Wrong Doing)”

Suppose your ‘human brain’ gave a ‘false signal’ (message) to your hand, and told your hand that the pan of water was ‘icy cold’ whereas, in reality, the pan contained boiling water? If the nerves in your hand got the ‘message’ that the water was cold, instead of what it was (Hot), and you put your hand into the water (as a result of this ‘deceptive’ message), there would, of course, be tragic consequences, namely, a burned hand! There must be honesty in the communication of the ‘brain’ to all the nerve passages of the body, if there is to be ‘security’, and ‘safety’ and ‘health’ in the entire body.

If there must be ‘honesty’ in the members of the human body (to guarantee total ‘health’), there certainly must be ‘honest communication’ between the ‘members of Christ’s Body’ (Church). And, also there must be ‘honesty’ in communication between humans, in the ‘wider world’ of business, education, and simple ‘family affairs’. In fact, God expects that all persons (Christians and non-Christians) practice ‘honest speech’ at all times, and carry on all earthly transactions with genuine integrity (with no secret plots or deceptive schemes). The ‘lying tongue’ (slander, gossip, etc.) is strongly condemned by the ‘God of all honesty’. The Bible declares that *‘God cannot lie’*, and God expects His creatures (although ‘fallen creatures’) to endeavor in all circumstances to ‘tell the truth and nothing but the truth’ – so help me God! When there is a slippage in strict honesty by one of God’s fallible children (weakened by temptation and sometimes prone to compromise of total truthfulness), then there must be a humble apology (confession to the one who has been ‘hurt’ by a ‘loose and careless tongue’). Rare is the person (Christian) who has not occasionally ‘failed’ to ‘speak aright’ in all circumstances. But humility demands that all failures in the area of ‘integrity’ by the ‘erring one’ be ‘made right’. Integrity (honesty) is God’s high call to every person, and especially to His redeemed children who are vital members of Christ’s Body (Church). Live honestly in the sight of all persons – that is a clear Biblical command! Let the outer life of charity be a clear reflection of the inner light of truth in your life! Be open and honest and transparent before all persons, especially as you live in the midst of a vile and corrupt and evil society. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. The light of truth, the light of honesty, the light of genuine transparency!

Jesus called His generation an ‘adulterous generation’ – for adultery and fornication (and even homosexuality) were widespread. Men in the pagan world thought nothing of having outside ‘sex partners’, independent of their wives. Sacred prostitution was widespread in many pagan religions. Seeking physical gratification was considered ‘normal’, and the practice of divorce was common. So, when the Christian ethic was introduced to this corrupt and sensual society, this religion was truly revolutionary! The impure became totally chaste, and dignity was restored to the family as well as to individual converts. But not only was sexual standards very low in the ancient Roman and Greek world, the standards of integrity and honesty and fairness in all human relationships were then very low. Christ came to restore honesty and justice to all human relationships. The Jewish people, of course, had the Old Testament (long before Christ’s coming), and often in the Old Law was the standard of righteousness and integrity taught, but Christ taught that the Law of Moses must become the Law of the Human Heart. The hand (in terms of honest ‘dealings’) could only be truly ‘healthy’ if the heart was cleansed of insincerity and deception and selfishness.

“Be ye holy, for I the Lord thy God am holy!” That is God’s strict command to His entire fallen Creation. What God commands (a pure and holy heart); God provides (divinely wrought transformation which gives powerful inner cleansing

from moral pollution and selfish motives). God is able to give a sincere seeker after truth and holiness, a pure heart! A pure heart can, of course, become 'tainted with sin and selfishness' once again, if the believer 'let's down his guard' during temptation. But our loving God immediately forgives and cleanses anew, if the erring believer confesses his sin. "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all unrighteousness." (I John 1:7)

When we obey God's command to be 'holy', what does it mean to be 'holy'? Briefly stated and described: 'Holiness' means two things – separation from the practice of outward sinning, and inward cleansing of the heart from all self-centered pursuits, and a surrender to the 'lordship of Jesus Christ in my total life (mind, emotions, spirit, will). The person who, by God's grace, is sincerely intent on living a 'holy life' does not practice sinning. This does not mean that he never fails morally (disobey), but it does mean that, when he deliberately sins, he quickly 'confesses' his sin to the Savior and he quickly 'pleads the blood of Jesus Christ'. *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (I John 1:9) Yes, the sincere believer seeks to resist all temptation, and he seeks (God being his Helper) never to commit a deliberate act of disobedience against the known laws of God. He wants to please his blessed Savior, to listen to the 'still small voice' of the Holy Spirit, to keep the holy and wholesome laws which God has given in His holy Word (Laws that God gave for the 'health' and the 'welfare' of all humans).

But the 'holiness' which God commands we have in our lives, is concerned not only with outward adherence to the Laws of God. 'Holiness', secondly, is focused on the inner heart condition of every person. God, through Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, is able to 'forgive me for what I have done' (sinful deeds), and also to 'cleanse me from the corruption of my inner heart'. Pure 'hands' (outward) and pure 'heart' (inward) is a 'double cure' for my two-fold problem of sin; outward practice of sin, and inward 'foul' condition of my heart). My inner disposition needs to be 'cleansed', as well as my outward 'messy life' of disobedience needs to be forgiven. Christ came to forgive me for what I have done, and to cleanse me from what I am. My outer conduct and my inner disposition are both greatly 'troubled' with sin, and Christ is able to accomplish His 'work of holiness' on 'both levels'. Justification and sanctification both are necessary if I am to experience an 'honest, transparent, authentic, integrated life'. It is sin which both destroys a reconciled relationship with God, and a cleansed relationship with God. To the extent that I experience God's saving and cleansing ministry in my life (outward and inward transformation), to that same extent will I experience what it means to be truly 'honest' with God, 'honest' with myself, and 'honest' with other persons. It is sin that 'clouds' my vision of reality – reality of God, reality of myself, reality of other persons. To be 'guileless', without duplicity, genuine, inwardly and outwardly sincere (to mean what I say, and say what I mean) – this is the description of 'holiness'. The holiness which is the property of God. *"Be ye holy, for I the Lord thy God am holy!"* God is 'single-minded' in His love for lost humanity, and He makes possible the salvation of every person, all because of Christ's sacrifice. Christ was 'single-minded' when He came to this earth – He had one purpose when He came to this planet! So, followers of Christ ('holy persons') are to be single-minded, never 'double-minded' (for such persons are 'unstable in all their ways'). A single purpose for living – a 'holy purpose' – to glorify the living Savior in all we do and say and think! *"The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit"*. (Romans 5:5) Pray this: "Lord Jesus, please shed abroad your love – your divine love – in my poor human heart. Help me to love what you love, to think like you think to have only one motive – to glorify you and to serve your kingdom while I am a 'passing pilgrim' on this planet! Thank you, thank you. Give me strength to live a consistent life of love. Amen."

Not an alternative, but a command: *“Be ye holy, for I the Lord thy God am holy!”* Holiness means separation – that is, separation from the world of ‘sinning’. Most (perhaps all) Christians occasionally ‘sin’ (that is, they break God’s holy laws), but when that happens the erring believer must quickly plead the ‘blood of Jesus’ for his forgiveness and his inner cleansing. One thing is sure (according to the Bible): No Christian ‘practices’ a lifestyle of sinning. He/she earnestly attempts (by God’s enabling, inner presence) to always say ‘No’ to every evil temptation. God tells believers: “Come out from among them (evil associates) and be ye separate, and I will receive you, and I will be a Father unto you”, says the Lord God Almighty. ‘In the world, but not of the world’ – that is, not partaking of the evil practices and evil attitudes of worldly persons, but, at the same time, loving sinners (really caring for their ‘spiritual burdens’). Not participating in their foul language and corrupt practices and hurtful attitudes, but, nevertheless, like Jesus, make yourself available to sinners who need an ear to listen, a shoulder to lean on, a mind to understand, a hand practically to help, a heart to love – all in the name of Jesus, and all without harsh judgment and criticism. Lift up the fallen and bring them to the arms of the loving Savior – a God who came to this sin-cursed earth to save a lost and dying race. Holy people seek to have the ‘Mind of Christ’ (understanding of all lost persons), they seek to have the ‘Heart of Christ’ (compassion towards all hurting sinners), they seek to have the ‘Will of Christ’ (desire to see all sinners saved, for God is not willing that any person should perish, and God has ‘elected’ all persons to be saved – depending upon their willingness to be saved), they seek the ‘Faith of Christ’ (as Christ, see amazing potential in all persons, regardless of their present lost condition). Yes, even though earnest followers of Christ must admit that they are ‘very human’ (and subject to temptation and sin), they have one supreme desire – the desire to please their Lord by the words they speak, by the thoughts they think, by the emotions they feel and express. Holy persons admit that they often need (and plead) the cleansing ‘blood of Jesus’ (because of their multiple mistakes and failures, and even occasional sins), and they readily acknowledge that others see their faults when they themselves are quite ‘blinded’ to their own faults. That is why they believe that the accountability which a loving ‘care group’ can give is so helpful to them, in their attempt to ‘purge themselves’ (sanctify themselves is Bible phrase) from personality ‘defects’ (weaknesses) and from actual behavior practices – all of which are hindering them from greater growth in grace and holiness. Growth in holiness is always growth in humility. A holy person does not think more highly of himself than he ought to think. Whatever he is, he is ‘by the grace and mercy of God!’ He knows that he is only a “Christian-in-the-making!”

Christians are ‘Christ-followers’, persons who are committed to a life of ‘holiness’, that is, separation from ‘worldliness’ (outwardly), and cleansing of the heart (inwardly). Wrote the apostle John: *“Stop loving this evil world and all that it offers you, for when you love these things you show that you do not really love God; for all these worldly things, these evil desires - the craze for sex, the ambition to buy everything that appeals to you, and the pride that comes from wealth and importance - these are not from God. They are from this evil world itself. And this world is fading away, and these evil, forbidden things will go with it, but whoever keeps doing the will of God will live forever.”* (I John 2:15-18, Living Bible)

When Christ, through the Spirit, lives within a person, there is a drastic change in his attitudes, his emotions, his spirit, and his choices! There is a marked contrast between a person of God and a person of this world, between a spiritually minded person and a carnally - minded person, between a self-centered person and a Christ-centered person; reverent mind instead of a profane mind, a loving nature instead of a revengeful nature. Pure motives instead of ulterior motives, a guiltless intentions not of ‘deceptive’ intentions. Honest ‘dealings’ instead of ‘shady’ dealings. Charitably words instead of vile words, generous actions instead of stingy actions. Prayerful practices instead of

careless practices, single-minded direction and goals instead of double-minded or unpredictable involvements.

To the extent that a person deliberately 'rejects' the way of Christ (i.e., the way of self-surrender to Christ and to His 'call' for one's life), to that same extent is that person 'lost' – lost to all meaning and purpose for his little life; to the extent that a person seeks earnestly to follow the living Christ (and His revealed will), to that same extent is that person on his way to finding meaning and purpose in life. It is either the way of selfishness (i.e., the way of Satan), or the way of self-surrender (i.e., the way of Christ). Victory or defeat in life, a double-loser or a double-winner. Life or death, joy or sorrow. Peace or turmoil, fulfillment or frustration.

The way of Christ (i.e., the Christian Way) is the way of Truth, Integrity, Transparency, Openness, without Guile and Duplicity, Single-mindedness, Integration, Authenticity, Straightforwardness, Humility, Teachable, Receptivity, Tough-Mindedness and at the same time Tender-Heartedness and honesty. The way of the world, in contrast to the Christian Way, is the way of deceit, lying, schemes and plots. Double-minded, ulterior motives, vindictive, hatred, bitterness, resentment, greed, thievery, blasphemy, profanity, sacrilege, uncleanness, vengeance, hard-heartedness, manipulation, cunning, exploitation, selfishness, pride, lust, self-sufficiency, self-reliance, and dishonesty.

It must be acknowledged that there are many non-Christians who are not deliberately rebelling against the degree of 'spiritual light' (of limited truth) that they have received, and who are basically 'honest' persons. These persons are living as best as they know how to live, with many of them involved in 'compassion projects'. They have not yet made an intelligent commitment to Christ, but, on the other hand, they are not knowingly 'rebelling' against that higher form of 'light' which is found in a personal, saving knowledge of Christ. They are the persons whom Christ said were like a plant that is 'white unto harvest' (who would gladly come to Christ, if they only knew how to do this). No, we must not say that all non-Christians are 'dishonest persons'. Who then are the 'dishonest persons'? It is those persons who have willingly (knowingly) rejected the 'call' of Christ to repentance and personal salvation. The above-stated (negative) words describe these 'God-rejecters' (to one extent or another).

HONESTY is one word that truly (but incompletely) describes what 'holiness' is all about! All of the above-stated (positive) words describe rather accurately the life of holiness. Holiness cannot be understood, short of understanding the meaning of Honesty (along, with several other important words, as noted above).

The contrast between the life of holiness and the life of worldliness is very great (as noted by the descriptive words in the above paragraphs). The Jesus who has called His followers to leave the evil practices of this world, has, on the other hand, not called His followers to leave the sinners themselves! He said that His followers were to be IN the world, but not OF the world! The apostle Paul challenged the 'holy ones' (followers of Christ) to live godly lives (of honesty and moral purity). Here is what he wrote (a challenge to live a holy life, in the midst of a very unholy society): *"Do all things without complaining or bickering with each other, so you will be found innocent and blameless. You are God's children called to live without a single stain on your reputations among this perverted and crooked generation. Shine like stars across the land."* (Philippians 2:14-15, Living Bible)

In what kind of 'land' are Christians 'called' to 'shine like stars'? To fully answer that question would involve ourselves in one long and detailed discussion and description (which time and space would not now permit), but, tragically, it is evident (relevant to our present subject) that our 'land' experiences widespread 'DISHONESTY'! As one author clearly describes: "In this age we have lost all sense of shame, we lie viciously,

completely conscious of what we do, out of spite, out of malice, out of evil passion. We tell lies, sometimes big lies, sometimes small, in public speeches, in our family circles, in the press, on the radio. We lie to those whom we call our friends, we lie to little children, and we lie to God. And, miserable as we are, we even lie to ourselves.” (‘Man, the Saint’ by J. Urteago Loidi; pg. 50)

There are numerous Biblical references that indicate God’s attitude towards all lying, and the sad consequences that come as a result of lying. It is profitable (for Christians and non-Christians alike) to ‘visit’ a few of those Biblical statements regarding ‘lying’. Give serious considerations to a few of these following references:

As noted earlier in this particular ‘paper’, there are 7 things that God especially ‘hates’, and among those 7 things are ‘Lying’, and ‘A False Witness’. (Proverbs 6:16-19)

“A truthful witness never lies; a false witness always lies.” (Proverbs 14:5);

“Punish false witnesses. Track down liars.” (Proverbs 19:5);

“A false witness shall be punished and a liar shall be caught.” (Proverbs 19:9, Living Bible);

“God delights in those who keep their promises, and abhors those who don’t.” (Proverbs 12:17, Living Bible);

“Deceit fills hearts that are plotting for evil; joy fills hearts that are planning for good!” (Proverbs 12:20, Living Bible);

“A good man is known by his truthfulness; a false man by deceit and lies.” (Proverbs 12:17, Living Bible);

Telling lies about someone is as harmful as hitting him with an axe, or wounding him with a sword, or shooting him with a sharp arrow.” (Proverbs 15:18, Living Bible)

Perhaps it ‘goes without saying’, but the obvious truths sometimes need to be repeated, over and over. Herein is stated the ‘obvious truth’, namely, “Deceitful actions have as their ‘foundation’ the sacrifice of truth (the facts). There can be no activity of ‘deceit’ without the activity of lies!” So lies and deceit are ‘inseparable sisters in evil’!

The Bible not only warns against ‘lying’, but also against ‘deceit’. The mind that is filled with lies is the mind that is obviously filled with deceitful thoughts (thoughts that plan and plot to hurt another person). The plotting mind (by definition) is the ‘evil mind’ – a mind that opposes God and God’s love and love for one’s neighbor! God is love, and only those who love all persons are godlike persons. Those who despise other persons (the very persons whom God loves) are definitely not godlike. Satan hates the human race, and humans who also hate the human race (or who hate even one person who is a member of the human race) are thinking Satan’s thoughts, and are intent on carrying out hateful (Satanic) actions. All persons are either ‘children of the light’ (love motivated), or ‘children of darkness’ (hate motivated). It is that simple!

There are only two kinds of persons in this world - those who are peacemakers (children of God), and those who are basically ‘troublemakers’ (children of Satan). Many persons who are not conscious followers of Christ, are, nevertheless, sincere persons who want to ‘do the right and compassionate thing’; in other words, they sincerely desire to be ‘peace-makers’ among all persons. Either here on this earth, or hereafter, these persons (who are walking in all the ‘light of truth’ that they have been given) will come into a wonderful and personal relationship with Christ Jesus. But those who have rejected the light of God given strongly to them, but who have resisted that ‘call to repentance and saving faith in Christ’ – these persons are walking in ‘spiritual darkness’, and they have identified with Satan’s ‘troublesome and deceptive work’ among humans! Instead of advancing the work of Christ’s good kingdom, these ‘God-rejecters’ are hindering the

advancement of Christ's worldwide kingdom of righteousness and justice and integrity and peace and love! To continue to follow Satan's way (of rivalry and jealousy and pride and lust and competition and self-advancement, etc., etc., etc.), is increasingly to experience a life that becomes 'narrow' and 'constricted' and 'limited' and 'hard'! The way of the transgressor (the liar and the deceiver, becomes 'harder', the longer he/she lives a self-centered life!

"A good man's mind is filled with honest thoughts; an evil man's mind is crammed with lies." (Proverbs 12:5, Living Bible)

Jesus, while on earth, was the greatest teacher the world has ever known. His teachings reflected the 'total truth' regarding God, Man, Sin, Salvation, the Final Judgment of all mankind, Heaven, Hell (the primary truths that 'control the destiny of all humans'). When it came to the 'ethical truths' (the virtues which persons enjoyed or not enjoyed, depending upon human response to divine offers), Jesus clearly revealed 'reality'. Jesus spent much of His time healing the sick, comforting the sorrowing, speaking peace to the troubled, calling persons to follow Him and His teaching, and even (on a couple occasions) raising the dead. His ministry was varied, and all of it was wonderful. But for those who chose to reject His call to repentance and obedience, Jesus' message was 'dreadful' (unwelcome). Jesus came as the 'Light of the world', the 'Way, the Truth, and the Life'. Jesus always spoke the truth, and nothing but the truth. It is written that God cannot lie, and the same can be said of Jesus. He was sinless. He never once spoke a lie. He was totally reliable. Whatever His Father told Jesus, Jesus spoke; Absolute integrity. No deceit. No evil plots. Faithful to the end of His life, to fulfill His God-given mission (the mission of redemption for the entire human race)! No greater or more holy man has ever lived on the face of this earth, than Jesus of Nazareth! He (as a human, with legitimate human limitations) was faultless in His judgment, and perfect in His performance. Under all kinds of conditions (very difficult and varied), Jesus never, under pressure, told a lie, or never shaded the truth. Perfectly dependable! The Savior, Friend and Good Shepherd! He came to earth to save all; He was the dearest Friend any person could have, and it was said of Him that He was a 'friend of publicans and sinners'; and He was the tender, loving Shepherd whose sheep listened to His voice and who carefully followed Him. Yes, Savior, Friend, Good Shepherd – and so much more! The Man among men! No comparison, and in a category all to Himself. The Son of God came down from the 'Ivory Palaces' to a sin cursed earth – to seek and to save a lost and dying human race! Such love, such mercy, such patience, such appeal, and such power! Perfect love, perfect wisdom, and perfect power! What a Savior! What a King! What a Counselor!

Of course, it is 'common knowledge' that, at best (as a dedicated believer), a human will be fallible. By God's grace, a person (Christian) can live a consistently 'good life' (i.e., a Spirit-filled, love - motivated) life, but most (if not all) 'saints' – holy ones – occasionally sin, in 'word, thought, and deed'. Even occasional sins are to be looked at as 'serious', and these 'slips' (failures) in a believer's life must be 'dealt with'. There is the 'cleansing stream of Jesus' blood' that is constantly available for the total cleansing of all sins (sins of commission and sins of omission and even so-called sins of ignorance). 'The blood, the blood is my entire plea; O hallelujah, it cleanses me!' There is 'power, wonder working power, in the precious blood of the Lamb of God'! When you sin, 'plunge and be made whole'. Keep a clear conscience daily. Without becoming overly 'introspective', take a personal 'inventory' of your life regularly (perhaps at the close of each day). Ask the Holy Spirit to 'search your heart' and to reveal to you those areas of your life (thoughts, intentions, attitudes, actions) which need God's correction (and the cleansing of Christ's blood).

Be 'easy' on others, but rather 'hard' on yourself. If the Spirit reveals to you that you need to ask someone's forgiveness (for your wrong to them), determine – in a spirit of humility and courage – to ask forgiveness. Keep 'up to date' in your relationship with

your God – and with your fellow human beings. Do not allow Satan however, to ‘accuse’ you of things you have not done and things you have not said – remember He is called the ‘accuser of the brethren’! Don’t ‘wallow’ in false guilt! Put every, false and unfounded guilt, in the ‘moral wastebasket’, and claim your ‘right’ as a child of God to be confident and restful and joyous and strong and creative in God’s kingdom work!

The supreme desire of your entire life (with all your involvements in daily life) is to ‘cultivate’ a Christlike character – a character that can (among many descriptions) be described as Honest and Without Guile! Through the indwelling Holy Spirit, you can be empowered to resist all temptations, and remain an Honest Person (sincere and single-minded and love-filled).

God is Perfect Honesty, and Satan is Total Deception. All lies and deception find their origin in Satan! Both religious and irreligious persons come under the sway of Satan’s dishonest way of life. This reality was experienced during Jesus’ own ministry. Said Jesus, to religious leaders, *“Why can’t you understand what I am saying? It is because you are prevented from doing so! For you are children of your father the devil and you love to do the evil things he does. He was a murderer from the beginning and a hater of truth - there is not an iota of truth in him. When he lies, it is perfectly normal, for He Is the Father of Liars. And so when I tell the truth, you just naturally don’t believe it!”* (John 8:43-45, Living Bible)

It is a very disturbing truth to face and to accept, namely, that the Devil is the ‘Father of Liars’. (John 8:45) Obviously, this passage of Scripture is not teaching that a person (a believer or non-believer) who (under strong temptation) ‘slips’ and ‘fails’ to tell the truth, is automatically a ‘child of the devil’ (with the terrible bondage that comes with that relationship). Satan is a liar, and those who are determined to abandon a lifestyle of honesty (truthfulness and sincerity) and to indulge in a lifestyle of deception and lying and cruel scheming (by his own wrong choices) becomes a ‘child of the devil’. ‘Like father, like son’. To submit to the devil means that you become like the devil – Dishonest, Deceiving, and Cruel!

According to Jesus’ teaching (John 8:44-45), those who practice telling lies (i.e., those who consistently guide their lives by deception and dishonesty) – these persons have Satan as their ‘father’! Satan is the Father of Liars! The more a person lies, the more he/she comes under the dominion (influence and control) of Satan! A very frightening thought! But in stating this ‘dreadful truth’, it is always important to recognize that our God is able to ‘redeem’ every ‘lost soul’! There is no ‘sin stain so deep, but what the blood of Jesus Christ is able to go deeper yet’. Where sin abounds (even the horrible sin of lying and deception and dishonesty), the grace (power) of God super abounds! God is able to save a ‘wretch’ and make him a ‘saint’! Anyone (even a hardened criminal and cruel deceiver) is invited to find a ‘space’ at the ‘foot of the Cross of Jesus Christ’. Jesus suffered a cruel (bloody) death, and He took the sins of every person upon Himself. As the ‘Sacrificial Lamb of God’, Jesus (the innocent one) died for every guilty (vile and wretched) sinner. Even for those evil persons who have made deceit and lying and dishonesty a ‘way of life’. God is not willing that any person should perish, but that all repent of their sins, and truly believe on Christ. Repentance means ‘godly sorrow for my sins’ and it means a ‘moral U-turn’, that is, turning my back on my ‘old way of life’. Turning away from the ‘evil attitudes and practices of my life’, I must turn my face toward the blessed Savior, in total trust and reliance upon Christ as the Source of my salvation (total life change). I must surrender my mind with its thoughts, my heart with its feelings, my will with its choices. Full surrender, that I might receive the full benefits of the Cross of Christ (justification, regeneration, reconciliation, and etc.). Then I (or the man who is ‘saved’ from a life of deception) must learn to daily surrender to the

Lordship of Christ, and that involves replacing old ideas (of deception and self-centeredness) with the new ideas of Christ's Kingdom (recorded fully in the Bible).

There are numerous examples of persons (wicked persons) who gave their lives to Christ, and who became (through Christ's transforming power) beautiful (honest) servants of the Righteous Kingdom of God! Do you remember Matthew the tax collector, who probably (like most tax collectors during the Roman times) was 'shady' (Dishonest) in his 'business dealings'? Matthew was so thoroughly converted by Christ that God eventually used him to write one of the several Gospels! Do you remember Zacchaeus (Luke 19) – the man of 'short stature' – who also was a dishonest tax collector? His conversion to Christ was so thorough that he pledged to 'give fourfold' back to anyone from whom he had 'stolen' through dishonest (deceptive) business practices! Multitudes of persons who have been dishonest (in so many different ways) have deeply repented of their evil (Deceptive) ways, and they have humbled themselves before the Living Christ, and they have become 'brand new' persons – honest and upright and dependable and trustworthy persons! Christ is able to 'change the leopard's spots', He is able to 'save to the uttermost', He is able to make a 'bad' man 'good'! "God is of purer eyes than to behold evil", but, while God hates sin in every form and in every degree, God, nevertheless, deeply loves every sinner. God is ready and able to change the 'corrupt' into the 'pure' and 'holy' and 'wholesome' and 'honest'! There is no 'case' too hard for the Almighty Savior, for He paid the price (with His blood), for the redemption of the 'chiefest of sinners'!

The 'grace of God' is multiple in its application to the human race! There is what is called God's "Prevenient Grace". This is the grace of God that 'goes before' – that is, 'goes before' – paving the road', 'drawing sinners to the Savior', 'revealing the appealing offer of salvation to the lost one'. Because of God's 'grace initiatives' (offering to every person the 'gift of repentance' and the 'gift of saving faith'), it is possible for every person (regardless of the kind or the degree of his/her sins) to 'kneel before the Cross of Christ' to become converted! Just as it was possible for thieving Zacchaeus and Matthew (in Jesus' time) to come to Christ, to become His loyal follower, so it is possible for anyone (i.e., any sinner, regardless of how wretched he/she is) to 'make his/her way to Christ (to experience total forgiveness and to give his/her heart to Christ to follow Him the rest of his/her life!) Many of those who were disciples in the 'Early Church' – converts of the apostle Paul – were one-time 'wretched sinners'. Notice what Paul wrote to the Corinthian Church: *"Don't you know that those doing such things have no share in the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who live immoral lives, who are idol worshipers, adulterers or homosexuals - will have no share in his kingdom. Neither will thieves or greedy people, drunkards, slanderers, or robbers. There was a time when some of you were just like that but now your sins are washed away, and you are set apart for God, and he has accepted you because of what the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of our God have done for you."* (I Corinthians 6:9-11, Living Bible)

Just think of this – by Christ's transforming power, the idol worshiper became a worshiper of the true God, the adulterer and homosexual became sexually 'clean' and 'healthy' and 'wholesome', the thief became an honest man, the greedy and self-centered man became generous and others-oriented, the drunkard became sober, the slanderer became charitable and honest in his conversation, the robbers no longer stole, but, instead, used their hands to work and to give to the poor! 'I once was lost, but now I am found; was blind, but now I see!' John Newton (the slave trader on an English ship which brought many black slaves from Africa) was indeed a 'wretch'. But when God 'got a hold of his life' and thoroughly transformed his heart and spirit and will, John Newton was no longer a 'desperate sinner', but instead a beautiful and saintly servant of God – indeed, a preacher of the Gospel. Perhaps the most popular hymn (a hymn that was written by John Newton two centuries ago) is 'Amazing Grace'. Multitudes of converted persons

(persons who have been 'saved' out of the 'pit of sin') identify with the vivid words of that famous song: "Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me!" No one is hopeless in their 'lost condition' of sin. God loves all; Jesus died for all; the Holy Spirit calls all to salvation (i.e., the gift of repentance and saving faith is offered to every sinner, which makes it possible for sinners to exercise their 'volition' (Free will) in a positive way, enabling them to accept Christ as Savior and Lord, and enjoy the total forgiveness of their sins). "Christ receives sinful men, even me with all my sin!" God turns no one away. "Though millions have come, there is still room at the cross for you." In a spirit of deepest humility (and gratitude), the apostle Paul called himself the 'chiefest of sinners', but Paul (through God's transforming grace) became the greatest of all Christian apostles! The theme of Paul's life (and letters) is the grace of God that is made available to all persons, all because of the 'finished work' of Christ on the Cross and by means of the Resurrection.

"Who may climb the mountain of the Lord and enter where he lives? Who may stand before the Lord? Only those with pure hands and hearts, and who do not, practice dishonesty and lying. They will receive God's own goodness as their blessing from him, planted in their lives by God himself, their Savior. These are the ones who are allowed to stand before the Lord and worship the God of Jacob." (Psalms 24:3-6, Living Bible)

God has not excluded anyone from His 'honest' offer of salvation (new life in Christ). God, through Christ (and His sacrifice) has 'elected' every human being to be a member of His 'spiritual family', but God will not 'force' anyone to receive this wonderful gift of 'abundant life' (here on earth) and 'eternal life' (after physical death). *"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden (under the burden of sin); and I will give you rest (from the horrors and deception of sin)."* This is Jesus' offer to those who struggle under the heavy yoke (Burden) of sin! Jesus has a well-fitting 'yoke' for each person to wear, and a 'light burden' for each person to carry. Yes, every follower of Christ has a yoke to wear, but His yoke is 'easy' (i.e., it is custom made for each follower of Christ). Yes, every follower has a 'burden' to carry (i.e., a definite responsibility in God's Kingdom, a definite 'calling' to fulfill throughout his short earthly life).

The way of sin is the way of hardship and misery ultimately, even though initially (for a short time) the ways of sinning (lust and self-centered pursuits, etc.) may give a kind of 'pleasure'. But 'pleasures' only for a 'short season', followed by a life of loneliness and eventual self-despising! Satan (true to his character) is a 'deceiver', a 'liar', a 'schemer', a 'murderer', an 'accuser', a 'thief' - and anyone who follows him will eventually realize that 'there is no good in him at all'. He hates the human race, and he is out (like a roaring lion) plotting to destroy every man, woman and child that he can! "God is not willing that any should perish" and God, therefore, is doing everything He can (short of 'forcing' Himself on humans) to 'get everyone to heaven'. God aches when He sees his human family suffering (needlessly) because of wrong moral choices. On the other hand, Satan is NOT willing that anyone make it through the 'pearly gates of heaven'. He is doing everything 'in his limited power' to divert the attention of everyone away from God and away from 'spiritual concerns' and 'eternal (lasting) values'! He tries (deceptively) to imitate the work of God, and he disguises himself (at times) and gives the appearance of 'an angel of light'! He is described as a 'roaring lion', going about (throughout the earth) 'seeking whom he may devour.' It is written (in God's Word) that Satan wishes to 'sift us like wheat' (total destruction of humans). He is a 'defeated foe' (defeated because of the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, where Jesus proclaimed 'It is finished'), and his ultimate destiny will be in the 'Lake of Fire'! Christ has given Satan his 'sentence' (eternal death), and Christ has set his date of execution, but (of course) we humans (including all Christians) do not know the date of Satan's final punishment. In the meantime, because Satan knows that he has been defeated (as a result of the death

and resurrection of Christ) and because Satan is terrified with the knowledge that Christ has provided a 'means of salvation' for every individual in the human race – these 'earth-shattering' (divinely-revealed) facts have caused Satan to be unbelievably 'angry' with the human race, and 'jealous' toward the human race! Satan is 'bitter' towards the Living God (who threw Satan out of Heaven in the distant past, and who defeated Satan on Mount Calvary and in the Empty Tomb). Satan is taking out his 'fury' and 'anger' and 'jealousy' on the human race! Whereas the human race is the object of God's great love, the human race, on the other hand, is the object of Satan's great hate. God wants everyone in heaven, and Satan wants everyone in hell. The 'human will' (the most fantastic and yet the most frightening distinguishing 'quality' of a person) – I say, the 'human will' makes the decision as to whether it will be 'heaven' or 'hell' – God's side or Satan's side.

We have noted (in previous discussion) that dishonest lying, deceit, etc., seems to be a widespread 'disease' in our modern society. But, in spite of the horror of this most hurtful 'disease', we noted that 'where sin abounds, grace super abounds.' There is no 'sin stain' that is so deep, but what the blood of Jesus goes deeper yet. There are no hopeless situations, when those (terribly sinful) situations are brought to the 'saving Lamb of God'. The unholy (dishonest person) can become holy (upright and reliable and guileless). All because of the work of Christ, and all because (by God's enabling gift of repentance and faith) the sinner (dishonest man) chooses to avail himself of God's wonderful gifts of repentance and faith.

God's mercy is great and His call to repentance is persistent, but the Bible (in a frightening statement) says that "My Spirit shall not always 'strive' (in mercy) with man." Don't forget that God finally destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (book of Genesis) with 'fire and brimstone'. Not quickly, for God patiently waited for a long time for these wicked persons to repent. But even the 'patience of God' finally comes to an end. God's mercy always 'guides God's justice', but there comes a time (after repeated offers of mercy) when God's righteous 'justice' takes over! And that spells 'terrible punishment'. God waited for 120 years for a wicked population to repent (under the powerful preaching of Noah), but only Noah's family (8 persons) was saved from the destruction (judgment) of the worldwide flood!

What will God do to those persons who turn their backs (spiritually - speaking) on the God who demands of every person – *"Be ye holy, for I the Lord thy God am holy"*? God expects all persons to pursue a 'holy lifestyle' throughout one's entire life. A holy lifestyle (as noted in this particular paper) is a lifestyle that is characterized by honesty, transparency, guilelessness, sincerity, and single-mindedness. For those who deliberately and defiantly reject God and God's ways (the ways of honesty, etc.), there awaits a fearful judgment from the God of Justice and Holiness! There is a 'Final Judgment' (called 'The Great White Throne Judgment'). The Bible (near the last pages of the Bible) briefly describes the 'tragic humans' who will have to suffer in that judgment. *"But cowards who turn back from following me, and those who are unfaithful to me, and the corrupt and murderers, and the immoral, and those conversing with demons, and idol worshipers and ALL LIARS - their doom is in the Lake that burns with fire and sulphur. This is the Second Death."* (Revelation 21:8, Living Bible)

If a person practices the lifestyle that reflects the 'works' of Satan (namely, the lifestyle of 'dishonesty', 'lying', 'deception', 'scheming', 'plotting', 'insincerity', 'guile', 'duplicity', 'ulterior motives', 'selfishness', 'licentiousness') – I say, if a person practices the lifestyle that reflects the 'works' of Satan, then where will be the destiny of such a person 'in the end'? Well, as long as there is 'breath', there is hope for moral change in a sinner's life – but only if there is genuine repentance (a moral U-turn) and sincere (humble) 'calling out to the Savior'. As just stated, as long as there is physical life (human breath), there's

hope for ones recovery from sin and escape from hell. It is a 'dangerous and foolish thing' for a never-dying soul (long time sinner) to wait until he is on his 'death bed' (or near that time), to come to God for mercy and forgiveness! But, true to His merciful character and His enduring love, God is willing to accept a truly 'repentant, death bed sinner' into His Kingdom. Remember the 'thief on the cross' near Jesus? He cried out in the last hours of his life - "Remember me when you come into your Kingdom"! How did Jesus respond to this man's plea? "Today you will be with me in Paradise"! Most astounding words of divine mercy! It is probable that, throughout the last two thousand years (since the ascension of Jesus to heaven), there have been a large number of persons (lost and broken and despairing sinners) who have (in great fear) faced the probability of their eternal destiny as something other than 'heaven', who have cried out to God for mercy, in the last minutes (hours) of their lives! When God beholds sincere repentance and genuine faith (trust) - and only God, of course, can discern the 'thoughts and desires' of the human heart during a person's last cries for God - God answers those who are 'genuine' in their seeking! God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. God always responds to the heart of repentance/faith - even during the last moments of a sinner's life.

It is far better, of course, for a human being to accept Christ as ones Savior, when they are a mere child. After that early conversion to give one's, life of service and love, to Christ. I have never met a person who said he/she 'regretted' that he/she gave their life to Christ at such an 'early time' (as a mere child). But I know there are many, many adults who regret that they waited so very long (decades) before they accepted Christ. These adults 'sowed wild oats' (of sin), and they have regrets (consequences and scars from their earlier sinning). The grace of God that 'prevents' a young person from ongoing into 'deep sinning' ('sowing wild oats'), is just as great as the grace of God that 'rescues' older sinners from their wretched lifestyle of sinning (which has brought great sorrow and 'hurt', not only to themselves, but to others around them).

The thief on the cross was wonderfully saved by the merciful Savior who was suffering on a cross next to him. What an amazing show of God's mercy. But, have you ever given thought to the fact that that thief doubtless caused (unknown) suffering and 'hurt' and 'damage' (in stolen goods) to many unfortunate persons in Galilee (or wherever)? HIS SOUL WAS SAVED, BUT THIS LIFE WAS LOST! At the end of our short earthly lives, each of us (individually) will stand before the One who gave us our lives, and we will give an 'account' to Him for the quality of life that we have lived 'in the flesh' on earth! The quality of our 'character' (which includes the diligence with which we used our 'spiritual gifts and talents and abilities and capabilities for the 'glory of God' and for the 'benefit and blessing of our fellow humans). Persons (sinners) who failed to 'believe on the Lord Jesus' (John 3:36) will, of course, be judged by an all-holy and all-just God.

Because these 'tragic' and 'pathetic' God-rejecters would feel totally 'uncomfortable' in a 'place of holiness and righteousness and unselfishness and honesty and mutual loves (HEAVEN)', they must depart to a place that is compatible with their 'nature of total selfishness and corruption' (HELL). As C.S. Lewis has noted, at the end of life's choices, God will finally say to those who refuse to follow the true God (Jesus: Not my will, but thy will be done!" In other words, if you do not wish (will) to following will (of peace and joy), then you must follow your own will (of sorrow and shame and eternal alienation). Free will choice!

If an earthly person (sinner) does not choose, throughout the few decades of his life, to abandon his 'sinful ways' and to 'turn to the loving and forgiving Savior', then what choice does God (who is just as well as merciful in His character) have, other than to send the God-rejecter to the 'home' of his 'father, the devil'? There are many 'prayer warriors' (Dedicated Christians) who are praying for the salvation of their precious loved ones who, by their lifestyle, have demonstrated that they are on the 'broad road that

leads to destruction' – but we must always remember that there is no one who cares for the welfare of our lost 'loved ones' like Jesus Christ. He came to this earth to 'seek and to save the lost ones' (and He did what, alone, was necessary to see this 'goal' accomplished). Jesus (through His Holy Spirit) is doing everything possible, (other than using 'brute, divine force') to 'get everyone into the Kingdom of God'. The methods and means and strategies (all honorable and 'honest', without any exploitation or deceit or hurtful scheming) – these methods are so 'successful' to bring people to 'spiritual regeneration' (new birth). Millions, throughout history, have received God's gifts of repentance and faith – and have found glorious, new life in Christ. There is no one who is more interested in 'getting a person to heaven' than the Spirit of God. If someone (tragically) 'ends up in hell' (after finally 'closing their ears' to the 'still, small voice of divine love'), then it must be clearly known that there is no one who grieves more than the Lord Jesus! None need go to hell. There is a place prepared by God for every person – in that indescribably beautiful (wondrous) place called HEAVEN. God is preparing that place ('mansion' John 14) for you – yes, YOU! Now, you must spend your life – serving God – and, thus, preparing yourself for that glorious Home!

HONESTY – that has been the 'overall' theme in this (lengthy) section of this Paper, discussed from several different 'directions'. Why is Honesty (Integrity, Authenticity, Purity of Heart, etc.) so very important! Very important, for we have pointed out that this powerful term – HONESTY – concisely expresses the meaning of 'Holiness' – the holiness of God which is supposed to be reproduced in the heart of every human being. *"Be ye holy, for I the Lord thy God am holy"*. No human has any 'inherent holiness' for the Bible says that every human being is *'born in sin'* (sinful nature with which all are born), and that every human being also has (to one extent or another) practiced sin (willfully and deliberately). *"None is righteous, no not one"* says the Bible (Romans 3). *"The heart of man is desperately wicked, who can know it."* (Jeremiah 33:9) Man, therefore, from the very time he is born, is helpless and hopeless – unless there is 'outside help'. And, thank God, Jesus saw the helpless and hopeless human race, and in pity (deep love) Jesus came to this sin-cursed earth, to redeem a lost and wicked race! Therefore, because of the infinite power of God (i.e., the transforming power of God, made possible because of Christ's 'finished work') every person (as wicked as he may be, and in bondage to sinful habits) – I say, every person can be 'wonderfully changed' – both outwardly and inwardly: Forgiveness for outward sins, and, cleansing inwardly from a corrupt nature. A holy lifestyle may not be easily 'realized' (in spite of God's willingness to 'change' a person), but a holy lifestyle (justification and sanctification) must be the 'constant pursuit and endeavor' of every 'earnest Christian'. Many 'failures' and 'stumbles' there likely will be, along the 'road of holiness' (for the best of Christians is still so very human and so subject to temptations and trials and hardships and weaknesses and faults in this fallible world). But nevertheless, an honest observer of people must (gladly) acknowledge that God has 'raised up a mighty host of godly persons' – holy persons – whose lifetime 'passion' is to live a life of sincerity and HONESTY (amidst a very corrupt and wicked and adulterous and dishonest world).

The pursuit of a life that can be described as "Christlike" is what best describes a 'holy person'. He is single-minded in his devotion to Christ. He is sincere in his approach to people (with no hidden motives, no duplicity, no deceit, no plotting, no bitterness, no half-heartedness, no preoccupation of one's selfish interests with an indifference to the needs and desires of others, etc.). Certainly the 'holy one' is not faultless, but he is blameless. If for some reason (like 'falling into a severe temptation') the 'holy person' finds himself with 'selfish impulses' or 'lustful feelings' or 'dishonest motives' or 'deceptive actions', or a variety of other 'faults' – really 'sins' – then this sincere man responds to the 'gentle nudges' (or sharp pierces) of the blessed and faithful 'convicting Holy Spirit'. He seeks quickly to 'right his wrongs' (in his thoughts and actions and words). He does not want to displease His heavenly Father and the precious Son (who

has redeemed him from a horrible life of wickedness). The Bible says, "*Grieve not the Holy Spirit by whom you are sealed for the 'day of final redemption'.*"

The sensitive (Spirit-filled) believer – the man of Honesty – wants to maintain a 'clear conscience', and, therefore 'the holy man' (the earnest Christian) determines to 'keep short accounts' of himself (i.e., he is going to respond to the 'gentle, but convicting voice of the Holy Spirit' regularly, possibly daily). The man/woman who is 'following hard after God' – to know Him better - is the man/woman who deeply 'covets' to have the 'smile of God's approval' on his entire life (socially, intellectually, physically, spiritually). The earnest (maturing) Christian knows that he/she must so live that (expectantly or unexpectedly) – when it is time to exit this world of humans, he/she will be able (through continuing faith in Christ's accomplishments) to hear the most blessed words that he/she could possibly ever hear – "*Well done, thou good and faithful servant; enter thou into the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world.*" God's rewards are given to only one type of person – Faithful, Honest, Humble, and Holy Person! A faithful (honest) God gives heavenly rewards to Faithful Servants – and faithful persons are Honest Persons. That is why it is so very important to discuss (in great length) the importance (and varied applications) of HONESTY!

Even though it is not a pleasant 'story' to recall, a discussion about 'Honesty' would not be complete without quoting Acts 5:1-11 (Living Bible).

"But there was a certain man named Ananias who, with his wife, Sapphira, sold some property. He brought part of the money to the apostles, claiming it was the full amount. With his wife's consent, he kept the rest. Then Peter said, "Ananias, why have you let Satan fill your heart? You lied to the Holy Spirit, and you kept some of the money for yourself. The property was yours to sell or not sell, as you wished. And after selling it, the money was also yours to give away. How could you do a thing like this? You weren't lying to us but to God!" As soon as Ananias heard these words, he fell to the floor and died. Everyone who heard about it was terrified. Then some young men got up, wrapped him in a sheet, and took him out and buried him. About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. Peter asked her, "Was this the price you and your husband received for your land?" "Yes," she replied, "that was the price." And Peter said, "How could the two of you even think of conspiring to test the Spirit of the Lord like this? The young men who buried your husband are just outside the door, and they will carry you out, too." Instantly, she fell to the floor and died. When the young men came in and saw that she was dead, they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. Great fear gripped the entire church and everyone else who heard what had happened."

What if God brought this severe judgment upon persons today who were liars and deceivers? Many persons would be lying dead around the truly godly (honest) people! God hates lying and deception and evil plots!

WILL A PERSON'S HIDDEN SINS (WRONGDOINGS) EVENTUALLY BE REVEALED?

There is nothing to hide from God. "*There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed, and hid, that shall not be known.*" (Matthew 10:28) There is an All-Knowing God who can read every thought and secret intent of man. "*Neither is there*

any creature that is not manifest in His sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” (Hebrews 4:13) Barclay well describes what the light of Jesus does. “It strips away the disguises and the concealments; it shows things in all their nakedness; it shows them in their true character and their true values. The externals, the disguises, the outer wrappings and trappings are stripped away; and everything stands revealed in the naked and awful loneliness of what it essentially is.” (John pg. 25) “When the Lord comes, He will draw our motives, thoughts, and deeds (even things we don’t know or admit to ourselves) out of the dark shadows of our hearts into His light. When this happens, the voice of God will speak to each of us the only praise that will ever matter.” (I Corinthians 4:5, Living Bible)

“WILL A PERSONS’ HIDDEN SINS (WRONGDOINGS) EVENTUALLY BE ‘REVEALED’?”

“On a sunny day in September, 1972, a stern-faced, plainly dressed man could be seen standing still on a street corner in the busy Chicago Loop. As pedestrians hurried by on their way to lunch or business, he would solemnly lift his right arm and pointing to the person nearest him, intone loudly the single word “GUILTY!” Then, without any change of expression, he would resume his still stance for a few moments before repeating the gesture. Then, again, the inexorable raising of his arm, the pointing, and the solemn pronouncing of the one word ‘GUILTY!’

The effect of this strange pantomime on the passing strangers was extra-ordinary, almost eerie. They would stare at him, hesitate, look away, look at each other, and then at him again; then hurriedly continue on their ways. One man, turning to another who was my informant, exclaimed: ‘But how did he know?’ “No doubt many others had similar thoughts. How did he know, indeed?”

“Guilty! Everyone’s guilty! Guilty of what: Guilty of over parking, guilty of lying, guilty of arrogance and hubris toward the one God? Guilty of borrowing not to say, embezzling? Guilty of unfaithfulness to a faithful wife; Guilty only of evil thoughts – or evil plans; guilty before whom? Is a police officer following? Did anyone see? Will they be likely to notice it? Does he know about it? But that isn’t technically illegal, is it?

“I can make it up. I will give it back. I’ll apologize. I wasn’t myself when I did that. No one knows about it. But I’m going to quit. It’s a dangerous habit. I wouldn’t want the children to see me. How can I ever straighten it out? What’s done can’t be undone.” (Karl Menninger, *Whatever Became of Sin*; pgs. 1, 2)

When the light of God struck Saul of Tarsus to his feet, Saul saw himself as God saw him, in all of his sin and self-righteousness. God unmasked Saul and showed him his true condition. When God confronted Saul, Saul cried out, *‘What shall I do?’ When God gets us on our knees and we feel our helpless condition, God can then help us. God saved Saul and he could later say, “I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.” (Acts 26:19)*

The light of God comes to all men, revealing things as they really are. There will always be one of two general responses to the light – either acceptance or rejection. Acceptance of the light leads to repentance and a change of life. Rejection of the light leads to hardness, bitterness, and further darkness. History, both from New Testament times, and since that time, is full of illustrations of some who rejected and some who accepted.

Man must inevitably respond either positively or negatively when Jesus, the Light of God, reveals things as they are.

How does the Bible answer this important question? "For whatever God says to us is full of living power; it is sharper than the sharpest dagger cutting swift and deep into our innermost thoughts and desires with all their parts, exposing us for what we really are. He knows about everyone, everywhere. Everything about us is bare and wide open to the all-seeing eyes of our living God; nothing can be hidden from him to whom we must explain all that we have done." (Hebrews 4:12, 13; Living Bible) "Whatever they have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms shall be broadcast from the housetops for all to hear!" (Luke 12:3, Living Bible) "Don't envy the wicked. "Don't envy the wicked. Don't covet his riches. For the evil man has no future; his light will be snuffed out." (Proverbs 24:19-20, Living Bible)

"But though a man sins a hundred times and still lives, I know very well that those who fear God will be better off, unlike the wicked, who will not live long, good lives - their days shall pass away as quickly as shadows because they don't fear God." (Proverbs 8:12-13, Living Bible)

"The heart is the most deceitful thing there is, and desperately wicked. No one can really know how bad it is! Only the Lord knows! He searches all hearts and examines deepest motives so he can give to each person his right reward, according to his deeds - how he has lived." (Jeremiah 17: 9, 10; Living Bible)

"Am I a God who is only in one place and cannot see what they are doing? Can anyone hide from me? Am I not everywhere in all of heaven and earth?" (Jeremiah 23: 23, 24, Living Bible)

Among the very important descriptions of God's character are these three: (1) God is all knowing, i.e., He is all-wise! (2) God is all-powerful. (3) God is all-loving. As these characteristics relate to humans, we can say (with great excitement and gratitude) that God knows what is best for each of us, God wants to give what is best for each of us, and God has the power (ability) to give what is best for each of us. God's power, knowledge, and love are what bring salvation to the human race, and all three of these characteristics are centered in Jesus Christ (the Son of the Living God).

God knows my 'secret sins'. God, in love, wants not only to expose my sins (for the purpose of my repentance), but God wants to forgive all my sins (made possible because of Christ's sacrifice). God is not cruel when He reveals my sins to me - when He brings a thorough 'awakening' to my mind and heart (regarding the fact and seriousness of my sins). It is an act of God's love to 'convict' me deeply of my sins, with the purpose of bringing me to a place of 'true repentance, confession, and faith'. But, admittedly, most (if not all) sinners do not like this 'severe mercy' (convicting) which God (in love and justice) brings to a lost person. Conviction, it has been said, is something like 'spiritual fever' (instead of physical fever). Sinners (under the 'convicting hand of Almighty God') feel the heat of God's awakening and conviction - the 'heat of exposure' that reveals the seriousness of my sins, and the 'hurts' which my sins have caused to those around me - and this 'heat' is more than I can 'bear'. To face the Horror Of My Sins - the fact that my sins helped 'crucify' the Son of God, the fact that my sins have brought great 'hurt' to many others, the fact that my heart is (from God's perspective) 'desperately wicked'

(Jeremiah 33:9), the fact that my sins have adversely affected me in my mind and in my spirit and in my heart and in my will and in all my relationships, the fact that my sins have 'tied me up inside' and shriveled my total self and have kept me from realizing my God-given and creative potential, the fact that my sins have given me a 'hard heart' and a 'closed mind' and a 'weakened will', the fact that my sins have separated me from all relationship (and fellowship) with God, and have robbed me of any peace and satisfaction and happiness, the fact that my sins have made me a 'loser in life' and that I will be a 'final loser' at the time of my physical death – these are some of the reasons that must motivate me to 'Run To Jesus For Forgiveness' – Even Though I Admittedly Don't Like My 'Spiritual Fever' (Awakening And Conviction From The Blessed Holy Spirit).

God Is All-Knowing (i.e., He knows all about me – my 'uprising and my down sittings', my success and my failure, my strengths and my weaknesses, and All My Secret (Hidden) Sins. Nothing is hidden from my Creator God. He knows the thoughts and motives and intents and desires of my heart! He knows all my hidden sins – sins like lust and greed and pride and deceit, and every other kind of vile sin!

God Has Perfect Knowledge, But, Thankfully, God Also Has Perfect Love! He does not reveal my sins to me for the purpose of destroying me. Rather, His revelation of my sins to me (which makes me, of course, 'uncomfortable') is for one purpose only, namely, to 'strongly motivate me' to move away from myself to find my place at the 'foot of the Cross of Christ' where forgiveness and healing and transformation and regeneration and reconciliation and justification and sanctification are available! There is room at the Cross (potentially) for every person, but only for those persons (sinners) who are (actually) ready to 'forsake their old sinful lifestyle' and who are ready (humbly) to 'bow their heart and head and will' to the only Savior – crucified and resurrected Lord Jesus Christ.

God is not only all-knowing and all-loving (for the purpose of 'calling' all persons to repentance and new life), but God is also all-powerful. God's power is guided by His love and mercy. God never uses His power to destroy any human life. There (tragically) is a 'doctrine' regarding God's nature that is far from the Biblical 'picture' of God (and of God's nature). This doctrine of so called 'election' teaches that God's power was manifest by God's arbitrary choice of only some human beings 'to be saved' (based on God's mysterious choice and divine 'will' – exercised before the creation of the world, and independent of anything any human being could do). Thus, based on God's power (sovereignty) alone, some 'fortunate human beings' would (by God's arbitrary choice) be saved for 'eternal life', and the remainder of the human race (probably the majority of the human race) would be lost eternally (all because of the exercise of God's power and sovereign decision). Thus, this terrible doctrine (regarding the arbitrary exercise of God's power of 'election') results in the 'eternal losses of the majority of the human race. This is 'hard core Calvinism' – a terrifying doctrine of God's power.

Of course, if one observes this historic doctrine, one would (in all honesty) have to conclude that the 'God of Calvinism' wants most of the human race to go to hell (independent of the 'will of man'), whereas Satan wants everyone to go to hell! In spite of the fact there are many (sincere) Christians who believe in this 'doctrine' (regarding God's arbitrary will concerning the salvation of mankind); the Bible Does Not teach that God uses His infinite Power to arbitrarily send anyone to Hell. God is not willing that anyone should go to hell, but that everyone (without exception) should repent and go to heaven. The Bible says that God has no delight whatever in the death of a sinner (who chooses, in the end, to refuse the offer of mercy and grace and forgiveness). The doctrine of Calvinism horribly teaches that God's 'glory' is honored when people (Not Arbitrarily Chosen by God go to hell!), a doctrine that is not taught in the Bible. Calvinism dishonors the character of a loving and merciful and just God! It is an anti-

Biblical doctrine, and totally against the teachings (regarding the character of God) in the Holy Bible. God honors the free will of man, and God extends grace to all persons. And God offers the gift of repentance and faith to all persons. Only those persons who finally (in the end of life) reject Christ will be lost!

Never defame the holy character of God. Do not turn the character of God into a character very similar to the character of Satan himself! That is a form of blasphemy! Can you imagine the unbearable 'strain and anxiety and outright fear' that you would experience throughout your life, if you had constantly to wonder if you were one of the fortunate persons who had been selected (elected) by God to have 'eternal life' (and to be 'forced' by this horrible doctrine to believe that you – and the exercise of your own 'free will – had no affect or influence or determination in your prayers to God, regarding your own 'personal assurance' of your eternal destiny)! What a cruel God – a God who uses His power (sovereignty) arbitrarily to select (elect) some to be saved and others (the majority) to be lost! That kind of God (whose great power is not controlled by His love and mercy) is a 'god' who is very much like Satan himself – and certainly not a God whose nature was best manifested (revealed) by the life and character of Jesus Christ! Totally contrary to the loving and merciful and kind and thoughtful and compassionate and healing and saving Jesus! The God of Calvinism is terrible, cruel, arbitrary, unpredictable, unmerciful, and totally unloving – just the opposite to the character of Jesus Christ (and to the character of the true God whose 'face' and 'hands' and 'feet' and 'voice' and 'heart' and 'will' were clearly revealed in Jesus who walked the shores of Galilee!). Predestination is clearly taught in the New Testament, but not the predestination which is taught by Calvinism. God (in eternity) predestined (planned) to save the entire human race (and every soul in that human race) by the person and the work of Jesus Christ – providing a universal atonement, and providing a 'call' to salvation to every person. God has chosen (elected) to save everyone; Christ (in love) has died for everyone; no person is automatically 'saved', but all persons are 'savable' (capable of being saved, if they choose to positively exercise the God-given gift of repentance and faith). God is all-knowing and all-loving and all-powerful. He never uses His power to show 'favoritism' among His human subjects. He loves them all equally (regardless of race, gender, status, etc.). *"Whosoever will may come!"* God excludes no one! God is never 'cruel' (arbitrary) in the use of His power!

But (to go back to the 'big question' in this section of the paper), it must be acknowledged (hesitantly) that 'Mercy spurned is judgment earned'. When a sinner continues to 'close his mind', harden his heart, allow his inner spirit to be irreverent, continue to refuse the will of God and instead use his own will for selfish pursuits – when those human 'conditions' remain unchanged, a time will come when God will 'withdraw the tender and loving appeals of the Holy Spirit'! This withdrawal will not happen quickly or easily, for the blessed (mighty) Spirit is deeply grieved with the willful and wayward person who is on a 'headlong' road that finally ends in total destruction. As is true of Jesus when he wept as he looked over unrepentant Jerusalem (realizing that soon this beloved city would be viciously attacked by the 'enemy'), so the loving and tender (and persistent) Holy Spirit also 'weeps' over the lost souls of men who refuse to accept God's gifts of repentance and faith (and, thus be saved).

God's use of His power is never 'arbitrary' (as seen in the picture of God in the Calvinist doctrine of 'election'), but God, nevertheless, has a 'proper' (a just) use of His power. What is that? God Will Use His Power Ultimately to Destroy All Sin and All Sinners Who Refuse to Be a Part of God's Kingdom. The Bible says that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews). Unrepentant sinners (who have been shown God's love and mercy) who stubbornly 'hold out on God' (reject God's ways and will and Word) – these (Tragic) Persons are In 'For Real Trouble' (Horrible Final Judgment when 'all hidden sins' will be fully exposed and judged!) The Jesus (who is called 'meek and mild'),

is the same Jesus who also spoke about the Justice of God and the final destiny of the wicked!

Someone pointed out that Jesus spoke more about 'hell' than He did about 'heaven' (in the Gospel accounts). Again, it is very clear (in the New Testament) that the Gospel Message of Salvation (forgiveness, reconciliation, transformation, joy, fulfillment, and so much more) – this Message is very often expounded theologically and very often proclaimed 'from the housetop'. The message of love and forgiveness is so clearly given, that none need misunderstand that glorious (hope-filled) message. None need perish; all can be saved (for time and for eternity). God wants all to be 'double-winners', not 'double-losers'! God wants every single soul to enjoy 'abundant life' here on this earth, and also 'eternal life' in heaven. God is presently on a 'deliberate venture' – seeking the lost wherever they are! And that is everywhere! There is no 'corner of the earth' that the Spirit is not seeking and searching for the 'lost and dying'. As the unseen 'wind' that 'comes and goes' wherever it so desires, so the Spirit of God (the 'Wind of God') is breathing upon the entire world' with a mighty influence – powerfully motivating as many as possible to 'turn to the lord' before it is everlastingly too late.

The Spirit is both 'urgent' and 'persistent', but not even the mighty Spirit can use 'dishonest methods' to change people's minds regarding their spiritual needs. The Spirit cannot 'force His will upon the will of any human'. The Spirit can 'convict' of sin; the Spirit can (respectfully) bring a wholesome sense of urgency to lost souls (that is, a deep 'fear' of coming doom for those without a 'knowledge' of Christ). To think of the coming 'Great White Throne Judgment' (where the books will be opened – all lives exposed – and where every person will be judged according to what is written in that Book) – this awesome fact the Holy Spirit can 'bring home' to the 'closed mind' and to the 'indifferent spirit' of human souls! Those 'hidden sins' will be fully known in eternity, so it is only "Common Sense For A Person To Allow God – in Time – To 'Hide One's Sins In The Sea Of God's Forgetfulness'"!

“WHAT DID THE CROSS ACCOMPLISH”?

I understand there is a painter who has painted a picture of the boy Jesus in Joseph's carpenter shop. Mary is looking on as Jesus is working with Joseph. The sun is just going down over the Palestinian hills and as Jesus is building an oxen yoke, He is crossing two boards. The crossing of the boards forms a long shadow that is the shape of a cross. Upon seeing this shadow of a cross on the floor of the carpenter shop, a sudden look of fright and sadness comes over the face of Mary – as if Mary can see into Jesus' future fate.

Of course, we know that this painting is only the creation of an artist's mind. There is nothing in the Gospels, which indicates that Mary knew ahead of time that Jesus would die on a cross. However, the Gospels do indicate that, figuratively speaking, the shadow of the cross was cast across the pathway of Jesus, during His entire ministry before he finally died upon the Cross.

Jesus many times talked about 'His Hour'. Several times he said that His hour had not yet come. When His time finally had come to die, He said, *“My hour has come. It was for this purpose that I was born.”*

Jesus was born to die – to die a death that would enable millions to live! At the heart of Jesus' ministry was a cross! Note's William Sangster: “Those devils and weaklings who met at Calvary would have said, ‘We did it.’ He cries from His Cross: ‘I did it!! It is finished!’ If they were right, the Cross would be a gibbet, a symbol of shame, something to hide and speak of only by compulsion with bated breath. In point of fact, we placard it to the entire world. No steeple so high that it will not bear it; no point of earth but is honored to be the stump of His Cross: it lies in a cache on the summit of Everest. It is His message, not theirs, which it bears at the last.

“Those free and evil men sought and secured His death cannot alter the fact that He knew what they were doing – and let them do it. You cannot martyr God. Hold in mind, WHO it was who hung and suffered there, and you will not think of it as martyrdom.

“If He was man, it was murder; if He was God, it was an offering. If He was man, it was martyrdom; if He was God, it was sacrifice. If He was man, they took His life from Him; if He was God, He laid down His life freely. If He was man, we must stand up and take our hats off; if He was God, we must fall down and give Him our hearts.” (Daily Readings; pg. 253)

There is a song which shows the victorious symbolism of the Cross:

**“In the cross of Christ I glory, Towering o'er the wrecks of time;
All the light of sacred story, Gathers round its head sublime.”**

Why so much attention given to the Cross? Because the death of Christ on the Cross accomplished all-important things – for God and for man. What did the Cross accomplish?

1. **The Cross Appeased God's Wrath against Sin.**
2. **The Cross Satisfied God's Justice, for God Could Not Allow Sin to Go Unpunished, and at the Same Time Remain a Just God.**
3. **The Cross Demonstrated God's Love for Sinners.**

THE CROSS APPEASED GOD'S WRATH

In speaking often of God's love (which we should do) perhaps we forget the fact of God's wrath. Both the Old and New Testaments picture God as a God of love, but the opposite side of God's character is God's wrath against sin, hypocrisy, and rebellion. Just as John the Baptist spoke of *'the wrath to come'*, so Jesus too spoke and taught God's wrath." (Matthew 3: 7) *"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) Wrote James; *"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."* (James 4: 4) Wrote Paul: "Among these we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and mind, and so we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of humanity." (Ephesians 2: 3) *"Be sure of this, that no immoral or impure man, or one who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for it is because of these things that the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not associate with them."* (Ephesians 5: 5-6) **The Explanation for God's Wrath.** God is a God of love, but His love demands that His own holiness be honored and that sin, which offends God's holiness, be punished. **Relationship Between God's Wrath and God's Love.** God's wrath, "does not compromise the conception of the love of God. We are not forced to choose between a God of wrath and a God who loves; rather the wrath is the obverse side of the love. E. H. Gifford has an opposite remark, 'Human love here offers a true analogy: the more a father loves his son, the more he hates in him the drunkard, the liar, or the traitor.' If this be quite possible in a human father with all his failings, we cannot account it incredible in God from whose wrath is absent all those imperfections which mar the human emotion of righteous anger even at its purest." (The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross; Leon Morris; pgs. 224, 225)

Contrast Between God's Wrath and Wrath of Pagan gods. God's wrath is not like the wrath of the pagan gods. "The Bible writers have nothing to do with pagan conceptions of a capricious and vindictive deity, inflicting arbitrary punishments on offending worshippers, who must then bribe him back to a good mood by the appropriate offering." (Ibid; 148) There is none of that irrational passion in God, but God's wrath is controlled, directed, and tempered by God's love. Wrath and love are compatible in God's nature. He hates sin but He loves the child of sin. There is a divine wrath, but if we hate sin He loves the child of sin. "There is divine wrath, but if we may put it this way, it is always exercised with certain tenderness. Even when He is angry with man's sin, God loves man and is concerned for his well-being in the fullest sense. There is a divine love, but it is not a careless sentimentality, indifference to the moral Integrity of the loved ones. Rather it is a love which is a purifying fire, blazing against everything that hinders the loved ones from being the very best that they can be." (Ibid; 176)

Jesus Took the Heat of God's Wrath Toward Sin Upon Himself. Jesus became sin for us. He bore our sins in His body on the cross. On the cross, Jesus cried out, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' Jesus represented all the sins of the entire world when He was on the cross. God laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Because Jesus became sin, God could not look upon Jesus, for God cannot look upon sin. *"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity."* (Habakkuk 1:13a) The penalty of sin is death, so he who sins must die. But when Jesus died, God's wrath against sin was turned upon Jesus. Because Jesus is God, God in reality turned His wrath against sin upon Himself. Therefore the sinner is shielded from God's wrath, and is treated, as if he had never sinned.

II. THE CROSS SATISFIED GOD'S JUSTICE

So serious is sin that, in the process of punishing sin, the sinner would also be destroyed. The wages of sin is death for the sinner. The cross is not only the answer to appeasing God's wrath toward sin, but also the answer to saving the sinner from suffering the just penalty for sin which is death.

Statement of Meaning. The cross-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.

A Moral Universe Calls for Moral Treatment of Sin: This is a moral universe, where right must be rewarded and wrong must be punished. If God could forgive the guilty one by a mere 'wink of the eye' then God would no longer be just and the universe would no longer be a moral, safe, reliable place to live. All bases for morality (right and wrong) would be destroyed.

"In Christ's atonement for sin, He stood in the guilty sinner's place. If God had forgiven sin by a divine decree without atonement, which involved the personal shame, agony, suffering, and death of Christ, then man could assume that God overlooked, winked at, or was indifferent to sin. Thus, man would go on sinning, and earth would have become a living hell. But in the surrendering of Jesus we have the participation of God in the act of atonement." (World Aflame; pg. 113, by Billy Graham) Jesus took the penalty for man's sin so that man could be forgiven justly.

Analogy: Showing the Substitutionary Death as a Necessity for Justice. Imagine the following: Court Room Scene, before a Judge.

I am guilty of a great crime. I cannot pay for it except by death, for this crime holds the death penalty. A friend offers to take my just penalty for me - to die in my place. Therefore: Justice has been met, insofar as the Law is concerned. Double punishment for one crime would be unjust (so if my friend dies, I do not need to die for this crime). If the truly guilty is willing to accept the substitutionary offering of the friend, then the punishment for the crime has been met and the guilty one is free, declared henceforth clear, and innocent (as far as the just Requirements of the Law are concerned).

God can declare the sinner just and righteous (and remain just in His dealing Himself) because Christ took the penalty for the sinner.

Inability Humanly to Make One's self Just and Righteous Before God. One cannot make himself just before God by any good thing that he can do (any more than a murderer can do anything to justify or clear himself from his crime)!

Writes Spurgeon: "Christ has made a complete atonement; and there is none other plan by which sinners can be made at one with God, except by Jesus' precious blood. I may make sacrifices; I may mortify my body; I may be baptized; I may receive sacraments; I may pray until my knees grow hard with kneeling; I may read devout words until I know them by heart; I may celebrate masses; I may worship in one language or in fifty languages; but I can never be at one with God, except by blood and that blood, 'the precious blood of Christ.'" (The Passion and Death of Christ; pg. 36)

When Jesus became the sacrificial Lamb, dying upon a Cross, God's justice was satisfied. God could not allow sin to go unpunished, and at the same time remain a just God. God remains just in His character and at the same time can justify guilty sinners - releasing them from the death penalty of sin - because of what Christ did on the Cross. Because the Innocent One, Christ, died for the guilty ones - the human race - God can now release the guilty ones, for the demands of justice have been met. God will not punish twice for one crime. If the guilty one accepts what the Innocent One - Christ - has done

for them, then they are released from the death penalty, are set free, and are treated as if they had never sinned.

THE CROSS DEMONSTRATED GOD'S LOVE

The cross reveals more about God than any other reality. The cross on Calvary is the unveiling of the Cross, which has always been on the heart of God eternally. God is love and the cross gives concrete expression to that truth. God is suffering love and therefore the cross in an absolute necessity. Only as man could see Jesus on the Cross of Calvary could man see the Christ of the Ages who has always borne a cross in His heart.

Jesus reveals the nature of God. Everything Jesus was, God has always been. When Jesus suffered on the Cross, God was suffering on the Cross. Jesus' suffering on the cross for sin shows that God suffers for sin. God hurts in our hurts, He bleeds when we bleed, he shares our guilt. *"Surely he hath borne our grief, and carried our sorrow."* (Isaiah 53: 4a)

The cross is the greatest of all revelations concerning God. For the revealed cross in history is the result of the hidden cross on the heart of God. The cross shows that at the heart of the Universe is self-giving, sacrificial love.

Jesus' life was a life of love – a life of identification with man's problems and man's needs. Jesus identified with man's temptations. Jesus shared man's poverty for Jesus said, *"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head."* (Matthew 8: 20)

Jesus knew what it was to be misunderstood, rejected, and despised. He knew what it was to be hailed, praised, and followed. Jesus knew abounding times and abasing times; prosperity and poverty; apparent success and apparent failure; companionship and loneliness; joy and sorrow; acceptance and rejection.

Jesus' love for humanity was supremely expressed when he suffered for man's sin. *"But God commandeth His love for us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."* (Romans 5: 8)

"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; with his stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53: 4, 5)

Not only did Jesus identify with sinners in life, but also Jesus identified with sinners in his very death. The Scriptures tell us *"He (God) has visited and redeemed His people."* "He took man's sin as His own and died as a malefactor on the cross. The visitation meant identification, and the identification meant not identification with man at the top, becoming the best of men, but becoming the worst of men - a sinner, dying between sinners. 'He became sin for us.' That identification was gradual, beginning at inner renunciation of being equal with God, coming in a Virgin's womb, and going deeper at every step until He hit rock bottom on a cross: 'My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?'" (E. Stanley Jones; Word Became Flesh; pg. 153)

"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: 36)

Someone has called John 3: 16 'the Heart of the Bible – the Gospel in miniature.' It is so simple a child can understand it; yet it condenses the deep and marvelous truths of redemption into these few pungent words:

"God".....Greatest Lover
"So Loved".....Greatest Degree
"The World".....Greatest Number
"That He Gave".....Greatest Act
"His Only Begotten Son.....Greatest Gift
"That whosoever".....Greatest Invitation
"Believeth".....Greatest Simplicity
"In Him".....Greatest Person
"Should Not Perish".....Greatest Deliverance
"But".....Greatest Difference
"Have".....Greatest Certainty
"Everlasting Life".....Greatest Possession

Will you come to the Christ and give him your sins? Will you receive His forgiveness today? It cost God the sacrifice of His dearest and best – His Own Son – to make your salvation possible. He gave His all for you! Will you give Him your all in love and service?

Can you sing: 'In the Cross of Christ I glory'? Remember, 'Nothing can for sins atone, nothing but the blood of Jesus.' Come to Jesus today! Let him wash away your sins!

WHAT IF THERE WAS NO RESURRECTION?

But what if Jesus – the Lamb of God – had not been raised from the dead? What if there was no resurrection?

Paul wrote, *"If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost."* (I Corinthians 15: 17, 18)

Your Faith in God's Love Is In Vain. If Christ had not been raised from the dead, then your faith in God's love is in vain! **If Jesus was the sinless Son of God, and If God would have allowed His Son to stay in the grave permanently to rot; then we would have to conclude that God was both unjust and loveless!** Then we are back to where Huxley, the atheist, was when he said, "I cannot see one shadow or tittle of evidence that God is love." **But God did raise Christ from the dead, showing to all that God loved His sinless Son so much that He would not let the hatred of men have the final word!**

Your Faith in God's Integrity Is In Vain. If Christ had not been raised from the dead, then your faith in God's integrity is in vain! God promised to establish His long-predicted Messianic kingdom upon the foundation of the resurrection. God promised to raise His Son from the dead. **If Jesus would have remained in the grave, then God's promises would prove to be false and God's claim to integrity would be invalidated.** But, God is never slack in fulfilling His promises. *"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."* (II Peter 3: 9) God is always true to His Word! **God raised Christ from the dead in order to keep His promises and to maintain His integrity!**

Your Faith in God's Power Is In Vain. If Christ had not been raised from the dead, then your faith in God's power is in vain! **If Christ would not have been raised from the dead, then it would be true to say that death is stronger than life, evil is stronger than righteousness, Satan is stronger than God.** Satan claimed victory when he saw Jesus hang His head in death on the cross. However, Satan was crushed three days later when he looked into an empty tomb and knew that Jesus was to ascend to the right hand of His Father's kingly throne! The demons' cries of triumph on Calvary's Friday suddenly turned into cries of terror on Easter morning! Christ disarmed the power of Satan!

“Death cannot keep his prey,
Jesus my Saviour!
He tore the bars away,
Jesus, my Lord!

Up from the grave He arose,
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes;
He arose a victor from the dark domain,
And He lives forever, with His saints to reign;
He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!”

The greatest weapon of Satan has always been death. When Christ arose from the dead, Jesus captured Satan's chief weapon! **The resurrection is what makes Jesus the conquering King and Satan the defeated foe!** The broken seal on Jesus' tomb on Easter Sunday becomes Satan's seal of death! God has already appointed his day of execution and has told what will be his final destiny! *“And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”* (Revelations 20: 10)

Your Faith in God's Justice is In Vain. If Christ had not been raised from the dead, then your faith in God's justice is in vain! Do you believe that ‘though the wrong seems often so very strong, that God is Ruler yet’? Do you believe that ultimately all evil will be punished and that all good will be rewarded? Do you believe that this is a Moral Universe, that a Moral God shall finally ‘balance the books’, redressing evil, and rewarding righteousness?

If there is no resurrection then your desires for justice to be rendered, in the affairs of men are all in vain! **If there is no resurrection, then there is no hope that evil men will be brought to justice, that evil will be destroyed, that Satan will be vanquished, that righteous men will ultimately be recognized and rewarded!**

The evil forces of men went unchallenged, the lies of men went unchecked for the first day and the second day following Christ's death, but on the third day – on Easter Sunday Morning - the evil of men and the lies of men were exposed for what they really were, and the truth of God and the justice of God were made manifest! Jesus arose from the dead, showing that the truth of God is stronger than the lies of men, and the justice of God is stronger than the injustice of men!

Oftentimes in this present life, wrong goes unpunished and right goes unrewarded. In this life, it sometimes seems that the balance is tipped in favor of the wrong. One is tempted to ask with the Psalmist, *“How long shall the wicked triumph?”* (Psalms 94: 3) When Jesus was crucified, it seemed that evil was triumphant and justice was mocked, but God's resurrection of Jesus vindicated God's righteousness and justice. The resurrection is proof that ultimately, righteousness will be rewarded and evil will be punished.

Your Faith In Christ's Righteousness Is In Vain, "If Christ had not been raised from the dead then your faith in Christ's righteousness is in vain"! Jesus' claim to be sinless would be invalidated without the resurrection. The penalty of sin is both physical and spiritual death. Therefore, if Jesus would have stayed in the tomb, one would have to conclude that Jesus was no different than any other man, that Jesus was (like everyone else) a sinner and thus subject to the penalty of sin which is death! For God to have allowed Jesus to remain in the tomb would have been a sign that Jesus was not God, that Jesus was not the sinless Son who was not subject to sin's final death. If He had not been raised from the dead, we would have to conclude that He died for His own sins. In that case, His claims to sinlessness would be invalidated and we would have to conclude that He was a mere man, full of sin like the rest of humanity!

Your Faith in God's Power To Change Human Nature Is In Vain, if Christ had not been raised from the dead, then your faith in God's power to change human nature is in vain! Do you ever long to be different, to be self-controlled, serene, loving, contributive, winsome, faithful, and confident? Do you ever wish that you could start life all over again? Do you ever wish that your secret past would no longer haunt you? Have you ever wished that your guilt could be resolved and that your future could be bright with hope and cheer?

What needs most in life to be changed – self-centered human nature – takes a power greater than the greatest of human powers and abilities. No psychiatrist, priest, or scientist can permanently change human nature from greed to compassion, from hate to love, from self-centeredness to humility, from perversion to purity! What power then is available to change human nature? The power that raised Christ from the dead is the same power that is available to transform human nature! The Christ, who defied the power of death and left the tomb empty, is the same Christ whose power is able to accomplish the humanly impossible – to change a bad man into a good man! However, without the resurrection of Jesus, man's moral transformation is impossible, for human transformation is dependent upon no lesser power than the power of the resurrection!

Paul makes it clear in I Corinthians 15: 14-18: "*And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.*" If Christ had not been raised, then one's faith is useless and futile, and that Christians are still in their sins! If there is No resurrection then there is no power to transform people's lives, and without moral transformation (spiritual conversion), people who die are lost eternally!

You're Faith in the Possibility of Establishing a Personal and Intimate Relationship with God Is Futile! If Christ had not been raised from the dead then your faith in the possibility of establishing a personal and intimate relationship with God is futile. Without the shedding of Jesus' blood, there is no remission for sins, but the shedding of Jesus' blood is not, in itself, the basis for man's remission of sins. Jesus' blood (the sacrifice of his life) was only effective if His blood was sinless. We have already noted that the resurrection proved that Jesus was more than a mere man and that His claims to absolute sinlessness were based on the facts of reality rather than on the wishful imaginations of an insane egomaniac! The resurrection proved Christ's righteousness, and it also proved that Jesus' sinless blood alone has the power to cleanse away sin and to reconcile sinful man to the Holy God. The High Priests of the Old Testament dared not go into the inner 'Holy of Holies' - the innermost room of the Temple – to approach

God in behalf of the nation of Israel without the possession of the blood of animal sacrifices. It was the sacrificial blood that gave them right of access to the altogether Holy God.

Jesus' resurrection from the dead proved that Jesus' blood was more than the mere blood of a man. His blood was the blood of the Innocent One. Because His blood was shed once-and-for-all for the unholy race of humanity, each person who places his personal trust in Christ, gains personal access to the Father. The believer who trusts alone in the merits of Jesus' holy blood, as the basis for his forgiveness, now may enter boldly into the 'Holy of Holies' – into God's intimate presence – without fear of being destroyed or rejected!

The moment Jesus died, the curtain of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom. *"At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split."* (Matthew 27: 51) Because the Sinless One – Jesus – had paid the price on the cross for the guilty ones – the human race – God could destroy the dividing walls between God and man. The tearing of the temple curtain from top to bottom symbolized the tearing away of all barriers that had separated the holy God from the unholy and common lot of humanity! Each person now has the possibility of personal access to Almighty God, resulting in the establishment of an intimate and permanent love relationship with the all - holy God!

But the splitting of the Temple curtain (symbolizing personal access to the Father) would never have happened if the death of Christ had not been followed by the Resurrection of Christ! The resurrection proved that Jesus was God's sinless High Priest who alone has the right to tear down (once-and-for-all) the dividing curtain and who alone, based on His righteous character, has the sufficient merits to bring every human being into the intimate presence of the altogether Holy God! It is because of the resurrection that man has a possibility of establishing a personal and intimate relationship with God (as symbolized by the 'holies of holies in the inner part of the Temple). Without the resurrection of Jesus, man would be alienated forever from God, lost and condemned in his sins! He would not be able to enter into the 'holy of holies' – into the inner sanctuary of God's intimate presence to enjoy sweet communion.

Your belief that your deepest aspirations will eventually be fulfilled hereafter is all in vain. If Christ had not been raised from the dead, then your belief that your deepest aspirations will eventually be fulfilled hereafter is all in vain! If man's aspirations are so real to him, and these aspirations cannot possibly be fulfilled within the short span of a lifetime, then the very presence of the growing aspirations points to a fulfillment beyond the confines of time, a fulfillment that reaches into eternity. However, if aspirations are to be fulfilled in eternity, there must be a life hereafter. But, there can be no life hereafter if Christ did not rise from the dead. Therefore, Christ's resurrection is necessary as the foundation for the fulfillment of man's deepest aspirations.

Man spends his entire lifetime, striving to grow, working to create, and laboring to accumulate wisdom and knowledge; and then man dies with a thousand unfulfilled dreams! Does death end it all? Is there no future opportunity for man's deepest longings to be fulfilled? Without the resurrection of Jesus, there is no resurrection for man and without a resurrection for man, there is no opportunity for life's deepest aspirations to find fulfillment! The satisfaction of man's deepest aspirations in the supernatural, immortal realm is only made possible because of Christ's resurrection.

The lungs are made for air, the stomach for food, the eyes for beauty, and the ears for music. Are not the deepest aspirations of your spirit created by God to be fulfilled by God in eternity? Because Christ lives, your aspirations will never die!

Your intense desire to have a permanent existence with a recognizable spiritual body after physical death, is all in vain. If Christ had not been raised from the dead then your intense desire to have a permanent existence with a recognizable spiritual body after physical death is all in vain! Belief in the bodily resurrection of Jesus gives the foundation of hope in the subsequent resurrection of the body of true believers. Notes Paul, "Death came into the world because of what one man (Adam) did, and it is because of what this other man (Christ) has done that now there is the resurrection from the dead. Everyone dies because all of us are related to Adam, being members of his sinful race, and wherever there is sin, death results. However, all who are related to Christ will rise again. *"Each, however, in his own turn: Christ rose first; then when Christ comes back, all His people will become alive again..The bodies we have now embarrass us for they become sick and die; but they will be full of glory when we come back to life again. Yes, they are weak, dying bodies now, but when we live again they will be full of strength. They are just human bodies at death, but when they come back to life, they will be superhuman bodies. For just as there are natural, human bodies, there are also supernatural, spiritual bodies."*

"For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming." (I Corinthians 15: 21, Living Bible)

"So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body." (I Corinthians 15: 42-44, Living Bible)

What if there was no resurrection? Then one's faith in God's love, God's integrity, God's power, and God's justice would all be in vain – useless, empty, and meaningless! Then one's faith in Christ's righteousness – faith that Jesus was sinless and thus more than a mere man – would be an illusion! What if there was no resurrection? Then humanity is permanently in the grip of sin's bondage and there is no power available to transform human nature! If there is no resurrection, then there is no sinless High Priest who can remove the veil, which separates Holy God from sinful man. Moreover, if the veil cannot be removed, then man cannot enter into an intimate and lasting fellowship with God but is left estranged and condemned in his sins! If there is no resurrection, then man's deepest aspirations will all die when man dies physically! In addition, there is no life hereafter, no possibility of receiving a new and deathless spiritual body in eternity!

But God provided a Lamb – and that Lamb is Jesus Christ whose death and resurrection makes possible your complete forgiveness of sin, your total deliverance from selfishness, and your ultimate salvation in heaven!

Have you placed your faith alone in the resurrected Christ? Remember, the object of your faith determines the value of your faith! Christ is a very trustworthy object for your faith. Trust Him today for your salvation. His blood alone can cleanse you from all sin, for He is God's Lamb – the Lamb who died and who arose again from the grave! Because He lives, you can be forgiven of your past and you can confidently face tomorrow!



**A FEW FAVORITE BIBLE PASSAGES
(Encouragement and Strength)
(Living Bible Version)**

Psalms 32:7-9:

*"For you are my hiding place,
you protect me from trouble.
You surround me with songs of victory. Interlude
The LORD says, "I will guide you along the best pathway for your life.
I will advise you and watch over you.
Do not be like a senseless horse or mule
that needs a bit and bridle to keep it under control."*

Philippians 4:8:

"And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise."

II Timothy 1:7:

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline."

John 3:16:

"For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."

Matthew 6:31-34:

"So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. "So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today."

"So be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid and do not panic before them. For the LORD your God will personally go ahead of you. He will neither fail you nor abandon you."



Acts 16:31:

"They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household."

I John 1:7, 9:

"But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin."

I John 1:9:

"But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin."

1 John 4:16-17 New Living Translation (NLT):

"We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the Day of Judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world."

Proverbs 3:6:

"Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take."

John 14:1-2:

"Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you?"

John 17:15-19:

"I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. They do not belong to this world any more than I do. Make them holy by your truths; teach them your word, which is truth. Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth."

Isaiah 40:28-31:

*“Have you never heard?
Have you never understood?
The LORD is the everlasting God,
the Creator of all the earth.
He never grows weak or weary.
No one can measure the depths of his understanding.
He gives power to the weak
and strength to the powerless.
Even youths will become weak and tired,
and young men will fall in exhaustion.
But those who trust in the LORD will find new strength.
They will soar high on wings like eagles.
They will run and not grow weary.
They will walk and not faint.”*

II Timothy 4:6-8:

As for me, my life has already been poured out as an offering to God. The time of my death is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his appearing.

I Timothy 6:17:

Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment.

Ecclesiastes 3:12-13:

“So I concluded there is nothing better than to be happy and enjoy ourselves as long as we can. And people should eat and drink and enjoy the fruits of their labor, for these are gifts from God.”

Psalms 16:11:

*You will show me the way of life,
granting me the joy of your presence
and the pleasures of living with you forever.*

Philippians 2:13:

For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

II Thessalonians 1:11:

So we keep on praying for you, asking our God to enable you to live a life worthy of his call. May he give you the power to accomplish all the good things your faith prompts you to do.

Luke 12:32:

“So don't be afraid, little flock. For it gives your Father great happiness to give you the Kingdom.

I Peter 5:7:

Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.

Psalms 103:8-16:

*The LORD is compassionate and merciful,
slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love.
He will not constantly accuse us,
nor remain angry forever.*

*He does not punish us for all our sins;
he does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve.
For his unfailing love toward those who fear him
is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth.*

*He has removed our sins as far from us
as the east is from the west.
The LORD is like a father to his children,
tender and compassionate to those who fear him.*

*For he knows how weak we are;
he remembers we are only dust.
Our days on earth are like grass,
like wildflowers, we bloom and die.
The wind blows, and we are gone—
as though we had never been here.*

Micah 7:19:

"Once again you will have compassion on us. You will trample our sins under your feet and throw them into the depths of the ocean!"

Psalms 18:1-3:

*I love you, LORD; you are my strength.
The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my savior;
my God is my rock, in whom I find protection.
He is my shield, the power that saves me,
and my place of safety.
I called on the LORD, who is worthy of praise,
and he saved me from my enemies.*

Hebrews 10:16b-17:

*"This is the new covenant I will make
with my people on that day, says the LORD:
I will put my laws in their hearts,
and I will write them on their minds."
Then he says, "I will never again remember
their sins and lawless deeds."*

Ephesians 3:17-19:

Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

Zechariah 4:6:

Then he said to me, "This is what the LORD says to Zerubbabel: It is not by force nor by strength, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of Heaven's Armies.

I Corinthians 2:9:

That is what the Scriptures mean when they say, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him."

II Corinthians 4:16 – 5:10:

That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever. For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down (that is, when we die and leave this earthly body), we will have a house in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands. We grow weary in our present bodies, and we long to put on our heavenly bodies like new clothing. For we will put on heavenly bodies; we will not be spirits without bodies. While we live in these earthly bodies, we groan and sigh, but it's not that we want to die and get rid of these bodies that clothe us. Rather, we want to put on our new bodies so that these dying bodies will be swallowed up by life. God himself has prepared us for this, and as a guarantee he has given us his Holy Spirit. So we are always confident, even though we know that as long as we live in these bodies we are not at home with the Lord. For we live by believing and not by seeing. Yes, we are fully confident, and we would rather be away from these earthly bodies, for then we will be at home with the Lord. So whether we are here in this body or away from this body, our goal is to please him. For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body.



